

The Vedic Yearly Chart – New Moon in Pisces

By Steve Stuckey

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The Vedic yearly chart is used by astrologers as a mundane chart to predict the yearly outcome of events related to the affairs of state of any particular city or country and includes such things as the disposition of heads of state, the economy, education, employment, foreign affairs, geological phenomena, and weather patterns. The chart is calculated for the exact time of the New Moon in sidereal Pisces that occurs between March 15th and April 15th (dates will vary slightly depending on the ayanamsa used).

Western or tropical astrologers use a similar mundane chart for predicting the year's events that is based on the Sun's entrance into zero degrees of Aries. This phenomenon always occurs exactly at the vernal equinox or the first day of spring on March 20th (in the Northern Hemisphere). Other charts used by tropical astrologers for mundane prediction include lunation's (new and full moons), eclipses, solar cardinal ingress charts, planetary ingress charts and times of important planetary conjunctions. These same charts may also be used by sidereal or Vedic astrologers for yearly predictive work, but the main emphasis for the year is placed upon the New Moon in Pisces chart.

The question naturally arises, why the New Moon in Pisces? Unfortunately, there does not appear to be an answer forthcoming from Jyotish classical texts on this subject. However, there is a reference in the Brahma Purana and the Chaturvarga Chintamani of Hemadri (approx. 1300 CE), wherein it is stated that Lord Brahma created the universe on the Chaitra Shukla Pratipada or the first day of the first month of the year. The month of Chaitra occurs in the March/April period when the Sun is transiting sidereal Pisces (or tropical Aries), and is regarded by many Hindus as the first month of the lunar calendar year. The Chaitra Shukla Pratipada is celebrated as one of a number of Indian New Years.

Chaitra is so named due to the Full Moon that will occur in the nakshatra of Chitra (23Vir20-6Lib40) during that month. Shukla refers to the bright half of the lunar phase or when the Moon is waxing. Pratipada is the first tithi or 12-degree span of longitude that exists from the time the Moon begins to separate from the Sun after their exact conjunction at New Moon. Therefore, the Chaitra Shukla Pratipada occurs either at the exact New Moon or as the Moon is separating from conjunction with the Sun and within the first tithi or 12-degree span from the Sun. Lord Brahma, the creator, is given rulership over this particular tithi.

There are many various New Year dates in use in India due to the necessity for a civil calendar and because of a wide diversity of cultures. For instance, the Saka New Year is based on the calendar followed by the Government of India and falls on March 21/22 (obviously coinciding with the spring equinox). The Bengali and the Tamil New Years are celebrated around mid-April. The Gujarati New Year is celebrated the day after the festival of Diwali, which occurs in the month of Kartika. Other dates used include the entrance of the Sun into sidereal Aries, sidereal Capricorn, and the winter solstice on Dec 21st. There are many more such dates celebrated in India, even some that use January 1st.

The timing of the New Year for the first New Moon of spring is not unique to India and was prevalent in many ancient cultures. The Modern Hebrew calendar for instance is based on a more ancient calendar that began the year with the month of Nissan, when the first thin crescent of the Moon became visible after conjunction with the Sun in the spring. The months of this calendar were all based on the principle of observing the first visible New Moon. Since the Moon is not visible when in close conjunction to the Sun due to combustion, the New Year was heralded when, just after sunset, the crescent Moon could be seen setting behind the Sun, having gained the minimum 12 degrees of separation necessary in order to be observed. The Babylonians also used the first New Moon of spring to begin the year.

So, there seem to be two possible explanations for the origin of the Pisces New Moon chart; one coming from scriptural reference regarding the creation of the universe and the other from an ancient tradition that began the year with the first New Moon of spring. In either case, there are some interesting things to consider about each scenario.

If the yearly chart always begins with the first New Moon in the month of Chaitra, then we should be aware that eventually, over a period of time, Chaitra will no longer be connected to the spring. Due to precessional movement of approximately 1 degree every 72 years, the equinoctial points are slipping gradually backward along the path of the ecliptic. As these points recede, the date of the Sun's entrance into sidereal Pisces will also change, by entering the sign later in the month as time goes on.

As an example, using Lahiri ayanamsa, the Sun entered sidereal Pisces on March 14, 2010. If we calculate a chart for March 14, 3010, a thousand years into the future, we will find the Sun at 15 Aquarius. The Sun will not reach Pisces until March 29, 3010 and the New Moon in Pisces will not happen until April 6th of that year. If we move ahead another thousand years, the Sun will not enter Pisces until April 12, 4010, with the New Moon occurring on April 27th. This process will repeat itself until eventually, after 25,800 years (also known as the great year), Chaitra will have passed through all the months of the year, and the Chaitra Shukla Pratipada will once again coincide with the March/April period.

Our second scenario, that of beginning the New Year with the first New Moon of spring, will also have to go through an adjustment as time moves on. The vernal equinox always occurs on or close to March 20th of the present Gregorian calendar. In the Tropical zodiac, which is non-precession corrected, this point will forever be 0 Aries. However, in a sidereal framework that allows for precession, this same point is gradually moving backward along the ecliptic.

The equinox as calculated this year on March 20th, is 5Pis59 45 using Lahiri's ayanamsa. Moving at the rate of 1 degree every 72 years, the equinox will enter the 29th degree of Aquarius around the year 2440 CE. From that point on, and for the next approximately 2,150 years, the spring equinox will occur in the sign of Aquarius.

We are currently living in the age of Pisces, as defined by the position of the equinox. By this same calculation, the age of Pisces began just after the equinox of March 20, 285 CE, when both the tropical and sidereal zodiacs coincided at 0 Aries. From that point, the two zodiacs diverged, as the sidereal zodiac moved backward into the 29th degree of Pisces.

Stating the above in another way; eventually the spring equinox will begin occurring in the sign of Aquarius, rather than Pisces. If the Vedic Yearly Chart takes its origins from the equinox, then this chart will have to reflect that change by being re-calculated as the New Moon in Aquarius.

The month of Chaitra is calculated in various ways, but generally, the month starts with either the New or the Full Moon. The Full Moon that occurs during the month should be in the nakshatra of Chitra. As previously explained, the month of Chaitra will gradually move forward through all the various seasons due to precession, and therefore it is evident that it is not permanently tied to the vernal equinox, although coinciding with the equinox at this point in time. By the year 6500 CE, Chaitra will be moving close to the Summer Solstice.

The first New Moon of spring however must always be close to the equinox as the ancients have observed and I much prefer this idea as the basis for the Vedic New Year chart. If one should accept this particular explanation by placing emphasis on the Spring, then I would suggest additionally that the Vedic Yearly chart, for countries in the Southern Hemisphere, be calculated as the New Moon in Virgo, in keeping with the advent of Spring in that area on September 23rd.

Whatever one wishes to believe regarding the origins of the Vedic New Year chart, there will not be any significant change in the way it is calculated for at least five hundred more years, and therefore it will be left up to future generations to decide its fate.

Readers should keep in mind that all of the above, although reasonable and logical, is obviously speculative with regard to the origins of the Vedic New Year chart, and warrants further investigation..