

Surya: The Sun in Vedic Astrology Dr. Gary Gomes

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By Gary Gomes

The Background of Jyotisha / Historical Theory

There is an enormous difference of opinion regarding the antiquity of Jyotish. According to some Hindu spiritual traditions, the Surya Siddhanta; a classical reference on Vedic Astronomy, dates back to 1,000,000 BCE, and is an Atlantean text. At the other end of the spectrum, in accordance with theories perpetrated by Dr. David Pingree and other Western scholars and astrologers, Jyotish formed in Indian as the result of the introduction of Greek astrology into Indian, either through trade, the invasion of Alexander, or through some sort of Persian influence. More moderate positions either date Vedic astrology back to the time of the Vedas (estimated now at 1,500 BCE) or credit it as being an outgrowth of ancient Babylonian or Chaldean systems. Although I have not seen this concept postulated in any text, Chinese astrology could be argued as an influence, because of its use of 28 Lunar Mansions. (The sky in China does not lend itself to the use of horizons as rising points, so the Chinese zodiac developed a rather different orientation than other astrological systems.). Interestingly enough, both Chinese and Indian astrology seems to be built on multiples of 12 years (roughly equivalent to cycles of Jupiter)

Some recent investigations of ancient Druid time cycles seems to indicate that they, like the Hindus and Chinese (and later the Arabs) used Lunar Mansions. (1) As a matter of fact, there is an inferred use of lunar mansions in

some Western Astrology. Roughly every 13 degrees along the Zodiac there are "sensitive points". Planets located in these positions become powerful. This measurement is not so far from the measurement of a Lunar mansion -- 13 degrees 20 minutes constituting one lunar mansion. There are other "shadows" of Vedic practices in Western Astrology (or perhaps vice versa?) -- in traditional Western astrology, house rulerships are extremely important, as they are in Vedic, and a Hindu technique called bhavat bhavam -- literally, from house to house, can give detailed information regarding areas in the lives of spouse, child, parents, workplace, by using the house which rules those things as a rising sign and reading the chart for that particular person or matter from that rising sign. In my experience with Western Astrology, this technique works well within the structure of that system.

I do not hold that Western astrology is mostly psychological and that Jyotish is mostly predictive. I have seen many fine predictions using traditional Western astrological techniques, and have discovered incredible psychological subtleties using Jyotish. They both work. My bias is that Jyotish is an older and purer system, and that it tends to produce its effects more consistently, and with less work, than Western Astrology. This last statement may strike some of you out there as bizarre, especially if you have been struggling with Jyotish for awhile. But, as one who learned and practiced Jyotish first, I can assure you...it is easy to get to the essence of the subject, provided the proper combinations are learned. It is tempting to want to know the details of a chart right away. As in approaching anything, it is better to learn the outline --- to sketch the outline (in art), or to figure out the key and the chords (in music) before you try to identify the specifics. Any of you who have played musical instruments may have some idea of what I am talking about --- it is the best analogy that I can use. Many young guitarists when I was growing up could play Led Zeppelin or Cream songs until they got to the guitar solo -- that took practice, determination, and the development of comfort with the instrument (as well as some manual dexterity). But the song structures themselves were easy. Prediction, as J.N. Bhasin titled one of his books, is an art. Merely learning a structure is not quite enough. Practice, application and, yes, inspiration are also necessary.

Around the time of Ptolemy, Western Astrology started taking a different direction, with the advent of Ptolemy and his Tetrabiblos. According to Robert Schmidt and certain other Western scholars, the traditions of Greek astrology were experimented with and modified by Ptolemy. The result was the evolution

from a system, which, as apparently practiced -- I say apparently based on his writings, but we have no way of knowing for sure -- by Vettius Valens and others, was remarkably close to Jyotish. There has even been a dasa system found in early Western astrology. To be sure, it is nowhere as sophisticated as the Hindu system, but its presence is tantalizing and provocative. Did one global astrological system once exist?

It is difficult to tell. From what little we know of earlier cultures, Jyotish has certain similarities to Chinese Astrology, and certain similarities to what little is known of ancient Druidic astrology, and there are some interesting similarities in certain Mayan astrological traditions. We still don't really have a good handle on early oral cultures. We may also not have a really good handle on early written cultures -- paper, papyrus and palm leaves, the three predominant writing media, are quite perishable, and we may never know what knowledge was destroyed as a result of fires, invasions, or other mishaps through time, and there are a lot of bizarre anomalies in terms of what some oral societies seem to know -- look at the bizarre set of astronomical facts that the Dogon tribe of Mali seem to possess without any astronomical instruments.

One of the incontrovertible facts of Hindu / Vedic Astrology is that it is virtually the only astrological system in the world today with officially sanctioned links with its orthodox religious tradition, so much so that the Sankaracharya of Madras (one of the religious leaders of Southern India) regularly contributes to the Madras-based astrological magazine Express Star Teller and the international religious magazine Hinduism Today regularly features articles on Jyotisha. Jyotisha also informs several of the other structural systems used in India and in Hindu centers, namely Ayur Veda (the doshas and health afflictions can be judged from a Vedic chart) and Vaastu (also called Stapathya Veda) are used in tandem with Jyotish. Although similar systems are used in Buddhism, there was an anti astrological period in Buddhism which makes it less of a fully realized system than the system practiced in India.

First of all, Vedic astrology (also known as Jyotish or Hindu astrology), is a compendium of techniques and approaches to astrology, which are used extensively on the Indian subcontinent and which influence the various forms of divination practiced in many parts of Southeast Asia, including Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia. The signs, houses and classical planets used in Western astrology are used in Jyotish, and there are many overlaps in the meanings of

these symbols in both systems, but the Vedic system uses a sidereal zodiac which places all the planets and signs roughly 23 degrees earlier than their positions in the Western chart. The other major significant differences are the extensive use of harmonic charts (the Vedic concept of harmonic charts inspired Western astrologer John Addey in his work); the use of Nakshatras (Lunar mansions) which surround the Zodiac and are used extensively in the predictive work of Vedic astrology; and the ability to use remedial measures to rectify certain chart problems.

Much is made of the "fatalistic" bias of Vedic astrology and the system's complexity. The former point has been emphasized by certain Vedic / Hindu astrologers, and logically, how else could predictions be made if the pattern were not there at birth? However, recognizing a pattern does give one an option and a path to other things. The use of remedial measures such as gemstones, yagnas (rituals), mantras (prayers) can be used to correct problems in the chart, but certain behavioral patterns can also be overcome through will power, avoidance, or simple understanding. Also, although the Vedic system(s) can be incredibly complex (and it is often taught this way), there are many techniques which are quite simple and can be stunningly accurate.

Differences between the Western and Vedic Systems of Astrology

Vedic astrology's bias is extremely predictive. I have given and received readings that have been, through the grace of God, stunningly accurate. And I firmly believe that this predictive ability is not particularly difficult to acquire...a significant part of the accuracy of the Vedic system lies in the use of a different Zodiac than that used in the West. The Western zodiac primarily follows the seasons as a reference point, assuming that the earth's axis is stable and does not shift. But the earth's axis does shift in terms of its relationship to the skies. This shift is caused by a slight wobble in the earth's axis. The entire perspective of the heavens changes gradually over a twenty-six thousand year period; Western astrology pays homage to this reality through its adherence to the tradition of world ages--that is, the age of Pisces, the age of Aquarius, and so forth. The Hindu system however, uses the sidereal zodiac as its standard reference point.

Perhaps significantly, the reckoning of when the two traditions started separating in their use of zodiacs probably occurred somewhere between 200 and 300 years after the birth of Christ. This is roughly the time that Ptolemy was

making his influence felt in Western astrology, and some scholars claim evidence that Ptolemy felt that the tropical zodiac was better for individual charts, but the Greeks, with several notable exceptions (Archimedes comes to mind) were rather anti-experimental and extremely theoretical in approach... this bias was inherited by later Western astrology even though within about 1000 years after Ptolemy's death, the precession had already shifted the difference between the two Zodiacs by more than ten degrees. As of the twenty-first century, there is now nearly twenty-five degree difference between the sidereal and tropical zodiacs--a significant difference, with significant interpretational implications. (It should be mentioned that, because of Cyril Fagan and Donald Bradley's pioneering work in the 1950's, a small Western-based sidereal tradition exists, but Hindu/Vedic astrology (also known as Jyotisha) has many other factors that differentiate it from the Western system.

The Hindu system also makes extensive use of a second zodiac that surrounds the constellational twelve sign zodiac used in the West. This zodiac contains the twenty-seven nakshatras, or lunar mansions. The lunar mansions assume incredible importance in the Vedic system because they provide a modifying influence on the planets in a chart, and they also provide a starting point for the destiny of the individual. The Moon in a particular placement in a nakshatra day birth is extremely important to the person's future. The Nakshatras or lunar mansions are ruled by planets -- the Hindu system uses the seven classical planets and the North and South Lunar nodes, which are also referred to as Rahu and Ketu. The lunar mansions are also mentioned in Western astrology several hundred years ago and are also used in Arabic and Chinese astrology, but have limited predictive utility.

In the Vedic system, the Nakshatras (lunar mansions) are an integral part of the system, predicating the direction that the individual's mind (represented by the Moon) will take, and as we think we act.

The Hindu system also uses the nakshatra placements to analyse personality characteristics, but personality can also be identified through use of the planet / house system in Vedic astrology, and gives an excellent perspective on how an individual responds to his or her environment.

The Indian system even has a special condition in the astrology chart - Mangalika - which shows marriage difficulties. In order to have a good marriage, individuals with Mangalika should marry someone who has a similar condition in

their chart. A difficulty with Mangalika is that neither party will usually be interested in linking with somebody with a similar condition. There has been a Mangalika condition present in the charts of most individuals with relationship problems for whom I have done readings.

Nodes, Aspects, remedial Measures

Other factors which distinguish the Hindu/Vedic Astrology from the Western tropical system is the lack of emphasis on the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune and Pluto) and in the attention paid to the North and South Lunar Nodes (called Rahu and Ketu), how it considers aspects and its elaborate system of planetary remedial measures dating back to its ancient origins.

The North and South Lunar Nodes are the points in space that are tracked to predict solar and lunar eclipses. These nodes -- Rahu and Ketu - are dominant features in the Hindu Astrological system. They are treated as planets and are assigned rulership over certain periods of our lives. In point of fact the Nodes have some traits in common with Uranus (the North Node); Neptune (the North and

South Lunar Nodes) and Pluto (the South Node). These "shadowy planets" can cause

both overwhelming problems and extreme good fortune during our lifetime. The placement of Rahu can give outstanding material gain and public recognition, but little piece of mind (Mick Jagger and many rock stars start their rise to fame and power during Rahu periods.). The placement of the South Lunar Node (Ketu) can bestow great spirirual success and sudden fame and recognition, but can also cause difficulties with society and personal health.

Hindu astrology also takes a different approach to aspects than Western astrology does. Aspects in Western astrology are usually considered according to the nature or characteristic of the aspect. For example, trines (planets that are 120 degrees from each other (or five signs apart) create luck and oportunties. Those planets which are ninety degrees apart create conflict and difficulties, but also push the person forward in life. These are examples of the Western aspect principles.

In Hindu/Vedic astrology, every planet (there are differences of opinion as to whether the nodes cast aspects) influence the entire house seven signs away from itself. So, the Sun in Aries will always influence the sign Libra in

this system. In addition, Jupiter casts aspects on spaces that are 5, 7 and 9 houses away (similar to trine aspects); Mars casts aspects 4, 7, and 8 signs away (similar to squares); and Saturn casts aspects on houses 3, 7 and 10 signs away, another type of square aspect. Some schools also hold that Venus casts aspects on the 6th, 7th, and 8th houses away from itself. Since Jupiter is regarded as being a benevolent benefic, usually giving good results, this treatment is consistent with the way it acts in a natal chart. Saturn and Mars, being the two great malefic planets in the Vedic system reflect difficulties even in their looks! For example, Saturn's aspect on the second house will cause some problems in education, affects family fortune adversely, and can cause speech problems like stuttering or hesitation. Jupiter's aspect will, however, cause expansion, increased luck and benefits to the house it aspects. It should also be mentioned that this system of astrology is not static--as the individual goes through certain periods of life, transits of the planets through various houses and sign and over various planets will improve or worsen the effects of the planetary period in which the individual finds him or herself.

In the extensive astrological literature of the Hindus, a significant amount of attention is paid to remedial measures which can ease difficult properties in a person's chart. For example, certain gem stones (which must be administered carefully), mantras and rituals are said to alleviate the effect of particular difficult planetary configurations. I have experimented with these remedial measures and have obtained very good results with them. In many cases, what could have been a serious problem from the chart was averted or delayed. I once noticed what should have been a major car accident in my chart. All that happened was a broken hose. The car was stopped, but I was not injured. So, from my experience, this system certainly works.

There are certain other elements of Jyotish, such as the use of sixteen subsidiary charts to analyse things like career, education and so forth, which can be analyzed from these charts.

Jyotisha or Hindu/Vedic Astrology shows a great deal of promise to become the premier astrological system in the world. It is already the official astrology of the world's third largest religion. The literature available on Jyotish is enormous and a great deal of it still needs to be translated into English. In addition, it needs to be interpreted so that it can be translated to a twenty-first century reality. Fortunately this system is becoming more and more accessible to the public and is also being made more affordable because of

the efforts of some dedicated souls. There are several exceptionally good software programs available at this time, and many Westerners, associated primarily with the American Council of Vedic Astrology and the British Association of Vedic Astrology, are teaching Vedic astrology and interpreting charts. This attention to Jyotish has, I believe, encouraged Westerners to become more interested in the work of organizations like Project Hindsight here in the United States that are systematically examining the available old historical literature on astrology in the Western tradition. Certain similarities have been uncovered between early Greek, Roman, Arabic and Mediaeval systems of astrology and Jyotisha. It is an extremely interesting and exciting time to be involved with astrology, and the researches these efforts bring forth will certainly be utilized extensively this century. Jyotish, I am sure, will be a centerpiece in this astrological renaissance.

Surya: The Sun in Vedic Astrology

"Om Bhur Bhuva Swaha! Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat."

This the famous Gayatri mantra, kept secret in India for hundreds of years as a special mantra used by the priestly caste. The Gayatri translates as a hymn of praise to the deity Savitri,[1] who is one of the many manifestations of Surya, the Sun God. As a female deity, Savitri can be interpreted as the shakti or divine feminine energy of the Sun, its active principle. It is appropriate that any discussion of the Sun in Vedic astrology start with a mantra of praise to the life-giver of the universe.

The biggest shock that any Westerner encounters when first approaching Vedic astrology is that, about 70% of the time, the familiar Sun sign placement will be changed to another sign. The free-spirited Sun in Aquarius becomes the stodgy Sun in Capricorn; the forceful Sun in Leo becomes the motherly Sun in Cancer; the dynamic Sun in Aries becomes the scattered, mystical Sun in Pisces. It is as if the person's very identity becomes changed by the use of the Vedic adjustment, which takes into account the precession of the equinoxes.[2] However, the shock and (sometimes) denial of this transformation is misplaced, because the evaluation of the Sun is different than in Western astrology.

Vedic astrology's interpretation of the Sun in its role as king of the solar system and ruler of the zodiac is a bit similar to that of the West, but

there is also a more difficult component to the Sun. In India it's often stated that the Sun "burns a hole in the chart." Not having experienced the unbearably hot Indian springs and summers, it is difficult for Westerners to understand this concept. However, if one thinks of the hottest day of the year, and reflects that this heat is one infinitesimally small component of the Sun's power, we can understand the intensity and (sometimes) damage that the Sun's placement in a chart brings. In Vedic astrology the Sun doesn't represent the personality, but the self or ego, the inner nature of the individual. It represents one's essence, not the outer shell. The Sun also represents the direction in life which will give the person confidence, or create a self-defeating personality. It also represents the person's father.

Vedic (or Hindu) astrology's major focus is predictive, so the main component in chart analysis is uncovering what may happen to the individual. The Sun represents the soul of the individual, but it also functions as the penultimate authority figure. It is interesting to note that there are familial relations among the planets in Vedic astrology, and that the Sun functions as the father of Saturn through his relationship with a shadow (Chhaya) who is the handmaiden of the Sun's wife. (Saturn represents limitation, grief or sorrow, as is befitting its shadowy origin.) The Sun also stands for the government and for religious authority (temples). A partial listing of other items the Sun rules in Vedic astrology follows:

Self-esteem, physical appearance, risk taking, ego development, status, authority, the government (the king or ruler), father, courage, confidence, illumination, achievement, determination, domination, dignity, elevation, the heart and spine, the head, right eye, pitta nature (in Ayurveda, the Indian holistic health system, there are three humors or essential natures, which show the extent of fire, air, water or earth in our being; pitta is the fiery humor). The Sun does best placed in the 10th house.

Its gemstone is ruby or red garnet; its metal gold. The Sun is exalted in Aries (in Sanskrit: Mesha) and fallen in Libra (also known as Thula). It has Sunday (naturally enough) as its day.[3]

The Sun, as the natural atmakaraka (soul indicator) in Vedic astrology, can give the individual great pride and authority, when well placed by sign and house. It can give a great or powerful father, or give the individual "royal"

stature, or benefits from rulers. The Sun, of course, when too strong can give too great an ego, or too high a level of pride. This often results in a great fall, particularly if other planets in the chart (especially the Moon) are weak by sign and house placement. When too weak, the Sun can give low energy and a timid personality, but can also, on the positive side, give great humility, essential for success in spiritual pursuits. Such a weak Sun, however, is often inauspicious for the person's father. (This is very true of day births, but less true of evening births, in which Venus (!) represents the father).

Sun Combinations

The influence of other planets on the Sun will ameliorate or amplify certain traits in a chart. For example, the Sun and Jupiter in the same sign show an individual who is very religious, or who is very authoritarian about religious pursuits. Jupiter also gives good luck (Indians believe Jupiter represents the grace of God), and this placement usually generates a very righteous person. But this combination can also indicate somebody who can convince anyone of the correctness of his or her position, and who gets away with things easily, thereby creating someone who may be extremely unethical or who takes shortcuts in business dealings.

Contrariwise, a Sun/Saturn aspect or conjunction, which is difficult on the individual's ego (Saturn depresses the Sun's natural fire and ebullience), usually creates a high degree of anxiety and lack of self-confidence, but usually also creates a great deal of honesty and humility, because the Sun continually illuminates their "grief", their responsibilities, underscoring Saturn's role in making sure that we all carry our share of the burden, and then some.

The Sun conjunct Mercury usually shows high intelligence, but usually in the service of the ego, while the Sun conjunct Mars shows very high energy, a very hot tempered individual, good at arguments and battles, with strong will power but little patience. The Sun in the same sign with Venus gives a great deal of beauty to the individual, and perhaps ability in the arts and mathematics, which Venus also rules in this system of astrology.

All of these combinations show the way the Sun amplifies planetary energy. But there is also a phenomenon in Vedic astrology called combustion, in which planets close to the Sun are "damaged" by the intense rays of the Sun. How is

this damage reflected? As Edith Hathaway pointed out in The Mountain Astrologer several months back, the obvious damage to the planet is not readily apparent. This is particularly true when we look at a "combusted" Mercury or Venus. These planets are close to the Sun so often (Mercury always being within 28° of the Sun and Venus always within 45°), that we can usually see little discernible difference between a "combust" and a "non-combust" planet. Mercury close to the Sun certainly does not affect intelligence (unless they are within one degree of each other). Acombusted Venus has been said to affect the happiness of the individual in terms of their romantic involvements, but there are many other combinations which can produce romantic unhappiness so such a pronouncement is difficult to measure objectively.

There is another area which must be considered, however. Vedic astrology pays a great degree of attention to rulership of houses. For example, Venus is the natural lord of Libra and Taurus. If Venus is within close range of the Sun, then these signs will suffer, and the houses which these signs represent will be damaged accordingly. If Libra or Taurus is the 10th house, career suffers badly, because the lord of the house "must" first serve the lord of the solar system. The house the Sun rules, however, will flourish. In our example, a Taurus 10th house has a Leo rising sign, so Venus would serve the ruler of the Ascendant, giving great attractiveness and grace to such an individual. If Libra were our 10th house, then Venus would be serving the ruler of the unfortunate 8th house. This would give high spiritual aspirations and abilities, but little career success in life.

Solar Cycles

The Sun obtains maturity in the individual's 22nd year. The concept of planetary maturity is important in Vedic astrology because it demonstrates when the effects of the heavenly bodies will most aggressively manifest. It is another element to consider when assessing the patterns of the person's life. These manifestations will then become part of the individual's make up, personality and life pattern for the remainder of his/her years, finally ceasing to unfold at the age of 48, when Ketu, the south lunar Node reveals itself. The Sun manifests right at the time that young men and women in our society have traditionally been deemed to enter adulthood. It is the time when they start to shoulder the responsibilities of career, of making their own lives for themselves, of becoming their own fathers, as it were. I live in a section of

the Northeast which has a high unemployment rate and a disproportionate share of

poverty and I have seen many charts with weak Suns, so we have maturity and self-support delayed, absent fathers (through divorce, abandonment, illness, or death) and a consequent damage on the area of life which Leo governs in the person's chart. Since Leo represents children (or the entire patriarchal lineage of the family), an afflicted Sun also damages the children of the individual.

This does not mean that every person with a weak Sun has a lack of male parental contact, or a bad male role model. A strong 9th house will usually offset this aspect of the chart. But I have noticed that these individuals will tend to break away from the father's authority, then reconnect with the male side of the family when the lord of the 9th or 10th house "achieves maturity" if that planet is strong. The initial qualities of responsibility may be too much to assume at age 22, or the individual's father may not be a good or trustworthy role model, but after the individual matures, peace may be made with the male parent at a later time.

Vedic astrology, especially in the Vimshottri (120 year) dasa system used by the vast majority of astrologers, ascribes especially strong planetary influences on the individual during certain periods. The dasa system is said to be the best predictive instrument, better (and more complete) than transits, progressions (yes, these exist in Vedic astrology) or the planetary maturity measures I discussed earlier. The dasa system ascribes a certain number of years to each planet. For example, Jupiter dasa lasts for 16 years; Saturn for 19 years, Mercury for 17 years, Ketu for seven years, Venus for 20 years and the Sun for six years. The Sun dasa is the shortest in the Vimshottri system, which is just as well because, if the Sun is weak and afflicted, it is the worst period one is said to encounter. It produces intense difficulties, wanderings from place to place, and time spent "in the desert." And this is not merely allegorical. I have examined dozens of charts in which a weak Sun produces intensely malefic results.[4] Why is this so?

The Sun, the primary giver of life, is considered a krura or cruel entity. The heat of the Sun in India (reaching 110 Fahrenheit or higher in Southern India in the month of April, coincidentally the same period of time in which the Sun is exalted in Vedic astrology) is unbearable in its intensity. This period is usually between April 15 and May 15, the time when our Sun (government) is most difficult to bear because of tax season. Everyone must obey the Sun during

this time. Life, it must be realized, is often difficult, but we need to obey the rules of the universe in order to preserve our bodies and minds. Every planet contributes something to the preservation and continuance of life from the Vedic perspective, but the ultimate giver of life is the Sun. Those for whom the Sun is weak often have unfortunate or "defeated" fathers. They often do not understand the need for authority. They often have little luck with the government or other authority figures, and usually lack confidence. Is it any wonder that these individuals have so much difficulty with the Sun dasa, when the heat from the Sun is felt so intensely? Such people will often find themselves at extreme odds with established society, moving from job to job, from place to place with little relief or respite.[5] (Remedial measures for a weak Sun are mentioned in the last section of this article.)

Those with a strong Sun will find that they must assume positions of high authority, perhaps working for the "king" (in our case, some administrative post or other position of authority), but these types of position require a great deal of personal responsibility and sacrifice.

The Solar Incarnation

The Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, [6] considered by many Hindu astrologers to be the most comprehensive classical work on Vedic astrology, contains a short passage on the incarnations of the Hindu God Vishnu as they relate to the planets. It is Rama, the second most popular incarnation of Vishnu (after Krishna) who manifested through the Sun. There is even a chart which has been constructed for Lord Rama as a teaching and religious tool in India.[7] As you would imagine, God has an exceptional chart. All of the planets are in their own sign, or exalted, save Mercury.

But Rama's life is full of problems, as described in the enormous epic poem, the Ramayana. First, he is cheated out of his kingdom because of a foolish promise made by his father to his stepmother. He is exiled from his kingdom with his wife, and forced to live in the forest. Then Ravana, king of the demons, kidnaps Rama's bride Sita. After a series of tremendous battles, Rama finally succeeds in rescuing Sita and killing the nearly invincible demon king.

Rama, as a solar incarnation, is all duty and honor. He must do the right thing. He honors the foolish vow made by his father, although he and his family suffer exile. He must defeat the evil king Ravana to rescue his wife and the

population Ravana has been terrorizing. Even after he has been restored to his throne, he must destroy his own happiness, by exiling his wife because his people falsely believe she is unworthy to be queen. All of these episodes are allegories for the way the Sun functions in a chart. Exile, battles, wanderings from place to place, ethical issues regarding the ruler and the right to govern, public service even at the cost of personal happiness are all symbols of the Sun's activities. The Sun destroys those demons who thrive on darkness by casting light on them, and Rama's bow is said to belong to the Sun God Surya. The Sun has no choice; it must throw light on the matters of the house in which it resides, and in which sign of the zodiac and which lunar mansion (nakshatra) it finds itself. A strong Sun in the 10th house will give a strong career, in the 1st house, a strong personality. There will be an intensity in the matters which this house rules which will not be felt in any other house.

For illustration, compare Krishna's life to Rama's. Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu through the Moon according the Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, and a bringer of delight and popularity. Certainly, Krishna's life is also filled with battles and confrontations, but it all seems so easy to Krishna. His life is filled with fun as well. Since the Moon is filled with soma (the nectar of delight), it makes sense that Krishna would be attractive, bringing delight to all he encountered. Rama, on the other hand, suffers isolation, banishment, separation from his love, and extremely formidable enemies. Other myths explain the effects of other planets.

This mythic information can be used in interpreting events for individuals, so that their life pattern will be revealed. The Sun is almost always unaware of its intensity. It is the indicator of the inner self, the part of ourselves of which we are most often unaware. It is also a primary spiritual indicator, because it emits self-generated light. All the other heavenly bodies reflect this light; they do not create it.

The following charts are prime examples of well disposed and weak Suns and how these affect all areas of a person's life. Looking at the chart of Bob Dylan and George Harrison, we see examples of two individuals who have had incredible success and popularity through music, but their personal presentations differ dramatically. Dylan's chart shows he could never be less than staggeringly popular, yet Harrison (dubbed the "quiet Beatle" when the group first gained popularity) has had extended periods of retirement from the public eye since the Beatles disbanded.

Dylan's chart shows a conjunction of the Sun, Jupiter and Venus in the 7th house in Taurus. The 7th house in Vedic astrology is considered one of the houses of career, and the Sun rules Dylan's 10th house, the primary house of career. The fact that the Sun in the 7th accentuates a high public profile, and that he is also "married" to his career (the ruler of the 10th house in the 7th) is determined by this placement. The close conjunction of the Sun and Jupiter gives him great popular support and the ability to break existing rules. His image as a rebel and his image as "the voice of his generation" is underscored by this combination. The placement of Venus (in its own sign) close to the Sun and Jupiter strengthens Dylan's ability to charm people and influence individuals and gives him a unique ability as someone who teaches through his music. The Sun is in a sign which connects with wealth, and in the Navamsa chart, the most important divisional chart for analysis of a birth chart, Dylan's Sun is exalted in Aries in the 2nd house of wealth and speech, giving him eloquence and great wealth. It is interesting to note that Dylan gained enormous popularity in the early to middle 60s. This coincided with the start of his Rahu dasa (Rahu major periods often generate fame) but also at the time of his Sun's planetary maturity in 1963. The Sun, as ruler of his 10th house, brought his career life into focus in his early 20s. The Sun is also the natural atmakaraka (or soul indicator) planet; he found his mission in life at this time.

George Harrison's Sun is much more eccentric and unpredictable. While he was a member of one of the most popular musical groups in history, his Libra Ascendant chart treats the Sun like an enemy planet. This combined with the placement of Ketu (the South Lunar Node) next to the Sun in his 5th house (Aquarius) is good for him financially and gives him "good" friends (from his days with the Beatles to his partnership with the late Roy Orbison, Tom Petty, and Bob Dylan, among others), but also gives a variety of recognition problems. Harrison was a talented but underrated musician. He was among the first to experiment with what is now called "world music" through his work in Indian music. He pioneered the use of electronic music and synthesizers. The Moog synthesizer used 0 throughout Abbey Road is played by Harrison). His interest in Transcendental Meditation helped popularize a wide ranging spiritual movement. (The Sun in conjunction with Ketu makes spiritual interests overwhelm worldly concerns.) In addition, the Sun (meaning good name or reputation) can be easily tainted by bad judgment, such as the law suit which Harrison lost regarding the song, "My Sweet Lord" (because of its similarity to the Chiffons' "He's So Fine." The Sun is also in an enemy sign in both the natal chart (Aquarius) and

in the Navamsa chart (Capricorn). Both signs are ruled by the Sun's bitter enemy Saturn (see above), minimizing his long term popularity (or even his interest in self-promotion). Harrison is still a serious spiritual seeker. He engages in a regular spiritual practice (Kriya Yoga through the Self Realization Fellowship), unlike most rock stars from the 60s who only temporarily engaged in such practices.

Billy Graham's chart show a weak, debilitated Sun in the 8th house in the sign of Libra. Of interest is the fact that the debilitated Sun, particularly when located in the 8th, can give a very humble nature (like Harrison's Sun-Ketu conjunction, but Ketu favors contact with "foreigners" and mystical practices) The Sun in Libra can give rather narrow obsessive nature, all else besides service to God (and my personal viewpoint of God) becomes irrelevant. I also find it interesting that Graham subscribes to a rather "occult" form of evangelism. He does tend to favor apocalyptic prophecy and angelic intervention. This is also manifestation of the 8th house Sun in his chart. The Sun rules his 6th house (house of work), so "salvation" becomes his daily work. Also, his Navamsa Sun is extremely strong. If it were not, there would be no way he could have achieved the fame that he did.

One final illustration of a Sun is from an individual who is a current client of mine whose identity will remain secret for confidentiality reasons. This individual has the Sun in the 7th house, debilitated in the sign Libra. The father of this individual was absent from a very early age, and was alcoholic. The individual has just left a Sun Dasa, and went through almost all of the classic negative significations of a weak Sun period. The Sun being in the 7th house of relationships, the individual went through several very difficult relationships. In addition, this individual changed residence four or five times in the course of six years. Finally, there were several job changes during this period, as well as delays and obstruction in attending and completing school,. Luckily, this person had other factors in the chart which supported and helped during this period.

In Jyotish, these solar placements do not necessarily produce the same results regardless of other chart factors. There must be support (or lack thereof) from other factors in the chart to manifest the results of the Suns shown in these charts. There are many remedial measures in Hindu Astrology which can partially offset the effects of a difficult Sun. These include the wearing of Ruby or Garnet, the recitation of certain mantras (the Gayatri cited at the

start of this article among these), the wearing of certain colors (reds, in particular) the practice of the Surya Namaskar series of Yoga postures, meditating on the sun within,. and the devout worship of Hindu and non-Hindu solar representations of divinity. Shiva, and Rama are two popular solar deities in India. Kriya Yoga is one of the most solar yoga practices, but many other yoga and spiritual practices qualify as well. Also, depending on your rising sign, a weak Sun may also be a blessing, minimizing losses, weaknesses and illnesses.

The planets in Vedic Astrology have personalities. They have lives, loves, happiness and disappointments. One of the unique features of Hinduism (properly called Sanatana Dharma, or the eternal law) and Jyotish, is that the religious tradition has maintained its link with astrology. You will often find anthropomorphic forms representing the planets in Hindu Temples, and the priests of the Temple are trained in the proper rituals for their worship. There was even a period in medieval Indian history in which the Sun and the planets inspired a sect devoted to them. In addition, it is said that by worshipping at certain temples in India (notably the Surya Temple at Pushkar) one can improve his/her astrological practice. Jyotish is the "Science of Light". The source of light in our cosmos is the Sun, the life giver. The Sun also rules the inner light of spirituality, the source of spiritual and (according to Hindu and Yogic theory) eternal life. Many times the difficult periods in Hindu Astrology cause us to turn inward, giving us inner strength, and ultimately, true happiness.

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Notes

[1] There are several translations of the Gayatri. One translation of the Gayatri, which underscores its spiritual meaning, follows: " Om, the infinite Beyond Conception, the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body; we meditate upon that light of wisdom which is the Supreme Wealth of the Gods. May it grant us increase in our meditations." from Kali Puja by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Devi Mandir Publications, Napa, California, 1996. « Text

[2] Richard Houck discussed this in an excellent article in the June 1995 issue of The Mountain Astrologer. « Text

[3] These significations are taken from a variety of sources, including classical Vedic texts and the work of Vedic astrologers such as Dr. Dennis Harness and Dr. K.S. Charak. « Text

[4] A recent article in the Indian publication The Astrological Magazine corroborates my findings. See B. V. Raman, Editor, The Astrological Magazine, March 1997, Bangalore, India. « Text

[5] Braha, James, Ancient Hindu Astrology for the Modern Western Astrologer, Hermetician Press, Hollywood, Florida, 1986. « Text

[6] Parasara Muni, Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, translated by R. Santhanam and G. S. Kapoor, Ranjan Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989. « Text

[7] Frawley, Dr. David, Astrology of the Seers, Passage Press Morson Publishing, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1990. « Text

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9. For introductory information on Hindu myths, I would recommend Indian Mythology, by Jan Knappert, Aquarius Publishing, New York, NY 1991. This gives an excellent overview of Indian mythology in clear, easily understood terms.

10. Translated by Burgess and Whitney, Surya Siddhanta, Wizard Press, San Diego, California, 1978.

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