

Joni Patry – Eastern Astrology for the Western Astrologer

Writeup by Sarah Laurent

In India, astrology is called Jyotish, the science of light. The Hindu scriptures compare it to the eyes, for knowledge of the stars gives light in the darkness. Astrology is held in such high esteem in India that the government provides funding for it to be taught in universities, and an estimated 90 percent of the population believes in it. According to Joni Patry, Vedic astrology is not only simpler but more accurate when it comes to prediction. It is only the terminology that makes it seem so formidable to us westerners.

First the differences. Vedic astrology uses the sidereal zodiac, which is based on the actual places of constellations in the sky. The signs are 23°40' behind their tropical positions, so if you have a planet earlier than 23°40' of a sign, it will fall in the previous sign. This is especially important for the Ascendant, as it sets up the entire chart.

Vedic astrology does not use the outer planets. It uses the 7 traditional planets plus Rahu, the north node, and Ketu, the south node.

Square charts are used in both northern and southern India, but in the northern charts the angular houses fall into a central diamond with the lesser houses on the periphery. In southern India, the entire chart is a square and the signs are read clockwise.

Indians use whole-sign houses. If you have 14° of Aries rising, your first house will begin at 0° Aries but the Ascendant will be noted in the house. Sometimes a diagonal line is drawn across the first house.

The Moon is more important than the Sun in Vedic astrology.

Houses and planets (Bhavas and Grahas)

Similarities between Vedic and western astrology are many, but they can be tricky, too. Houses are called *bhavas* (*bhava* = field of action) and their meanings are largely the same as ours. For instance the 5th house is the creative mind, and it's where you find writers, politicians, astrologers, and advisors. Just as in western astrology, the 1st, 5th and 9th houses - called trikonal houses - are considered the most fortunate, and the planets that rule those houses will always be your friends. For instance, if you were born with Gemini rising, Mercury, Venus and Saturn will be your greatest friends.

The planet that rules the 11th house will always be an enemy to you, unless you are fortunate enough to have the same planet rule a trikonal house. That would cancel out the malefic influence. Why the 11th? Although it is a house of great money gains, it is also the house of desire, and desire ensnares us, bringing us into incarnation over and over again. As you see, this is a spiritually-based system, and everything revolves around the concept of liberation. That comes through 4, 8 and 12 - the *moksha* houses - which are the most powerful and the most misunderstood houses. Since there is no real security in this world, the water houses are where we learn to let go.

Joni said, "Once you understand the houses, you've got it. The houses carry the energies of the planets."

Planets are called *grahas*, which means "to grasp." They represent our karma, or what controls us. The Sun is our life force, but it's also a malefic. In India, the heat of the Sun burns as often as it gives life; and too much Sun is equivalent to too much ego. The Moon is our mind, our perceptions of things. It's what's illuminated by the Sun. When planets conjoin the Moon, they describe your mind. Mercury is what we do with the mind - for example, astrology. The other planets have basically the same meanings as our own.

If your natal horoscope is not so good, there's still hope. Joni talked about the navamsha chart, or "fruit of the tree." It's related to the number 9, and it shows what your life will evolve into. As we get older, we become more like our navamsha chart. If it's bad, this is cause to worry.

If your chart ruler is debilitated or there's an area of our chart you want to strengthen, you can use colors, gemstones, or chants. You really need to know what you're doing, however. For example, many businessmen want to wear hessonite, the gemstone for Rahu, because Rahu causes anything near it to increase - but this could lead to cancer if you wore it too often or at the wrong times. Cats'- eye, Ketu's gemstone, is equally problematic.

Rahu and Ketu

Rahu and Ketu are the names given to head and tail of a demon-serpent which was cut in half by Lord Vishnu just after it had tasted the nectar of immortality. Rahu, the head, has a grasping, materialistic quality. It brings us into the web of incarnation. It's our desire body, and when we go after things of the material world, there is always a price to pay. It can bring addictions (desires that can never be satisfied). When Rahu is conjunct a planet, it magnifies the qualities of that planet at least ten-fold.

Ketu, being the tail, is essentially dead to the things of this world. However, like Rahu it is immortal, so it represents detachment, our connection with God, our spiritual understanding. Ketu is like Neptune and the 12th house - it is beyond this world. If one seeks the things of this world during a Ketu cycle, the result can be loss and disappointment.

Ketu diminishes whatever it falls near. When it falls conjunct the Sun, the person negates himself or herself. The ego is weak. On the other hand, there is a possibility of achieving enlightenment with Ketu. Both Rahu and Ketu deal with poison. They are both considered malefics.

Aspects (Drishtis)

In Greek, "aspect" means "to glance," and that is basically how the Vedic astrologers see it, too. Vedic astrologers don't use a lot of aspects, and orbs are not a problem because they use whole-house aspects. If you have a planet at 0° Leo and another at 29° Leo, those planets are conjunct. If they are next to each other and in different signs, they are also conjunct.

Aspects are only counted in a forward direction, and charts are read clockwise. Therefore, planets only mutually aspect each other if they are conjunct or opposed. Otherwise, only one planet sends

an aspect, and which one sends it depends on the kinds of aspects each planet throws. Planets can aspect a house even if there's no planet there.

If a planet aspects a house that it rules, it will bring out what that house is good for in a dynamic fashion. Jacki Onassis had Mars aspecting her 2nd and Scorpio on the cusp; that brought in immense wealth.

Many of these rules can be used by any astrologer, eastern or western. For instance, Joni mentioned that a planet's dispositor gives the reason why a planet does what it does. Her Mars is in the 4th and its dispositor, Venus, is in the 8th. She received property and money through inheritance.

Chandra yogas

Besides the natal and navamsa charts, Vedic astrologers sometimes generate a chart using the Moon (*Chandra*) as the Ascendant, and less often, the Sun as Ascendant. Yoga means "union," and these charts show how the Moon connects with other planets and houses. Here's one Joni swears by.

When Jupiter gets to the sign before your Moon (12th house from the Moon), you will have more expenses and fewer gains. When it gets to the sign after your Moon (2nd house from the Moon), this is when money will come. Even if Jupiter is transiting your 2nd, if it is in the 12th house from the Moon it will not bring the expected gain.

Even though it means loss, when a planet is 12th from the Moon, it's a good yoga because it can also mean you are generous.

The worst lunar yoga is the Kemadruma, or "cracked mind," yoga. This occurs when there are no natal aspects to the Moon. These people feel alienated and do not relate well to people. The Moon is the mind. It likes to feel connected to other people, and it is well-aspected when it has planets in houses on either side or across the chart.

Nakshatras

There are 27 of these "lunar mansions," and each is 13°20' in length, or one day of the Moon's travel. (Hindu months are 27 days long.) Each planet in your chart falls into a nakshatra, but the most important one belongs to your Moon. It sets the tone for your entire life.

The nakshatras are related to mahadashas, which are nine periods of time related to the seven traditional planets plus Rahu and Ketu. Taken together, they total 120 years - our total life capacity.

Mahadashas are great predictive tools that anyone can use. The ASA website has two articles on them: one by Dennis Flaherty entitled "The Eastern Moon Through Western Eyes" and one by Dennis Harness entitled "The Nakshatras."

If you would like to study Vedic astrology, Joni teaches it through her website, www.galacticcenter.org.