

## ORATION

### Astrology and mental illness

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## ABSTRACT

Astrology is an ancient system which was said to be predictive of human nature, character and health, it has a very significant history and at times it gives an idea that it is nearly scientific, but, rigorous experiments with the available scientific methodologies of present times. The history of astrology, ancient significance, dictions and contradictions are discussed in the presented paper.

**Key words:** astrology; science; predictions; controversies

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## INTRODUCTION

Do planets really influence our life, character and health? This question has been pondered for several years, by several people at several times but the final answer is elusive. This will leave us to answer a question, how man had become an inhabitant of this planet, and how life has started on this planet or elsewhere. There are religious as well as scientific explanations with controversial and inconclusive statements, each group stick to their arguments, though there is enough evidence to the contrary. Anyway, neither religion nor science is yet to deliver their final answer to this conundrum. Is man a product of a universal design with a creator who supervises life on earth or merely a combination of chemicals and a few random accidents? Science, which is objective, verifiable and evidence based explains, that( simple organic molecules, similar to the nucleotides, are the building blocks of life must have been involved in its origin, suggesting that organic molecules could have been synthesized in the atmosphere of early Earth and rained down into the oceans. RNA and DNA molecules- the genetic material for all life-are just long chains of simple nucleotides (Guanine, Adenine, Thymidine and Cytosine) forming the basis of life. <sup>[1,2]</sup> And, the genetic programming which determines , neurogenesis, neuronal growth, neuronal migration , differentiation and subsequent growth of the individual determine the path and course of human (biological) existence. Religion (Theism) described as subjective, intuitive, anecdotal,

dogmatic and allegorical has a different version. According to Bhagavata Purana, <sup>[3]</sup> process of evolution takes place through 8,400,000 species of life, which includes 900,000 aquatic species, 2,000,000 non moving species such as vegetables and hills, 1,100,000 germ and insect species, 1,000,000 bird species, 3,000,000 lower-animal species, and 400,000 human species. The living spirit transmigrates from one species of life to another, and he is moving in that way for millions and millions of years within the hollow of the great universe. Science says man has evolved from a lower species, but, may not be agreeing on transmigration of soul, etc, which is dismissed as a blind belief. But, there are many blind spots in scientific reasoning also. Many of the religious dogmas do not stand to the scientific reasoning of modern times that leaves philosophy to make its attempt to explain. Indian systems of philosophy which had many religious and certain scientific concepts incorporated into them were mainly taken as religious, than scientific concepts. The main schools of Indian philosophy, <sup>[4]</sup> were formalized chiefly between 1000 BC to the early centuries AD. The orthodox are Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsha and Vedanta. Whereas, the Heterodox are Jain, Buddhist and materialist (Charvaka). The Sankhya philosophy best explains the continuity of human life with concepts of super soul, soul and its transmigration, etc. All these Indian systems of philosophy are derived from Vedas which means knowledge. <sup>[5, 6]</sup>

### Origins of astrology

Astrology comes from the early Latin word astrologia, deriving from the Greek noun 'account of the stars'. Astrologia later passed into meaning 'star-divination'. Early human beings made conscious attempts to measure, record, and predict seasonal changes by reference to astronomical cycles. evidence of such practices appear as markings on bones and cave walls, which show that lunar cycles were being noted as early

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as 25,000 years ago; the first step towards recording the Moon's influence upon tides and rivers, and towards organizing a communal calendar. [7] Agricultural needs were also met by increasing knowledge of constellations, whose appearances change with the seasons, allowing the rising of particular star-groups to herald annual floods or seasonal activities. By the third millennium BCE, widespread civilizations had developed sophisticated awareness of celestial cycles, and are believed to have consciously oriented their temples to create alignment with the heliacal risings of the stars.

Indian Astrology, dating back at least ten to twenty thousand years, originated from Vedic scriptures which are the oldest books of the world library. They are the world's most ancient scriptures and the most vast, complete system of knowledge known to man. Thus, Indian Astrology is the science of understanding the subtle influences that come to us from the greater universe. The Indian text on Jyotisha is derived from the Vedanga Jyotisha which describes rules for tracking the motions of the sun and the moon. There are very few texts considered most important exist in scholarly editions or translations, such as the Yavanajataka (3rd century), Brhat Samhita (6th century), Brhat Parasara Horasastra (7th century) or Saravali (8th century), while many remain unedited in Sanskrit or vernacular manuscripts. There is scattered evidence to suggest that the oldest known astrological references are copies of texts made during this period.

Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa (compiled in Babylon around 1700 BCE) reported to have been made during the reign of king Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BCE). [8] Edswarqly use of electional astrology is ascribed to the reign of the Sumerian ruler Gudea of Lagash (ca. 2144–2124 BCE). [9] This describes how the Gods revealed to him in a dream the constellations that would be most favourable for the planned construction of a temple. However, there is controversy about whether they were genuinely recorded at the time or merely ascribed to ancient rulers by posterity. The oldest undisputed evidence of the use of astrology as an integrated system of knowledge is therefore attributed to the records of the first dynasty of Mesopotamia (1950–1651 BCE). Pingree, [9, 10] notes that astrology and traditional medicine are the two traditional sciences that have survived best in modern India, although both have been much transformed by their western counterparts. Astrology remains an important facet of Hindu folk belief in contemporary India. Many Hindus believe that heavenly bodies, including the planets, have an influence throughout the life of a human being, and these planetary influences are believed to be "fruit of one's karma" The navagraha, planetary deities, are

considered subordinate to God, i.e., the Supreme Being) and assist in the administration of justice. Thus, these planets can influence earthly life.

There are other types of astrology, like the Chinese astrology, western astrology, etc. Western Astrology, [11-14] is a form of divination based on the construction of a horoscope for an exact moment, such as a person's birth. It uses the tropical zodiac, which is aligned to the equinoctial points. Western astrology is founded on the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies such as the Sun, Moon, planets, which are analyzed by their movement through signs of the zodiac (spatial divisions of the ecliptic) and by their aspects (angles) relative to one another. They are also considered by their placement in houses (spatial divisions of the sky).

[1] Astrology's modern representation in western popular media is usually reduced to sun sign astrology, which considers only the zodiac sign of the Sun at an individual's date of birth, and represents only 1/12 of the total chart. [1] The names of the zodiac correspond to the names of the constellations originally within the respective segment and are in Latin. Chinese astrology was elaborated during the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) and flourished during the Han dynasty (2nd century BC to 2nd century AD). During the Han period the familiar elements of traditional Chinese culture - the Yin-Yang philosophy, theory of the five elements, Heaven and Earth, Confucian morality - were brought together to formalize the philosophical principles of Chinese medicine and divination, astrology and alchemy. According to Chinese astrology, a person's destiny can be determined by the position of the major planets at the person's birth along with the positions of the Sun, Moon and comets and the person's time of birth and Zodiac sign. The system of the twelve-year cycle of animal signs was built from observations of the orbit of Jupiter. [15-17]

Astrology which is said to predict the human character, health and future has a long past and a weak recognition in the present days, the reason for the weak recognition could be due to, i) Western education, ii) Since things do not often happen as predicted, iii) Lack of proof with the existing scientific understanding and scientific scrutiny, iv) Remedial measures do not yield expected results, v) Astrologers may add lot of their intuition before pronouncing the predictions, vi) Rationalists feel that the gullible are being exploited by astrologers. Astrology is a science or not is a big argument as the power of predictability is little over 10% with astrology, but 10% predictability is something which need to be pursued and the same may hold good for some scientific experiments also, but astrology is a fact for those who believe in it and for others who do not believe it, it is just a wasteful exercise..

**Birth month, time and health:**

Astrologers have mentioned that our month of birth holds secrets about our individual personalities and ultimate fate in life, and there is scientific and statistical evidence that suggests one's birth month can influence success or health. Astrological charts are prepared basing on the geographical location, time and season of birth of an individual. Science also says that health of an individual can be predicted by taking into account parameters such as time, season and geographical location. There is experimental evidence that links spring births and various disorders, including schizophrenia, multiple sclerosis and even type I diabetes mellitus. Those born in the fall live longer than people born in the spring, geographical location as evidenced by experiments. A study found that children born in December were 39 % more likely to be treated with medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) compared to children with a January birthday. A loss of hypocretin neurons has been observed in human narcolepsy; however, the cause of this disorder is still unknown. Patients with narcolepsy had a significantly different seasonality of month of birth compared to that of the general population. The monthly distribution of birth yielded a peak in March and a trough in September. No gender or country of origin differences was observed. African-American babies born in the summer and fall were smaller than those born at other times. Also, babies of African-American and Puerto Rican decent gained less weight in their first four months if they were born in the fall. Babies born in the fall have a 9.5 percent risk of food allergies, up from 5 percent for babies born in June and July. Those babies born in November or December were also three times more likely to suffer from eczema and wheezing. Moderate and severe nearsightedness, or the inability to see well at long distances, is highest for babies born in the summer. Birth month might even affect biological clock. Mice born in the winter were less able to adapt to a summer light cycle, which could be related to the increased risk of mental health disorders in humans born in winter the researchers speculated. Leukemia has also been linked to being born in the spring, with a peak in April. [18-24]

**Predictive astrology:**

Maharishi Bhrigu (most probably around 3000 BC) who was one of the seven great sages, one of the Saptarshis in ancient India is credited as the father of Hindu astrology and the "Bhrigu Samhita" which was authored by him was said to contain over 5 million horoscopes, in which he wrote down the fate of every being in the universe. According to popular tradition, only about a hundredth of these horoscopes have survived to this age, Maharishi Bhrigu was the first compiler of predictive astrology, Jyotisha. He compiled about

500,000 horoscopes and recorded the life details and events of various persons. This formed a database for further research and study. This study culminated in the birth of the science (shastra) of determining the quality of time (Hora) and is the Brihat Parasara Hora Shastra. These Horoscopes were based upon the planetary positions of the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Rahu (North Node of the Moon) and Ketu (South Node of the Moon). The total permutations/ possible horoscope charts that can be drawn with this is about 45 million. Though it is said that these horoscope have been recorded for all mankind who were, have and will be born till eternity. During foreign invasions of India by Muslim warriors from the North West in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Brahmin community became dispersed all over India. The invaders captured these prime assets of the Brahmins. Some parts of the 'Bhrigu Samhita' were taken away by them. The most unfortunate and destructive event was the destruction of the Nalanda university library where several thousands of the horoscopes compiled by Maharishi Bhrigu had been stored. Only a small percentage of the original horoscopes of Bhrigu Samhita remained with the Brahmin community which are now scattered throughout various parts of India. [11, 25] Planets with their large magnetic fields and gravitational interaction with the Earth, affect it physically. The Indian astrology defines the actual traits of an individual, marital compatibility, and the future based on the position of planets at the time and place of birth.

Albert Einstein said "Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible concatenations, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion. To that extent I am, in point of fact, religious". He further said "science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind." [26, 27] Jung opined astrology is one of the intuitive methods like the I Ching, geomantics, and other divinatory procedures. It is based upon the synchronicity principle, i.e. meaningful coincidence. Astrology is a naively projected psychology in which the different attitudes and temperaments of man are represented as Gods and identified with planets and zodiacal constellations. In a letter written to astrologer Raman on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1947, Jung felt as a psychologist he was chiefly interested in the particular light the horoscope sheds on certain complications in the character, and in cases of difficult psychological diagnosis he usually used to get a horoscope in order to have a further point of view from an entirely different angle. And very often he found that the astrological data elucidated certain points which he otherwise would have

been unable to understand. From such experiences he felt that “astrology is of particular interest to the psychologist, since it contains a sort of psychological experience which we call ‘projected’ - this means that we find the psychological facts as it were in the constellations.” [28-30] Brunton in his book “search in secrets of India” mentioned that the planets should be accepted as being only symbols which stand in the sky; it is not they which really influence us but our own past. One can never understand the reasonable nature of Astrology unless one accepts the Doctrine that man is born again and again and that his fate follows him with every birth (“Written in the stars” Ch.xiii pp 205-225). [31]

### **Mind, mental illness and planets:**

In Vedic astrology, the Moon and Mercury signify the mind. The rational intellect gets assigned to Mercury, while everything else having to do with mind was given to the Moon. The Sun rules the spirit, which is eternal, while the Moon, not having light of its own, has to reflect the light of spirit, and signifies the Eternal’s incarnation on the human plane. Thus, the Moon rules human consciousness in general, including both thoughts and feeling. According to Vedic mythology, the Moon is Mercury’s father: Mercury, the intellect, is born from the Moon. If Mercury, the rational mind, can be said to (ideally) perceive objective reality, then the Moon would be that part of us which experiences subjective reality, i.e., the conditioned mind, conditioned by our past experiences. Thus, in Vedic Astrology, the Moon specifically signifies our past, our memories, and our conditioned behaviour patterns. Attached to all of this accumulated data are emotional responses, an integral function of the Moon, which are what make the memory banks subjective. The placement of the Moon in the Vedic birth chart will show by its sign position, house position, and its involvement with other planets, what the conditioned patterns are in a particular case. We are each, in a sense, victims of our own past, and our inherited karma (past lives), which constitutes our conditioning. Essentially we are all distorting objective reality by experiencing the present circumstances through the filter of our past conditioning. This is the natural order of things; it is what makes the human plane a place of great variety. It also makes mutual agreement amongst humans nearly impossible, unless the conditioning has been the same or at least similar. Thus we establish better, smoother, relationships with those who share our conditioning, who share our past (which can be this life’s past or another life). [32, 33]

In Vedic astrology, the Moon governs our five senses, thus: “how you see is what you get”. What we are attracted to, the experiences we each desire, are dictated by the mental-emotional food that we have a

‘taste’ for. Thus, we avoid, shut out, or when there is no other choice, redefine those experiences that don’t fit with our own familiar mental constructions. The 4th house in any birth chart has various significations such as house, vehicles, peace of mind, mother etc. Generally most astrologers look at the 4th house with a view to deciphering whether the native will be blessed with comforts and vehicles. A significant aspect of 4th house is attributable to mental peace and inner purity. Generally 6th lord in 4 goes under the name “Kapata Yoga” or yoga for becoming a thief. It generally refers to lack of cohesion in thought, word and deed. Malefics in 4 or aspecting the 4th house make a person deceitful in all dealings and this in turn deprives the native of peace of mind. Mental stress is caused if the 4th house is aspected by malefics. To understand the full features of 4th house we need to look at Moon, Mars and Mercury. Moon is the karaka for mother. Hence, Moon and the 4th lord both afflicted lead to deprivation of maternal happiness. The greatest source of joy and comfort in this world is a loving mother. There is a saying that when a person is born, God also designates a “Guardian Angel” to look after that person. We know that a loving mother is the physical equivalent of that Guardian Angel. When Moon is afflicted, one’s mother will not be of any help to the native. So that could be one causative factor for mental anguish. “Insanity or madness will not be present unless the Moon and Mercury are involved in heavy afflictions”. This is because Moon rules the mind and Mercury rules certain emotions like sense of humor one will be blessed with peace of mind, happiness and comforts if the 4th house and 4th lord are free of any blemish of any sort. Benefics, such as Jupiter or Venus aspecting the 4th house would also give a person, cheerfulness, joy and enthusiasm. Stress is now considered as a serious causative factor in many psychosomatic disorders. [34] Varaha Mihira (505-587 CE), was an Indian astronomer, mathematician, and astrologer who lived in Ujjain. He was considered to be one of the nine jewels (Navarathnas) of the court of legendary ruler Vikramaditya (Taught the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II Vikramaditya). He was also an astrologer. He wrote on all the three main branches of Jyothisha (astrology). [35]

### **References to mental diseases by Varahamihira**

- Jupiter in ascendant (Lagna) and Mars in 7<sup>th</sup> house results in mental disorders
- Saturn in ascendant and Mars in 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> house results in mental disorders
- Reducing Moon in ascendant along with Saturn in 12<sup>th</sup> house can also result in insanity.

Prasna Marga is a unique work on astrology, natal and horary, of vital importance to every astrological scholar,

practitioner and student. The author, a Nambudari Brahmin of Kerala who wrote this book in 1650 A.D., was a renowned scholar and has culled valuable information from a number of ancient sources, touches on some of the most important aspects of life marriage, children, longevity, death, disease, etc. Part II of Prasna marga is an encyclopaedic work on matters that affect all areas of human life including dreams and their interpretation as indicators for death or disease and its timing etc. [36] Reference to mental illness as per Prasnamargam (these five states as narrated in Prasnamargam; if seen for a specific question it can be told that the particular subject has mental disorder; but, they may be weak when the horoscope is considered)

- When Jupiter is in ascendant, if Saturn is in the 7<sup>th</sup> house, it results in mental illness (as per Varahamihira this state results in Rheumatism.
- If reducing moon is associated with bad planets (Papagraha /Malifix) if in ascendant in 8<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> houses, it can result in mental illness.
- Combust Moon and Mercury together in ascendant can result in mental disorders.
- If Gulikan (Paapa graham) along with malifix planet is in the 7<sup>th</sup> house, it can result in mental disorders.
- Mercury along with a malefic planet in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> house can result in mental disorders.

### Contradictions and criticisms

Astrology largely has been declared as a pseudo science with falsified values. Scientists dismiss the electromagnetism and gravity theory which astrologers offer as explanations; calling them implausible, since, for example, the magnetic field, when measured from earth, of a large but distant planet such as Jupiter is far smaller than that produced by ordinary household appliances. Other astrologers prefer not to attempt to explain astrology, and instead give supernatural explanations, such as divination. The Synchronicity principle which Carl Jung explained as the basis of Astrology is derived from a single study he conducted, where no statistically significant results were observed. Synchronicity itself is considered to be neither testable nor falsifiable. The study was subsequently heavily criticised for its non-random sample and its use of statistics, and also its lack of consistency with astrology. Astrology has been declared a pseudoscience without demonstrable effectiveness in controlled studies and is without scientific validity. Those who continue to have faith in astrology have been characterized as doing so “in spite of the fact that there is no verified scientific basis for their beliefs, and indeed that there is strong evidence to the contrary”. The majority of professional

astrologers rely on performing astrology-based personality tests and making relevant predictions about the remunerator’s future. The former astrologer, and scientist, Geoffrey Deans and psychologist Ivan Kelly conducted a large scale scientific test, involving more than one hundred cognitive, behavioural, physical and other variables; they found no support for astrology. Furthermore, a meta-analysis was conducted pooling 40 studies consisting of 700 astrologers and over 1000 birth charts. Ten of these tests, which had a total of 300 participants, involved subjects picking the correct chart interpretation out of a number of others which were not the astrologically correct chart interpretations. When the date and other obvious clues were removed, no significant results were found to suggest there was any preferred chart. A further test involved 45 confident astrologers, with an average of 10 years experience and 160 participants (out of an original sample size of 1198 participants); they strongly favored certain characteristics on the Eyesenck personality questionnaire to extremes. The astrologers performed much worse than merely basing decisions on the individual’s age, and much worse than 45 control subjects who did not use birth charts at all. [37-39]

Science and non-science are often distinguished by the criterion of falsifiability. The criterion was first proposed by philosopher of science Karl Popper. Using this criterion of falsifiability, Popper regarded astrology as “pseudo-empirical” in that “it appeals to observation and experiment”, but “nevertheless does not come up to scientific standards”. [40, 41] In 1953, sociologist Adorno conducted a study of the astrology column of a Los Angeles newspaper as part of a project examining mass culture in capitalist society. Adorno concluded that astrology was a large-scale manifestation of systematic irrationalism, [42] where individuals were subtly being led to believe that the author of the column was addressing them directly through the use of flattery and vague generalizations. It has also been suggested that much of the continued faith in astrology could be psychologically explained as a matter of cognitive bias. [43]

Testing the validity of astrology can be hard because there is no consensus amongst astrologers as to what astrology is or what it can predict. Most professional astrologers are paid to predict the future or describe a person’s personality and life, but most horoscopes only make vague un-testable statements that can almost apply to any individual. Astrologers avoid making verifiable predictions and instead rely on making vague statements which allows them to try to avoid falsification. Astrology has been criticized for failing to provide a Physical Mechanism that links the movements of celestial bodies to their purported effects on human behavior. In a lecture in 2001, Stephen Hawking stated

that “The reason most scientists do not believe in astrology is because it is not consistent with our theories that have been tested by experiment.” In 1975, The Humanist magazine presented a rebuttal of astrology in a statement, entitled ‘objections to astrology’; it said that there is no scientific foundation for the tenets of astrology, and warned public against accepting astrological advice without questioning. Their criticism focused on the fact that there was no mechanism whereby astrological effects might occur. <sup>[44]</sup> Across several centuries of testing, the predictions of astrology have never been more accurate than that expected by chance alone. One approach used in testing astrology quantitatively is through blind experiment. When specific predictions from astrologers were tested in rigorous experimental procedures in the Carlson test, the predictions were falsified. The Shawn Carlson’s double-blind chart matching tests, in which 28 astrologers agreed to match over 100 natal charts to psychological profiles generated by the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) test, the study found that predictions based on natal astrology were no better than chance, and that the testing “clearly refutes the astrological hypothesis”. <sup>[45]</sup>

#### **Astrology in other religions:**

According to Catholic belief, all forms of divination are to be rejected. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums, all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict also on the basis the honour, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone. <sup>[46]</sup> According to Islam, the methods of astrologers conflicted with orthodox religious views that the ‘Will of God’ can be known and predicted in advance, and hence, astrology is not to be believed. <sup>[47]</sup>

#### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Astrologers believe that it is possible to make astrological predictions by studying the house position of a certain planet and the influence of other planets on the presiding planet of a chart. This, they say, requires deeper and devoted study, if not the predictions can go awry. Though the scientific explanations cannot be drawn about the value of predictability, those who believe continue to believe it. Hence, it is difficult to say which one gives a reasonable explanation to human creation, religion or science. I conclude to quote famous Indian Scientist Subba Rao who said, “If science prolongs life religion deepens it. <sup>[48]</sup>

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