

ACVA Comet 2026 –06, Technical Article



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Chronicles of the Cosmic Court

The Navagrahas or the nine planets of Jyotiṣa have fascinating tales that appear in various classical texts. These stories, genealogical lineages, and mythological origins of the Navagrahas are scattered across several classical Purāṇic and Vedic texts. This series of short articles is an attempt to share the essence of these mythic tales, and their linkage to the significations attributed to the Grahas by Sage Parāśara.

This being the first article in the series, it starts with a prelude to the influence that the Navagrahas exert over life on earth. We then have the mythological tale of Sūrya, and in the last part, how this tale ties into the significations of Sūrya as given by Parāśara. These tales served as memory aids in an era when the written script did not exist and knowledge was passed by the spoken word.

As is the tradition of India, we begin with invoking the mantra of Navagrahas to appease the nine celestial bodies, to bring balance, positivity, and protection.

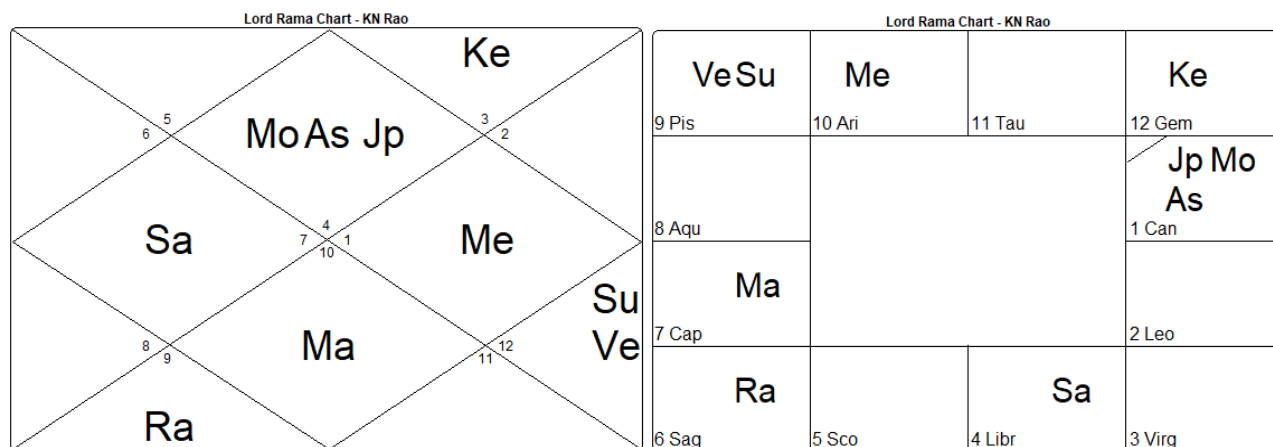
अदित्याय च सोमाय मंगलाय बुधाय च ।

गुरु शुक्र सनिभ्याश्च राहवे केतवे नमः ॥

adityāya ca somāya maṅgalāya budhāya ca ।

guru śukra sanibhyāśca rāhave ketave namaḥ ॥

"Salutations to the Sun, the Moon, Mars, and Mercury. Salutations also to Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, and Ketu."



The Influence of Navagrahas

Long long ago a master and his disciples gathered on the banks of the river Gaṅgā in Vārānasi and proceeded for a Holy dip in the river. As they emerged, the Sun was making his benign appearance on the horizon. The master stood still absorbing the Sun's soft rays and offered his prayers to the Graha who is the source of all Life i.e. Sūrya.

A disciple observed his master soaking the rays of the Sun and smiling in bliss. As soon as the master had finished his prayers the disciple asked, "Guruji I am curious to know why do people worship the Sun or for that matter the Navagrahas?"

The master smiled, walked to a Banyan tree and sat down on the platform. His disciples assembled in front of him, and he said, "The nine Grahas are so powerful, that people pray to them, to make peace with them and to gain their blessings, so the Grahas do not torment them. The Navagrahas control an individual's life from the moment of their conception to their last breath. They determine one's Karma, they move in the sky casting their gaze on Earth; even the Gods are not spared, when the Grahas take Avatārs (incarnations) on Earth."

See the chart of Lord Rāma as described in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. Even Lord Rāma, the Avatāra (incarnation) of Mahāviṣṇu himself, could not escape the wrath of Mars in the 7th house, and was tormented by its disturbance in his married life. The strong Dharma Puruṣārtha (soul's primary motivations) made him Puruṣottama Rāma - the upholder of Dharma. Rāhu in the 6th ensured that he faced unconventional enemies and strange battles, yet it being there also helped Rāma destroy his enemies. Ketu is the Mokṣa Kāraka in 12th house of moksha, isolation and exile. Ketu is also the natural significator of spirituality and detachment. The placement of Ketu in the 12th house accurately reflects Rāma's 14-year ascetic life in the forest.

In the same way the Grahas determine the boundaries of every life form. Birth, food, wealth, health, progeny, marriage, education, and glory are all under the influence of these Grahas. If they cast a benevolent gaze, they bring joy and peace or else they cause unending sorrow and storms. Even Lord Rāma himself recited the Āditya Hṛdayam Stotram* (*The Āditya Hṛdayam Stotra is a sacred hymn dedicated to Sūrya Dev (the Sun God). It is found in the Yuddha Kāṇḍa (Book of War) of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa*) to seek the blessings of Sūrya when he went into battle with Rāvaṇa.

The Purāṇic story of Sūrya Dev

The seven celestial Ṛṣis (sons of Lord Brahmā), entrusted with the responsibility to propagate, lived with their wives and birthed the various clans that even today can trace their lineage back to their respective forebears. Kaśyapa and his wife Aditi, whose 33 children (the Devas) left home after differences with their stepbrothers, longed to have a loving son. Aditi became full of remorse and asked her husband for a boon. She asked him to grant her a son who would be devoid of hatred, envy, partiality, and discrimination and would hold in his heart nothing but the welfare and well-being of the world at large. Kaśyapa said that it is only Mahāviṣṇu who could grant such a boon, and she must pray to him. Aditi immersed into serious penance and soon Mahāviṣṇu appeared. Aditi asked for her boon and Mahāviṣṇu said “Look up in the Sky. What do you see?” Aditi looked up and said, “I see Sūrya Bhagavāna shining across the world amongst the clouds” And Mahāviṣṇu said “See how He touches all of creation, the thorny bushes and the delicate blossoms alike, he strives to give everyone life and glory, he is unbiased, and he is the child you seek. He is the child you shall have.”

On Sūrya’s birth, Mahāviṣṇu and all the Gods visited Kaśyapa and Aditi. Mahāviṣṇu said to Aditi, that your son will travel in a chariot across the skies crossing the 12 Rāśi or Zodiac. He shall stay in one zodiac for a month, and each month will be known by a name and will collectively be called Dvādaśa (12 Names of Sun) Āditya.

As he grew into the young handsome man, emanating a glow around him, Nārada brought forth a marriage proposition to Sūrya’s parents. Being the Universal traveler, he proposed that the daughter of Viśvakarmā, the celestial architect would be the perfect mate for their son. And hence Sūrya was married to Saṃjñā in the presence of all the Gods in a palace of pure gold made for them to reside in post the nuptials.

In time Saṃjñā and Sūrya birthed three children. Vaivasvata Manu, the lawgiver, and the twins Yama, the god of Death, and Yāmi or Yamuna. As life went on, Saṃjñā found it increasingly difficult to bear the heat that Sūrya emanated and would feel his “combusting effect”.

Moreover, Sūrya would be up early in the morning and be away to work completing his duties and providing warmth and life to the worlds. Unable to bear his heat, one day she devised a solution to her problem. She knew that Sūrya would be forlorn and may be disturbed in his duties which he was most passionate about and did with utmost diligence and persistence. So, she gave form by way flesh and body to her own shadow Chāyā. She cast into Chāyā her own personality so no one would ever know. Handing over the responsibilities of the household and children to Chāyā, Saṃjñā with her father’s (the Divine architect) help morphed herself into a mare and disappeared from Sūrya’s life.

Over time Sūrya unsuspecting of Chāyā, had three children with her, Śanaiścarāya, Śravaṇi and Tāpti. Over time Chāyā started to favor her children over those of Saṃjñā. She also started to sow the seeds of hatred in her children and soon the children grew apart. Yama was the last to be disturbed by her actions, for he had immense tolerance and patience. Being the follower of righteous Dharma, he eventually decided to stand up against the injustice being meted out to his siblings. One day it led to a showdown between him and Chāyā, where Yama stood his ground and proclaimed that the injustice would not be acceptable anymore and that he would complain to his father. In a fit of anger, Chāyā cursed Yama.

As the news reached Sūrya, he was shocked as to how a mother could curse her own child. He

accosted Chāyā, who, upon seeing his anger and hearing his thundering voice admitted the whole episode of how Saṃjñā had created her.

Sūrya upon discovering the truth, immediately left to find Saṃjñā. As he looked around the forests, he came across a divine mare and as soon as he stared into the eyes of the mare, he recognized her to be Saṃjñā, who had taken that form to protect herself from demons. He also took the form of a gallant stallion. Their reunion resulted in the birth of the Aśvinī Kumārs (Nāsatya, Dasra) and Revantha. Sūrya now urged Saṃjñā to return with him to her other children who longed for their mother, saying that he had now become aware of his unyielding attitude to duty that led to neglecting the household and their separation. Saṃjñā asked Sūrya what was then to become of their horse headed children. Sūrya said they are Devas and that Nāsatya and Dasra shall be the physicians of the Gods and be known as Aśvinī Kumāras while Revanth shall be the master of equestrian sciences. Nārada appeared at this moment and assured Saṃjñā that all of these events were necessitated to ensure the birth of Śani, and that having been achieved she should return home.

Upon return home, Saṃjñā asked Chāyā to rejoin her and give up her form and blessed all the children and embraced them as their mother and they lived happily thereafter.

Another small story is of Ṛṣi Yājñavalkya, the preceptor of King Janaka, the father of Sīta. Their dialogues are central to the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Upon completion of his studies his Guru bade him farewell but the Ṛṣi replied, “But you have not taught me the Vedic knowledge and Saṅkhyā Yoga.” His guru replied that he was not fated to learn them, as was ordained by the planetary alignment. The guru then asked Yājñavalkya to leave and find his answers elsewhere.

Sitting under the tree and contemplating on what his guru had said, he started to wonder which of the Navagrahas was averse to him learning Saṅkhyā Yoga. He started to calculate his Kuṇḍalī (horoscope) and realized that it was Sūrya, the king of the Grahas, who was ill disposed towards him. So, he decided to propitiate Sūrya and ask him to grant him a boon.

He started his penance with “Om Sūryāya Namaḥ!” and went into deep meditation losing all sense of time. Lord Sūrya appeared and hailed him. Yājñavalkya with folded hands implored Sūrya to turn his benign face towards him so he could learn. Sūrya granted him the favor and asked Mā Sarasvatī to enter Yājñavalkya’s body and bless him. It thus became clear to the world that without the blessing of Sūrya it is impossible to get good education.

Mythology and the Significations of the Sun according to Parāśara

From the mythological tales, which are a means of learning by way of storytelling, we can ponder on their lessons and connect various parts to the significations of the Sun in Jyotiṣa. He is the King of the Cosmos. He is dutiful and impartial and just, and his Guṇa is Sāttvika which manifests as his noble, righteous, and selfless nature. His relationship with Saṃjñā tells us about indications of his placement in the 7th house of the horoscope. He treats the 7th as being engaged in public and masses, serving them at the cost of personal relationships. If influenced by benefics it turns into being ever loving and caring, and if by malefics it turns to neglect of the partner. His adherence to a strict routine is symbolic of punctuality and focus. He attains Digbala in the 10th house, the nadir of the directions, of Karma. Sun rises to its peak and is brightest here, for as he has to ensure that his rays enlighten the universe each day in turn sustaining life. Sun represents subjects like physics and mathematics which are related to his

clockwork like precision. Being the King, he governs the government, kings, high-ranking officials, and anyone in a position of leadership or command. As he is the source of all life, he represents the sense of "I-ness," and self-worth, and how one projects their personality to the world - lighting it up or not. Since it is the giver of life it also is the Karaka of 1st house of vitality and immunity. At another level in Jyotiṣa Sun represents the highest form of knowledge—Atma Vidya (*knowledge of the soul*)—which allows one to see the truth without the distortion of ego or ignorance. According to texts like Uttarakālamṛta, the Sun governs intellectual clarity and sharpness. It provides the "light" needed for the intellect to function decisively.

And so, the mythology of the planets is not just a collection of stories but a powerful narrative to understand the planets nature and significations in the context of Jyotiṣa. We explore the Moon or Candra and its cosmic connections with Jyotiṣa next time.

References:

Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Notes.

Purāṇas - Matsya, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahma, Skanda and Bhagavat

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Sandeep Tyagi is a dedicated researcher and student of Jyotiṣa, with a primary focus on the mechanics of Daśā interpretation. After a distinguished 30-year career in the corporate and consulting sectors, he transitioned his professional focus to the study and spread of Vedic astrology. Throughout his journey, he has studied under the guidance of esteemed mentors, including Marc Boney and Penny Farrow, and he is currently furthering his studies under the tutelage of Akhila Kumar of The Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan. As an author, Sandeep has published several research-based articles, including Dots of Destiny, The Fallen Kings, Why Now? and Whispers from the Abyss. In addition to his writing, he is a practicing astrologer and educator, conducting courses in both Pārāśarī and Jaimini Jyotiṣa.