Understanding Jyotisha astrology I: Theoretical aspects as a holistic spiritual science

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Abstract
Jyotisha expounds deep understanding of Vedic sciences of the soul. It is considered the supreme spiritual science, and is known in the Vedic literature as the ‘Science of the Sciences’, it illuminates the soul’s progress on the path of Sanatana Dharma. This paper shows how the structure of Jyotisha illustrates the Chaturvdiha Purushardha, the four-fold aims or goals of life, Dharma – Artha – Kama – Moksha. It enables expert Jyotishis to evaluate a soul’s subtle energies, merits and demerits, and so assist a native on the path to Moksha. The paper thus emphasizes how the structure of the Jyotisha Kundali offers deep insights into the nature and theory of Dharma. The Kundali indicates at each point in time the nature of active Prarabda Karma dominating a person’s life. Correctly used, Jyotisha implements the principle, “Heyam Dukham Anagatam”, Avert the Danger Yet to Come. Of fundamental importance in life are the influences of the Chaya Grahas, Rahu and Ketu, which carry forward Vasanas from previous Janmas. Jyotisha thus presents a perspective of supreme wisdom which, when wisely used, can solve problems, help the native avoid suffering, and advance the soul to spiritual fulfilment.

Keywords: Jyotisha, soul, dharma, Artha, Kama, moksha

Introduction
India’s ancient Vedic Sciences are often considered the height of mankind’s intellectual achievements [1]. Supreme among them is Adishankara Shankaracharya’s system of Advaita Vedanta [2], based on his celebrated commentaries on Bhagavad Gita [3], Brahma Sutras [4-6] and Upanishads [7]. Some hail it as the supreme philosophical achievement of mankind [8-10]. Based on the four Vedas and their subordinate Upavedas, the six limbs of the Veda, the Vedangas, and their six subordinate limbs, or Upangas, the Vedic Sciences are similarly hailed as a supreme system of knowledge [11], originating in the cognitions of the Vedic Rishis, or Seers. Of these Vedic Sciences, one stands out [12] in that it is known as the ‘Science of Sciences’ [13]. The sixth Vedanga, Jyotisha, presents a detailed account of both the life, and the journey, of each soul. Its structure implicitly sets out the context for souls’ development, while the predictions it makes of life events show how such development materialises in a given lifetime. This paper is concerned with the first, life of the soul’, aspect, while its sequel, will more concern Jyotisha’s prediction of events in each life’s journey. Jyotisha implicitly explains how the unbounded, infinite creative intelligence of nature is able to direct and coordinate all events on our planet Earth [14]. As a spiritual science it is supreme, because it elucidates the progress of the soul on its path from generation by the Divine Being, Ishwara, to supreme fulfilment in the state of Moksha, spiritual liberation. This path, laid out in the ancient system of Sanatana Dharma [15], is central to the Vedic sciences of the soul given in the Vedic literature. Sanatana Dharma describes the path of the soul as a transformation from dualistic states of suffering to non-dualistic states of bliss and fulfilment [16]. As it progresses, the soul gains increasing abilities that accumulate over many lifetimes. To expound the soul’s progress through successive incarnations, the Vedic literature uses terms that are nigh untranslatable into European languages, the Chaturvdiha Purushardha: Dharma – Artha – Kama – Moksha [13]. Each concept presents deep insights into the relationship between the soul and its creator. Overall, the Purushardhas epitomize the nectar-like essence of Vedic philosophy. This foundation paper presents Jyotisha astrology as a Holistic Spiritual Science. It treats the interrelated structure of these four concepts, explaining the theory behind them,
and showing how Jyotisha helps understand them. In the process, it shows how Jyotisha helps people achieve them, and how it can guide humanity into states of higher evolution. In Sanatana Dharma, all souls are regarded as aspects of the Divine, created before the beginning of time, and rising through successive states of greater mental, emotional and intellectual ability during the course of their experience of life or lifetimes on earth [15, 19]. Incarnation is an opportunity for the education of the soul, thereby adding to its Chit, the accumulated sum of all its experiences. Eventually, through development of both perception and comprehension of the nature of the soul, the soul can clearly grasp the validity of truths presented in texts like Bhagavad Gita, such as where Lord Krishna declares, “He who sees all beings in Me, and Me in all beings, he is not lost to Me, nor I to him” [17]. Intrinsic to Jyotisha is its capability to assist souls in their progress on paths to spiritual fulfillment.

Jyotisha intrinsically shows how Nature’s Infinite Intelligence is reflected in ongoing processes in our finite world. The Vedic literature embodies this in the saying “Anoraniyan Mahatamahiyant” [18], from the smaller than the smallest to the larger than the largest (is the Infinite Creative Intelligence found). A similar statement was given in ancient western tradition, “As above, So below” [19] (Sanskrit, “Yata pinde, tata Brahmande” [20]), implying that what occurs here on earth precisely reflects what happens in the heavens above. Indeed, that precise encapsulates Jyotisha astrology, which holds that every event on earth correlates with, and is predictable from, positions and motions of the Navagrahas [21].

The primary concern of Jyotisha is thus the Soul [22]. It works on subtle levels using phenomena unknown on gross levels of manifestation. In modern western studies, the only example where “Remote Viewing” [23] is considered possible, is parapsychology. Even there it is regarded as rare, an extraordinary ability, highly desired for misuse by immoral people [24].

To estimate a soul’s level, Jyotisha evaluates its subtle energies and tendencies, its merits and demerits. Through such soul properties Jyotisha predicts major events in a person’s life, and says what steps may be taken to avoid them, if possible – something it can also evaluate.

Traditionally in the Vedic civilization, Jyotisha was at the heart of family life. Every newborn baby was taken to the family Guru soon after birth, to be given blessings [25] and to clarify the child’s Dharma, or path in life. She or he would expound the path, if necessary using the baby’s Janmakundali, birth chart. Otherwise, he would simply use his ability of Jyotishmati Pragya, the Siddhi enabling a person to see events at great distances, or in the past or future. Either way, the Guru would ‘see’ the Dharma of the newborn’s soul, and the various karmas that would fructify in its life [26]. He would inform the parents how to guide their child in the best possible ways to maximize its achievements, Kama, on all levels, material and spiritual, thus increasing progress on its path of return to the Divine. Jyotishmati Pragya [27], the Siddhi embodying the ability to see events at great distances, or in the past or future, takes long Sadhana for most people to master. For Jyotishi, Jyotisha practice helps it develop.

The Kundali
The Vedic civilisation was dedicated to furthering Dharma [28], the continuous progress seen in the world [29], originating in the Infinite Creative Intelligence of nature, and the creativity, that He/She has bestowed on created souls. The structure of the Kundali [30], or astrological chart, in Jyotisha gives deep insight into the nature and theory of Dharma. The Kundali’s twelve Bhavas (houses) are divided in 4 triplets, one each for Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha [31]. The Dharma triplet [32] presents spiritual nature and tendencies. The Artha triplet [33] presents prescribed activities and achievements that bring progress in life, e.g. wealth; the Kama triplet [34] yields insights into aspirations and desires to fulfill; while the Moksha triplet [35] presents feasibility of attaining spiritual liberation, Moksha, in this life.

The Kundali thus presents deep structures in life like fundamental tendencies, repeated patterns, etc. Also indicated are dangers and vulnerability, diseases, accidents, and problems like debt [36]. Most importantly, it presents probable timings of specific events [37].

Karma: source of the Kundali’s properties and predictions
The concept of Karma in the Vedic sciences is central to the overall system of Sanatana Dharma. It plays a foundational role, as the fundamental reason why a soul takes birth, or continues its present incarnation. It explains a person’s tendencies of personality, abilities, profession, and how their life unfolds with the passing of time. As a soul’s lifetimes unfold, he or she gains higher levels of various abilities including spiritual potentiality. These are put to use in future lives, making the soul’s lifetimes increasingly rich with the passage of time.

Karma shows up in a person’s Janmakundali through the influence of successive Grahas in the system of Vimshtottari Dasa-Bhaktis (major periods and minor periods) [38]. Together with Graha Gochara (transits) [39], these lead to detailed predictions of current events in a person’s life. Competent Jyotishis are therefore always aware of the dates of forthcoming transitions of Grahas from Rashi to Rashi, and Nakshatra to Nakshatra etc. [39, 40] Such information enables the Jyotishi to fulfill the danger-averting principle of Heyam Dakham Anagatam [41].

The Vedic Sciences divide Karma into three parts [42, 43]. First, Prarabha Karma, representing the fruit of past actions, Karma active in this lifetime [42]; second, Sanchita Karma, that which we accumulate in this life, which will fructify in future, and be experienced then [43]; and third, Agami Karma, the store of Karma from previous lives that will fructify in future lifetimes but not in this one [42-44]. According to the tradition of Vedic wisdom, these last two kinds of Karma, Sanchita Karma and Agami Karma, can be annulled by actions in the present life, “The seeds (beeja) of future actions can be roasted” [45]. That is a major purpose of advanced stages of Yoga practised by high-level aspirants on the path to Moksha.

In light of the above, we can now proceed to an exposition of the Chaturvidha Parushardhas.

Dharma
Dharma is primary, sustaining the other three components of Chaturvidha Parushardha. The auspicious Trikona Bhavas, Houses 1, 5 and 9, of a Kundali present the overall picture of Dharma at the epoch time. Pratham Bhava, Lagna Bhava, concerns the holistic state at that time [46]. Panchama Bhava, presents influences from the past on the process; Navama Bhava, how the spiritual world may help unfold it.

Regarding Lagna Bhava, Brihat Parashara Hora Shasta (BPHS) states (BPHS 12.2)


~ 20 ~
Meaning: Physique, complexion of the body, appearance, vigour, weakness, intellect, happiness, grief and innate nature are all to be divined from the Lagna Bhāva.

Regarding Panchama Bhāva, concerning influence of past karmas \(^{47}\), BPHS says (BPHS 12.6)

\[ \text{कालिंगकी तत्तब्रम्ह ब्रह्मविनयसाधनान्} \]
\[ \text{पुस्तकान्तराष्ट्रायेण पर्यस्तु ज्ञातम्} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: The learned deduce from Bhāva 5 amulets, sacred spells, learning, knowledge, sons, royalty (or authority), fall of position etc.

Regarding Bhāva 9, named for Dharma \(^{48}\) itself, BPHS says (BPHS 12.10)

\[ \text{भव्यं दयानं भ गमं भ भानुपिन्यविनयसाधनान्} \]
\[ \text{तीर्थवाहिणि सन्यव प्रभवाधारिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Religion, visits to shrines, and good luck, wife’s brother and brother’s wife, etc. are told from Dharma Bhāva.

BPHS Chapters 13, 17, 21 further elaborate on Bhāvas 1, 5 and 9 respectively.

Artha
The second Purushardha, Artha, ‘Wealth’ is governed by Bhavas 2, 6 and 10. The Bhava 2, Dhana Bhava, governs inherited wealth and family qualities \(^{49}\). The Bhava 6, Dushthana, Nashita Bhava, concerns opposition that may arise, due to enemies, deficiencies in resources, poor control, etc. \(^{50}\)

Bhava 10, Karma Bhava, the House of Action, indicates the means by which a project can generate resources, etc. \(^{51}\)

More generally, Artha means ‘rewards for efforts’, e.g. spiritual progress, generation of finance, expansion and advance, and special awards.

Regarding Bhāva 2, BPHS states (BPHS 12.3)

\[ \text{चक्रवर्ती कुर्वाच मूलज्यसिद्धिम्यप्रक्ष} \]
\[ \text{कन्तुशाहिन्द सन्यव पश्चात्यालिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Dhana Bhāva (2) concerns wealth including precious stones and metals, family, food (including grains etc.), death etc. Also, it is the first māraka sthāna.

Regarding Bhāva 6, BPHS says (BPHS 12.7)

\[ \text{मनुस्तन्तकदशेन साध्विन्य शालिभिदृष्ट} \]
\[ \text{वर्णीर्मणि चापि पश्चात्यालिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Bhāva 6 (Ari Bhava) indicates enemies, disease, debts, mother’s brother(s), step-mother, fear of death, etc.

Regarding Bhāva 10, BPHS says (BPHS 12.11)

\[ \text{राहुँय चापाशृष्टि भ मानं भ दित्तेतुम} \]
\[ \text{प्रवासमय अण्वयाणि व्योमस्तन्तरिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Bhāva 10 (Karma Bhāva) indicates profession (livelihood), positions of authority and honours, father, place of residence, e.g. living abroad.

BPHS Chapters 14, 18, 22 further elaborate Bhāvas 2, 6, and 10, respectively.

The pattern of Jyotisha reveals that wealth, in the sense of personal and family prosperity, is something that comes to a person as a result of Karmic merits gained over past lives, an idea illustrated by the proverb, “As you sow, so shall you reap”. As a soul incarnates in successive lifetimes, its level of merit tends to increase. The maturing of a soul in Sanatana Dharma will bring it enough wealth, Artha, to fulfil desires from previous lives. Professional success, as indicated by Bhāva 10, represents the means to fulfil them. It brings the soul to Sanatana Dharma’s next stage, and is an integral part of the overall path to Moksha.

KAMA
The Kama Bhavas, houses of attainments, are numbers 3, 7, and 11. The third Bhava, for which Kuja Graha is Sahaaja karaka (natural significator), indicates the boldness and drive of those leading the project \(^{52}\). The Bhava 7, with Sakra as Sahaaja karaka, indicates partners \(^{53}\). Bhava 11, Labhasthana, the ‘House of Gain’, is fundamental to an endeavour’s success \(^{54}\). Strength therein is essential for a project’s success.

Regarding Bhāva 3, BPHS says (BPHS 12.4)

\[ \text{निष्कम्य स्वाधीनता वीदेशोद्योगकर्मं} \]

\[ \text{पितृपति वमय भूक्ष्य निर्भरिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Bhāva 3 (sahaaja / bhṛāti bhāva) indicates valour, younger brothers and sisters, Servants, upadeça, Journeys, Death of Parents, etc.

Regarding Bhāva 7, BPHS says (BPHS 12.8)

\[ \text{साधस्यव्यायां च वातित्वं नाशीलाम} \]

\[ \text{मनोणं स्वदेशस्य वायव्यालिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: Bhāva 7 (Yuvati / Kalatra bhāva) indicates business partners and trade, travel, loss of sight, etc. Also, as the second Māraka Sthāna, termination of a project.

Regarding Bhāva 11, BPHS says (BPHS 12.12)

\[ \text{नानास्तन्त्रश्वारुप सुरुज्यादिविनं} \]

\[ \text{आयं पूर्वी वायुं भ भौतिकालिष्ठेवनं} \]

\[ \text{ bè ॥ ॥} \]

Meaning: bhāva 11 (lābha bhāva) indicates all articles, daughters-in-law, income, prosperity, domesticated animals, e.g. cows and pets, etc.

Chapters 15, 19, 23 of BPHS further elaborate on bhāva 3, 7 and 11, respectively. These aspects of Kama Bhavas are often lost when discussing Mokha. Sanvyāsa alone is often thought sufficient, but Jyotisha shows that the Grihasta Ashrama, fulfilling aspirations in this world, is integral to the path. The Kama Bhavas provide the soul strength to succeed in achieving them, enabling it to progress to the stage on the path where...
renunciation naturally sets in. Then it can aim for a higher level of achievement, Moksha, liberation.

Jyotisha thus emphasizes an aspect of Sanatan Dharma often lost in obsession with Moksha, for which Sanyasa, is usually thought the sole means. It illustrates the point that, until the native’s desires, aspirations and ambitions have been fulfilled in the relative world, the soul’s destiny in the Absolute beyond all relative planes of existence cannot be attained [55]. The Kama Bhavas provide the means to fulfill lower aspirations. Only then can the soul move on, and aspire to things of a less ephemeral nature, and attain a permanent state in the beyond.

Moksha

The Moksha Bhavas are Houses 4, 8 and 12. Bhava 4, Matri Bhava, concerns qualities of heart and capacity to love God [56]; Bhava 8, Ayurbhava, indicates longevity, powers of subtle perception and action, and overall limitations [57]; Bhava 12, Vyaya Bhava, indicates loss of anything pertaining to a project, including Karma. A person’s potential for Moksha, spiritual liberation, can therefore be read from it [58].

Bhava 4 with Chandra as Sahajakaraka governs heart, love, and mother; Bhava 8, concerning transformation, has Sani as Sahajakaraka; Bhava 12, the ‘House of Loss’, Vyaya Sthana, with Ketu as Sahajakaraka, governs loss including loss of a person’s three kinds of Kama. From the Yoga perspective, Tapas and Sadhana destroy these, bringing Moksha.

Regarding Bhava 4, BPHS says (BPHS 12.5)

Bhavas कथानकों मुख्य भवस्थापतिकारकों || ॥
भवास मध्येपर्मक भवीय मत्तकों ॥ ५ ॥

Meaning: bhāva 4 (Matri Bhava) indicates mother, vehicles, relatives, mother, happiness, treasure, lands and buildings.

Regarding Bhava 8, BPHS says (BPHS 12.9)

आयु रूप विवेकाभियोगसनातनाविद्याधिकारकों || ॥ ९ ॥

Meaning: Bhava 8 (Randhra Bhava) indicates longevity, battle, enemies, forts, wealth of the dead, things that have happened, and things yet to happen, i.e. births, past and future.

Regarding Bhava 12, BPHS states (BPHS 12.13)

व्यया रूप वैदिक आधारभवसंस्थापकों तथा !
व्ययाविक हे हालतथापनिनम सर्वश्रेष्ठ ॥ १६ ॥

Meaning: Bhava 12 (Vyaya Bhava) indicates expenses, history of enemies, one’s own death etc. Prosperity, or Annihilation of a Bhava

In terms of Karma, Moksha means annulment of Agami and Sancita Karmas, by e.g. devotion to God, yoga meditation etc. When action is in accordance with Natural Law, Sancita Karma is no more created. Allowing God’s Will to direct all one’s actions leads to Moksha. In Bhagavad Gita, actions in accordance with Natural Law are implicitly illustrated by Arjuna having Lord Krishna as his charioteer [59]. The horses are said to symbolise the organs of action [60], so having Lord Krishna holding the reins implies that all Arjuna’s actions are directed by the Will of God.

BPHS Chapters 16, 20, 24 further elaborate on Bhāvas 4, 8 and 12 respectively.

Discussion/further considerations

A fundamental idea in Jyotisha is that all Bhavas are equally important in judging the strength of a Kundali. Any one of them can have a key influence on its strength or weakness, and play a major role in possible outcomes. Of course, the strength of the Lagna does have implications for the whole Kundali. Its strength can help guarantee positive outcomes for the process being considered, while weakness will have the opposite effect. The Dusthana Bhavas are all in the Artha – Moksha pair of triplets. If one Dusthana is strong, the whole triplet is dragged down. Rahu has inauspicious results similar to Dusthanas, except that it will drag down a whole triplet, e.g. towards values of materialism Its partner, Ketu, on the other hand, will tend to advance a soul on the path to Moksha, for which it is Karaka. Generally, each Graha’s results are signified by the Bhava it occupies and the Bhavas of the Graha in whose Nakshatra it is posited at the epoch time, subject to other influences.

A very significant aspect of the Kundali is that it can be understood to reflect the overall, unified nature of existence asserted in Advaita Vedanta. The ancient Rsis realized that each Purushardha in itself presents a goal of life that the soul must realize in order to attain final fulfilment. They can be summarized as follows.

- The Dharma Bhavas, 1, 5 and 9, concern the soul’s path and overall purpose.
- The Artha Bhavas, 2, 6 and 10, concern capabilities needed to fulfil that Dharma.
- The Kama Bhavas, 3, 7 and 11 represent rewards that bring the soul satisfaction, motivating it to progress further on its journey.
- The Moksha Bhavas, 4, 8 and 12 indicate how the soul achieves enlightenment.

This sequence of four Purushardhas is repeated 3 times in the cycle of 12 Bhavas:

- The first Set of four, Bhavas 1 to 4, concerns the Knower him / herself.
- The second Set of four, Bhavas 5 to 8, concerns the Process of Knowing.
- The third Set of four, Bhavas 9 to 12, concerns the Known, including the Ultimate.

Thus, the three Sets of Four together, i.e. the Whole Kundali, Bhavas 1 to 12, present the Wholeness of Knower, Process of Knowing and Known, the overall, Unified Structure of Reality according to Advaita Vedanta.

Conclusion

In these various ways, Jyotisha presents a perspective of supreme wisdom that can be wisely used to avoid problems and suffering, Heyam Dukham Anagatam, and help the soul advance to spiritual fulfilment. Its title in the Vedic literature of being, “The Science of Sciences” [13], is fully justified. No other science lays out all aspects of the paths of Sanatana Dharma so clearly, with the central concepts so well delineated.

Conflict of Interest

None of the authors has a conflict of interest to declare.
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