

Ending the War between the Astrologers

Revised June 2007 and January 2010 and July 2013

It is both sad and ironic that astrologers, who are so soundly rejected by most mainstream Western cultures, have formed factions and decry each other's methods. Many years ago, the astrologers at a meeting of the Fraternity of Canadian Astrologers actually broke into fistfights over which house system was more accurate!

For as long as I have been practicing astrology, I've heard both Western and Vedic astrologers reject each other's approach. This practice goes on even today, by astrologers who should know better. Perhaps they are insecure or threatened by the knowledge that another system exists that they have not mastered; perhaps it's just about ego and competition.

Chiropractors, homeopaths, and acupuncturists can all look at the same person, using different systems, and arrive at effective remedial measures. Each medical method, and each branch of astrology, is a discrete system that should be used and evaluated on its own terms. It is almost as if the very similarities between Western and Vedic astrologies (and the fears around cross-breeding) make it difficult for astrologers using either system to accept the other.

I would like to address the typical issues that each "camp" poses to the other, and respond.

I. Vedic criticisms of Western Astrology

A. The Wrong Zodiac. Many Vedic astrologers are quick to disparage the use of the Tropical Zodiac (in which the signs are defined by the seasonal movement of the Sun) in comparison with their usage of the Sidereal Zodiac (in which the signs are defined by the positions of the stars and constellations).

There are several reasons for Vedic astrologers to stop this practice:

1. Even in their own field, there is disagreement about where the Zodiac starts. At least in Western astrology there is no similar ambiguity.
2. Vedic astrologers do not use the constellations as they really are any more than Western astrologers do. If they did so, then the sign of Scorpio as used by Vedic astrologers would have to be at least twice the size of the sign of Libra (since the constellations are so different in size). The use of 30 degrees per sign is a complete departure from the physical reality of the constellations.
3. Vedic astrology uses the Zodiacal signs very differently than Western astrology. For example, Western astrologers successfully determine a person's temperament by seeing which element is most predominant (i.e. the one that most of their planets are in). This sign-based technique is not present in Vedic astrology because it doesn't work using Sidereal signs. (Note, however, that Vedic astrology does have very effective techniques for assessing temperament.)
4. The Tropical Zodiac, used by Western astrologers, is a completely valid coordinate system that accurately reflects the seasonal changes on Earth. In other words, this Zodiac is more directly rooted in the physical reality of life on Earth than the Sidereal Zodiac based upon the distant stars.

B. Inaccurate Predictions.

This is a very misinformed belief on the part of Vedic astrologers who never mastered Western astrology sufficiently to become adept at predictions using Western astrology. In India, clients want predictions that are mundane, and Vedic astrologers have specialized in predicting concrete details of life like the number of children, gender of children, physical characteristics of the person and their relations, etc.

Many Western astrologers are far less interested in predicting mundane facts about a person, and in fact some find such an orientation unappealing, but this does not mean that they cannot make such predictions.

Some modern Western astrologers question the value of predicting that the person has two children or that they moved when they were two years old. This is seen by them as "scoring

points", i.e. convincing the client that you can tell them something about themselves that they already know, but didn't tell you. This type of information is also of less value to many Western astrological clients, who are often more interested in psychological issues and the unfolding of life's lessons and opportunities; and so Western astrologers have come to speak to their clients' interests. (This orientation may also be a side effect of the Western cultural derision towards astrology, which would sway many practical people away from consulting astrologers.)

Western astrologers, nevertheless, have made innumerable successful mundane predictions. Western clients do want to know when they will marry, move, or get a new job, and are happy with the work of their Western astrologers. Joan Quigley, for example, the astrologer of President Reagan and his wife, was very successful (using Tropical Lunar Returns) in predicting personal and World events. One of the most influential financiers in history, J. Pierpont Morgan, is quoted as saying, "Millionaires don't use astrology. Billionaires do", and attributed much of his success in business to the guidance he received from his Western astrologer. Finally, Judith Hill was able to predict the timing of earthquakes precisely, using her own innovative Western astrological methods.

II. Western criticisms of Vedic Astrology

A. The Wrong Zodiac. Some Western astrologers are so attached to their successes in using the Tropical Zodiac, that they too pronounce the use of the Sidereal Zodiac as erroneous.

This is fallacious for the following reasons:

1. Where did the signs get their names? From the shapes of the constellations in the sky. Clearly, the Sidereal Zodiac was used by astrologers far earlier than the Tropical Zodiac, and is the basis of the sign names and their meanings.

2. Most Western astrologers have literally no knowledge of the principles of Vedic astrology, and therefore cannot understand how signs can be used differently and still have value. They shouldn't reject what they haven't explored. For example, Vedic astrologers know that if the dispositor of a planet occupying its weakest sign (called Fall in Western astrology and Detriment in Vedic astrology) is in its own sign or exaltation, then the original planet's weakness is ameliorated. Such fundamental understandings are missing from Western astrology.

[Note: In order to address this issue more deeply, I have written an article called, "The Vedic Signs" for The Mountain Astrologer, which I have posted on this website and encourage you to read by clicking here.]

3. The Vedic system of astrology has been practiced by more astrologers, for much longer, than Western astrology. To invalidate an entire system that has been developed from its inception based on the Sidereal Zodiac just because it uses a different coordinate system is completely misguided. It's very similar to someone ignorant of astrology deciding astrology doesn't work because the planets are so far away.

Within Western astrology there are so many different approaches that are accepted, from using different house systems, rulership methods, and additional points like the asteroids, the comet Chiron, and hypothetical points, as well as the variant principles used in Horary, to the different coordinate systems used for astro-mapping, and in Heliocentric astrology, and even in Western Sidereal astrology. If Western astrologers can tolerate the amazing diversity within their camp, they should be ecumenical enough to accept Vedic astrology, too.

B. Too Fatalistic.

This is perhaps the most often voiced objection to Vedic astrology by Western astrologers ignorant of the field.

They ignore the following facts:

1. Throughout Vedic astrology's long history, Upayas (remedies to counteract issues in the chart) have been prescribed – in fact, Western astrology is woefully deficient in providing such remedies. Vedic astrologers can recommend specific forms of charity, chants, meditations, ceremonies, and gemstones to help to balance one's chart. If the Vedic method was fatalistic, applying remedial measures would never have become part of their tradition.

2. Western astrology was originally so fatalistic itself that its fatalism was the cause of its

rejection by early Christians, e.g. Saint Augustine in his Confessions. Many Western astrologers still use very fatalistic (and very discouraging) language. Fatalism is the flaw of the individual practitioner, not of the type of astrology.

On other hand, many Western astrologers become so "politically correct" and Pollyana-ish that they have become afraid to be the bearers of bad tidings, and gloss over – or don't even see – both natal patterns of deep challenge and potential disasters in the making. In other words, Vedic astrologers are generally much more willing to address dis-asters (bad stars!) in the chart and how to work with the problems they symbolize.

3. Another practice confused with fatalism is the teaching method common to both ancient Western and Vedic astrology that presented the most extreme manifestations as examples of a particular astrological factor. For example, from Ptolemy's classic *Tetrabiblos* (translated by Robert Schmidt, Book III, page 54):

"Kronos [Saturn] makes the native cold of belly and full of phlegm and rheumatic, emaciated and weak and jaundiced, prone to dysentery and coughing and vomiting and colic and elephantiasis..."

It is therefore important for the astrologer approaching ancient texts to understand that they were not meant to be taken literally, nor studied on one's own, but instead explored with one's mentor and thereby placed in context. The very extremity and starkness of the ancient style of delineations was meant as an aid to memory. And the concreteness of the statements gave them life and color.

A cursory glance at a classical Vedic text, in other words, has given many a modern Western astrologer the wrong impression, of fatalism and dire predictions.

C. Not Psychological.

An additional complaint made of Vedic astrology by Western astrologers is that it is not psychological. Those voicing this criticism have clearly not familiarized themselves with the delineations available in even the oldest Vedic astrology texts.

1. Vedic astrology is very psychological, in some ways more directly addressing one's mental state than Western astrology. The Vedic astrological method addresses what astrological factors indicate internal conditions like peace of mind, anxiety, emotional sensitivity, and mental illness; and what factors indicate external traumas like incest, drug and sexual addiction and impotence, and other forms of abuse. [Yes, even in classical Vedic texts.]

2. Vedic astrology also enables one to discern a great deal of detail about the individual's temperament. A Vedic astrologer can understand physiological patterns (such as what organ systems are liable to be problematic) and can use the chart to know which Dosha (Ayurvedic body type) a person will be --and the appropriate diet, herbs, etc. for each individual.

3. The main predictive method of Vedic astrology, the Vimshottari Dasa system, is truly superb at revealing when a person's life crises and their resolutions will occur.

4. Perhaps most importantly, the Vedas themselves, from which Jyotish was born, are incredibly rich in psychological content. Jyotish brings with it, from the Vedas, a deep and spiritual understanding of the structure of mind.

III. Very Different Origins

Because Vedic astrology has been a continuous oral tradition spanning thousands of years, its set of principles have formed a solid foundation for Vedic astrologers throughout the ages. The originators of Vedic astrology -- the Rishis -- were considered to be God-inspired, and thus their teachings were literally an essential part of the Hindu religion and therefore kept sacrosanct, and passed from generation to generation unaltered. It is astonishing how incredibly sophisticated and elaborate (both astronomically and predictively) the foundations of Vedic astrology are. Because of the richness of the original source material, many modern Vedic books are basically restatements and clarifications of the ancient texts.

Western astrology, conversely, has "died many deaths" during its history, due to religious persecution, the burning of books and whole libraries, and the scientific revolution. Even such intensive scholastic efforts such as Project Hindsight had to struggle mightily to find and

translate "lost" astrological works.

As a result, Western astrology has had to reinvent itself many times, which has resulted in an amazing diversity of approaches, but no solid thread of an original foundation.

IV. The Future

There is a small but fortunately growing number of astrologers who honor both systems. It is time astrologers recognized the incredible richness each system has to offer the other, and to reap the benefits of an open mind and an open heart.

Another evolving theme is the growing interest of other astrologies. The Traditional Astrology methods (called Hellenistic and Medieval), Chinese Astrology, Aztec Astrology, Babylonian Astrology, and additional astrologies of other cultures are beginning to gain more and more followers. Hopefully, this diversity will encourage everyone to be more open-minded.

Revised Sidebar: Those who pollute the waters.

One of the biggest dangers facing Vedic astrology today comes from Western astrologers who -- with the best of intentions -- bring Western astrological concepts to their Vedic writings and practice. This creates a "mishmash" of principles and techniques, and greatly dilutes the efficacy of the Vedic approach.

Similarly, those who attempt to make Western astrology into a science are confused to hear me be grateful that their efforts have failed. That is because astrology is as much a language, an art, and a practice, as a science, and the reduction of astrology to a set of statistical principles would strip it of its life and of its soul.

In addition, one cannot evaluate an astrological system from outside of it. There are those that have never studied with a Vedic master, yet they presume to know enough to criticize, distort, modify, and attempt to invalidate core Vedic principles. Please read my new article: Vedic

Astrology: An Oral Tradition for more on this topic.

V. Dancing Between the Stars: An Example

Here is an example of using both Western and Vedic astrology in the analysis of a person's chart.

A short Western astrological analysis of Julia Roberts:

Before looking at Julia's biography, I immediately noticed the impending eclipse in her birth chart. Indeed, four days after she was born, there was a total eclipse of the Sun. Using one day = one year of life, I knew that at age four something very difficult happened to her.

Upon looking at her bio in AstroDatabank, I saw that her parents divorced at (her) age four, and that this was a terrible loss for Julia. This event is also symbolized by the 4 degree applying square of Mars to Saturn. The damage to her relationship with her beloved loving father (symbolized by the eclipsed Sun) was the result of her parent's divorce. He died five years later.

It is easy to see, from the stellium in Virgo and the three planets in Scorpio, that Julia is very hard on herself, takes criticism way too deeply, is perfectionistic, and if you add the Mars in Capricorn, exerts tremendous efforts in anything she attempts. Her biography alludes to her insecurities, which are clearly the result of a very active inner judge.

In her Western chart, Saturn is in its sign of Fall in Aries, as ruler of the 7th house, with only hard aspects to it (including the aforementioned one from Mars). No wonder she has had so many failed relationships.

That same Saturn is the bucket-handle of a bucket chart, emphasizing the strength of her inner judge and her inability to feel satisfied with her successes.

A short Vedic astrological analysis of Julia Roberts:

I immediately note the Raja Yogas (success combinations) and Dhana Yogas (wealth combinations) formed by having Jupiter, lord of the 9th, Moon, lord of the 1st, and Venus, lord of the 11th, in the 2nd house. Since this house also represents the face, here are the symbols of her beauty (especially since Venus is also lord of the 4th house). Her wealth is strongly indicated by the fact that the same yoga-forming planets, Venus and the Moon, are the yogi and duplicate yogi, which being conjunct – in the 2nd house! – portends exceptionally well for her financial well-being.

Her success in career is further indicated by Jupiter aspecting both the 10th house and 10th lord and the "master of disguise" Rahu (the North Node), who occupies the 10th house. Mars, her 10th lord and dispositor of Rahu, in the 6th house, also shows how much effort she exerts in her work.

Ketu (the South Node) conjunct both the debilitated Sun in Libra and Mercury shows the insecurity and self-doubt that has plagued Julia throughout her life. Both the presence of a strong Saturn in her 9th house and the debilitated Sun conjunct Ketu also show the loss of her father.

Her Moon is dark and waning, and so she should pay attention to healing her emotional wounds, and to creating islands of stability in her life.

Finally, her challenges in relationships are clearly reflected by the sequence of dasas (planetary periods). Now that she has entered the Moon's dasa, with the Moon in a good house and a Parivartana yoga in the Navamsa, there is the chance for a better and longer lasting relationship. [Note: I wrote this paragraph well before Julia got married and started her family. She seems to have finally achieved relationship stability.]

If you wish to see a page showing both types of charts, [click here](#).

And thanks to AstroDatabank for Julia Roberts' birth data.

VI. Postscript: How I use both astrologies

I am often asked, "Are you going to give up Western astrology now that you're a practitioner of Vedic astrology?" and "What can you see using Vedic astrology -- or Western astrology -- that you can't see using the other approach?"

I am a bit wary about making any declarative statements, because I don't want to be followed blindly, and I certainly understand that different astrological factors and approaches speak clearly to different astrologers (and clients).

For example, up to and including the present, the asteroids, Chiron, most progression methods, house systems other than the Equal House System, Directions, Composite charts, and even Solar Returns have not "spoken to me". May I quickly add that I know astrologers who use these methods with great and accurate results.

Similarly, I have not been drawn to different Dasha methods beyond Vimshottari Dashas (which I find unbelievably reliable), nor have I connected with Ashtakavarga, KP astrology, the Systems Approach, or many other Vedic methodologies (but again know that they "sing" in the right hands).

What I'm trying to say is that the conclusions I'm about the make are not "the gospel" but simply what have worked for me.

In Western astrology, the transits of Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto have been priceless as predictive factors, and I would be hard pressed to give them up. Similarly, the configuration of the aspects, the elements, and the angles in Western astrology speak loudly to me about psychodynamics, temperament, and the level of psychological integration of the individual. I also assess compatibility with much greater understanding and depth using the Western astrological approach of examining the inter-aspects between two charts.

On the other hand, I've found Vedic astrology to be much more accurate in assessing the strength of planets (e.g. by sign occupation/dignity), house rulerships (and all of the myriad ramifications that Vedic astrology applies to house rulers, e.g. the incredibly meaningful

planetary yogas), and I would be very hard-pressed to ignore the stunningly potent predictive value of the aforementioned dasha system, and the use of divisional charts for understanding how each life theme is unfolding (e.g. career, health, relationships, etc.)

{Both of the two paragraphs above focus on only a fraction of the insights I receive from using both Western and Vedic charts.}

May I say again that since I have become "fluent" in Vedic astrology, on top of my mastery of Western astrology, my readings have developed a potency and impact and aliveness that I could never have predicted. I am incredibly grateful to Hart de Fouw for igniting Vedic astrology for me (and teaching me such a wealth of Vedic principles) and to all of the Western authors who empowered me in Western astrology.