

"The Message of the Stars"

~ Jyotisha Newsletter, December 2016 ~

Greetings everyone, and happy holidays! Wishing you all a blessed New Year and much warmth and coziness through this Winter season.

The Limbs of Jyotisha

Jyotisha (a.k.a. Vedic Astrology) is a multifaceted 'Vidyā' which comes from the Vedic tradition of India. The word 'Vidyā', can be roughly translated as "old world science", but beyond that also indicates an inspired, living tradition.

This ancient tradition seeks to provide the practical knowledge and tools that can enable us to live in harmony with the greater whole. For this purpose, Jyotisha has been organized into 'six limbs':

Gola, Gaṇita, Jātaka, Praśna, Muhūrta & Nimitta

Gola is observational astronomy and astrology. It is the first limb of Jyotisha, because naturally Jyotisha must begin with direct observation of the Sun, Moon, Stars and Planets. To understand Jyotisha fully, we must keep in mind that it is far more than just looking

at symbols on a page - it is about a connection with the greater whole which we are a part of.

Next comes **Gaṇita**, calculations. Interpretation of a horoscope requires certain calculations. The astrologer must know what degree of each constellation the planets are in, for example. There are many techniques in Jyotisha which require calculations, and these days computers are able to do much of this work for us. However, for those of us interested in practicing Jyotisha, learning to do some calculations without the computer is a great way to keep the mind sharp!

The third limb is **Jātaka**. This refers to the interpretation of birth charts. Through the birth chart we can understand our strengths and challenges, as well as our unique destiny patterns (known as *prārabdha karma* in Sanskrit). By better understanding the “hand we are dealt” in this life, we are able to “play that hand well” - in such a way which promotes growth and well-being. Jātaka can also be used for understanding *relationship dynamics* between any two individuals.

Next is **Praśna**. While Jātaka is probably the most well-known aspect of any type of astrology, Praśna can be very useful. It involves answering questions. The astrologer can cast a chart the moment a question is asked, and interpretation of this chart (the ‘*birth-chart of the question*’, if you will) helps us to understand which course of action may prove to be the most effective. Praśna is typically used for ‘yes or no’ type questions - such as “Should I buy the house?”, etc.

The 5th limb of Jyotisha is **Muhūrta**. This limb involves selecting a favorable day and time to begin something important. This is a very useful aspect of astrology as it allows us to ‘optimize’ the use of our free-will by choosing to perform actions at ‘the right time’, so to speak. The result is an alignment with the greater whole, which promotes harmony and positivity. Examples of important uses of *muhūrta* include choosing an auspicious time for marriage, beginning a business, or starting an important journey.

Last but not least is **Nimitta**. Nimitta is the interpretation of omens. Jyotisha is as much an art as it is a science. It is a living, organic knowledge. This limb is based on the principle that events do not just occur randomly, and that everything is interconnected. Nimitta involves cultivating receptivity in order to understand what Nature may be communicating to us.

In conclusion, by understanding these six limbs, we can see that Jyotisha is a holistic system which has been passed down to us since ancient times for the purpose of providing practical tools which promote harmony and growth in life.



ॐ सर्वेशां स्वस्तिर्भवतु ।
सर्वेशां शान्तिर्भवतु ।
सर्वेशां पुर्णभवतु ।
सर्वेशां मङ्गलंभवतु ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*May there be Well-Being for All,
May there be Peace for All,
May there be Fulfillment for All,
May there be Auspiciousness for All,
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.*

The Purpose of Health

Caraka-saṃhitā 1.15:

*Dharmārtha kāma mokṣāṇām ārogyaṃ mūlam uttamam.
Rogās tasyāpahartāraḥ śreyaso jīvitasya ca.*

"Health is the best foundation for the four aims of human life: dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa. Diseases take this away, as well as goodness and life itself."



"Health is wealth, health is a covetable possession indeed.
Health is a valuable asset for one and all."

- Swāmi Sivānanda

In our modern world, it seems that many of us have become increasingly health-conscious. For example, according to ota.com, "Organic is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. food industry. Organic food sales increase by double digits annually, far outstripping the growth rate for the overall food market..." (www.ota.com/resources/market-analysis)

With this recent trend, perhaps it is fair to ask the question: "Why health?" Is health important to us simply because we believe it will allow us to "feel good" or to avoid disease? What is our underlying motive for our pursuit of health?

According to the ancient science of Ayurveda, health has an important purpose and role to play on our life journey. This "purpose of

health" includes, but also goes much deeper than the mere prevention of disease.

Caraka, one of the great classical authorities on Ayurveda, teaches us in his Caraka-saṃhitā that health is the best foundation ("mūlam uttamam" in Sanskrit) for the attainment of the "four aims of life" (known as "puruṣārthas"). These four aims of life are called Artha, Kāma, Dharma and Mokṣa. They represent four goals of life that, when attained, are considered to bring one a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

"Artha" represents the meeting of our basic material needs in life - such as our need for food, water, shelter and the money required to attain these things. "Kāma" represents our need for enjoyment. Some examples here can include love and romance, entertainment, hobbies, etc. "Dharma" can be thought of as 'right conduct', and signifies living in a way that is ethically sound and in harmony with the laws of nature. "Mokṣa" means final liberation, freedom, or enlightenment.

According to the ancient Indian seers (ṛṣis), a life oriented toward fulfilling these four aims is a balanced life - and one which enables us to thrive.

Considering that health is said to be the 'very best foundation' for the four Puruṣārthas suggests that health truly is of utmost value, and that it has a deeper, profound purpose beyond just the prevention of disease alone.



As usual, Jyotisha readings are available both in person (in Cleveland Heights, OH) or long-distance via Skype. I also offer private tutoring in both Jyotisha and Sanskrit. For more details about my current offerings, see: vedichealing108.com/jyotisha-services/ Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or if you would like to schedule a consultation:

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Sincerely,

Greg Stein