Systems and Divisions of Vedic Astrology
Christina Collins

One of America's leading practitioners of Mundane Astrology explains the major types of Jyotish and clarifies confusing Sanskrit terminology.

Natal Astrology
Most people work within the natal branch of astrology. A natal chart is the blueprint of an individual formed by the planetary configuration present at the moment of birth. Jyotish (Vedic astrology) employs many divisional charts and systems in addition to the rasi or "main" chart, and twelve houses of 30 equal degrees. It uses yogas or planetary configurations, of which there are hundreds, and timing systems called dasas. Jyotish uses the sidereal rather than the tropical system for its calculations.

Dasa Systems
Jyotish uses dasas as predictive tools for ascertaining possible future events, and when an incident or experience may occur. There are fifty or more planetary time period systems. Most commonly used is the Vimsottari which illuminates the period affecting a person (or event) at any given time. The nine planets calculated for a chart have their individual time period when they will influence the life, when it’s their turn to play their card. Each planet's cycle of years is slightly different and varies in length from six to twenty years; it takes 120 years to complete the full cycle. We calculate the dasas from the position of the natal Moon at birth. This gives a probability factor for when particular types of events may occur, although this can be modified by possible decisions an individual makes as controller of their own destiny. Personal choice can lessen a negative tendency and increase a positive trend: it’s up to the individual. One can look both ways before crossing the street, or just walk into the street without looking. One can run smack into a wall, or just gently bump the nose—but if the discovery has been made that the wall may be there, one may miss it entirely! The terms maha dasa, bhukti, antaradasa, sooksma and prana are names for the major period (maha dasa) and subdivisional periods of time.

Predictive Astrology
In the branch of Predictive Astrology the following are just some of the techniques employed:

GOCHARA/TRANSITS reflect the daily movement of planets as related to the natal (rasi), or event (prasna) chart. A transit will have a more significant effect if its dasa or bhukti is in operation. Today's planets superimposed over the birth chart form aspects that render current meaning. These transiting planets are read like conjunctions when in the same sign as a natal planet, and the other aspects apply much as they do in the nativity. This is similar to having a second set of planets at all times connecting with your own. It's really like a weather report. Possible rain, take your umbrella. Possible accident, don't speed in the car. Possible love, get out and circulate. Jokingly said, this illustrates a very important point. You have free will. If you have the chart of a president but you never leave your small town—guess who won't be president? It is true that there are certain parameters that can't be changed, but it is also true that when transits bring us into our potential, it is up to us to live up to that potential. Also, we must always keep in mind the totality of the natal chart and its tendencies, before making predictions. Is the chart accident prone? Love prone? The full picture gives us the general weights and balances, then we apply the transit connections.

PRASNA/HORARY addresses a query; it’s a “Question Horoscope.” This predictive technique employs the concept that this is the chart of an idea or issue rather than of an individual. For instance, "Will I get fired from my job?” or "Should I go into partnership with this person?" There are many interesting forms of prasna in addition to calculating an actual rising sign for a horoscope. In some cases the person is asked to toss a coin or flower onto a chart to determine its ascendant. This is not that common in the West where so much astrological work is done by telephone. When the birth time is unknown a prasna chart is cast and a
natal reading is given based on the moment the astrologer is approached by the person. Many astrologers calculate the ascendant using the longitude and latitude where he or she resides when receiving the question.

**MUHURTA/TIME AND DATE DETERMINATION** selects the most auspicious time for an event to take place, such as weddings, engagements, announcements, business incorporation, court filing and appearance dates, dissolution of contracts (business or marriage), travel, or performing any important action desiring a good result. Just as positive placements in a natal chart give good results in life, a good chart for starting something important can give a good outcome.

**Relationship Compatibility**

Synastry (kuta in Sanskrit) involves taking two or more charts and comparing them for harmonious aspects and agreement. It is most often used prior to marriage for determining the compatibility between two prospective mates, but also in business for choosing partners or employees. In Jyotish, not only are the planetary positions compared but the constellations of the Moon play a major role in determining marriage suitability. A special system called the Kuta Agreements compares each of the 27 nakshatras or lunar mansions to each other, ascertaining which pairing would prove most fortunate. The operating dasa systems are also taken into account for comparison. This system can really help people understand why they do or don’t get along with their parents or children. It helps show how best to communicate, and if difficulties are present, what can be done or improve them. This is one of many places where remedial measures, such as gemstones or mantras, can be of assistance.

**Propitiation/Remedial Measures**

Ayurvedic and medical astrology frequently make use of propitiation and remedial measures. This involves the use of gemstones, mantras, service, prayer, or sacred rituals for balancing the chart in a more hopeful direction. Most common is the recommendation of a gem for a chart to strengthen the person energetically. There are a couple of basic schools of thought.

1. Strengthen the benefic planets so that weak benefics cannot cause harm. Often the stone for the ruler of the rising sign or Moon will be recommended.
2. Give a stone for a malefic planet, "feed the hungry tiger so it won't eat you!" A stone for the ruler of the 8th house (house of longevity), or for a malefic dasa ruler is often given in this category.

Until one has a great deal of experience with this, it is usually held that it is "safer" to give benefic stones.

**Medical Astrology**

Medical astrology uses astrology to understand and diagnose potential health problems so that preventative measures can be taken to avert possible illness. It is also used when a chronic or difficult problem exists to aid in diagnosis. Medical astrology can assist a person in understanding why health problems or accidents happen to them. It also helps them to know when there will be light at the end of the tunnel, and when they can expect improvement. People can bear their burden far more gracefully and with more hope if they know it isn't going to last forever. And, in the cases where it will, or when the disease is indeed life threatening, it can aid them to recognize that it might be time to get their affairs in order. This branch is closely aligned with Ayurveda, and many Ayurvedic physicians also practice Jyotirveda (Vedic Astrology).

**Naming**

Each of the 27 nakshatras or Moon mansions is comprised of four equal parts or padas, and each pada has a sound allocated to it. The most common use of this sound system (nama nakshatra) is for naming people and businesses. The degree of the natal Moon determines the first syllable or initial sound chosen for an individual's name. In India where written records of birth times are not often kept, knowing this sound provides the approximate degree of the Moon, thereby ensuring the horoscope can be reconstructed when needed. Another potential use arises when an auspicious name sound is requested for a new or existing business.

**Mundane/World Events**
Mundane Astrology involves observing the transits to the charts of a nation and its ruler, an event and its native, or an event in nature, and its location. For example:
1. Following political affairs by comparing the chart of a nation and its leader.
2. Predicting natural disasters and earth changes, or a country's economic or political climate.
3. Following the planets for their influence in financial markets.

Study of this system also assists the astrologer when reading a natal chart. If you have learned that an aspect between Mars and Saturn causes war to break out, or that an eclipse of the Sun or Moon can bring an earthquake, then when you see this occur in a person's chart, your depth of understanding of the individual increases. Or if you notice that the transiting Mars will soon aspect an individual's Saturn, you can give timely counsel.

Spiritual/Esoteric
This system illustrates the soul path of an individual or nation. It is used to determine life purpose, career, past life credit, and religious or spiritual tendencies. Here considerations such as caste and ganam (whether the person’s tendencies are “angelic, human or demonic”) are determined in order to assist the individual in finding or following their chosen path. A good way to observe spiritual tendencies is to study the charts of saintly persons or spiritual teachers. Another technique is to look at the nakshatras of all of the planets of an individual, and determine their quality (ganam).

There are many other branches of Vedic astrology, some less commonly used, such as meteorological (to predict weather), financial (to predict the markets), and agricultural (for planting and harvesting crops).

Components of a Vedic Birth Chart

RISING SIGN/LAGNA: Found along the ecliptic (the "apparent" path of the sun, or in actuality the orbit of the earth around the sun) are the twelve constellations of the zodiac, which we call "signs." Each of these twelve signs rise for approximately two hours. The sign rising in the east at the time of birth is known as the rising sign or lagna. Each sign belongs to a division called a house and each house division has 30 degrees in the Vedic Equal House system. In Jyotish, the rising sign and the Moon sign are the primary areas of focus—this is why it is so important to obtain the correct time of birth. If one is born just as a sign was changing, one minute can make a difference, changing the rising sign and the house placement of planets. Chandra lagna means using the sign the natal Moon is in as the rising sign. In Jyotish the Chandra lagna is often read in addition to the usual birth chart.

RASI KUNDALI and NAVAMSA: The rasi kundali or natal chart is the primary chart calculated. It is the birth chart or blueprint of the native. The navamsa (ninth harmonic) chart, considered the "fruit of the tree," gives the hidden or subtle side to an individual's life, and clues to the person's partners. Where one person could exhibit a very positive natal chart (i.e. a strong and healthy tree), the navamsa may show "bitter fruit." Another person's natal chart may seem complicated and troublesome, yet portray "sweet fruit," having great hidden strength and hopefulness in the navamsa chart.

Supplementally we employ many other divisional charts for further specific life experience reference. Rectification verifies the time of birth and is one of the many times where the navamsa is of great assistance. If the navamsa doesn't give correct results when questioning the individual, then the birth time should be corrected until the navamsa rings true.

HOUSE MEANINGS: Each house has many meanings. A brief synopsis of some of these meanings follows:

House 1: The self, identity, personality, soul, physical health and the ego, and the head.
House 2: Personal finance, earnings by individual effort, early family life, the face, mouth, and the throat.
House 3: Creativity, courage, communication, younger siblings, short journeys, the arms, hands and chest.
House 4: The home, vehicles, mother, agriculture, fixed assets, emotions, education and the stomach.
**House 5:** Pleasures, romance, children, intellect, sports, speculation, meditation or spiritual practices, the heart and lower back.

**House 6:** Sickness, service, pets, medical connections, enemies and litigation or war, and the intestines.

**House 7:** Marriage, partnerships (business and other), bladder and kidneys.

**House 8:** Misery, hidden things, inheritance, chronic conditions, longevity, unearned wealth, reproductive and organs of elimination.

**House 9:** Religious nature, spirituality, long distance travel, the personal relationship with the father, the hips and thighs.

**House 10:** Career or life purpose, occupation, the world's view of the father, and the knees.

**House 11:** Prominent people, friends, cash flow and profit, shins and ankles.

**House 12:** Losses, moksha or liberation, institutions (hospitals, prisons and monasteries), abstinence or bed pleasures, and the feet.

**HOUSE RULERS or LORDSHIP:** Each house has a ruling planet. The position of the ruler of a house gives further meaning to a particular house. This rulership is taken into account even when planets are not posited in a house. Depending on planetary placement, a greater or lesser amount of focus may be spent discussing one house over another. Do not be concerned if a chart has a house without planets. There are nine planets and twelve houses. It does not mean that a house without planets will not have an influence.

**Planets**

Jyotish calculates the signs for the major planets — Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, and includes the Moon's nodes Rahu (north) and Ketu (south), but does not include the trans-Saturnian planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, which are further away. It was once thought that the ancients did not use these more distant planets for lack of knowledge of their existence. However, through translations of many Vedic texts it is believed that indeed they knew of their existence, but felt that these planets were too slow moving for individual impact, and seemed to have more of an effect on large groups of people and world events. What was found to have a major influence on individuals though, were the nodes of the Moon: Rahu and Ketu. Known as the shadow planets, these points were found by experience to have major effects and so were given full planetary value. These points are known in the West through solar and lunar eclipses. Additionally, each planet will be in one of 27 nakshatras (also called asterisms, lunar mansions, constellations or "stars"). These stars form the background of the 12 signs of the zodiac.

In ancient cultures, astrology was as much a part of life as any other aspect. Wouldn't it be nice today, if at about the time children are taught to tell time, they were also started with planetary instruction? This would offer both a renewal of the past, and a future to dream for. I applaud you all in your perusal of this most ancient science, in the hopes that it will bring more "light" (jyotish) into the world.

---

*Christina Collins is founder and CEO of the Colorado School for Vedic Astrology, and received the Jyotish Kovid Award from the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences in 1994. She is a third generation astrologer and teacher. She can be reached at 3165 Arnett Street #2, Boulder, CO 80304, 303/786-7868.*