

Synthesizing Vedic Principles

To tackle and synthesize the multitude of Vedic texts across many disciplines in one class is rather daunting. But I'm going to try to show a brief history of the Vedic culture and how it evolved into many different branches of what we now call the Vedic Sciences.

Essentially the earliest Vedic writings were more Scriptural-based and come from an incredibly early time when things were not written down for the sake of scholarship, but more for the sake of remembrance. Meaning, the earliest Vedic people did just fine relating information orally. During the Satya Yuga it was not necessary to write things down. Our mind was vibrating at a higher frequency. However, these wise people knew that we would be slipping into a darker era and so that future generations would not forget how to perform these important rituals, they began to write them down.

The oldest Vedic scriptures are mainly rituals – ways to awaken the God force here on earth. It is difficult to approach these texts with the modern mind because nothing is persuasive or explanatory. In general, these are manuals – textbooks from ancient magicians who understood the deepest mysteries of life and how the subtle energies of the universe are creating beings and experiences.

Within this larger context more formal sciences evolved later on as it became necessary to actually provide methods and background and specific techniques for different areas of life. The earliest of the Vedic sciences had more to do with Vaastu (sacred architecture and direction) and astrology (reading the heavens and doing things at auspicious times). In fact, the reason we still have these Vedic sciences at all is because they were master astrologers. Before they began to write any of the ancient texts, they found the most auspicious times to do them. This is why in spite of thousands of years of invasions, the Vedic sciences are still largely intact.

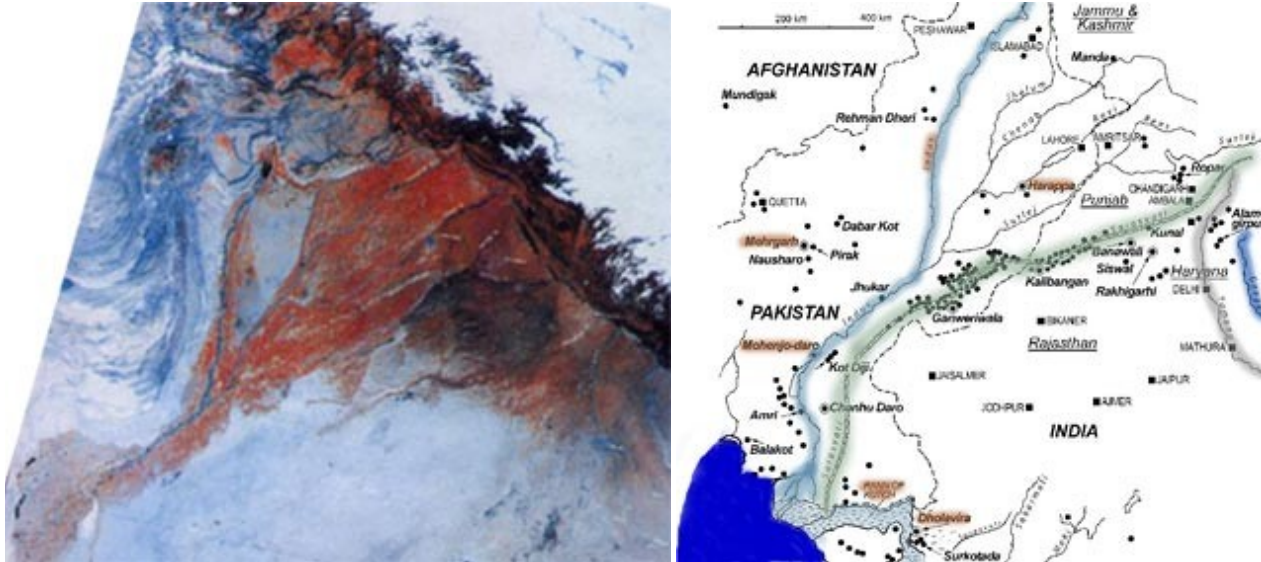
Vedic Timeline – Older Than We Thought

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The early Vedic people congregated in an area that is now modern Pakistan and Eastern Iran (mostly). It is now commonly believed, based on archaeological evidence from these sites, that this ancient culture flourished from about 3000 – 1900 B.C. - Later moving once the Saraswati river dried up. The earliest culture was centered around the Saraswati River. For centuries the existence of this river has been disputed or called a myth. Yet, modern satellite imagery from this area shows the remnants of a dried up riverbed that would have supported the culture referred to in the Rig Veda and other ancient texts.

There are more than 2,500 Archaeological sites, two-thirds of which are along the recently discovered dried up Sarasvati River bed. These sites show a cultural continuity with the Vedic literature from the early Harrapan civilization up to the present day India.



The archaeological sites along the dried up Sarasvati River basin are represented by black dots. Several independent studies of the drying up of the Sarasvati River bed, all indicate the same time period of 1,900 B.C.E.

The significance of establishing this date for the drying up of the Sarasvati River is, that it pushes the date for the composition of the *Rig Veda* back to approximately 3,000 B.C.E., as enunciated by the Vedic tradition itself.

There are many references to events that happen in Vedic times that place the precession of the equinoxes in Krittika Nakshatra, which would have occurred around 3,000 BC. – the same time frame as the Sarasvati river civilization and this satellite imagery suggests. Since the River did not dry up until 1900 B.C., and the archaeological evidence reaches back to at least 3300 B.C., the *Rig Veda* must be dated somewhere in this time.

The Vedas

Some Descriptions below Paraphrased from wikipedia.com

The Vedas are the earliest class of "Vedic texts". They are aggregated around the four canonical Samhitās or Vedas proper, of which three are related to the performance of yajna (ritual)

An important thing to know about the Vedas is they are meant to be spoken, not read. They invoke the power of mantra - sacred sound vibrations - in conjunction with the performance of certain activities (rituals) in order to awaken God energy. However, even if they aren't necessarily meant to be read, reading them is still a pretty amazing thing!

1. the Rg Veda, contains hymns to be recited by the chief priest. The Rg Veda, when read and understood properly, is referencing many astrological and astronomical phenomena as well as what literally seems to be praising obscure gods and forces. To an untrained reader, or listener, it seems very extravagant and bewildering. Yet, to someone who has studied astrology and Vedic cosmology, The Rig Veda is an absolutely remarkable document (more on that later).

2. the Yajurveda, contains formulas to be recited by the adhvaryu or officiating priest. The Yajurveda documents the earliest known use of numbers up to a trillion (parardha). It also discusses the concept of numeric infinity (purna "fullness"), stating that if you subtract purna from purna, you are still left with purna. (The famous "Purnamida, purnamidam chant)

ASTROLOGICAL CONNECTION:

This Document also contains the Vedanga Jyotisha - the earliest references to Astrology proper in Vedic culture. This section of the Yajur Veda gives directions necessary to time the religious events of the Vedic culture such as the Tithi (lunar day), Nakshatra (Star), Muhurta (Time Measurement), Ayana (Course of the Sun), etc.

3. The Sāmaveda consists of a collection (samhita) of hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses, all but 75 taken from the Rigveda, to be sung, using specifically indicated melodies called Samagana, by Udgatar priests at sacrifices in which the juice of the Soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, is offered in libation to various deities.

The Atharvaveda, a collection of spells and incantations, stories, predictions, charms and some speculative hymns. The Atharvaveda, while undoubtedly belonging to the core Vedic corpus, in some ways represents an independent parallel tradition to that of the Rigveda and Yajurveda. It incorporates much of early traditions of healing and magic that are paralleled in other Indo-European literatures.

AYURVEDIC CONNECTION:

Atharva Veda has many hymns eulogizing herbs. Many plants were worshipped as deities and invoked by incantations. There were also many mantras to combat jaundice, consumption, heredity diseases and so on.

The Limbs of the Vedas

The Vedangas of "Limbs of the Vedas" are each said to be derived from teachings that come from the Vedas, although these scientific systems themselves have not been established yet in the Vedas proper.

The Vedangas are:

Yoga | Jyotish (Astrology) | Vaastu | Palmistry | Ayurveda | Sanskrit

The formal texts and manuals of these scientific systems were formalized later. Yet, it is undeniable that the wisdom that produced these later Sciences originated from the same magic conjured in the Vedas. There are those who denounce these sciences as being "non-Vedic" because the scriptural texts called "The Vedas" do not necessarily contain each of the science books proper. But this is not the correct way to look at it. The "Vedic Sciences" do not necessarily mean from "The Vedas", it means from the "Vedic Culture".

It is as if to say the only laws that are valid are the ones that come from the U.S. Constitution. That would be silly. What is more correct is to see the Constitution as the framing document, with the Universal principles that frame other forms of jurisprudence. (Did I just compare the Vedas to the U.S. Constitution?)

Rig Veda and Astrology

To truly understand the nature and power of the Rig Veda one has to study it in reference to Vedic cosmology and astrology. At first the text appears to contain many bewildering references and prayers to forces of nature and gods mixed with every day, sort of humdrum activities – like

eating. On the surface this is what is being said. But a deeper look into the myths of these deities and what they represent, especially now that we understand about yoga, Vedanta and Vedic philosophy, a deep and mystical power emerges.

The first thing to realize is all of the major deities in the Vedas have their place in the sky – in the Nakshatra's – the distant stars or Star sections. For instance, when Indra is evoked, it refers to the section of the sky where we have the Western Star Antares – in the tail the scorpion. That is the section of sky where Indra rules. When we hear of Soma, the moon God – he who distributes the blissful nectar of the mortality, it is known that he lives in the section of sky called Mragashira – equidistant between Taurus and Gemini constellations.

What amazes us is the realization that these stellar indications, and qualities of the deities, are exactly reflective of what happens when planets connect with the stellar forces being referred to. For instance, in the Krishna Yajur Veda we have the first texts that introduce us to Lord Shiva – the God that destroys - in his fierce form of Lord Rudra. The section of sky that refers to Lord Rudra is called "Ardra" - it exists in the middle of the constellation Gemini. This is probably the most destructive section in the sky. Almost every disaster and calamity on planet Earth has a least one planet here at the time, usually a prominent planet like the sun, moon or Mars. Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 Tsunami earthquake and tidal wave, 911, the Columbine shooting, almost every war the US has fought – began with planets in this 1/27th section of sky.

When viewed this way everything changes. You quickly realize that the Vedas are about connecting our earthly life with our stellar, universal life.

The renowned Vedic scholar David Frawley wrote a fascinating exposition on astronomical references in the Rig Veda a few years ago.

There are also sections from the Shatapatha Brahmana

Paraphrased Excerpts:

According to Dirghatamas Rig Veda I.155.6, "With four times ninety names (caturbhih sakam navatim ca namabhih), he (Vishnu) sets in motion moving forces like a turning wheel (chakra)." A fourfold division may correspond to the solstices and equinoxes. Elsewhere Dirghatamas states, I.164.36, "Seven half embryos form the seed of the world. They stand in the dharma by the direction of Vishnu." This probably refers to the seven planets. (Half embryos would seem to refer to the masculine and feminine nature of the planets as expressed through their zodiac signs)

Most of the astronomical information occurs in his famous Asya Vamasya Hymn I.164. Much of this hymn can be understood as a description of the zodiac. It begins:

1. Of this adorable old invoker (the Sun) is a middle brother who is pervasive (the Wind or lightning). He has a third brother, whose back carries ghee (Fire). There I saw the Lord of the people (the Sun) who has seven children.
2. Seven yoke the chariot that has a single wheel (chakra). One horse that has seven names carries it. The wheel has three naves, is undecaying and never overcome, where all these beings are placed.

The zodiac is the single wheeled-chariot or circle yoked by the seven planets which are all forms of the Sun or sunlight. It is the wheel of time on which all beings are placed. The Vedic horse (ashva) is symbolic of energy or propulsive force.

3. This chariot which the seven have mounted has seven wheels (chakras) and is carried by seven horses. The seven sisters sing forth together, where are hidden the seven names of the cows.

The seven planets create their seven rotations or seven wheels. Each has its horse, its energy or velocity. Each has its feminine power or sister, its power of expression. It carries its own hidden name or secret knowledge (symbolically cows or rays). This refers to the astrological influences of the planets.

11. The wheel of law with twelve spokes does not decay as it revolves around heaven. Oh Fire, here your 720 sons abide.

The circle of the zodiac has twelve signs. It has 720 half degrees or twins, (Karanas) making 360 total.

The Shatapatha Brahmana X.5.5, a late Vedic text, also speaks of a wheel of heaven with 720 divisions. "But indeed that Fire-altar is also the Nakshatras. For there are twenty seven of these Nakshatras and twenty-seven secondary Nakshatras. This makes 720." Twenty-seven times twenty-seven Nakshatras equals 729, with which some overlap can be related to the 720 half-degrees of the zodiac.

12. The Father with five feet and twelve forms, they say, dwells in the higher half of heaven full of waters. Others say that he is the clear-seeing one who dwells below in a sevenfold wheel that has six spokes.

The five feet of the father or the Sun are the five planets or the five elements that these often refer to (to which Vedic thought associates the five sense organs and five motor organs in the human body). His twelve forms are the twelve signs. The Sun in the higher half of heaven with the waters is the signs Leo with Cancer (ruled by the Moon), with the other five planets being the five feet, each ruling two signs.

The sevenfold wheel is the zodiac moved by the seven planets. The six spokes are the six double signs through which the planets travel. The same verse occurs in the Prashna Upanishad I.11 as a symbol for the year.

14. The undecaying wheel (circle) together with its felly (circumference), ten yoked to the upward extension carry it. The eye of the Sun moves encompassing the region. In it are placed all beings.

This may again refer to the ten signs ruled by the five planets, with each planet ruling two signs. The eye of the Sun may be the sign Leo through which the solar influence pervades the zodiac or just the Sun itself. The upward extension may be the polar region.

15. Of those that are born together, the seventh is born alone. The six are twins (yama), Divine born rishis. The wishes that they grant are apportioned according to their nature. Diversely made for their ordainer, they move in different forms.

The six born together or are twins are the twelve signs, two of which are ruled by one planet (considering the Sun and Moon as a single planetary influence). The seventh that is singly born is the single light that illumines all the planets. Elsewhere the Rig Veda X.64.3 speaks of the Sun and Moon as twins (yama) in heaven.

The planets are often associated with the rishis in Vedic thought, particularly the rishis

Brihaspati (Jupiter), Shukra (Venus) and Kashyapa (the Sun) which became common names for the planets. Their ordainer or stabilizer may be the pole star (polar point).

48. Twelve are its fellows. The wheel is one. It has three naves. Who has understood it?

It are held together like spokes the 360, both moving and non-moving.

This perhaps the clearest verse that refers to the zodiac of twelve signs and three hundred and sixty degrees. The same verse also occurs in Atharva Veda (X.8.4). The zodiac has three divisions as fire, lightning and Sun or Aries, Sagittarius and Leo that represent these three forms of fire. The 360 spokes are the 360 degrees which revolve in the sky but remain in the same place in the zodiac.

Yet another verse (43) of this same hymn of Dirghatamas refers to the Vishuvat, the solstice or equinox, showing that such astronomical meanings are clearly possible.

If we examine the hymn overall, we see that a heavenly circle of 360 degrees and 12 signs is known, along with 7 planets. It also has a threefold division of the signs which can be identified with that of fire, wind (lightning) and Sun (Aries, Sagittarius, Leo) and a sixfold division that can be identified with the planets each ruling two signs of the zodiac. This provides the basis for the main factors of the zodiac and signs as we have known them historically. We have all the main factors for the traditional signs of the zodiac except the names and symbols of each individual sign.

Elsewhere in Vedic literature is the idea that when the Creator created the stars he assigned each an animal of which there were originally five, the goat, sheep, cow, horse and man (Shatapatha Brahmana X.2.1). This shows a Vedic tradition of assigning animals to constellations. The animals mentioned are the man, goat, ram, bull and horse, which contain several of the zodiacal animals.

The zodiac in Vedic thought is the wheel of the Sun. It is the circle created by the Sun's rays. The Shatapatha Brahmana X.5.4 notes, "But, indeed, the Fire-altar also is the Sun. The regions are its enclosing stones, and there are 360 of these, because 360 regions encircle the Sun on all sides. And 360 are the rays of the Sun."

Conclusions:

We must realize that ancient people were connected life in the cosmos in a way that we simply are not in this day and age. They realize what we are now reawakening to, that we are made of divine energy. That divine energy has a source – the universe itself. Astrology is simply how our life in the universe takes form. Astrology is the great science of how the macrocosm is being expressed through the microcosm. The inner and outer universe is what these ancient people were tuned into.

Even from these few snippets of text see the grand scheme of the Universe played out. The Rig Veda are hymns to the Gods Agni (Fire), Indra (Lightning), Soma (divine nectar-Moon), Vishnu (consciousness), Varuna (rain), Vayu (Wind-Prana) and all of the symbology contained within the sacred rituals that bring these elements together in a divine way.

The Five Elements

The Vedic sacrifice and rituals discussed in the Vedas are not limited just to ceremonies

performed with that specific intention. The ceremonies themselves are an allegory for us, our life, our body, and the nature of reality itself.

In Vedic ritual all five elements are used and evoked as sacred, divine principles. Each one of these elements are divine beings that form a part of our consciousness and body - correspond to a sense organ (Jnana Indriya – organ of wisdom) and motor function (karma Indriya – organ of action).

The ritual is to purify those elements in us and in so doing bring more wisdom to the actions we perform. Thus, rather than our actions being based on low-level of understanding, which brings attachment and limitation – the actions we perform are based on increased wisdom and bring joy and less suffering.

The Five Elements are:

Earth: Related to solid forms – like our body and things that do not change quickly.

Water: Related to thing that flow, like our senses into our environment and our feelings.

Fire: Related to digestion of all sorts in the heat that is necessary for it and produced by it.

Air: Related to movement of all sorts and the speed with which things change.

Space: Related to the silent empty container of everything that takes place in the other four elements.

These five elements are common to all Vedic sciences. In astrology each one of the planet's rules an element. In Ayurveda our constitution is made up of different combinations of these elements. In Yoga we're working energetically to balance these elements directly through breath (Air), discipline (fire), connection (water) , stability (earth) and consciousness (space).

Thus even though the Vedas themselves do not contain the individual textbooks for working with the five elements (and the three Gunas, and the Karma / Jnana Indriyas, etc) the Brahmins (mystical teachers of that time) knew the deeper energetics at play and later formalized these systems into the Vedic sciences as we know them today.

There are many many references in the Vedas to food – and how everything is an offering of food. On the surface it just seems obvious that we would all want to have food so that we can eat and continue to live. The act of eating itself is analogous to the purification ritual. Everything is an offering to the God Agni (fire deified).

It is Agni who takes our offerings in the fire ritual up to heaven. It is Agni who eats for the Gods. When we lose sight of the fact that it is WE WHO ARE GOD – our eating becomes unconscious. But when we remember that every time we eat we are feeding God – entire experience is transformed. Not only are we feeding god, but we are also eating God, (who is feeding us) as there is nothing but God.

The external flame in the fire pit ritual, is the fire in our belly that digest our food. The purity of what we offer during the fire ritual, in form and spirit, is analogous to the purity of the food we eat and the temperament by which we take that food in our own mouth. The quality of the food determines the quality of the actions and thoughts (air) that follow. When we feed the flame of consciousness with pure food, our thoughts and actions remain pure.

But we are not just eating with our mouths we are eating with all of our senses. Everything must be digested and it is Agni that digests it. Especially in this modern world, with so much stimulation and so much "food" -- we must be careful with the quality of the food we are eating through sight, taste, sound, touch, smell.

Astrology, Ayurveda and Yoga – Connections and History

From these Vedic roots - and around common themes and understandings - Astrology, Ayurveda and Yoga evolved simultaneously (along with Vaastu and Palmistry). It's important to make a few distinctions about how each of these sciences view our divine, embodied selves.

Astrology is the Vedic Science of our Karma. The Divine being has taken a specific form at a specific moment in time in order to have specific experiences. Astrology shows exactly what they are and why. When an astrologer looks into the birth chart he is looking into the evolutionary pattern relative to each of the divine forces that animates all of creation. The planets themselves are the animating principles of life.

In many ways, astrology operates at a more fundamental and deeper level than all other sciences and it must be seen that way. This is not to say astrology is "more important", just that it is the study of the universe that is creating everything. For instance, Ayurveda comes after astrology and yoga. Without astrology (the universe that has created something) there is no "body/form" to examine or balance.

Origin of Vedic Astrology – as practiced today – comes largely from a document called Brihat Parshara Hora Sastra. This amazing work is said to have been put together between 1000 and 200 BC by the sage Parashara. By the time of emperor Alexander and the Hellenistic influx, the document had disappeared, but its influence never died.

It was lost for thousands of years as many medieval and old world vedic astrologers had heard of it but had never seen it - Including Varahamihira - the Astrologer/astronomer responsible for resurrecting astrology in the third century. This document is the only complete book of vedic astrology and is (almost inarguably) the greatest astrological text the world has ever seen. It was re-discovered at the end of the 19th century.

Even though it was lost - as seen by later influential texts such as "Yavana Jataka" (The astrology of the Greeks) the astrology in Brihat Parashara was diluted, but not dead. There are some who have rushed to claim a Greek origin to Vedic astrology, given the appearance of "Yavana Jataka" that show a mixing of Greek and Vedic astrologies. But to anyone who studies Vedic astrology, there is no doubt that its origin is Indian and comes from Brihat Parashara.

Every facet of Indian astrology is seamlessly interwoven with the other Vedic sciences (that developed at this same time) and with Vedic culture in general. One would have to ask why in the world Greeks would be introducing things like "vedic deities", "caste" and "guna" into an astrology system, when in fact their own astrology system or culture does not use those things.

What is more likely is the Greeks infiltrated India and started copying Indian astrology, and the things that didn't fit into their (Greek) culture such as "vedic deities", "caste" and "guna" and other specifically Indian facets of astrology, were discarded.

This is why in many ways western astrology looks very much like the astrology in Brihat Parshara Hora Sastra, but without all of the "Indian stuff" (and not as much complexity either).

Ayurveda is the Vedic Science of Health and longevity. Awakening from the delirium of form and it's veiling effect on Spirit is the highest calling of Ayurveda. This remarkable science shows how the five elements and seven tissues create the wonder and miracle of human beings and all life forms. Ayurveda is essentially the study of matter – how is formed, how it behaves and how to unlock the divine essence within form.

Origin of Ayurveda is the Atharva veda should be seen as the Atharva Veda, was mentioned

earlier and the Charak Samhita – the first Ayurveda proper text. Its age is not certain. Pathanjali who lived in the 2nd century BC is known to have written a commentary on the Charaka Samhita and therefore it follows that Charaka's period should necessarily be earlier than that of his commentator. It is said that Ayurveda reaches back into the mists of time, similar to what is said about Vedic astrology.

The sage Dhanvantari is said to have invented Ayurveda thousands of years ago, but it is not certain when. Dhanvantari is often depicted as having four arms, holding herbs in one hand a pot of immortal nectar in another. He is said to be an Avatar of Lord Vishnu.

Earlier origins of Ayurveda are more mystical in nature and actually related to the heavens (as are most things in Vedic thought). The story is Ayurveda came from The Ashwins, the physicians of the gods from the Rig Veda. These healers of man were gifts to the Earth from the Sun God, Surya. They preside over the Nakshatra of Ashwini, at the very beginning of the astrological sign Aries and at the beginning of the Zodiac itself. It is said in many texts that God placed Ashwini at the head of the Ram, Aries – at the head of the zodiac, in order to bring healing into the Earth plane as the Kala Purusha (the being in time) enters the wheel of life on Earth. Often when people have important planets in this Nakshatra – especially the moon or sun – they will be healers - doctors or alternative healers, like astrologers.

Yoga is the Vedic Science of enlightenment and spiritual liberation. Working energetically with the sacred power in our minds and hearts is the work of yoga. Transforming the elements from their gross expressions to their refined and subtle nature is the work of yoga. Rather than fire just digesting our food it digests our ignorance. Rather than error just creating a lot of ideas, it generates increased life force and Prana. Rather than food just creating sluggishness in temporary happiness, it creates content and, stamina and spiritual power. Yogic practices are the culmination and the cure for the imbalances we find when practicing other Vedic Sciences.

Origins of Yoga. The two main works of yoga are the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

The Bhagavad Gita (The Song of God) is the story of Lord Krishna teaching Yoga, Dharma and Karma to Arjuna, the reluctant warrior, on the eve of a great battle. It is an excerpt from "The Mahabharata" (Great India).

Krishna summarizes the Yogas through eighteen chapters. Three yogas in particular have been emphasized by commentators. Bhakti Yoga or Devotion - Karma Yoga or Selfless Action - Jnana Yoga or Self Transcending Knowledge. In order to do perform these yogas one has to act through a sense of duty (dharma) rather than through likes and dislikes (kama). Remembering dharma (the truth of existence) one elevates desires rather than being enslaved by them.

It is not clear when the Gita was composed, but it refers to the the time of Lord Krishna, which is said to be 3228 BC (the alleged year of Krishna's Birth based on astrological references in the Mahabharata)

Yoga Sutras of Maharishi Patañjali existed around 150 BCE. He is is the compiler of the Yoga Sutras, the documents that laid out the practice of Raja Yoga - the disciplined path to liberation. This document formalized the scientific path that, until that time, had existed in more of an abstract form.

The scientific path of Yoga as described by Patanjali is highly developed and potent. It sees the body as a laboratory for the soul. Through different restraints (Yamas) and observances

(Niyamas) then (Asanas) postures (Pranayama) Breathing exercises, (Pratyahara) withdrawing senses, (Dharana) concentration, (Dhyana) meditation, (Samadhi) oneness with all.

Shri Adi Shankaracharya (788-820 AD) Re-established the Gurukula systems of initiation and the Guru lineage that still exists today. He also made extensive commentaries on the Upanishads and formalized "Vedanta" - the philosophy of Yoga.

Common Connections and Remedies

The five elements are embodied, strengthened and healed through yoga, Ayurveda and astrology in different, yet similar ways. The corresponding sense organ helps heal each element. For instance, birth is related to the sense of smell – so incense can help heal certain problems with the earth element. An Ayurvedic doctor may see this difficulty as weight gain, lethargy or attachment. The diagnosis being that this person is deficient on a psycho/spiritual level in the earth element. If we increase it internally they will feel less of a need to try and fill themselves with Earth in the form of external gratification.

A vedic astrologer would see the planet that rules earth in detriment – were overtaken by another element, that is perhaps windy in nature. So he may prescribe incense related to that planet – let's say, the planet Venus which rules and earth sign.

Earth is related to karma yoga, the yoga of selfless service. It shows hands-on, practical and tangible things we must do in order to break the cycle of attachment we have to our limited form. Once a person begins to serve others, their heart opens up and begins to flow (water – related to Bhakti Yoga – the yoga of devotion).

Esoteric, Mystical Implications Of the Vedic Sciences

Nadis and Chakras

The idea of the subtle vital force (prana) and the channels along which it flows (nadis) appear in the earliest Upanishads (7th-8th century b.c.e.). The heart was said to be the centre of the 72,000 nadis or subtle channels, and the place into which the senses are withdrawn during sleep.

But it was only in the later Upanishads - the earlier of which were composed somewhere between the 2nd century b.c.e. and the 2nd century c.e. - reference is first made to basic Tantric concepts such as chakras, mantras, and so on.

The Brahma-Upanishad mentions the four "places" occupied by the purusha (soul): the navel, heart, throat, and head. Following common tradition, each place is characterised by a particular state of consciousness: the navel (or the eye) waking consciousness, the heart dreamless sleep, the throat dreaming, and the head the "fourth" or transcendent state. These four states, originally referred to in the Mandukya Upanishad, are identified with the gods Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (a derivative of Shiva) and Akshara (the indestructable).

The Yogatattva Upanishad speaks of the "five parts" of the body corresponding to the five great or cosmic elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space. Each element corresponds to a particular

mantra - a "seed-vibration" or mystical syllable - and a particular deity. Emphasis is also given to siddhis (supernormal powers) that can be attained through mastery of yoga and of the different elements.

The Chakras and Corresponding Characteristics

Name	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Visshuddha	Ajna	Sahasra Padma
Meaning	Root	Self-abode	City of Gems	Unstruck Sound	Very Pure	Command	
Location	Base / Earth	Sex / Water	Navel / Fire	Heart / Air	Throat / Ether	Third Eye	Top of head
Petals	4	6	10	12	16	2	1000
Bija Mantra	LAM	VAM	RAM	YAM	HAM	KSHAM	OM
Element	Earth	Water	Fire	Air	Ether	Mind Space	Consciousness Space
Planet	Saturn	Jupiter	Mars	Venus	Mercury	Sun/Moon	
Signs	Capricorn/ Aquarius	Pisces/ Sagittarius	Scorpio/ Aries	Libra/Taurus	Virgo/Gemini	Leo/Cancer	
Sense Organ	Nose	Tongue	Eye	Skin	Ears	Mind	Consciousness
Motor Organ	Excretory	Urino-Genital	Feet	Hands	Vocal Organ	Mind	Consciousness
Tanmatra	Smell	Taste	Sight	Touch	Sound	Thought	Consciousness

Modern Mysticism and Worship

Modern Vedic mysticism revolves around the path of yoga and the path of tantra. It's hard to say which came first, or which influenced the other. Not as much is known about the authentic origins of tantra. However, no doubt its origin comes from the same set of ideas that we are discussing. Both yoga and tantra use the same energetics of elements, deities, etc. but there are important differences. Since much is known about yoga, we will focus and contrast it with tantra.

Tantra is more related to the sacred feminine – worshipping the beauty of Earth and all things, rather than trying to control, which is more related to yoga – which is generally more masculine in nature. However, within this general framework, anything and everything occurs and is possible. These are, after all, mystical practices where the very nature of our experiences dissolve boundaries such as masculine/feminine – and the elements themselves.

Whereas in yoga there are specific observances, rituals, meditations, breathing exercises and visualizations – in tantra, generally everything is seen as fair game. Stated simply, yoga is very much related to controlling the external environment, focusing it toward the divine. Tantra is very much about accepting what ever comes and seeing the divine in it.

Within certain segments of Tantra, this acceptance includes things that are taboo in other spiritual/mystical circles – such as sex and hedonism. This has led to much confusion about tantra. If you talk to an Indian tantric priest, he will not be doing anything that has to do with sex. Mainly he will be trained in a set of rituals that revolve around worship of the Goddess and activating her love and protection.

What is commonly labeled “Tantra” in the West is actually a combination of this sacred feminine approach, mixed with Taoist sex practices. People should be very careful when they speak of tantra, not to fall into this confusion. At its heart, the philosophy of tantra is incredibly beautiful. It acknowledges that everything is sacred, even the most profane and disgusting thing you can imagine. This is why there are also extreme tantrics who eat excrement, live in burial grounds and eat the flesh of dead bodies, et cetera. They are called “Aghoris”. Like all things, there is a sacred duty to their rituals and work also. It is an incredibly intense discipline.

Puranic Deities - Siva and Vishnu Worship

In a more secular/religious sense, there are two main “families” of worship. One revolves around the God Shiva and the other a round the god Vishnu. Lord Siva is the God related to liberation and things not of this world. Shiva worship has a lot to do with meditation, discipline and connecting to the life force itself directly. In fact, all the stuff mentioned above related tantra and a taboo subjects, etc. are also an offshoot of Shaivism (Siva Worship) – actually is more related to his wife, the goddess Kali and all of her forms.

The pantheon of deities from the Vedic times became more secularised around 1000 B.C. In a group of writings called the Puranas. In them we see the ancient elemental deities such as Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Indra (the king-lightning) condensed and merged into several important gods from the Vedas.

Siva

Lord Shiva is a combination of Rudra, from the Krishna Yajur Veda and many qualities related to Agni and Indra – the two main players in the Rg Veda. There are many stories in the Puranas and Mahabharata and other vedic texts where only Shiva can save the day, because he is the origin of creation and the one with the power to destroy it. Also, much of the time he doesn't care either way, he sees the nature of destruction as a creative process.

Shiva is called "Mahadeva" (Great Lord) – and is portrayed as the king of the Yogis – the king or renunciates and those who want to find a liberation. He is also most associated with the wrathful form of God. The wrath of God is a protective force, not one that destroys or punishes us. In the Eastern cents there is no dual nature to God. The wrath of God is protective of those that would harm us and the sense of Dharma we are living authentically. If we invoke God's grace and love, we are always protected – never punished. Westerners may have a hard time with this notion, due to Judeo-Christian thinking. We expect God to also be punishing us, this is not the case in the Eastern Sense. Our punishment comes from ignorance of the true self, nothing else. That punishment arrives in the form of our karma – and so does the reward. Karma is the great law of the universe that keeps everything in place.

Vishnu

Vishnu himself is getting quite a lot of time in the replay to. His influence dates back older than that of Lord Shiva. Even in the earlier texts Lord Vishnu was not as exalted as he later becomes. Lord Vishnu is associated with the preservation of life on Earth. He is the maintainer of the physical universe and the energy that preserves the balance. As such, he is much more related to a sense of justice and an equilibrium that keeps our life together.

Everything we see in the physical universe is an expression of Lord Vishnu. All of the great avatars and Mahatma's or incarnations of Lord Vishnu directly. That includes Lord Krishna, Lord Rama and many other ancient incarnations explained in certain books such as Srimad Bhagavatam and Vishnu Purana. It is said that Lord Vishnu incarnations on the Earth's at a time when we need to restore Dharma and righteousness.

Siva – The king of the yogis and those who are trying to achieve liberation. He is more related to primordial sources of energy and truth. Shiva worship is felt in silence, eternity, the enormity of time and other such abstract concepts.

Vishnu – The maintainer of the universe we inhabit and living in accordance with the laws. He is related to embodying God in the flesh, in the moment, involved in day to day life without loosing our sense of Dharma (duty to the truth) in the world of thought and action (Karma).

Kala, Dharma, Karma and Freewill

Once we Enter the body and the world flesh, we enter the world of time. The clock starts ticking and at some point it will stop. The reason we have entered the body and the world of time is because we still have lessons to learn on earth, in this densest form of energy.

Our spirit is not done on its journey of self-realization, so we came into a dimension where we get immediate feedback into our decisions. We have a physical and emotional body that experiences pain and pleasure very easily - and has a lot of needs.

The limitations of Earth through the body imposed upon the unlimited nature of the soul creates an anxiety in us. This anxiety forces us to grow. Whether easily or painfully, growth will occur - stasis is not an option.

In Brihat Parshara Hora Sastra it states "Lord Vishnu has incarnated as the nine planets to bestow upon the living beings with fruits of their karma, to defeat the demons and to restore Dharma". The agency of our karma comes through the planets, the animating forces of creation. There is the age-old debate about karma and free will – how much is predetermined and how much do we decide. It is better to look at this question, and the nature of karma itself, in a nonlinear fashion.

For instance, you're reading this document now. You're getting the karma of the decision YOU (your free will) made when you decided to attend or listen to this class. But was it predetermined that you would make the decision to attend this class? That seems to be to be questioned people have. The simple answer is, most external things are predetermined – at their effect on you is totally a matter of the choices you make.

Many of the deeper things in life are predestined. For instance, all of the physical traits you have have nothing to do with your free will. It does not matter how much you wish to be a center in the NBA, if you are 5 feet tall it will not happen. But we can go even deeper than that. How much of your life is simply determined by your physical needs and predispositions. For example, you need to eat food – you need to sleep – you need to drink water – you need to breathe - you need to honor certain physical laws, it is your karma. Not only in general, but your physical constitution and a tendency toward disease is also your karma. Your capacity to change and function within the framework of these larger parameters is also your karma, and is shown astrologically.

But the deeper part of your being is not constrained by the karma of the elements. That is the inherent soul nature within you that is always free of any actions you take. Remembering the truthful, divine being within – rather than feeling yourself as being the limited body performing the actions of the limited mind feeling them – switches the entire discussion. This is the subject of the Bhagavad-Gita, how to perform our actions while remembering the truth. In life we must act. Life is one activity after another. But who is acting and why?

When we ask from a place of truth and self remembrance (dharma), we incurred no karma, when we ask from a place of self-interest and desire (kama), we feel our limited self as the do or, and create more attachment and more karma as a result.

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- General Nature of Each Planetary Force and the Karmic Lesson it is Teaching.
- How Each Astrological Sign Shapes the Planetary Elements.
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Class Syllabus:

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- How to draw the chart and the basic astronomy / architecture of an astrology Chart (I usually explain this to clients in 5 minutes in every astrology reading, so it is not hard to understand)
- Connecting astrology to Sankya philosophy and Ayurveda with special emphasis on relating the planets to the Dhatus, Mahabhutas, Elements and Gunas.
- Introduction to astrological timing factors (dasa lengths, transit times, etc)

Week 2:

- Deeper Qualities of Planets - Their expressions through mind, body and spirit.
- Planetary expressions through the Signs - Psychology - masculine and feminine - Appearance - constitutional factors explored.
- Planetary Cycles of Health and illness using Vimshottari Dasa Cycle.

Week 3:

- Connecting to the Living Sky and dynamic cycles using astrology transits
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We will be looking at a lot of charts (including your own if you like) so we learn these techniques practically, not just abstractly.



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