

Study of Vedic astrology demands an elementary knowledge of astronomy and some basic techniques concerned with the preparation of horoscopic charts. Understanding the static promise in a horoscope, and the dynamic aspect of timing the fruition of such promise, are areas which demand deeper study. Vedic astrology has at its disposal innumerable techniques which can be employed for virtually infallible results.

VEDIC ASTROLOGY LESSONS INDEX

S.NO.	LESSON	DESCRIPTION
1	Vedic Astrology an Introduction	The emphasis in this lesson is on very basic fundamentals of Astrology. The vedas. Who should practise astrology. Basic subdivisions of Astrology.
2	Astrology and Science	Understanding the basic concepts of Astrology. If astrology is a science ? Get answers to these questions, in this lesson.
3	Elementary Concepts of Astronomy (Part-1)	The introduction to astronomical concepts of Astrology. Explaining basics of Astrology, Earth, Zodiac, Sign and Nakshtras.
4	Elementary Concepts of Astronomy (Part-2)	More further explanation of astronomical and astrological concepts. The geocentric astronomical framework, seasons, equator rising and setting of signs.
5	Elementary Concepts of Astronomy (Part-3)	Sidereal time, Ayanmasa, Sayana and Nirayana system of astrology. Planets and Zodiac.
6	Elementary Concepts of Astronomy (Part-4)	The panchanga(Hindu Calendar), Lunar months, sidereal, symbolic, nodical, anomalistic, Moons cycle, Moons node and other basic cocepts related to role of moon.
7	Elementary Concepts of Astronomy (Part-5)	Solar Eclipse, Lunar Eclipse. Lunar Date or Tithi system. Yoga, Karana. Astronomical features of the planets.
8	Vedic Method of Instruction (Part-1)	The signs, Horoscopic charts, The Signs or Rashis.
9	Vedic Method of Instruction (Part-2)	12 Houses, Planets.
10	Vedic Method of Instruction (Part-3)	Nature of Planets, Malefics and benefics by nature, Benefics and Malefics for different lagnas, Trik Houses and their lords.

Aum ! May He protect us both (the teacher and the disciple) together. May he sustain us both together. May we attain vigour together. May the learning of us both be resplendent. May we harbour no mutual ill will.

Aum ! Peace ! Peace ! Peace ! Peace !

Astrology is as old as Vedas themselves. The Vedas which are the sacred Hindu scriptures, embody eternal knowledge. Strict moral and spiritual practices along with the deep study are prerequisites to understand the essence of Vedas. To the uninitiated, the Vedas might appear as nothing more than ritualistic oblations to air, water and thunder etc. Deep truths, however begin to unfold to the true seeker as his search goes on.

In time of yore, sincere seekers of truth and knowledge in India used to spend years and years at the feet of their 'gurus', learning the meaning hidden in Vedas. In order to decipher what lies concealed in Vedas, a study of certain subjects is considered a prerequisite. These subjects are called the 'Vedangas' or the body organs of the Vedas. There are six such vedangas. They are :

- (A) **Shiksha** : Which deals with the understanding of the Vedic 'Varanas', 'Swaras' and Mantras, and thus with the technique of correct pronunciation.
- (B) **Chhanda** : Dealing with the appropriate lyrical utterance of the Vedic 'Suktas'.
- (C) **Vyakarana** : Expounding the grammatical aspects of the language.
- (D) **Nirukta** : Which explains the difficult words, 'padas' and 'mantras'.
- (E) **Kalpa** : Dealing with the understanding of Sutras and the use of Mantras, hence concerned with the ritualistic aspects of the Vedas.
- (F) **Jyotisha or Astrology** : Of the body called the Vedas, astrology represents the 'eyes' with its capacity to see the past, the present and the future. Astrology is considered as the most important of the Vedangas.

What is Astrology ?

Astrology is the scientific study and application of language of the heavenly bodies. These heavenly bodies determined on the basis of Astronomy and mathematics, are mapped in the form of a horoscope. Their specific locations in the horoscope indicate specific happenings in the case of individuals, of multitudes and of geographical regions. Whether the Sun, the Moon, the planets and stars themselves influence the terrestrial phenomena, or they only indicate such phenomena by their various dispositions, is immaterial. What is important to us is that variations in their disposition determine variations in the events on the earth; the correlations are only too strong to be brushed aside by critics of Astrology.

Who should practise astrology ?

In the ancient times, a strict code of conduct was demanded of those who practised Astrology. A guru would teach astrology only to deserving disciple who would adhere to such a code of conduct. The guru-shishya (i.e., the teacher-disciple) tradition is already long over in India. With changing times, it has become difficult to find an appropriate 'guru' and a deserving 'shishya' to pursue this sacred study within the rules laid by the sages of yore. It is, however, quite in order to be aware of this ancient code of conduct. Varamihira, the celebrated authority on astrology, prescribes the following qualifications for an astrologer :

- (a) **Physical features** : According to the said author , the physical feature reflect the inner nature of man. The astrologer must be good to loom at, with all his body parts complete and healthy. He should be of sound health, with sound hands, feet, nails, chin teeth ears, forehead and head, and having a loud and impressive voice.

- (b) **Moral soundness** : He should be truthful, gentle, bereft of cravings and aversions, clear of heart, not inclined to be critical of the qualities of others, devoid of base and wordly distractions.
- (c) **Behaviour in an assembly** : He should be clever, able to express himself, bold in an assembly, not intimidated by his fellow astrologers, dignified and aware of the constraints of social and historical circumstances.
- (d) **Proficiency in the subject of Astrology** : He should be well-read, and proficient in the three branches of Astrology known as Ganita, the Samhita and the hora. He must have studied the five siddhantas (or mathematical treatises). His mathematical proficiency must include the knowledge of various divisions of time, from the gross one like yuga to the finer ones. He must also possess knowledge of the various divisions, including the finest ones, of the zodiac.
- (e) **Proficiency in various branches of Astrology** : The astrologer is required to possess a knowledge of different aspects of astrology which deal with propitiation of planets, rendering the planets beneficial or hostile, conducting religious ceremonies, and rituals which help neutralise the natural calamities.
- (f) **Defence of Astrology** : The astrologer must be able to answer queries, and also pose relevant questions where appropriate. When necessary, he should be able to dazzle others by his knowledge, only to increase the dignity of astrology.

The Sage Parashara advocates a similar code of conduct for astrologers, stressing particularly on the necessity for technical intellectual and moral excellence; the capacity to weigh the pros and cons of a situation, along with the ability to synthesize a coherent prediction based on sound knowledge of the principles, sometimes apparently contradictory, of knowledge.

Sub-Divisions of Astrology

There are three main sub-divisions of Astrology.

(1) **Samhita** : This deals with collectivity or multitudes. It encompasses such varied areas as weather forecasts, agricultural produce, natural disasters, floods, famines, wars, earthquakes, cyclones, market trends, changes in government, national and international events, and virtually anything that influences the masses. The annual world predictions which are generally based either on Hindu New Year commencing on the Chaitra Shukla Pratipada, or on the solar Ingress into Mesha, fall under the Samhita astrology.

(2) **Siddhanta or Tantra or Ganita** : This deals with the mathematical aspects of astrology. There are several treatises on Siddhanta Astrology but five among them are considered as particularly important. They are :

- (a) Surya Siddhanta
- (b) Paulisha Siddhanta
- (c) Romaka Siddhanta
- (d) Vasishtha Siddhanta
- (e) Paitamaha Siddhanta

A proficiency in these is considered as a prerequisite for a good astrologer, according to the celebrated Varahmihira.

(3) **Hora** : It deals with :

- (a) Individual horoscopes, or Jataka, or natal charts of a person.
- (b) Muhurta or electional Astrology, which concerns itself with the election of favourable planetary dispositions to achieve specific accomplishments in day-to-day life.

Study of astrology has been branded by the neo-scientists as a belief in superstition. Greater criticism has been heaped on astrology by those who have never bothered to study the subject. Many critics have questioned the basis of astrology, ignoring the fact that an understanding of a basis has to succeed and not precede an observation. The basis of gravitational pull was determined after the existence of the force of gravitation was recognised. Anyone who studies astrology with an open mind cannot but appreciate the fact that astrology is a highly developed science.

By definition, science means a knowledge ascertained by observation and experiment, critically tested, systematised and brought under general principles. Astrology strictly fulfils all these criteria. Two aspects of astrology deserve a special mention:

(a) **The cause and effect phenomenon:** Critics of astrology boast that physical sciences depend upon a cause and effect relationship, which astrology apparently lacks. They, however, fail to appreciate that astrology is a cosmic science and not bound by the limitations of a laboratory. In physical sciences, there may be a gross cause or a subtle cause, producing a physically visible or gross effect. Gravitation, which is a subtle cause, produces a gross effect of attracting a physical body towards the earth. In the case of astrology, the cause is always subtle while the effect is appreciable and predictable according to rules, which have been developed and refined over the centuries. The subtle cause in case of astrology is the cosmic force represented by the disposition of the various heavenly bodies or 'planets'. Physical scientists can only trace the cause from the apparent effect.

It may be noted, however, that astrology deals with a multitude of phenomena on the earth. This being so, there are numerous parameters and a methodology more elaborate than any known physical science can boast of. Making correct predictions, therefore, is difficult and demands hard labour on the part of an astrologer. Unfortunately, the failure of an astrologer has been often misinterpreted as a failure of the science

(b) **The phenomenon of replication:** Astrology is also criticised on the ground that its principles do not yield results, which can be invariably replicated or reproduced. Physical sciences can, on the other hand, boast of a reproducibility of their various principles. It may be pointed out here that every correct astrological prediction, in fact, underscores the principle of replication in astrology. Since astrology is a complex science, its every known principle has to be applied carefully, considering the numerous parameters and weighing the various pros and cons. In the ancient Indian scriptures, for example, numerous astrological dicta lie hidden. Unfolded and carefully applied today, they prove their eternal applicability and give dazzling results, which the open minded scientists of today can only marvel at. It is no coincidence that a planetary combination present at the time of the Mahabharata war, and described by Karna to lord Krishna, also obtained, in a modified form, in 1914 when the World War I started; in 1942 when World War II was in progress, and again in 1971 at the time of the Indo-Pak conflict. During all these occasions, India got involved in the mess quite intimately. In 1965 too, when India and Pakistan clashed, a similar but modified planetary disposition arose. Before heaping any criticism on astrology, it will be interesting to which when such a combination is likely to obtain in future, and in what form.

Astrology and Karma

Karma is the sum total of one's physical, mental and spiritual functions. The world goes on because there is a role of free will assigned to human beings. Where does then astrology fit in, deal as it does with predestination? Is there a conflict between belief in astrology and in free will? How can scriptures lay emphasis on both if they are mutually conflicting?

Astrology is based on the relationship of cause and effect. If there is an effect, there must be a cause preceding it. Thus, if an event good or bad happens today, there must be a cause for it, whether or not that cause is appreciable. Certain functions or Karmas produce an immediate result. Still others obtain fruition after a longer time period. Still others may take several years or decades (or even longer) to materialise. If one believes in the law of cause and effect, then the ambience of one's birth and the subsequent opportunities or their lack cannot be a matter of mere chance. This takes us to a belief in birth and rebirth. Karmas done in one birth must manifest sometime in a later birth.

The past karmas produce limitations for us because they yield certain results, which influence our future karmas. We do have a free will, but within the limitations prescribed by the results of our past actions. Karmas in fact manufacture destiny.

An astrologer can point out which of the results from the past karmas can be overcome, and which cannot be overcome and, therefore, have to be suffered. A karma done is like a missile fired; it may or may not be neutralised by a counter-missile, depending upon the relative strength of the two.

Astrology and Genetic Link

A fascinating aspect of astrological study is the link that exists between members of the same family. This is an area of research also. Just as certain blood groups cannot exist amongst the children of particular parents, so also certain planetary combinations cannot obtain in certain families. Study of horoscopes belonging to a family indicate similarities which can be easily appreciated. This aspect of astrology has a vast possible usage.

Interlinked Destinies

Different individuals who are linked to each other in one way or the other show distinct similarities in their horoscopic charts. An event which is visible in the horoscope of a child can also be seen in the horoscopes of his parents as well as siblings. People who come in closer contact in mutual relationships or business partnerships show striking similarities in their charts at appropriate periods. Just as particles of similar densities sink to a similar extent on centrifugation, so also people who have similar pursuits tend to get grouped together.

Composite Approach for Astrological Predictions

In the ancient times, astrology was studied and practised in a highly scientific manner. Just as in medical sciences of today where multiple investigative tools are employed to diagnose a disease, in astrology too several different methods used to be employed. As the ancient tradition disappeared, astrology shrank into a family tradition, getting confined to a few families only. Its approach became more and more rigid. Until recently, many astrologers have been using only limited methods to make only a limited range of predictions.

Lately, however, highly educated people have started studying astrology giving it a modern and scientific look. This sacred subject is now taught in institutions like any other modern science. No longer is astrological study subject to limitations of method and approach. A highly effective composite approach for astrological predictions has been thus revived. Any given event is confirmed in a horoscopic chart by using a host of available techniques, like the use of both the Parashari and the Jaimini systems, the application of various dashas and the use of several divisional charts and of Ashtakavarga. Besides, the same event is often studied in the charts of those closely related to or associated with the native. This increases the success of predictions and proves the superiority of astrology as a scientific discipline.

In the chapters that follow, an earnest attempt will be made to explain some of the elements of this sacred science.

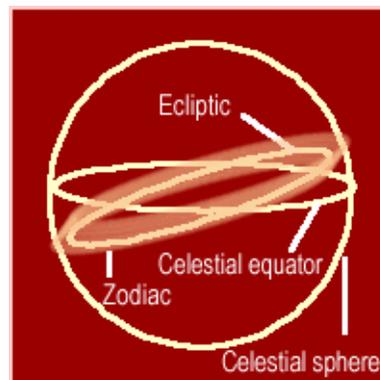
Vedic Astrology is based on a very sound understanding of astronomy. In ancient India, astronomy was a highly developed subject. Knowledge of astronomy was considered essential for an astrologer. To the ancient Vedic astrologer, such phenomena as the rotation and the revolution of the earth, the formation of seasons, the occurrence of eclipses, the concepts of solar and lunar months, the equinoxes, and the subtle concepts of disposition of planets and stars in the sky, were all well known. Without the availability of the present day sophisticated instruments and telescopes, he was able to decipher fine variations in the disposition of heavenly bodies. The fact that he could take into consideration such fine divisions of time without the electronic/atomic clocks of today is marvellous.

Earth as the centre

The Vedic astrologer was aware that nothing in the universe was stationary. It was, therefore, irrelevant to attempt to pick up a fixed point in the sky, and consider the movements of earth and other heavenly bodies in relation to such a point. He, therefore, considered the position and movement of all heavenly bodies in relation to the earth itself, which was his residence. It is no wonder then that Indian astronomy and astrology consider the earth as the centre, and all other heavenly bodies moving around it in one manner or the other. The Indian astronomy is thus geocentric and not heliocentric which latter considers the Sun as the centre. The Indian astronomer does appreciate the Sun to be the centre of the solar system, but he also appreciates that the Sun, the solar system, as well as the stars are all moving. Hence he considered the pole star Dhruva as the point of relative fixity at the centre of heavenly bodies in the galaxy. With such profound appreciation of astronomy, one can't attribute ignorance of the earthly movements to the ancient Indian astronomer.

Zodiac

Imagine a belt or a path in the sky, some 18 degrees of arc in width, running around the earth in an east-west direction. Groups of stars, to all appearance fixed, are studded along this imaginary belt. Twenty seven (or twenty eight!) such groups of stars are recognised in Vedic astrology. Because of lack of apparent motion, these are called as Nakshatras. This imaginary belt, with nakshatras studded on it, is called the zodiac. The zodiac forms the reference point for fixing up the position of any planet or star in the sky. Since it encircles the earth, it is comprised of 360 degrees. The twenty-seven nakshatras being evenly placed on it each have a span of 13'20' arc. The various nakshatras are numbered from one to twenty-seven.



The zodiac is a 18 deg wide band placed obliquely to the equator. It is divided in 12 rashis and 27 nakshatras

In contrast to the fixed nakshatras, there are the moving heavenly bodies called the Grahas. These move along the zodiac from the west to the east. They derive their name from the fact that, while moving against the background of the nakshatras, they appear to get hold of one nakshatra after the other (graha = to catch hold of). Vedic astrology recognises nine grahas. They are the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu. Of these, the Sun is a star, the Moon is a satellite of the earth, Rahu and Ketu are mere mathematical points on the zodiac, while the remaining ones are planets. For the sake of descriptive convenience, we shall refer to all of these as 'planets'. These planets (appear to) revolve around the earth while staying within the limits of the zodiac. The apparent path of the Sun along the zodiac is known as the ecliptic. The ecliptic passes through the centre of the zodiac. It is inclined at an angle of 23'28' to the plane of the equator. The extra-Saturnine planets, called Uranus, Neptune and Pluto has not been considered deliberately as they do not form a part of Vedic astrology.

Signs or Rashis

When the zodiac is divided into twelve equal parts, each such part has an extension of 30 degrees of the arc. Such a division is called a sign or Rashi. A rashi consists of two and a quarter nakshatras. A particular group of stars in the zodiac is considered as the starting point of the zodiac. From this point, the twenty-seven nakshatras or the twelve signs begin. A planet located anywhere along the zodiac may be considered as located in a particular sign, depending upon which twelfth division of the zodiac it is in; it may be considered as being located in a particular nakshatra too, depending upon which twenty seventh division of the zodiac it is in.

The planets from the Sun to Saturn have been allotted the ownership of these signs. While the Sun and the Moon own one sign each, the remaining planets own two signs each. Rahu and Ketu are generally not allotted ownership of these signs. The names of the twelve signs, their planetary lords, and their extent in the zodiac, etc., are given in Table given below :

Table depicting rashis with their lords

	Sign	English equivalent	Symbol	Lord	Extent in degrees
1	Mesha	Aries	♈	Mars	0-30
2	Vrisha	Taurus	♉	Venus	30-60
3	Mithuna	Gemini	♊	Mercur	60-90
4	Karka	Cancer	♋	Moon	90-120
5	Simha	Leo	♌	Sun	120-150
6	Kanya	Virgo	♍	Mercur	150-180
7	Tula	Libra	♎	Venus	180-210
8	Vrischik	Scorpio	♏	Mars	210-240
9	Dhanu	Saggitarius	♐	Jupiter	240-270
10	Makara	Capricorn	♑	Saturn	270-300
11	Kumbha	Aquarius	♒	Saturn	300-330
12	Meena	Pisces	♓	Jupiter	330-360

Nakshatras

The twenty-seven nakshatras also extend along the zodiac from 0° to 360°. They too are owned by planets. But in case of nakshatras, the planets Rahu and Ketu are also allotted the ownership. Each nakshatra is further divided into four parts called the Padas or charanas. There are thus 108 nakshatra padas or quarters in the twenty-seven nakshatras. Each nakshatra quarter measures 3°20'. The relation of nakshatras with rashis, along with their extent and owners, are shown in Table given below :

Table depicting rashis,nakshatras and their lords

	Rashis	Nakshatras	Extent s d	Pada	Lord
1	Mesha	1. Ashwini	0 ^S 13°20'	4	Ketu
		2. Bharani	0 ^S 26°40'	4	Venus
		3. Krittika	1 ^S 0°0'	1	Sun
2	Vrisha	3. Krittika	1 ^S 10°0'	3	Sun
		4. Rohini	1 ^S 23°20'	4	Moon
		5. Mrigasira	2 ^S 0°0'	2	Mars
3	Mithuna	5. Mrigasira	2 ^S 6°40'	2	Mars
		6. Ardra	2 ^S 20°0'	4	Rahu
		7. Punarvasu	3 ^S 0°0'	3	Jupiter
4	Karka	7. Punarvasu	3 ^S 3°20'	1	Jupiter
		8. Pushya	3 ^S 16°40'	4	Saturn
		9. Ashlesha	4 ^S 0°0'	4	Mercury
5	Simha	10. Magha	4 ^S 13°20'	4	Mercury
		11. P Phalguni	4 ^S 26°40'	4	Venus
		12. U Phalguni	5 ^S 0°0'	1	Sun
6	Kanya	12. U Phalguni	5 ^S 10°0'	3	Sun
		13. Hasta	5 ^S 23°20'	4	Moon
		14. Chitra	6 ^S 0°0'	2	Mars
7	Tula	14. Chitra	6 ^S 6°40'	2	Mars
		15. Swati	6 ^S 20°0'	4	Rahu
		16. Vishakha	7 ^S 0°0'	3	Jupiter
8	Vrischika	16. Vishakha	7 ^S 3°20'	1	Jupiter
		17. Anuradha	7 ^S 16°40'	4	Saturn
		18. Jyeshtha	8 ^S 0°0'	4	Mercury
9	Dhanu	19. Moola	8 ^S 13°20'	4	Ketu
		20. P Asadha	8 ^S 26°40'	4	Venus
		21. U Asadha	9 ^S 0°0'	1	Sun
10	Makara	21. U Asadha	9 ^S 10°0'	3	Sun
		22. Shravana	9 ^S 23°20'	4	Moon
		23. Dhanishtha	10 ^S 0°0'	2	Mars
11	Kumbha	23. Dhanishtha	10 ^S 6°40'	2	Mars
		24. Sata Bhisaj	10 ^S 20°0'	4	Rahu
		25. P Bhadrpada	11 ^S 0°0'	3	Jupiter
12	Meena	25. P Bhadrpada	11 ^S 3°20'	1	Jupiter
		26. U Bhadrpada	11 ^S 16°40'	4	Saturn
		27. Revati	12 ^S 0°0'	4	Mercury

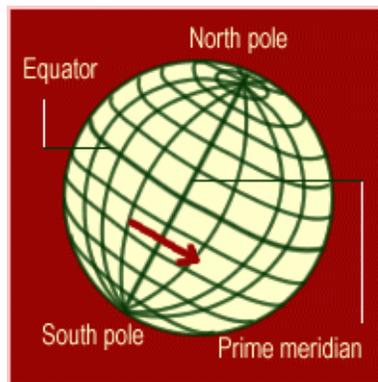
A segment of the zodiac extending from 276°40'0" to 280°53'20" (equivalent to 6°4'0" to 10°53'20" in the Makara rashi, involving the last quarter of the twenty first (i.e. Uttarashadha) nakshatra and the beginning of the twenty-second (Sharavana), is sometimes considered as a separate nakshatra by the name Abhijit. This addition changes the number of nakshatras to twenty-eight. In such a situation, Abhijit is considered as the twenty-second nakshatra, and the subsequent six nakshatras (from Sharavana onwards) assume changed numbers (from 23 to 28, instead of 22 to 27).

The geocentric astronomical framework

In order to understand the very basic astronomical concepts, as pertinent to an understanding of Vedic astrology, it is important to understand certain facts about the earth, the movements of the earth, and the apparent movement of the planets around the earth. Explanation of a few definitions is also in order.

Earth as a sphere : The earth is spherical. It rotates from west to east around its axis. The axis of the earth is an imaginary line which, passing through its centre, connects its two poles, the north pole and the south pole. Another imaginary line running across the largest circumference of the earth, equidistant from its poles and running in an east-west direction, is called the equator. The terrestrial equator is considered as the zero degree of latitude. Parallels drawn to the equator, either north or south of it, indicate the north or south latitudes, from zero degree at the equator to 90 degrees at either pole.

Imaginary lines can also be drawn on the surface of the earth connecting the north pole to the south pole. Encompassing the circumference of the earth, these correspond to the 360 degrees of longitude. They are also known as the terrestrial meridians. Ancient Vedic astrologers considered the terrestrial meridian passing through Ujjain as the zero degree longitude. At present, the meridian passing through Greenwich in England is regarded as corresponding to zero degree of longitude. The longitudes are marked from zero degree to 180 degrees east or west, depending upon whether a place falls to the east or to the west of Greenwich. The latitude and the longitude of a place are the co-ordinates, which help to locate the place accurately on the surface of the earth. The 360 degrees of terrestrial longitude represent a time span of 24 hours. One hour thus corresponds to 15 degrees, and one degree of terrestrial longitude represents 4 minutes of time.



The equator divides the earth into northern and southern hemispheres. Latitudes and longitudes help locate a place on the surface of the earth. Arrow shows the direction of the earth's rotation from west to east.

The great and the small circles : A **great circle** is any circle the plane of which passes through the centre of a sphere. Equator is a great circle on the earth, equidistant from the north and south poles. Any circle the plane of which does not pass through the centre of a sphere is called a **small circle**. As the equator corresponds to zero degree latitude, all parallels to it are small circles, which represent the north or south latitudes.

Imaginary extensions into space : The space around the earth extends to an infinite extent. To us, the extension of space upto the zodiac is of primary importance. Celestial Sphere is an imaginary projection of the earth in all directions upto infinity. An extension of the plane of terrestrial equator into space is called the **celestial equator** . Any great circle that joins the celestial north and south poles is called a meridian. The meridian of a place corresponds to the terrestrial longitude. The meridian passing through **Greenwich** corresponds to zero degree of longitude, and is termed as the **Principal meridian** or the Standard meridian. The angular distance between the principal meridian and the meridian of a given place (i.e., the angle subtended by the principal meridian and the meridian of a given place, at the centre of the earth) is called the longitude of a place.

The Sun crosses the meridian of a place at mid-day. The intersection of the ecliptic (i.e., the sun's apparent path around the earth) with the meridian of a place is termed as the midheaven which in other words corresponds to the cusp of the tenth house of a horoscope. The meridian of a place thus passes, around the earth, through north pole, midheaven (10th house or zenith), south pole nadir (4th house) and back to the north pole.

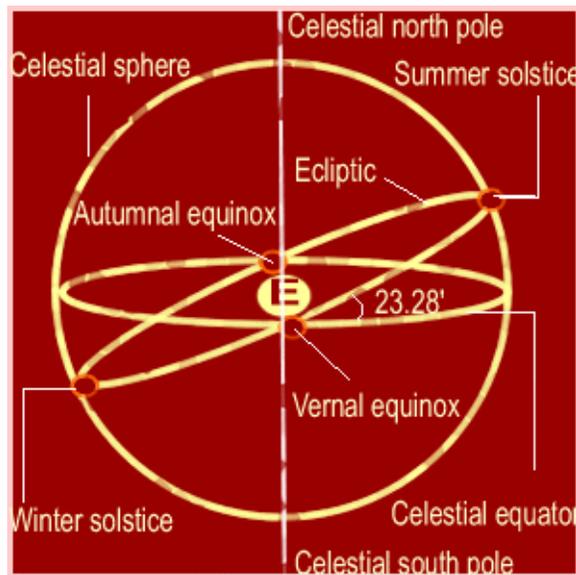
Declination and right ascension: Just as parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude help to locate a place on the surface of the terrestrial sphere, so do their extensions in the form of parallels of declination and meridians of right ascension help to locate heavenly bodies on the celestial sphere. **Declination** of a planet is the angle subtended by it and the celestial equator at the earth. The declination of a planet, thus, corresponds exactly with the terrestrial latitude. A planet at the terrestrial equator is said to possess zero degree declination. **Right ascension** of a planet is its angular distance, measured eastwards along the celestial equator, from the vernal equinox to the point where a perpendicular drawn through the said planet falls on the celestial equator.

Equator and ecliptic ; formation of seasons: The earth rotates on its own axis in twenty-four hours. Along with this rotation, it also revolves around the Sun in one year or 365.2422 days (365 days 5 hours 48 minutes 46 seconds). This span of time is called a tropical year. The path of the earth around the Sun appears to us, from the earth, as the Sun's path around the earth, and is called the **ecliptic** . The equator runs around the middle of earth in an east-west direction and divides the earth into a northern hemisphere and a southern hemisphere. The ecliptic, or the Sun's path, in the apparent east-west direction, does not lie along the equator but is obliquely placed to it. Half of the Sun's path thus lies to the north of the equator and a half of it to the south of the equator.

Aryabhatta wrote over fifteen centuries ago:

"One half of the ecliptic, running from the beginning of the sign Aries to the end of the sign Virgo, lies obliquely inclined (to the equator) northwards. The remaining half (or the ecliptic) running from the beginning of the sign Libra to the end of the sign Pisces, lies (equally inclined to the equator) southwards."

The Sun thus happens to cross the equator twice a year, giving rise to what are termed as the two equinoxes. The **vernal equinox** happens around the 21st March, when the Sun is on its northerly course. The **autumnal equinox** occurs around 23rd September when the Sun is on its southerly course..



The ecliptic is inclined to the equator at an angle of 23.28'. It crosses equator at two points, the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox. The north of the earth corresponds to the celestial north and celestial south poles.

On these two occasions, the day and night all over the globe are of equal duration. The Sun is vertically above the equator at this time. The declination of the Sun at these occasions is zero as it corresponds to the terrestrial equator which represents zero degree latitude.

After vernal equinox, the Sun progressively attains north declination unit it reaches a maximum of 23°28'. This occurs around 21st June and is known as the **summer solstice**. The Sun is vertically above the tropic of Cancer at this time. The northern hemisphere experiences the longest day and the shortest night on this occasion. The reverse holds true for the southern hemisphere.

After the autumnal equinox, the Sun pursues a southward course and attains a maximum south declination of 23°28' at the time of **winter solstice**. This happens around 22nd December. The Sun is vertically above the tropic of Capricorn, at this time. The northern hemisphere experiences the shortest day and the longest night on this occasion. The reverse holds true for the southern hemisphere.

The obliquity of the ecliptic to the equator thus results in the **formation of seasons**. When it is winter in the northern hemisphere, it is summer in the southern hemisphere. When it is summer in the northern hemisphere, it is winter in the southern hemisphere.

The horizon: It is the great circle, which represents the meeting line of the earth and the sky. It varies according to the position of the observer on the surface of the earth. For example, for an observer at the north pole of the earth, the horizon corresponds with the equator while the southern hemisphere remains out of view. For one standing at the equator, the great circle passing through the poles represents the horizon; the two poles lie on the horizon in this case. For any intermediate positions, the horizon too varies accordingly. More and more of the southern hemisphere moves out of the horizon as the observer moves northward, and more and more northern hemisphere moves out of the horizon as the observer moves southward.

The point of the celestial sphere, which is directly overhead for the observer, is called as the **zenith**. This is at right angles to the observer's horizon. Its opposite point is known as the **nadir**. The great circle that passes in a north-south direction through the zenith and the nadir, through the celestial north and south poles (i.e., the north and south poles of the equator) and through the north and south points of the horizon is called the **meridian** which has been already referred to.

The rising and setting of signs

As already mentioned, the ecliptic passes through the centre of the zodiacal belt which extends some 8' to 9' on its either (north as well as south) side. The planets remain within the limits of the zodiac. The earth rotates around its axis once in twenty-four hours from west to east. As a consequence, all heavenly bodies appear to revolve around the earth from east to west once in twenty-four hours. The zodiac, with the nakshatras and rashis fixed upon it, also appears to revolve around the earth once in twenty-four hours. Thus all the signs and nakshatras on the zodiac appear to successively rise in the eastern horizon and set at the western horizon once in twenty-four hours. Six of the twelve signs appear at the eastern horizon during the day-time and the remaining six during night-time. The following points are of importance:

1. The sign that rises at the eastern horizon, at a given moment of time, is of primary importance and called the ascendant or the lagna. It is the sign where the ecliptic cuts the eastern horizon. In a horoscope this represents the first house.
 2. The sign seventh from the ascendant is the descendant or the setting sign. That is, when a particular sign is rising in the eastern horizon, its opposite sign is setting in the western horizon. It is the sign where the ecliptic cuts the western horizon. In a horoscope this represents the seventh house
 3. The points where the meridian cuts the ecliptic are the zenith (above the earth) and the nadir (below the earth, exactly opposite to the zenith) The Zenith (mid-heaven) represents the tenth house in a horoscope, while the nadir represents the fourth house.
 4. Each sign takes time to rise at the horizon from zero degrees to 30 degrees. All signs are not of equal duration so that some signs take longer to completely rise above the horizon compared to the others
 5. Signs can be divided into three groups, depending upon their rising periods (rashi maanas).

Group A	Mesha	Kanya	Tula	Meena
Group B	Vrisha	Simha	Vrischika	Kumbha
Group C	Mithuna	Karka	Dhanu	Makara
- A sign belonging to one group takes the same time to rise as another belonging to the same group at the equator. The six signs from Karka to Dhanu lengthen and the remaining six shorten as one proceeds from the equator to the north pole. On the other hand, the signs from Makara to Mithuna lengthen, while the remaining ones shorten, as one proceeds from the equator to the south pole.
6. For any given latitude, the rising period for different signs is fixed.
 7. As one moves away from the equator, certain signs lengthen while the others shorten as far as their rising period is concerned. That is, certain signs remain longer on the horizon than the others.
 8. Six signs elapse between sunrise and sunset, while the remaining six signs do so between sunset and sunrise.
 9. This means that in winter, when the days are shorter, the six zodiacal signs that rise successively during the day have a shorter time duration, while the remaining six have a longer time duration. This gives rise to signs of short ascension and those of long ascension.
 10. Signs of long ascension in the northern hemisphere are: Karka, Simbha, Kanya, Tula, Vrischika and Dhanu.
 11. Signs of short ascension in the northern hemisphere are: Makara, Kumbha, Meena, Mesha, Vrisha and Mithuna. These are the signs of long ascension for the southern latitudes.
 12. As one nears the poles, certain zodiacal signs fail to rise.

LESSON 3 : ELEMENTARY CONCEPTS OF ASTRONOMY (Part -3)

The concept of sidereal time

The earth rotates around its axis in 24 hours, in what may be termed a mean solar day. In other words, the mean solar day is a function of earth's rotation in relation to the Sun. Considered with reference to any fixed star in the zodiac, the earth completes its one rotation in approximately 23 hours and 56 minutes (23 hours, 56 minutes, 4.09 seconds, to be precise). One rotation of the earth in relation to a fixed star is called a sidereal day. Said in another manner, a sidereal day is the time interval between two successive transits of a fixed star over the meridian of a place. A sidereal day is 3 minutes and 56 seconds (or roughly 4 minutes) shorter than the mean solar day.

A sidereal day consists of 24 sidereal hours. Time reckoned according to this method is called the **sidereal time**. Since the sidereal time considers the angular rotation of the earth in relation to the fixed stars of the zodiac, **the earth will attain the same position with reference to the zodiac every day at the same sidereal time. In other words, for any location, for the same sidereal time, the disposition of the signs of the zodiac (including the rising sign, the setting sign, the tenth house, the 4th house, etc.) will be the same.** This is the reason why it is essential to obtain the correct sidereal time for the purposes of erecting an astrological chart for any given moment of mean solar time as provided by the watch.

Why is the mean solar day longer than the sidereal day? By the time the earth rotates once, with reference to a fixed star, i.e., in one sidereal day, the Sun has moved by approximately 1° thereby consuming approximately 4 additional minutes each day.

Precession of equinoxes

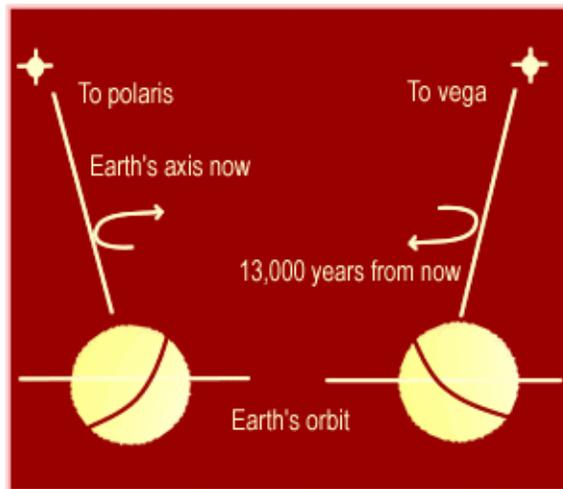
The earth revolves around the Sun once in 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds. Considered from the earth, the Sun appears to complete one round of the ecliptic during this period. This is called a **tropical year**. In the span of a tropical year, the earth regains its original angular position with the Sun. It is also called the year of seasons since on this Earth-Sun cycle depends the occurrence, and timing, of seasons. If we consider the revolution of the Sun around the earth from one vernal equinox (around 21st March, when the day and night all over the globe are equal) to the next vernal equinox, it takes one tropical year to do so.

However, if at the end of a tropical year from one vernal equinox to the next, we consider the position of the earth with reference to a fixed star of the zodiac, the earth appears to lie some 50.26 seconds of celestial longitude to the west of its original position. In order for the earth to attain the same position with respect to a fixed star after one revolution, it takes a time span of 365 days 6 hours 9 minutes and some 9.5 seconds. This duration of time is called a **sidereal year**. The sidereal year is just over 20 minutes longer than the tropical year; this time difference is equivalent to 50.26 seconds of celestial longitude.

Each year, the Vernal equinox will fall short by 50.26 seconds along the zodiac reckoned along the fixed stars. This continuous receding of the Vernal equinox along the zodiac is called as the **precession of equinoxes**.

Causes of precession

The earth rotates around its axis like a spinning top. In doing so, its north pole (and, therefore, the celestial pole), describes a circle of some 47 degrees around the pole of the ecliptic.



The wobble of earth's axis in a clockwise direction causes the precession of equinoxes. The axis now points towards polaris; in about 13,000 years from now it will have to be moved to a point within a few degrees from vega.

This in other words, means that the plane of the equator intersects the plane of the ecliptic at a constantly shifting point. This point, the first point of Aries or the vernal equinox, goes on receding westward at a rate of approximately 50.26 seconds of arc each year. This is called the precession of the equinoxes. The result of this precession is a slow increase in the right ascensions of almost all fixed stars in the zodiac. This precession takes some 25,800 (or approximately 26,000) years to complete one circle. As will be seen, an appreciation of this precession is of paramount importance in the understanding of the basic concepts of Vedic astrology.

Fixed and movable zodiacs

The fixed or the sidereal zodiac considers the nakshatras as its basis. Its first degree begins as the first degree of Mesha (Aries) from a particular point in the Revati group of stars. There is another zodiac, however, which is reckoned from the Vernal equinoctial point; here the first point of Aries begins from the Vernal equinox. This is called the movable or the tropical zodiac. As has been seen, the movable zodiac continues to recede westward along the stars, which characterise the fixed zodiac?

Ayanamsha; the sayana and the niryana system

It has been seen that because of the precession of equinoxes at a rate of 50.26 seconds per year, the distance between the Vernal equinox (the 1st point of the movable zodiac) and the 1st point of Mesha (Aries) on the fixed zodiac has been progressively increasing. This distance at any given epoch is called as the **Ayanamsha**. The ayanamsha thus indicates the difference between the fixed zodiac and the movable zodiac. The system that considers the fixed zodiac is called the **Niryana** (without ayana!) system, while the one that considers the movable zodiac is called the **Sayana** (with ayana!) system. The Niryana values of planetary longitudes can be obtained by subtracting the ayanamsha for a given time from the Sayana longitudes.

The Niryana and the Sayana zodiacs coincided in the year 285 AD when the ayanamsha was zero. At the rate of precession of equinoxes stated above, the ayanamsha on the 1st of January, 1995 is 23°47'26". The equinoctial precession completes one round in approximately 26,000 years, as mentioned earlier, so that the fixed and movable zodiacs coincide regularly after this time span. The ayanamsha reckoned on the basis of considering the year 285 AD as the year when the Sayana and the Niryana zodiacs coincided is called the **Chitrapaksha ayanamsha**.

Ancient method of time reckoning

The Vedic seers had an elaborate method of reckoning time. They combined genius with religion so that it appealed to the intellectual and the devoted alike. There were several methods of reckoning time. One standard method was as follows:

1 Asu (or Prana)	= 4 (sidereal) seconds
6 Asus	= 1 sidereal Pala (or Vighati or Vinadi or 24
60 Palas	= 1 Ghati (24 minutes)
60 Ghatis	= 1 day (24 hours)
30 days	= 1 month
12 months	= 1 year
43, 20, 000 years	= 1 Yuga
72 Yugas	= 1 Manu
14 Manus	= 1 Kalpa (or 1008 Yugas)
2 Kalpas	= A day and night of brahma
30 day-nights of Brahma	= 1 month of Brahma
12 months of Brahma	= 1 year of Brahma
100 years of Brahma	= Life of Brahm (or 1 Mahakalpa

In addition to the above, the following methods of reckoning of time were used for astrological purposes :

1. Sidereal day = Time interval between one star-rise to the next
2. Civil day = Time interval between one sunrise to the next
3. Lunar month = One new moon to the next
4. Solar month = Interval between entry of Sun from one sign to the other.
5. Solar year = Period of one solar revolution
6. Jupiterian (Barhaspatya) = Period of Jupiter's motion through a sign.

Circular divisions

Measures of angles have been similarly described by Vedic astronomers.

60 Prataparas	=	1 Tatpara
60 Tatparas	=	1 Vilipta (or Vikala or
60 Vilipta	=	1 Lipta (or Kala or minute)
60 Lipta	=	1 Lava (or bhaga or amsha or degree)
30 Lavas	=	1 Rasi (Sign)
12 Rashis	=	1 celestial circle or a

Planets and the zodiac

The planets revolve around the Sun at different velocities in elliptical orbits. They also appear to revolve around the earth in elliptical orbits.

Says Parashara:

"Although the grahas proceed towards the east, they appear as if they are moving in the westward direction, under the influence of the 'force of flow'."

The following three factors are of importance:

I. The rotation of the earth from west to east direction : Even as this causes the day as well as the night, it also makes the planets appear to be moving from east to west across the earth.

II. Daily revolution of the zodiac from east to west : The rotation of the earth makes the whole zodiac also appear as if it is making one daily revolution around the earth. In one day-night duration, all the signs of the zodiac (and all the nakshatras) successively rise in the east and set in the west.

III. The movement of the planets from west to east : Although the daily rotation of the earth makes the Sun and other planets appear to be moving from east to west, in effect they move from west to east along the zodiac. Thus a planet in Mesha will actually proceed to Vrisha, and then to Mithuna, and so on.

Order of the planets: Aryabhata describes the order of planets thus:

"Beneath the asterisms lie (the planets) Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon (one below the other); beneath them all lies the earth....."

Planets as lords of days and Horas: Aryabhata continues:

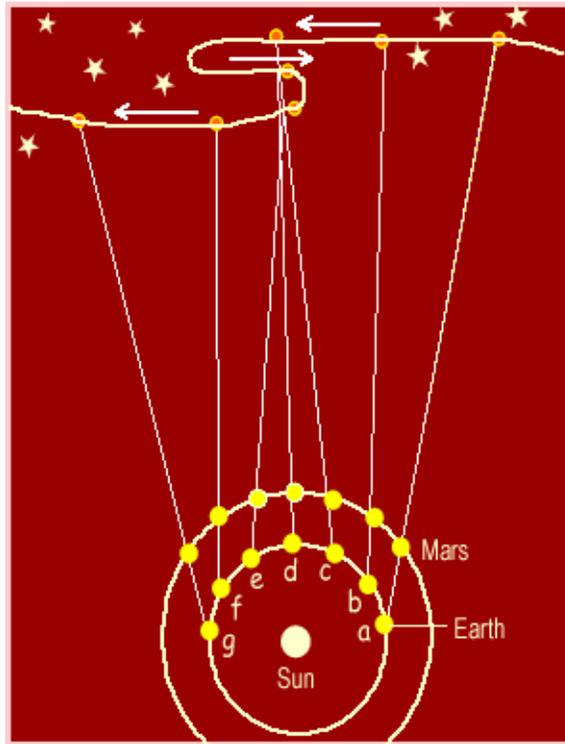
"The (above mentioned) seven planets beginning with Saturn, which are arranged in the order of increasing fourth in order of increasing velocity are the lords of the successive days, which are reckoned from sunrise."

There are 24 Horas in a day. Each Hora is being (approximately!) equivalent to an hour. The first Hora on a day, starting from sunrise, belongs to the lord of the day itself. Subsequent Horas follow in the order as given above, i.e., Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, etc., until the end of day at next sunrise.

From Saturn, the fourth in order is the Sun; therefore, the Sun is the lord of the day following the day of Saturn. That is, Sunday follows Saturday. From the Sun, the fourth in order is the Moon. Therefore, Sunday is followed by the day of the Moon, i.e., Monday.

Inner and Outer planets: The planets Mercury and Venus have their orbits between the Sun and the earth. They are called **inner or inferior planets**. These planets cannot go far away from the Sun. Mercury can only move a maximum of 27 degrees from the Sun and Venus a maximum of 47 degrees from the Sun.

The planets Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, whose orbits lie outside the orbit of the earth, are called **outer or superior planets** .



Phenomenon of apparent retrogression in an outer planet as viewed from the earth

Retrogression and direct motion: Planets move along the zodiac from west to east, around the Sun. However, when seen from the earth, sometimes their motion appears to be occurring in a reverse direction against the background of the stars. This apparent motion in the reverse direction is called as retrogression of planets and has special significance in predictive astrology. Rahu and Ketu, which are not true planets, however, always move in retrograde direction.

Combustion of planets: Planets when too close to the Sun become invisible and are labelled as combust. A combust planet loses its strength and tends to behave adversely according to predictive astrology. **Aryabhata** has the following to say about combustion:

"When the Moon has no latitude (i.e., when it is at zero degree of latitude) it is visible when situated at a distance of 12 degrees from the Sun. Venus is visible when 9 degrees distant from the sun. The other planets taken in the order of decreasing sizes (viz., Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn and Mars) are visible when they are 9 degrees increased by twos (i.e., when they are 11, 13, 15 and 17 degrees) distant from the Sun."

The degrees as mentioned above are generally taken as the limits within which the respective planets are said to be combust.

Planets as gods

Planets represent concentrations of energy. They influence the terrestrial phenomena by their disposition in the heavens. The sage Parashara, the father of Vedic astrology as understood and practised today, considers the planets as the representatives of gods. According to him:

(i) The Sun represents lord Rama.

(ii) The Moon represents lord Krishna.

(iii) Mars stands for lord Narsimha, the half human-half lion form of the lord.

(iv) Mercury represents lord Buddha.

(v) Jupiter represents lord Vamana, who attained the form of a dwarf to rid the world of the rule of demons. (vi) Venus represents lord Parshurama.

(vii) Saturn represents Kurma, the Tortoise incarnation of the lord.

(viii) Rahu represents Sookar, the Boar incarnation of the lord.

(ix) Ketu represents Meena, the Fish incarnation.

Even as the lord, according to Gita incarnates to safeguard the interests of the righteous and to punish the evil-doers, so also the planets undertake their benevolent and punitive actions. In other words, they behave as benefics and malefics in a horoscopic chart. All planets, true to their godly nature, produce both good and bad results. The actual results produced by them manifest according to the inherent nature of these planets.

LESSON 3 : ELEMENTARY CONCEPTS OF ASTRONOMY (Part -4)

The Panchanga

Knowledge of astrology is useful for daily use in Indian homes. All the daily rituals and even day to day pursuits make use of astrology. While predictive astrology was mainly restricted for the kings in ancient times, practical astrology in the form of what we call today as electronic astrology was of concern to the layman as well.

The Indian almanac which details information about the festivals, rituals and planetary combinations for the purpose of election of a suitable moment, and has been in use since times immemorial, is called a Panchanga .

A panchanga consists of five parts :

1. Thithi or the lunar date.
2. Vaara or the day of the week.
3. Nakshatra or the lunar asterism
4. Yoga
5. Karana

While vaara or the day of the week is the function of the sun alone, the other four parts of the panchanga depends on the desposition of the moon alone or the moon-sun duo. The moon thus has a special significance in vedic astrology, besides the sun.

Lunar months

The moon goes round the earth once in a lunar month. Like other planets, it moves from west to east along the zodiac although the rotation of the earth makes it appear to be moving in the reverse direction. One revolution of the moon around the earth produces what is called a lunar months :

(a) **The sidereal month** : This is the period of time when the moon takes one round of the zodiac, as observed from the earth. It's duration is equal to 27.3217 mean solar days (or 27 days 7 hours 43 minutes approximately). During this period the moon when observed from a fixed star, moves once round the zodiac and returns to the same star.

(b) **The symbolic month** : This is the period of time which elapses between the new moon and the next. It's duration is 29.5306 mean solar days (or 29 days 12 hours 44 minutes approximately). The synodic month is also called a lunation. A new moon indicates a conjunction of the sun and the moon. The synodic month is larger than a sidereal month because it indicates the relation of the moon with the sun. During one revolution of the moon, the sun too moves along the zodiac by slightly less than one sign. To catch up with the sun (in order to complete the synodic month) the moon, thus has to take some extra time.

(c) **The nodical month** : The intersection of the ecliptic by the moon's path results in the formation of the ascending and descending nodes of the moon, respectively known as rahu and ketu. They move in the reverse direction along the zodiac. A nodical month is the time taken by moon to complete one round from rahu to rahu. Since rahu moves in the reverse direction the rahu meets the moon slightly earlier along the zodiac. The duration of the nodical month is approximately 27.2122 mean solar days.

(d) **The anomalistic month** : This is the duration of time that the moon takes to complete one revolution around the earth, in its orbit from perigee to perigee. It's duration is approximately 27.5546 mean solar days.

The moon loops around the earth in an elliptical orbit just as the earth does around the sun. The orbit itself is in constant flux due to perturbations caused by the sun and other planets. Perigee is the point at which a body (the moon, in this case) in orbit around the earth is at least distance from the earth. Whereas apogee is the point when the body is farthest.

An anomalistic lunar month is the lunar equivalent to the solar anomalistic year which indicates the passage of the sun around the earth from perigee to perigee.

Perihelion and Aphelion are the equivalents of perigee and apogee, with the sun as the center and the planets orbiting around it.

Cycles of moon

A lunar year generally considered for astrological purposes, is a synodic year consisting of twelve synodic months amounting to approximately 354 days. It consists of 360 tithis i.e. thirty tithis in a synodic month. This year falls short of a solar year of about 365.25 days by eleven days.

If totally lunar calendar was followed, the various seasons would fall to coincide with the lunar months. Since a lunar year would end eleven days before a solar year. This would mean a difference of over a month every three solar years. In order to compensate and make the solar and lunar calendars work side by side a luni-solar concept has been developed. The extra lunar month is considered every third year or before. This extra month is called an intercalary month. The use of various yuga cycles consisting of three year cycles, five year cycles, eight year cycles, eleven year cycles, nineteen year cycles and thirty year cycles etc., are signified brilliant attempts by Indian pre-vedic astronomers to harmonise the solar and lunar years. The nineteen year cycle appears to be the most accurate yuga or cycle. It consists of seven intercalary months over a period of nineteen solar years. It implies that in a period of 228 solar months, there are 235 lunar months (new moons or full moons).

The metonic cycle: Consistent with the above observations is the discovery by Meton (433 BC) that there occur 235 lunations in a period of nineteen solar years. It will be seen that total number of days in nineteen years come out to be 6939.60 days. Total number of days in 235 lunar synodic months come out to be 6939.69 days. The two figures are remarkably close. It means that 228 solar months is equal to 235 lunar months. The nineteen year luni-solar cycle is so accurate that the tithis or lunar days fall on the same days after nineteen years. Even such astronomical phenomenon as the eclipses recur after nineteen year intervals with accuracy.

Adhika maasa or the intercalary month : The sun changes its sign or rashi every month. The day it enters a sign is called as its ingress into that sign. A lunar month in which there is no solar ingress into a sign is considered as intercalary month. An intercalary month occurs in 32 solar months and 16 days. This means that an intercalary month occurs in every three years and this year has thirteen lunar months.

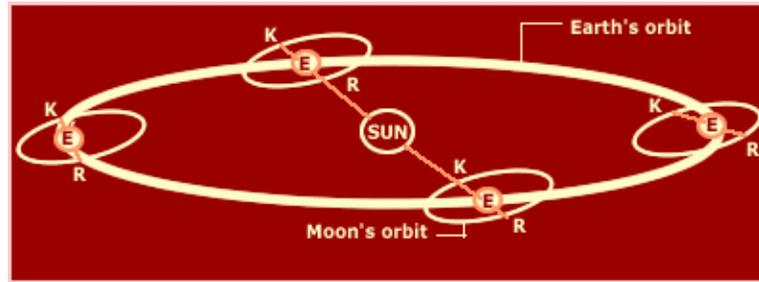
Kshaya maasa or omitted month : This happens when there are two solar ingresses (i.e. sun enters two signs) during one lunar month. This happens very infrequently. When there is an omitted month, there occurs two intercalary months during one year.

Paksha : A paksha consists of fifteen lunar dates or we can say two paksha make one lunar month. A Krishna paksha extends from Purnima (full moon) to Amavasya (new moon). A Shukla paksha extends from new moon to full moon.

Moon's nodes

The moon's apparent path intersects the ecliptic obliquely at two points called nodes. This is similar to the sun's path or the ecliptic intersecting the equator at an oblique angle. The point where the moon crosses the ecliptic from south to north is called the ascending node or rahu. Where it crosses the ecliptic from north to south is called the descending node or ketu. These two points are six signs or 180 degrees apart. Just as the equinoctial point shifts westwards on the ecliptic at a constantly shifting point. Thus rahu and ketu go on receding or shifting westward along the ecliptic. Their movement is therefore constantly retrograde. They complete one round of the zodiac in approximately eighteen years and ten days.

Rahu and ketu, though only astronomical points have a special status in vedic astrology. They are treated as graphs or planets, like any other planet.



The orbit of the earth around the sun and that of the moon around the earth. Rahu and ketu are formed where the moon's orbit intersects the apparent path of the sun around the earth.

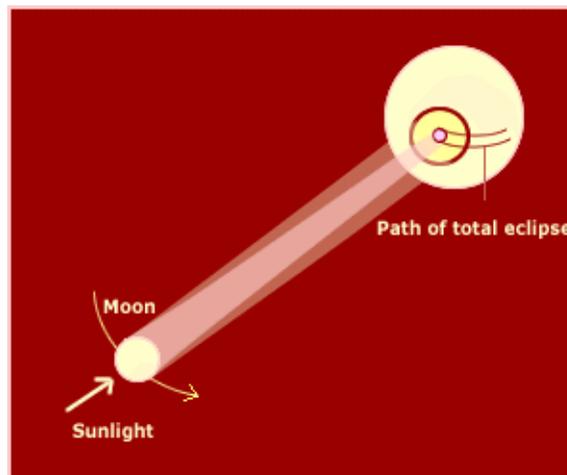
LESSON 3 : ELEMENTARY CONCEPTS OF ASTRONOMY (Part -5)

The eclipses

There are two kinds of eclipses :

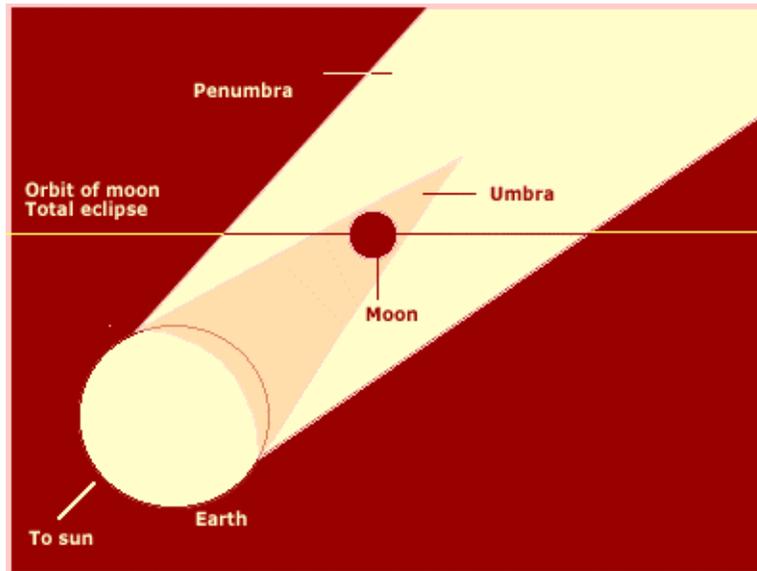
1. Solar eclipses.
2. Lunar eclipses.

A solar eclipse occurs when the shadow of the moon falls on the earth. This means that at the time of the eclipse the moon lies between sun and earth. This happens on a new moon day, when the sun and the moon are conjunct and lie on the same side of the earth. Since the orbit of the moon is tilted at an angle of 5 degrees approximately to the ecliptic, the sun-moon-earth trio does not fall on same line on every new moon day. Hence there is no eclipse on every new moon day.



Solar eclipse

A lunar eclipse occurs when the moon lies opposite to the sun with the intervening between the two. The shadow of the earth falls on the moon. This happens on the full moon day when the sun-moon-earth trio falls on the same line. Again, because of the obliquity of the moon's path to the ecliptic, this situation does not arise every full moon day.



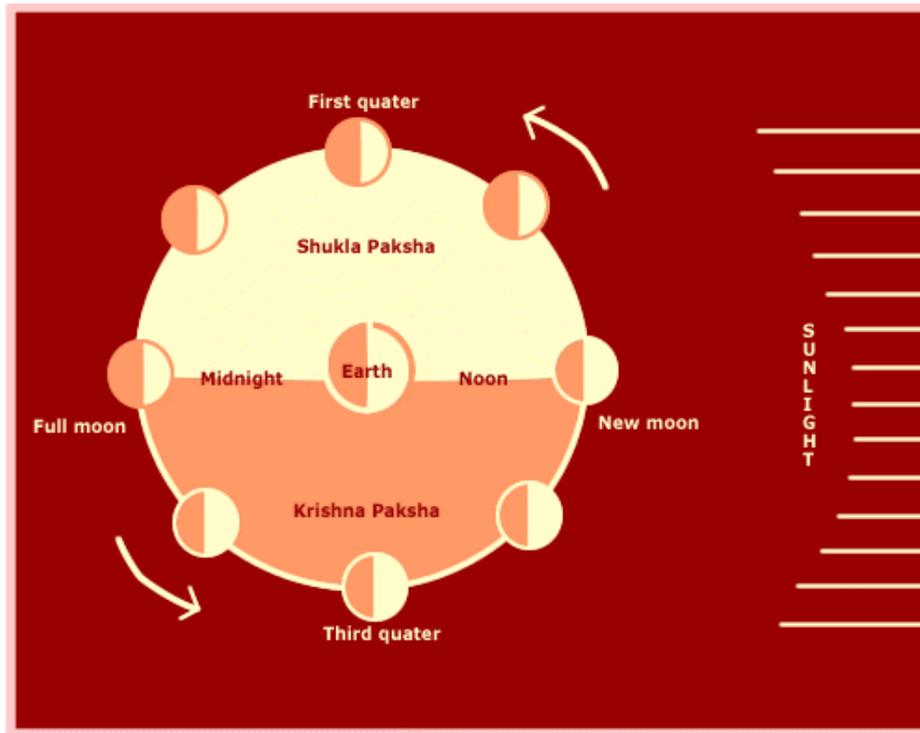
Lunar Eclipse

It has been pointed out that the moon's path crosses the sun's path at the ascending and the descending nodes (i.e. Rahu and ketu). The moon must, therefore, be fairly close to rahu and ketu and the sun too must be close enough to ensure that the earth, the sun and the moon fall on the same line. **""Swallowed by rahu""** is an expression applied to the eclipsed luminary. A solar eclipse is likely to occur if a new moon occurs within 18.5 degrees of the node (rahu or ketu) and certainly if the distance is less than 15 degrees. A lunar eclipse occurs on a full moon day, likely when the distance between the moon and the sun nodes is less than 12 degrees, and certainly when the distance is less than 9.5 degrees. A maximum of seven eclipses (4 or 5 solar; 2 or 3 lunar) are possible in any given year

Tithis or lunar dates

There are thirty lunar dates or tithis, of 12 degrees each (12*30 = 360 degrees). A tithi is indicative of the moon's separation from the sun. It is obtained by subtracting the longitude of the sun from the longitude of the moon, and dividing the above value by twelve. The quotient plus one gives the number of the tithi operating on any particular day. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{Moon} - \text{Sun}) / 12 \\ & \text{Tithi} = Q + 1 \end{aligned}$$



Phases of the moon

The tithis are counted from the 1st of the bright half or shukla paksha. The sun's conjunction with the moon coincides with the 30th tithi or the amavasya. When the moon overtakes the sun, but lies within its 12 degrees, it is the 1st lunar date of the shukla paksha. At 180 degree separation, with the moon opposed to the sun, it is the 15th of the shukla paksha, called as poornima. From here onwards starts the krishna-paksha, or the darker half. The tithis here again start from 1st and goes upto the 15th or the amavasya, when the moon and the sun conjoin. A tithi that is operating at the time of sunrise, on a particular day is the tithi operating on that whole day. Tithi is extremely important in performing day to day rituals and in electoral astrology.

Vridhhi or additional tithi: A tithi that extends from before sunrise on one day to after sunrise on next day is called as vridhhi tithi. Such a tithi operates on successive two days.

Kshaya or omitted tithi: A tithi that begins after sunrise and ends before sunrise on next day is called as kshaya or omitted tithi. This tithi is supposed to miss operation during that lunar cycle.

Yogas

There are twenty seven yogas. Each yoga measures 13.20 degrees of arc ($360/27=13.20$). A yoga indicates a sum of the longitudes of the moon and the sun in multiples of 13.20 deg. Although this measure of a yoga is the same as that of a nakshatra, there is no link between the two. Add the niryana longitudes of the sun and the moon and divide by the first one (vishkumbha) onwards. The 27 yogas are listed below :

1. Vishkumbha
2. Preeti
3. Ayushman
4. Saubhagya
5. Shobhana
6. Atiganda
7. Sukarma
8. Dhriti
9. Shool
10. Ganda
11. Vriddhi
12. Dhruva
13. Vyaghata
14. Harshana
15. Vajra
16. Siddhi
17. Vyatipata
18. Variyana
19. Parigha
20. Shiva
21. Siddha
22. Sadhya
23. Shubha
24. Shukla
25. Brahma
26. Indra
27. Vaidhriti

Yogas like tithis find extensive use in electional astrology and day to day rituals.

Karana

A karna is half the tithi, or 360 minutes (6 degrees) of arc. In thirty tithis comprising a lunar month, there are sixty half-tithis or karnas. There are four karnas that occur only once in a lunar month. They are the fixed karnas and called as :

1. Shakuni : assigned to the latter half of the 14th day of the krishna paksha.
2. Chatuspada : assigned to the first half of the amavasya (15th day of the krisna paksha).
3. Naga : assigned to the latter half of the amavasya.
4. Kimstughna : assigned to the first half of the first day of the shukla paksha.

The remaining 7 karna recur eight times during rest of the lunar month. Their names are :

1. Bava
2. Balava
3. Kanlava
4. Taitila
5. Gara
6. Vanija
7. Vishti

These karnas recur in regular order starting from the second half of the first day of the shukla paksha until the first half of the 14th day of the krishna paksha. Karnas too find their use in rituals and electional astrology.

Some astronomical facts about planets

The following is a very brief discription of the planets which are of relevance in vedic astrology.

SUN

This is the most important of the nine grahas. In fact the sun is our nearest star in the space with planets revolving around it. It is the source of all the natural light and the heat of the earth. It provides the centripetal force to balance the centrifugal force generated by the planets going around it. It's diameter is 1.392 million kilometers, which is almost 109 times the diameter of the earth. The mass of the sun is some 323,000 times the mass of the earth. It has extremely high surface and core temperatures, and goes on producing immense amount of energy. At one time the sun was considered as the center of the universe (this was never the view of vedic astrology), but now we know it lies near the edge of the spiral arm of the milky way galaxy, lying some 30,000 light years from the galactic center, and sharing the rotation of the galaxy.

MOON

It is a satellite of the earth. In vedic astrology it is of great importance. It is the fastest moving grah and has the usual west to east movement along the zodiac. It has relatively small size, its diameter being only about 3476 kilometers. Its average distance from the earth is about 384,400 kilometers. It always presents the same face towards earth because it takes the same time to rotate once on its axis as it does to revolve once around the earth i.e. 27.32 days. Since the rotation is a uniform motion, while the motion in orbit is not, we may sometimes see an extra strip of the moon's surface on one or the other side. Some 59% of the total surface of the moon may thus be visible to us on the earth at one time or the other. This phenomenon is called as libration.

The luminosity of the moon is caused by the light from the sun. It is the varying relative positions of the sun and the moon that produce the phases of the moon. These lunar phases, earlier discussed as tithis, are extremely important in vedic astrology.

MARS

Mars is the first of the outer planets and fourth in order of distance from the sun. Its orbit is highly elliptical as compared to that of earth, due to which its closest position may be only 56 million kms. whereas at its farthest it may reach upto 100 kms. The brilliance of the mars depends upon its location. Mars is only twice as large than earth's moon. Its diameter being 6786 kms. It is at a mean distance of 227.8 million kms from the sun.

The synodic period of the mars is 780 days, which is the interval between martian oppositions to the sun, with the earth lying in between. Mars rotates on its own axis in 1.026 days and has an orbital period of 687 days. Mars has two small satellites called phobo and deimos.

MERCURY

Mercury is the planet nearest to the sun and hence is extremely hot. It has a very eccentric orbit so its minimum distance (perihelion) from the sun is much less than its maximum distance (aphelion). Its mean distance from the sun is about 58 kms. and its diameter is 4870 kms, and its maximum inclination of about 7 degrees on either side of the ecliptic. Mercury rotates once round its axis in 58.65 days which is 2/3rd of its orbital period of about 88 earth days. (planet has maximum speed at perihelion and minimum at aphelion).

JUPITER

Jupiter is the largest planet of the solar system, its mass exceeding that of all the other planets combined together. Its rapid spin (once in 9 hours 50 minutes) has caused it to bulge at equator (diameter at equator 143,000 kms.) and to flatten at the poles (diameter 133,000 kms.). It is 318 times as massive as the earth and less than the 1000th part of the sun. Its mean distance from the earth is 778 million kms. and has an orbital period of 11.86 earth years.

Being far away from the sun, it is a cold planet with its gaseous cloud having a temperature of 140 deg. below freezing point. There are perhaps 16 satellites which circle around jupiter

VENUS

Venus is the second nearest planet to the sun. Its dense cloudy atmosphere reflects light extremely efficiently and accounts for the brilliance of this planet in the sky. The maximum inclination of this orbit is about 3.24 deg. on either side of the ecliptic. It is located at a mean distance of 108 million kms. and has a diameter of about 12,000 kms.

The rotation period of venus is 242.6 days. An important fact about the rotation of venus is that it is retrograde, that is opposite to the general direction of rotations in the solar system. The orbital period of venus is about 224.7 days.

SATURN

It is the last of the naked eye planets. Its mean distance from the sun is 1426 million kms. Its rotation period is approximately 10 hours 14 minutes, and its orbital period is 29.46 years. Saturn has a diameter of over 142 thousand miles at the equator. Being further away from the sun, saturn is a cold planet . It is larger than the rest of the planets (except jupiter) and is about 95 times as massive as the earth. Its characteristic feature is the presence of rings around it. At least twenty satellites are known to revolve around the planet.

The extra -saturnine planets (uranus,neptune and pluto) need the help of a telescope for their identification They do not form a part of predictive vedic astrology and are, therefore, not treated of here.

LESSON 4 : VEDIC METHOD OF INSTRUCTION : (PART - 1)

Ancient Indian teaching methods involved a personal instruction by the teacher to his disciple. The teacher, called as "**Guru**", would generally live in seclusion, away from city life, and have a select group of disciples, called '**Shishyas**'. It would only be the good fortune of a 'shishya' if he managed to secure a good 'guru'. Similarly, a great 'guru' would strive to find a deserving disciple. The teacher-disciple relation used to be a highly affectionate relationship, with the teacher commanding the same, nay more, reverence from his disciple as the latter owed to their parents. The ancient historical records of India find their place in the **Puranas**. In these Puranas, generally there is a story being told by an elevated sage to one or more seekers of knowledge.

The Signs

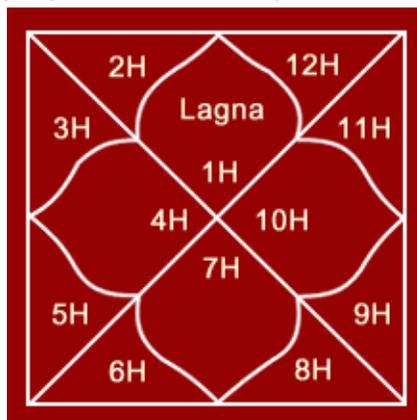
There are twelve signs of the zodiac. One of the signs happens to be the sign rising at the eastern horizon at the time of birth. This rising sign is called the **lagna or the ascendant**. The lagna happens to be the first house of the horoscope. By this is meant that the houses and signs do not coincide. The first house has the label of the sign rising at the time of birth, the second bears the label of the sign that will rise next, and so on.

The nine grahas (from the Sun to Ketu) or 'planets' are the occupants of these houses. The houses represent certain characteristics. The signs falling in these houses also represent certain characteristics, and the two intrmingle to indicate something newer. Then the planets which occupy them inflict further modifications.

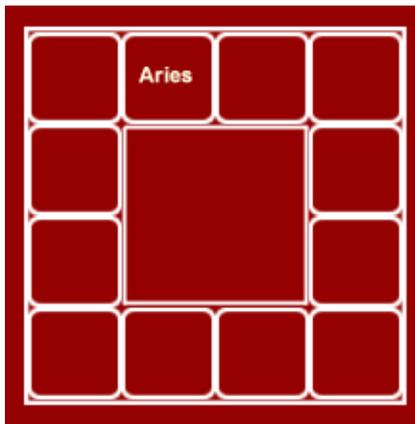
In order to be able to make any fruitful predictions, it is essential to understand the meanings of the signs, houses and planets.

A Horoscopic Chart

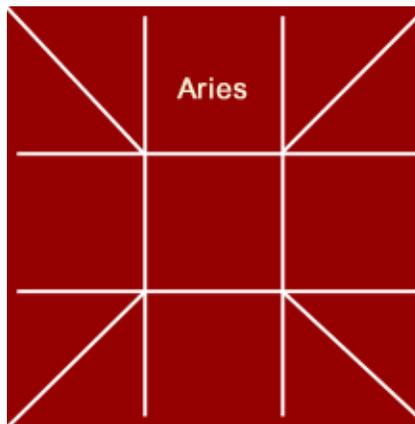
(A) **North Indian Chart** is the one in which the order of the houses is fixed. It consists of four central rhomboidal houses (which are numbered 1, 4, 7 and 10, starting from the upper central rhomboid) and eight triangular houses. The sign rising at the time of birth is marked in the first house or the upper central rhomboid, and the remaining signs marked in regular order in an anti-clockwise direction.



(B) **The South Indian Chart** has the signs in a fixed order in the chart. The lagna is marked in the appropriate sign. The remaining houses are counted in a clock-wise direction.



(C) **An Eastern Indian Chart**, often used in Bengal and Orissa, also has the signs in a fixed order in the chart. The ascendant is marked in the appropriate sign. The remaining houses are counted in an anti-clockwise direction.



Whatever the type of horoscopic chart preferred, the planets are placed in the houses bearing the signs in which the planets are located astronomically.

The Signs (or Rashis)

The signs of the zodiac have special features which are being described here.

(1) **Appearance and Habitat** : The twelve signs of the zodiac each have a specific appearance and a habitat.

The sign **Mesha** resembles a ram. It circulates among the goats, the sheep and region holding wealth and precious stones. It wanders on grassy lands, and around lakes surrounded by vegetation.

The sign **Vrisha** resembles a bull. Cowhouses and farmlands are its place of residence.

A man and a woman bearing a trumpet and a harp represent the sign **Mithuna** whose places of residence are the couch and the lounge. This dual sign haunts the sports lovers and the pleasure houses.

Karkata has the appearance of a crab and lives in water. Its places of residence include water-filled garden beds, river banks and un-inhabited lands.

Simha (resembling a lion) resides in the mountains, forests, caves, inaccessible places, deep ditches and the living places of hunters.

Kanya (consists of a woman) standing in a boat and holding corn and a lamp in her hand, inhabits women's pleasure rooms.

Narda! Tula is represented by a man holding a balance in his hands, and its residences include lanes, bazaars, towns, routes and buildings.

Vrishchika resembles the scorpion in appearance. It moves in crevices and pits. Its areas of residence include poisons, animal excreta, stones and insects.

Of **Dhanu**, the legs are like those of a horse. It is radiant and holds a bow and arrow.

The mouth of **Makara** is like that of a deer, shoulders like those of a bull and eyes like those of an elephant. It moves in the rivers and resides in the ocean.

Kumbha resembles a man wearing wet clothes and holding on his shoulders an empty pitcher. It moves in gambling houses and resides in drinking dens.

The sign **Meena** consists of two fishes lying side by side, the head of one being beside the tail of the other. It haunts pious places, temples of gods and houses of Brahmins.

(2) **Parts of the body** : The various signs from Mesha onwards represent (1) head, (2) face, (3) shoulders, (4) chest, (5) heart and stomach, (6) abdomen, (7) lower abdomen and groin, (8) external genitalia, (9) thighs, (10) knees, (11) calves, and (12) feet.

(3) **Stature** :

Of **short stature** are signs Mesha, Vrisha, Kumbha and Meena (i.e., 1, 2, 11 and 12).

Of **tall stature** are the signs Simha, Kanya, Tula and Vrischika (i.e., 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Of **even stature** are the signs Mithuna, Karka, Dhanu and Makara (i.e., 3, 4, 9 and 10)

(4) **Diurnal strength** :

Strong during night are the signs Mesha, Vrisha, Mithuna, Karka, Dhanu and Makara. Except Mithuna, they rise by the hind side (Prishtodaya)

Strong during day are Simha, Kanya, Tula, Vrischhika, Kumbha and Meena. Except Meena, they rise by the head (Sheershodaya).

Mithuna too rises by the head.

Meena rises both by the head and the tail (Ubhayodaya)

(5) **Malefic/Male** : Odd signs, viz., 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11.

(6) **Benefic/Female** : Even signs, viz., 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

(7) **Movable or otherwise** : Signs 1, 4, 7 and 10 are **movable** ; they indicate change and mobility.

Signs 2, 5, 8 and 11 are **fixed** ; they indicate stability and fixity.

Signs 3, 6, 9 and 12 are **mixed** ; they indicate a balance between the fixed and movable signs.

(8) **Directions** :

East	signs 1, 5 and 9.
South	signs 2, 6 and
West	signs 3, 7 and
North	signs 4, 8 and

(9) **Inherent nature** :

Fiery	signs 1, 5 and 9.
Earthy	signs 2, 6 and
Airy	signs 3, 7 and
Watery	signs 4, 8 and

(10) **Biological characters** :

Quadrupeds	signs 1, 2, 5, posterior half of 9, and anterior half
Bipeds	signs 3, 6, 7, 11, and anterior half of 9.
Insect (Keeta)	signs 4 and 8.
Those inhabiting water	signs 12, and rosterior half of 10.

(11) **Constituent characters :**

Mineral (Dhatu) signs 1, 4, 7 and 10.
Vegetable (Moola) signs 2, 5, 8 and 11.
Animal (Jeeva) signs 3, 6, 9 and 12.

(12) **Caste :**

Kshatriya signs 1, 5 and 9.
Vaishya signs 2, 6 and 10.
Shudra signs 3, 7 and 11.
Brahmin signs 4, 8 and 12

(13) **Lords :** Of the twelve signs, starting from Mesha, the lords are respectively Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Moon, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Saturn and Jupiter.

LESSON 4 : VEDIC METHOD OF INSTRUCTION : (PART - 2)

The Houses

The twelve houses of a horoscope deal with all conceivable aspects of life. The most important of all houses is the lagna or the first house. The remaining houses are basically related to the first house only. The planets in the horoscopic chart are subservient to the lagna, and their original nature undergoes modifications depending upon the lagna.

- (1) The **Kendras** (or Quadrants) : Houses 1, 4, 7 and 10. These are highly significant houses.
- (2) The **Panapharas** (or Successant Houses) : Houses 2, 5, 8 and 11.
- (3) The **Apoklimas** (or Cadent Houses) : Houses 3, 6, 9 and 12.
- (4) The **Trikonas** (or Trines) : Houses 1, 5 and 9. These are highly auspicious and along with the Kendras, determine the health, wealth, status, dignity, rise and virtue of a native.
- (5) The **Upachaya** : Houses 3, 6, 10 and 11. These houses indicate struggle, competition and material achievement.
- (6) The **Trik Houses** : Houses 6, 8 and 12. These are considered bad houses. They indicate debt, disease, loss and misery.
- (7) The **Ayu-sthanas** (or houses of longevity) : Houses 8 and 3. They indicate the length of life and, therefore, also the death.
- (8) The **Maraka-sthanas** (or killer houses) : Houses 2 and 7.
- (9) **The two halves of a horoscope :**

(a) Houses 1 to 7 indicate the **invisible half** and houses 7 to 1 indicate the **visible half** of the horoscope.

(b) Houses 10 to 4 indicate the **eastern half** and houses 4 to 10 indicate the **western half** of the horoscope.

The Planets

Nine main planets are employed in Vedic Astrology. Their English equivalents and symbols are given below :

Vedic name	English equivalent	Symbol
Ravi (Surya)	Sun	
Chandra	Moon	
Mangala	Mars	
Budha	Mercury	
Guru (Brihaspati)	Jupiter	
Shukra	Venus	
Shani	Saturn	
Rahu	Rahu (Dragon's head)	
Ketu	Ketu (Dragon's tail)	

(1) Physical Attributes

The Sun has a square build, scanty but curly hair, lovely appearance, good intelligence, impressive voice, medium stature, red eyes, dark red complexion, strong bones, bilious nature, firm temperment and saffron robes.

The Moon has a slim but roundish body, beautiful appearance, lovely eyes, sweet tongue, phlegm and wind in his composition, white complexion, short curly hair, amiable nature, Sattvika inclination, discriminating wisdom, restless nature, excessive sexual urge, white robes.

Mars is characterised by fierce red eyes, short stature, tough and youthful body, fickle but generous disposition, short but shining and curly hair, valorous nature, Tamasika inclination, eagerness to hurt, easy excitability, bilious disposition and fair complexion.

Mercury has a slim and beautiful body, large reddish eyes, dark green complexion, healthy skin, medium height, clear and witty speech, expression with multiple meanings, Rajasika inclination, plenty of energy, bile, wind and phlegm in his composition, and green robes.

Jupiter has a big belly and a fat body, pale eyes, virtuous disposition, phlegmatic temperament, knowledge of scriptures and sciences, bright yellow complexion, Sattvika inclination, sharp intelligence, keenness in religious pursuits, forgiving nature and yellow-coloured dress.

Venus is dark brown and handsome, of symmetrical limbs and dark curly hair, writer of poetry, and has an amorous disposition. He has long arms, broad chest, excessive seminal fluid, windy and phlegmatic temperament, Rajasika inclination, grace, vigour, wisdom and intelligence, and multi-coloured robes.

Saturn has a tall, lean and weak body, dark complexion, stiff hair and limbs, large teeth, lazy disposition, windy temperament, cruel nature, Tamasika inclination, lame, dark and shabby robes.

Rahu and Ketu have a bluish complexion resembling smoke, wild in bearing, intelligent, and of windy disposition.

(2) Planetary Lordship :

The Sun owns	Simha
The Moon owns	Karka
Mars owns	Mesha and Vrischika
Mercury owns	Mithuna and Kanya
Jupiter owns	Dhanu and Meena
Venus owns	Vrisha and Tula
Saturn owns	Makara and Kumbha

(3) Castes :

Brahmins	Jupiter, Venus
Kshatriyas	Sun, Mars
Vaishyas	Moon, Mercury
Shudra	Saturn

(4) Essential nature :

Sattvika (good and	Sun, Moon,
Rajasika (active and	Mercury, Venus
Tamasika (dark and base)	Mars, Saturn

(5) Rulership in respect of the Kaala-Purusha :

Sun	Soul
Moon	Mind
Mars	Essence
Mercury	Speech
Jupiter	Wisdom and comforts
Venus	Seminal fluid
Saturn	Miseries

(6) Social status :

King	Sun, Moon
Commander-in-	Mars
Heir-apparent	Mercury
Ministers	Jupiter, Venus
Servant	Saturn
Army	Rahu and Ketu

(7) Gender :

Masculine	Sun, Mars, Jupiter
Feminine	Moon, Venus
Eunuchs	Mercury, Saturn

(8) Rulership over body constituents :

Sun	Bones
Moon	Blood
Mars	Marrow
Mercury	Skin
Jupiter	Fat
Venus	Seminal fluid
Saturn	Nerves

(9) Places represented :

Sun	Temple
Moon	Watery place
Mars	Place of fire
Mercury	Playground
Jupiter	Treasure house
Venus	Bedroom
Saturn	Dirty places, sites of refuse disposal

(10) Directions :

Sun	East
Moon	North West
Mars	South
Mercury	North
Jupiter	North East
Venus	South East
Saturn	West
Rahu	South West

(11) **Directional strength :**

Mercury, Jupiter	East (Lagna or the 1st house)
Sun, Mars	South (10th house)
Moon, Venus	North (4th house)
Saturn	West (7th house)

(12) **Benefics and Malefics :**

Natural benefics	Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus
Natural malefics	Sun, Mars, Saturn, Rahu, Ketu

The waning Moon and afflicted Mercury too behave as malefics.

(13) **Exaltation, Debilitation and Moola Trikona :** Planets are strong and favourable when placed in their exaltation signs or in Moola Trikona signs.

Exaltation, Debilitation and Moola Trikona of Planets.

Planet	Exaltation	Debilitatio	Mooltrikona
The Sun	Aries 10°	Libra 10°	Leo 0°-20°
The	Taurus 3°	Scorpio 3°	Taurus 4°-20°
Mars	Capricorn	Cancer 28°	Aries 0°-12°
Mercury	Virgo 15°	Pisces 15°	Virgo 16°-20°
Jupiter	Cancer 5°	Capricorn 5°	Sagittarius 0°-10°
Venus	Pisces 27°	Virgo 27°	Libra 0°-15°
Saturn	Libra 20°	Aries 20°	Aquarius 0°-

(14) **Natural Mutual Relationship of Planets :** Planets according to their nature, are disposed as friends or enemies or neutrals towards other planets. A planet's friends are the lord of its exaltation sign as also the planets owning houses 2, 12, 5, 9, 4 and 8 from its Moola Trikona sign.

Natural mutual relationship of planets.

Planet	Friends	Enemies	Neutrals
The Sun	Mon, Mar, Jup	Ven, Sat	Mer
The Moon	Sun, Mer	--	Mars, Jup, Ven, Sat
Mars	Sun, Mon, Jup	Mer	Ven, Sat
Mercury	Sun, Ven	Mon	Mars, Jup, Sat
Jupiter	Sun, Mon, Mar	Mer, Ven	Sat
Venus	Mer, Sat	Sun, Mon	Mars, Jup
Saturn	Mer, Ven	Sun, Mon, Mar	Jup

(15) **Temporal relationship** : Besides their natural disposition as friends, enemies or equals(neutrals) towards each other, planets become friends or enemies of each other depending upon their location in a horoscopic chart.

Temporal friends : Planets located in houses 2, 12, 3, 11, 4 and 10 from any planet become its temporal friends.

Temporal enemies : Planets located in houses 1 (i.e., conjunction), 7 (opposition), 5, 9, 6 and 8 from any planet become its temporal enemies.

(16) **Five grades of relationship** : On the basis of their natural and temporal disposition towards each other, planets may have any of the five grades of relationships given below :

	Natural	Temporal	Resultant
1.	Friend	Friend	Bosom friend
2.	Friend	Enemy	Neutral
3.		Friend	Friend
4.		Enemy	Enemy
5.	Enemy	Friend	Neutral
6.	Enemy	Enemy	Bitter enemy

(17) **Aspects, Combustion and Retrogression** : Planets exert their influence on the houses and planets that they aspect. All planets fully aspect the seventh house, or planets located therein, from their own position. In addition, the outer planets (Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) have been granted special aspects. Thus Mars also fully aspects houses 4 and 8, Jupiter houses 5 and 9, and Saturn houses 3 and 10. The remaining planets cast a quarter glance on houses 3 and 10, Half an aspect on houses 5 and 9, and three-quarter aspect on houses 4 and 8.

Planets when close to the Sun tend to lose their strength and vitality, and are considered to be **combust**. A combust planet loses its capacity to do good and produces adverse results. Planets also become **retrograde** when, during their motion, they appear to be moving in a reverse direction. The Sun and the Moon do not become retrograde while Rahu and Ketu (almost) always move in a retrograde direction. A retrograde planet produces unexpected results and is generally adverse for health. A retrograde planet also exerts influence from its preceding house.

LESSON 4 : VEDIC METHOD OF INSTRUCTION : (PART - 3)

Nature of Planets

Analysis of a horoscopic chart requires a thorough understanding of the nature of planets. It is on the basis of a proper knowledge of the nature of planets that good and bad results can be predicted with any accuracy. Before venturing into predictive aspect of astrology, it is imperative on the part of a practitioner of astrology to spend some time mastering the principles that govern the benevolence and malevolence of planets.

Planets may be benefic or malefic by nature. Or they become benefic or malefic depending upon the nature of the rising sign in a horoscope. Benefic and malefic planets produce their results when their appropriate dashas operate. Dashas thus help us in the timing of events.

The nature of various planets is determined on the basis of standard astrological principles mentioned by the classical writers.

The following account is primarily a reproduction of the same principles.

Malefics and Benefics by nature

Planets may be malefic or benefic depending upon their inherent nature. Thus, Jupiter, Venus, waxing Moon and well-associated Mercury are natural benefics. Similarly, the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu, waning Moon and afflicted Mercury are natural malefics. The Moon though a mild and benevolent planet, behaves as a malefic when too close to the Sun. Mercury gets influenced too easily; it thus behaves as a benefic under benefic influence and as a malefic under malefic influence. Rahu and Ketu too can behave as benefics especially when placed in the signs of Jupiter and Mercury.

Benefics and Malefics for different Lagnas

Parashara's Principles

Planets behave as benefics and malefics depending on the houses they own. The ownership would naturally vary from one lagna to the other. In other words, for a given lagna, certain planets will behave as benefics while others will behave as malefics or neutrals. This will be independent of their inherent nature. Planets thus are subservient to the lagna. On the basis of the principles discussed hereunder, a natural benefic may assume the role of a malefic while a natural malefic may assume a benefic role.

Principles - Part I

(a) Natural benefics as lords of quadrants (houses 1, 4, 7 and 10) shed their beneficence.

(b) Natural malefics as lords of quadrants shed their malefic nature.

Note :

(1) Natural benefics are the Moon, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus; natural malefics are the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.

(2) Lordship of quadrants has a neutralising influence on the nature of planets. The natural benefics thus lose the capacity to give benefic results, while the natural malefics lose their capacity to do harm.

(3) Only the ownership of quadrants does not convert benefics into malefics, and vice versa.

(c) Lords of trines (houses 1, 5 and 9) give benefic results no matter whether by their inherent nature they are benefics or malefics.

Note : Lord of the lagna is both the lord of a quadrant and a trine. It is thus supposed to give benefic results irrespective of its inherent nature.

(d) Lords of the third, the sixth and the eleventh houses are always malefic.

(e) Lords of the second, the eighth and the twelfth houses behave as neutrals. They give results according to their location as well as association.

Note : Lords of the 2nd, 8th and 12th houses are impressionable neutrals.

Principles - Part II

The twelve houses in a horoscope have been divided into four groups above : (a) the quadrants; (b) the trines; (c) the 3, 6, 11 group; and (d) the 2, 8,12 group. In each group the relative strength of the various house lords is described thus

(a) Of the lords of the quadrants, the 4th lord is more powerful than the lagna lord; the 7th lord is more powerful than the 4th lord; and the 10th lord is more powerful than the 7th lord.

(b) Of the trine lords, the 5th lord is more powerful than the lagna lord, while the 9th lord is more powerful than the 5th lord.

(c) Of the 3, 6, 11 group, the sixth lord is more powerful than the 3rd lord while the 11th lord is more so than the 6th lord.

(d) Of the 2, 8, 12 group, the 12th lord is more powerful than the 2nd, while the 8th lord is more so than the 12th.

Principles - Part III

The lord of the 8th house, though considered a neutral, has a special propensity to do evil. The eighth house represents obstructions, obstacles, failures, intrigues, ailments, death and the like. The following points must be remembered while considering the 8th house.

(a) Eighth house is the 12th from 9th (indicating loss of Bhagya); hence its lord is ever malefic.

Note :

(i) 12th house from lagna indicates loss. 12th house from any house indicates loss of that house. Since the 9th house stands for Bhagya (luck), virtues, pious deeds, religious inclinations, father, etc., the 12th from it (i.e., the 8th) indicates the loss of all these. Loss of fortune or luck is considered the biggest loss.

(ii) When the 8th lord is also lagna lord, the benefic nature of the lagna lordship prevails, and the 8th lord tends to behave as a benefic unless it is particularly afflicted or ill placed.

(b) The 8th lord is still more malefic when it also lords over the 3rd or the 11th house.

Note :

(i) For Pisces ascendant, Venus is the lord of the third and the 8th houses and is bad.

(ii) For Virgo ascendant, Mars is the lord of the third and the eighth houses and, therefore, adverse.

(iii) For Taurus ascendant, Jupiter is the lord of the 8th and the 11th houses, and is adverse.

(iv) For Scorpio ascendant, Mercury as the lord of the 8th and the 11th houses is bad

(c) The eighth lord becomes a benefic when it also owns a trine.

Note :

(i) Jupiter and Mercury for Leo and Aquarius ascendants respectively own the 5th and 8th houses, and behave as benefics.

(ii) For Gemini ascendant, Saturn as the lord of the 8th house as well as the 9th house (a trine) does not become an outright benefic, and, according to the Bhavartha Ratnakara, gives mixed results only.

(d) The evil effects of the 8th house lordship do not apply to the Sun or the Moon.

Note : The Moon is the 8th lord for Sagittarius ascendant, and the Sun for Capricorn ascendant. According to the sage Parashara, the Sun and the Moon remain un-afflicted by the 8th house lordship. This, however, may not hold true in actual practice, at least in medical astrology.

Principles - Part IV

(a) When a planet owns both a quadrant and a trine, it becomes particularly useful and is called a Raja-yoga-karaka (doer of great benefit). It gives additional benefit if it is also located in a quadrant or a trine.

Note :

(i) Mars for Cancer and Leo ascendants, Venus for Capricorn and Aquarius ascendants, and Saturn for Taurus and Libra ascendants, become Yoga-karakas because of the ownership of a trine and a quadrant.

(ii) Some people doubt the efficacy of Saturn as a benefic for Taurus ascendant despite its ownership of the 9th and the 10th houses (a trine and a quadrant respectively). This is because the 9th lord is considered a Badhaka (an obstructing agent) for a fixed lagna like Taurus. This, however, is not the view of Parashara which is more authentic.

(b) Only the ownership of a quadrant does not convert a malefic into a benefic. The malefic must also own a trine to completely shed its malevolence.

Note : Saturn, as the lord of the 10th and the 11th houses for Aries ascendant, as lord of the 3rd and the 4th houses for Scorpio ascendant, and as the lord of the 6th and the 7th houses for Leo ascendant, remains a malefic despite owning a quadrant in each case.

(c) The blemish of kendra lordship (ownership of quadrants), as applicable to benefics, increases progressively from the Moon, to Mercury, to Jupiter, to Venus.

(d) Full Moon, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus, in this order, are progressively more powerful as benefics.

(e) Waning Moon, the Sun, Saturn and Mars, in this order, are progressively more powerful as malefics.

Principles - Part V (Raja Yogas)

When the lord of a quadrant is in some way related to the lord of a trine, a Raja Yoga (or a highly benefic combination) is formed. Benefic combinations in a horoscope neutralise affliction and are good for remaining free from disease. Relationship between any two house lords can be in one of the following ways :

(a) By location in the same house (conjunction).

(b) By mutual aspect.

(c) By an exchange of houses (Parivartana Yoga).

(d) When one of them is placed in the other's house and this latter aspects the former.

Note : When the lords of quadrants and trines are related in one of the ways indicated above, they still do not produce a Raja yoga if they also own the Papasthanas (adverse houses), i.e., houses 3, 6 and 11.

Principles - Part VI (Rahu and Ketu)

(a) Rahu and Ketu give results according to the house where they are located, and according to the planet (i.e., the lord of a house) whom they join.

(b) Rahu and Ketu become Yogakarakas (productive of Raja Yoga) in the following situations :

(i) When they are placed in a quadrant, and join a trine lord; or

(ii) When they are placed in a trine, and join a quadrant lord.

(c) Rahu also behaves as Saturn and Ketu also as Mars.

Trik Houses and their Lords

Houses 6, 8 and 12 are known as Trik houses. While these houses, their lords, as well as the planets that associate with these houses and their lords are productive of adverse results, they are particularly adverse in relation to health. The sixth house and the sixth lord, among other things, indicate disease and accidents. The eighth house and the eighth lord indicate chronic disease, incurable disease, or death. The twelfth house and its lord indicate suffering and also hospitalisation. The dasha periods of the planets associated with these houses and their lords must be carefully watched for determining illness.