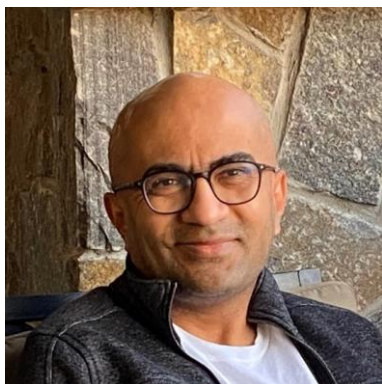
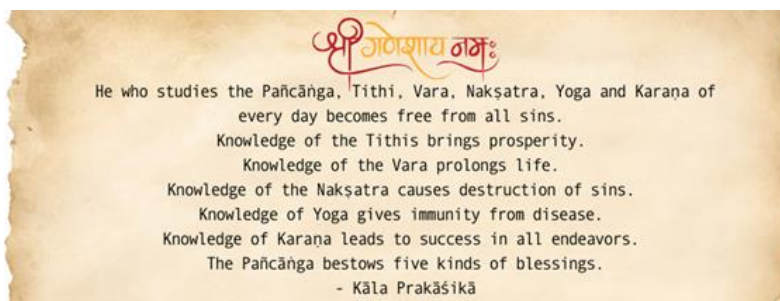


Practical Pañcāṅga – Introduction, Part 1



By Pratik Mehta



The above quote from the classic *Jyotiṣa* text on *Muhurta*, *Kāla Prakāśikā*, beautifully encapsulates the significance of *Pañcāṅga*. It has been an integral part of the Hindu religion (*Sanātana Dharma*) over the centuries and even today, the *Pañcāṅga* is a quintessential part of most Indian households. It significantly influences the day-to-day lifestyle of the Indian denizen, more so by choice than by compulsion.

Etymologically, *Pañcāṅga* simply means “Five Limbs” (*Pañca Aṅga*), the five limbs of time, to be more specific. Let’s take a quick detour to examine the significance of the number five (*Pañca*) in Vedic lore. Just stay with me and you’ll see why this holds the key to understanding the *Pañcāṅga*. In Vedic philosophy you’ll find the:

- *Pañcamahābhūtas* (Five elements) – Fire, Earth, Air, Water and Ether.
- *Pañcakośa* (Five sheaths) – The five layers that make up the human body and aura. Starting from the outermost to the innermost they are *Annamayakośa* (physical layer fueled by food), *Prāṇamayakośa* (energy layer), *Manomayakośa* (mental layer), *Vijñānamayakośa* (layer of inner wisdom) and finally *Ānandamayakośa* (layer of inner bliss).
- *Pañcājñānendriya* (Five senses of knowledge) – Sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. These each enable us to receive inputs and knowledge from the world outside of us.

- *Pañckarmendriya* (Five senses of action) – Mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitalia. These enable us to perform our duties and make our contributions to the world outside of us.

Akin to other ancient cultures (Greek, Chinese, etc) the Vedic seers believed the *Pañcamahābhūtas* (the Elements) to be responsible for the origin of life form as we know it today. The sheaths, the senses, and everything else that we perceive, and experience is believed to be nothing but a variation of the elements, *Pañcāṅga* being no exception.

The five limbs of *Pañcāṅga*, namely, *Vara*, *Tithi*, *Karaṇa*, *Nakṣatra* and *Yoga* are connected to one of the five elements as shown in the table below. *Pañcāṅga*, therefore, is a quintessential way of timing our actions so that we can make the most of the never-ending flow of energy emanating from the *Pañcamahābhūtas* (elements) to nourish the *Pañcākośa* (sheaths). *Pañcāṅga*, therefore, is the cornerstone of *muhurta* (elective astrology).

Taken a step further, a native's birth time and chart can in a way be considered as a *muhurta* and *muhurta* chart, for they represent a specific point in time that was most opportune for the soul to manifest into a physical form, to carry on with the next iteration of its evolution through time.

In other words, using *Pañcāṅga*, we can get a sense of the elements at play with regards to a native's constitution and life events. Traditionally, *Pañcāṅga* was the first thing that *Jyotiṣis* would look at when analyzing a natal chart. However, somewhere in the evolution of *Jyotiṣa*, the birth chart, *Rāśīs*, planets, divisional charts, etc, seem to have overshadowed the use of *Pañcāṅga*. The only *Pañcāṅga* element that still enjoys some level of notability is that of the *Nakṣatras*. That's unfortunate, because, as you can see from the quote above and the table below, the other four *Pañcāṅga* play a pivotal role in a native's lifetime.

The table below summarizes some of the key characteristics of each of the elements of the *Pañcāṅga*:

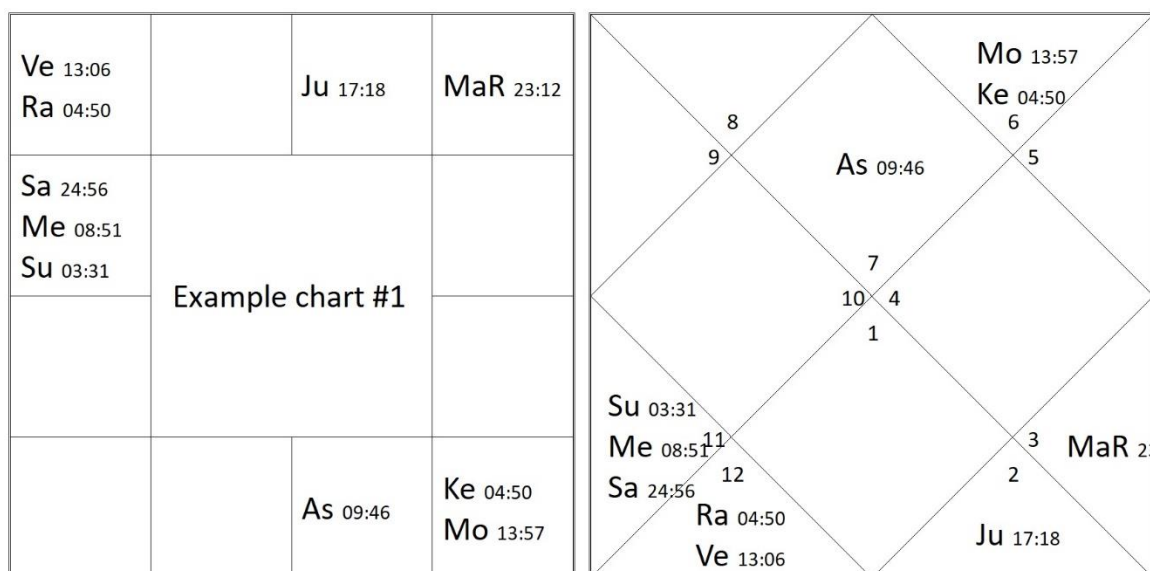
<i>Pañcāṅga</i>	<i>Deva</i>	<i>Tattva</i>	Indicator of
<i>Vara</i>	<i>Surya</i>	Fire	Longevity, vitality
<i>Tithi</i>	<i>Devi</i>	Water	Happiness, emotions, relationships
<i>Karana</i>	<i>Ganeśa</i>	Earth	Material success
<i>Nakshatra</i>	<i>Śhiv</i>	Air	Attitude, behavior, experiences
<i>Yoga</i>	<i>Vishnu</i>	Ether	Immunity, health, resilience / binding force

Let's briefly examine each of the *Pañcāṅga* elements and why they are so significant.

1. *Vara*: Solar day

This is simply the weekday when the native was born. The critical thing to keep in mind, though, is that in *Jyotiṣa* the days begin and end with sunrise. Days do not begin and end at midnight as far as *Jyotiṣa* is concerned. So, for someone born at 12.10 am on a Sunday, the *Vara* would still be Saturday.

The *Avasthā* (planetary condition) of the *Vara* lord in the natal chart is indicative of the native's overall vitality and, to an extent, longevity. Consider the chart below with an assumption that this person was born on a Saturday. The *Vara* Lord would therefore be Saturn. Notwithstanding other factors, the fact that the *Vara* lord is in its own sign in the favorable 5th house would be a positive indication for the native's vitality and longevity, even though it is not associated with the 1st house / Lord or 8th house / Lord, both of which we would typically evaluate when trying to determine overall vitality and longevity.



2. *Tithi*: Lunar day

The *Tithis* help keep track of the synodic month, ie, the Moon's revolution around the earth as measured from one new moon to the next. Therefore, there are in all a total of 30 *Tithis* divided into two groups.

The first group tracks the waxing moon and is collectively referred to as the *Śhukla Pakṣa Tithis*. The second group tracks the waning moon and is collectively referred to as the *Kriṣṇa Pakṣa Tithis*.

Fourteen *Tithi* names repeat within each group and are differentiated by prefixing the *Tithi* group to the *Tithi* name. For example, the first *Tithi* after the New Moon is called *Śhukla Pratipad* whereas the first *Tithi* after the Full Moon is called *Kriṣṇa Pratipad*. The two exceptions are *Purnimā* (full Moon) and *Amāvasyā* (new Moon), being the 15th *Tithi* of the *Śhukla* and *Kriṣṇa Pakṣa*, respectively.

Shown below is the listing of the 15 *Tithi* names. We will delve into the nature and significance of each *Tithi* in future instalments of this *Pañcāṅga* series.

<i>Tithi No.</i>	<i>Tithi name</i>	<i>Saṃskṛita name</i>
1	<i>pratipadā</i>	प्रतिपदा
2	<i>dvitīyā</i>	द्वितीया
3	<i>tritīyā</i>	त्रितीया
4	<i>caturthī</i>	चतुर्थी
5	<i>pañcamī</i>	पंचमी
6	<i>ṣaṣṭhī</i>	षष्ठी
7	<i>saptamī</i>	सप्तमी
8	<i>aṣṭamī</i>	अष्टमी
9	<i>navamī</i>	नवमी
10	<i>daśamī</i>	दशमी
11	<i>ekādaśī</i>	एकादशी
12	<i>dvādaśī</i>	द्वादशी
13	<i>trayodaśī</i>	त्रयोदशी
14	<i>caturdaśī</i>	चतुर्दशी
15	<i>purṇimā</i>	पुर्णिमा
15	<i>amāvasyā</i>	अमावस्या

Since *Tithis* account for the Moon's revolution around Earth, and the Earth's revolution around the Sun, they start and end at varying times during the day. One *Tithi* ends and the next one starts when the Moon has travelled exactly 12° relative to the Sun.

The *Tithi*, its innate characteristics, its ruling deity and the *Pakṣa* play a significant role in a native's overall happiness in life, especially from relationships.

We hope that this part of the introduction provided you with a taste of the magical flavors of *Jyotiṣa* that the *Pañcāṅga* has to offer. We will cover the remaining three elements of the *Pañcāṅga* in Introduction Part 2. Looking forward to seeing you there.

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Pratik is an IT professional by day but a *Jyotiṣi* at heart. Drawn to *Jyotiṣa* since his teenage years, he has always relied on it for divine guidance and grace. He never considered studying *Jyotiṣā* till he got immersed into learning it by sheer happenstance at age 41, when he had his *Lagneśa* (Jupiter) and Saturn transiting his ascendant, which he believes brought about this destined transformation. Since then, he has been ardently pursuing the magical science with the sole intent of using it to better his life, the lives of his loved ones and anyone else that the universe sends his way. To him, *Jyotiṣa* is a *sadhana* that brings him mental peace and emotional bliss.