THE FOLLOWERS OF THE STARS:
ON THE EARLY SOURCES AND HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN ASTROLOGY

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This article sets itself a goal to explore the early historical development of the traditional astrological sciences (jyotishastra, jyotisavidya) in India, tracing its relationship to the astrology developed in Mesopotamia and in the Hellenistic period by the Greeks, as well as discussing some of its amplifications in South Asia, and the direct intercourse between India and the Arabs. Some attention is paid to the transformation and re-interpretation of foreign astral and divinatory sciences in India. The primarily sources of the present study are the early Sanskrit texts (mainly those of Sphujidhvaja's and Varahamihira's), and the study itself is grounded on the critical analysis of contemporary discussions carried on by D. Pingree, O. Neugebauer, P. V. Kane, A. M. Shastri, and others scholars in the field.

“To deny to Babylon, to Egypt, and to India, their part in the development of science and scientific thinking is to defy the testimony of the ancients, supported by the discoveries of the modern authorities. The efforts, which have been made to ascribe to Greek influence the science of Egypt, of later Babylon, of India, and that of the Arabs, do not to the glory that was Greece. […] Without serious questioning we may assume that a fundamental part of the science of Babylon and Egypt and India, developed during the times which we think of as Greek, was indigenous science.”

Lynn Thorndike

“There existed, therefore, a more or less common understanding of astronomy and astrology in those regions of the world where Latin, Greek, Syriac, Pahlavi and Sanskrit were used, though each culture had its particular idiosyncrasies and its special areas of sophistication”.

D. Pingree

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Astrological texts bear testimony to the profound and illustrious culture of Indian divination traditions in ancient times. That is, because astrology in one form or another provided a common ground for the encounter of meteorology and architecture, medicine and jewellery-making, iconology and town-planning, agriculture and historiography. India, owing to her preeminent geographical position, had always been a meeting place of many nations and cultures. This enabled her from the very beginning to play an important role in the transmission and diffusion of ideas. To a historian of civilization, astrology is not only one of the significant phenomena of the ancient world’s culture but a very helpful tool for the investigation of the transmission of ideas. The purpose of this study is the investigation of Indian astrology in the crucial period from about 500 B.C. to 1000 A.C. in order to obtain a more comprehensive and more plausible picture of ancient Indian astrological history than had previously been presented. The emphasis is placed on the ascertainment of socio-religious dynamics that brought about the change in conceptual basis of ancient Indian astrology during this period, which saw the transition from Vedic *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa*, anchored in a magic-religious ideology to practical applied astrology *Phalita Jyotiṣa*. The methodology requires a historical and philological investigation of a variety of Indian and non-Indian sources and study itself is based on the analysis of contemporary discussions carried on by D. Pingree, O. Neugebauer, P. V. Kane, A. M. Shastri, and others scholars in this field.

We know equally little about the origin of astrology and astronomy and the relative influence of these two disciplines upon one another is largely a matter of conjecture. Our attempt here is to explore the development of classical astrology (*jyotiṣaśāstra*) in India, tracing its relationship to the astrology developed in Mesopotamia and in the Hellenistic period by the Greeks, as well as discussing some of its amplification in the South Asia, and direct intercourse between India and the Arabs. Knowledge of the processes by which Brahmanism integrated elements of Hellenistic astrology into its religious doctrines and practices not only helps to deepen the understanding of Indian astrological history, but also sheds abundant light on the social and cultural history of Hinduism through the centuries.

**Origins of Astral Divinatory Practices: Mesopotamia and Greece**

The reading of celestial omens was a relatively late development within the Mesopotamian sciences of omens, following after extispicy, oneiromancy, teratology, and physiognomy, and

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more or less contemporaneous with animal and plant omens. The events in the heavens, in the sky and even on the earth were supposed to intimate the thoughts of the gods and to convey indications about impending happenings. By celestial omens the gods, without being asked any question, voluntarily communicated to the king their intentions by altering the normal appearance and behaviour of the stars and planets, which serve as the physical manifestations of the divine powers in the world of men. The events announced by omens were not considered inevitable by the Babylonians and Assyrians. The message of the gods always allowed one to prevent the imminent evil by appropriate actions and behavior. The rites to avert such evil were called nam-bur-bi. This is a Sumerian word, taken over into Akkadian as namburbu, has a meaning "its (i.e., the announced evil's) loosening". Among the numerous namburbis there are also some especially concerning evil omens coming from the celestial events, and eclipses were among the most dangerous omens.

According to Rochberg-Halton, the earlier history of celestial omens in Mesopotamia is hard to delineate, such omens were probably observed in late Sumerian times, in the late 3rd millennium B.C., though no Sumerian tablets with such contents are as yet available and nothing is know about Sumerian astronomy. From the last half of the 2nd millennium B.C., the principle collection of celestial omens in Akkadian was the series of probably over seventy Tablets entitled Enûma Anu Enlil. These tablets comprise omens derived from the moon, the sun, weather phenomena, the stars and planets, however it seems to have evolved from the observation of eclipses, both lunar and solar ones.

The oldest fragments of tablets from the Old Babylonian Period itself dealing with the appearance of the sky and the Moon on certain numbered days in a lunar month belong to the first half of the 2nd millennium. And from the third quarter of the 2nd millennium we have a greater variety of omens, but not a significantly greater number of texts. Historically are interesting two texts called mul. apin, of which earliest preserved copies are dated around 700 B.C. They contain summary of the knowledge of their time and are concerned mostly with the fixed stars, the planets, the Moon, the seasons and related topics. Around this time we meet

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4 See: David Pingree, From Astral Omens to Astrology, From Babylon to Bikânér, Roma, Instituto Italiano per L’Africa e L’Oriente, 1997, p. 11. My debt to modern scholarship in the field is considerable. In present research I relied throughout on David Pingree’s findings, however differently organized and emphasized. His fundamental works have much cleared up interconnections between the ancient Near East and adjacent cultures to the East and the West, and the routes they followed in Greek and Arabic language transmissions. In the immense project called Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit, D. Pingree provided a preliminary explanation and organization of the vast of Sanskrit and Sanskrit influenced literature devoted to astronomy, mathematics, astrology and divination together with brief bibliographical information concerning the treatises and their authors. Without this unique encyclopedia any serious attempt in the field of traditional Indian astrosciences would be rather impossible. See Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit, Series A, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1970–1994, vols. I–V.


with systematic observational reports of astronomers.\textsuperscript{7} The documents concerning astrology in Mesopotamia belong to the Seleucid period. A letter written by the priest of Assur, Akkullanu, to Assurbanipal in 657 B.C. shows that in c. 1100 B.C. the Babylonian king employed observers who reported to him on celestial phenomena.\textsuperscript{8} At the end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century B.C., the earliest examples of what has been called Babylonian horoscopes are attested. We have less than ten horoscopes from cuneiform tablets, and still fewer texts concern astrological doctrines as they are known to us in such enormous amounts from Greek sources.

Sufficient indications exist that at least in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century B.C. in Asia Minor something was known about Mesopotamian birth omens. By the 1\textsuperscript{st} century B.C. horoscopes begin to appear in Greek and to be mentioned in Latin literature. The earliest datable example is for a nativity on 21 January 72 B.C.\textsuperscript{9} In Egypt the earliest horoscopes, Demotic or Greek, are from the reign of Augustus. The earliest astrological doctrines belong to the same period. The rapid spread and enormous development of astrological doctrine during the first Roman imperial period is paralleled in the spread of Christianity, Mithraism, and related creeds.

The astrology which is known to us from the Assyrian period is quite different from the Hellenistic personal astrology. The predictions concern like the king and the country as a whole and are based on observed astronomical appearances, not on computation and not on the moment of birth. The science of planetary astrology was developed in, most probably, the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} or early 1\textsuperscript{st} century B.C. as a means to predict, draw up from horoscopic themata the moment of an individual’s birth (or conception), the fate of the native, and depend upon the computed position of the seven celestial bodies and of the zodiacal signs in their relation to the given horizon. This form of astrology, called genethlialogy, is rooted in Aristotelian physics and Hellenistic astronomy, but also borrowed much from Mesopotamia and some elements from Egypt as well as developing many theories of its own.\textsuperscript{10} The adaptation of this form of astrology to determine the best time for initiating actions is termed catacholic astrology. All these types of astrology depend on the notion that the planets in their eternal rotations

\textsuperscript{7} Ulla Koch-Westenhalz, \textit{Mesopotamian Astrology. An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination}, University of Copenhagen, 1995, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{8} S. Parpola, \textit{Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esharhaddon and Assurbanipal}, vol. 2, Helsinki, State Archives of Assyria, 1993, p. 76–78.


about the earth, transmit motion to the four elements and to the assemblages of elements, animate and inanimate in the sublunar world. As Neugebauer states it clearly:

"The main structure of the astrological theory is undoubtedly Hellenistic. [...] Though it is quite possible that the original impetus for horoscopic astrology came from Babylonia as a new development from the old astronomical omens, it seems to me, that its actual development must be considered as an important component of Hellenistic science."\(^{11}\)

The closest Babylonian parallels to Greek astrology are the so-called 'horoscopes', which record planetary positions and other data at the time of a native's birth and, sometimes, computed conception, and the texts which inform the diviner about the interpretation of these omens. The astronomy of Mesopotamian omen-literature was purely descriptive, and all concern the nation as a whole, or the king and royal princess. None of those omens that reached our times is concerned with the fate of individual men. Description of omens clearly presuppose that there is some relationship between what happens in the sky and what happens on the earth, though they do not suggest that the relationship is one of cause and effect.

From the seventh century onwards an exact observation becomes increasingly important, and still later arithmetical computation plays a part in this sort of proto-astrology. The names of the constellations, including those, which lie along the ecliptic, are frequently used, but there is no sign of the zodiac as such. Many of the names were taken over by the Greeks, and the combined Greco-Babylonian description of the heavens was later given the name *sphaera graecanica*, to distinguish it from the *sphaera barbarica*, the non-Greek and usually Egyptian description. Alongside these omens there are a few which give predictions about a child according to the month of birth, but these may be derived from list of lucky and unlucky months rather than from any astronomical data.

After the conquest of Alexander the Great, the Egypt of the Ptolemies was part of the Greek world, and Alexandria became and remained for centuries the intellectual capital of the ancient world. Nevertheless, the ancient Egypt produced no astrology of its own. The Greeks themselves believed that their astronomy was derived from the east, from Babylonia, and that astrology was brought into Greece by the 'Chaldaean' Berosus. Four books of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* became for centuries the most influential textbook of astrology in the West.\(^{12}\) He himself was an Alexandrian Greek of the mid-second century A.D., and Alexandria was the home of Greek astrology. As Franz Cumont has made it clear, the new cities and academies of the Hellenistic world spurred the fusion of Zoroastrian, Babylonian, Jewish, Syrian, and Greek currents, and astrology came to function as nothing less than a universal and syncretistic religious perspective that underlay or influenced all the religions of late antiquity. Astrology appealed to the educated Greeks precisely because they were rational, and because it was a rational system, or could be made to look like one. Its acceptance as a learned and


scientific study was the common, if not the normal, attitude to it, and it is not an accident that the greatest of the Greek astronomer (Hipparchus, Ptolemy) were also astrologers. In that sense George Sarton has justly pointed:

"One might almost claim that Greek astrology was the fruit of Greek rationalism. At any rate, it received some kind of justification from the notion of cosmos, a cosmos which is so well arranged that no part is independent of the other parts and the whole."¹³

Early Astrological Beliefs in Vedic India

But let’s take a look now at India.¹⁴ The history of astrological beliefs in India goes back to a hoary antiquity. The Vedic civilization exhibits belief in the prognostications and omens.¹⁵ Omens (adbhuta, upāta, nimitta) have always been regarded by Indians, as well as by others, as a means of knowing the future. Prognostications were based in very early Vedic times on the nakṣatras either of birth or on nakṣatras deemed auspicious or inauspicious. To regard the time when the Moon conjoins with a particular nakṣaṭra as propitious or unpropitious for performing certain acts was an ancient custom in India. Eventually a separate science developed that used this notion of auspicious and inauspicious time-units, in combination with omens and astrological yogas, to establish the correct time for initiating various kinds of actions. This is the science of muhūrtā corresponding to Hellenistic catarchic (horary) astrology.¹⁶ In Indian treatises on catarchic astrology great importance is given to deciding the time for performing the religious sacraments sanśkāras and other ritual acts, and this aspect

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¹⁴ P. V. Kane in his study, the *History of Dharmaśastra* divides the history of astrological and astronomical literature in Sanskrit into three slightly overlapping periods. According to him, the first period is that of the Vedic Sanhitās and the Brahmaṇas from the mists of antiquity to about 800 B.C. The second period is represented by the Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa, the Śrauta, Gṛhya and Dharma sūtras, Manus, Yajnavalkya and Garga smṛtis, Iaina works like Sūryaprajāpāti and ended about the 3rd century A.D. The third period begins at the commencement of the Christian era and is represented by the works called Siddhānta and gave rise to the works of A rāhaṭa (born 476 A.D.), of Varāhamihira (born about 475 to 550 A.D.), Brahmagupta (born in 598 A.D.) and so on. (P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśastra*, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1994, vol. V, Part I, p. 484.) However, it is clear that he totally ignored the evident influence which astrological methods of Greeks and Arabs made on Indian astrosiences. See for instance, Alex Wayman, "Four Periods in the History of Indian Astrology", *Proceedings of the 26th International Congress of Orientalists*, Poona, 1969, vol. III, pp. 146–148.


of mūhūrta strongly influenced, many treatises of dharmaśāstras which are entirely or partially devoted to this kind of prediction.

Traditionally jyotisha, according to the medieval Indian astrological treatises, was originally promulgated by the eighteen sages: Brāhmaśārya, Vasiṣṭa, Atri, Manu, Paulastya, Romasa, Marici, Angiras, Vyāsa, Nārada, Śaunaka, Bhrigu, Cyavana, Yavana, Garga, Kaśyapa, Parāśara and Śūrya. The Vedāṅga Jyotisha is a general name by which one generally refers to the treatises called the Ṛgveda-jyotisha (RJ), the Yajurveda-jyotisha (YJ) and the Atharvaveda-jyotisha (AJ). The former two are ascribed to Lagadha, while the last one is anonymous. The Vedāṅga Jyotisha is traditionally known to be one of the six auxiliary sciences (aṅgas) of the Vedas and its purpose was to provide Vedic priests with a means of computing the times for which the performances of sacrifices are prescribed, primarily new and full moons. In the following verse the purpose of the Vedāṅga Jyotisha is clearly stated:

"The Vedas arouse for the purpose of use in sacrifices; sacrifices are enjoined according to the order of times; therefore he who knows jyotisha which is the science lay in down the proper times knows sacrifices. Just as a tuft of hair stands on the head of peacocks or a jewel in the heads of cobras, so astronomical calculations (gaṇita) stand at the head of all the sciences that are spoken of as Vedāṅgas."17

After quoting the verse given above in his commentary on Brhajjiitaka Bhaṭṭotpala says:

"Now, how it is proved that astrology is Vedāṅga? It is Vedāṅga because auspicious times are described in terms of lunar and solar eclipses, sun’s entry into a sign of the zodiac, [calculations] of vyaṭipāta, gajacchaya, tīthi, etc; because specific times are prescribed for the sacrifices, and because times are laid down for various other activities described in the Śrutis, smṛtis and Purāṇas."

It means that, according to Bhaṭṭotpala, astrology (phālita jyotisha) depends strongly on astronomy (gaṇita jyotisha). In the Pāṇiniya Śikṣā the science of the movements of heavenly bodies is said to be the eye of the Veda. (Śikṣā, 41–42) It shows that the words jyotisha and gaṇita are used as synonyms in the Vedāṅga Jyotisha. From amongst these three, it is only the RJ that is the current text memorized for the Vedic recitation by the traditional Vedic reciters (vedapāṭhin), while the YJ and the AJ are the less known two, and hardly ever recited in the Vedic circles.18 The YJ is a sort of an enlarged and revised version of the RJ, both of which are ascribed to Lagadha, whose disciple Śuci seems to have composed or corrected and preserved

17 vedā hi yajñārthamahbhipravṛttah kālā anupurvyā vihitāśca yajñāh, tasmādī daṃ kāḷaḥvidhānāśtras trām ye jyotisham vedā sa vedā yajñān – Ṛgveda Jyotisā, 35, Yajurveda Jyotisā, 3.
the knowledge codified by this celebrated teacher, sometimes between 1000 to 500 B.C. The RJ consists of 36 verses, the YJ – of 43 verses and the AJ – of 162 verses divided into 14 chapters. Yajur-reception names no author, but has bhāṣya, or a commentary by one Somakāra. While the RJ and the AJ have some variations in the readings, both of them have about thirty verses in common. It is the YJ that has generally been used by modern scholars too, as it, in two of its additional verses, attempts to adjust the older system of the RJ to the familiar terms of medieval Indian astronomy.

We have no clue for ascertaining whether there were any works more ancient than the Vedāṅga Jyotisa and the Śaṃhitās of Garga and others. None of these are available at present. The first Śaṃhitā branch dealt with the movement of planets in the zodiac and their mutual conflicts, etc., the consideration of benefic or malefic effects of meteors, comets, eclipses and omens on the world. The second branch is devoted to the selection or consideration of auspicious moments for starting on a journey, the celebration of a marriage, etc. Varāhamihira’s works show that in his time both branches enjoyed equal importance, but from Śripati’s time (around 1050 A.D.), the first part began to lose its importance and from about 1500 A.D., the second part gained so much importance that only the chapter on muhūrtā began to pass to the fore the third branch.

References to named stars or constellations are extremely rare in the earliest levels of Vedic literature, written before 1000 B.C. Vedas and Brāhmaṇas provide us with some elements of observational astronomy. For marking the sidereal positions of the Sun and the Moon, ancient Indians divide the ecliptic circle in 27 or 28 (depending on the particular list) divisions nakṣatras or constellations associated with the Moon’s course through the sky, and this tradition seems to have been subject to Babylonian influence. The earliest text, Taittiriya saṃhitā (IV.4.10. 1–3) gives the names of twenty-seven nakṣatras in sequence and of the presiding deity of each; this information with further mythological references is found also in two passages of the Taittiriya brāhmaṇa (I. 5 and III. 1. 4–5). The other early lists of nakṣatras are those of the Atharvaveda (XIX. 7, 2–5) Kāthaka saṃhitā (XXXIX.13) and

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19 The common points in astronomy and cosmography discussed by W. Kirfel include Vedic evidence, but can be explained as reminiscences from the Indus culture. However, according to P. V. Kane, they at least do not prove any direct contact between Vedic India and Mesopotamia. See: Willibald Kirfel, Die Kosmographie der Inder, Bonn–Leipzig, 1920, p. 28.

20 Vedanga Jyotisha, ed. with corrected readings and interpretations in his commentary, by Himmatram M. Yajnik (Jani), Vedhashala, Ahmedabad, 1985. A detailed comparative table of corresponding verses has been provided by Shankar Balakrishna Dikshit in his celebrated work on Indian Astronomy Bhāratīya Jyotisā (2nd printing, Poona, 1931; Hindi trans., Publication Bureau, U.P., Prayag, 1957. English translation of part 1, History of Astronomy during the Vedic and Vedanga period, tr. by R. V. Vaidya, Delhi, 1969). By the way, Dikshit held that the scientific system of Indian astronomy is essentially independent and rests only on Indian observations.

21 This can be confirmed from the titles and the subjects matter of the following works: Muhūrtā Tatva, Muhūrtā Mārtaṇḍa, Muhūrtā Cintāmani, Muhūrtā Cudāmani, Muhūrtā Dipika, Muhūrtā Gaṇapati, and others.
The Followers of the Stars

Maitrāyāpi samhitā (II. 13, 20). The nakṣatras are named after a prominent star or asterism in the respective portion of the Zodiac, but these names differ in the various lists. In this list, which is always headed by the Kṛttikās (the Pleiades) in the East, each nakṣatra is associated with a ruling deity, gotra, food and number of muhūrtas in the unequal-space nakṣatra system. What is important is that almost all of the Indian names of nakṣatras are significant or have ancient legends connected with them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taittiriya samhitā</th>
<th>Atharvaveda</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Deity (according to RJa. 25-26, and YJa. 36.40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kṛttikās (pl.)</td>
<td>Kṛttikās (pl.)</td>
<td>cutters (?) knife (?)</td>
<td>Agni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rohini</td>
<td>Rohini</td>
<td>ruddy</td>
<td>Prajāpati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mrgaśirṣa</td>
<td>Mrgaśiras</td>
<td>deer’s head</td>
<td>Soma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ārdrā</td>
<td>Ārdrā</td>
<td>moist, wet</td>
<td>Rudra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Punarvasū (dual)</td>
<td>Punarvasū (dual)</td>
<td>two that are good again</td>
<td>Aditi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tisya</td>
<td>Tisya</td>
<td>auspicious, nourishing</td>
<td>Brhaspati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Āśreṣas (pl.)</td>
<td>Āśreṣas</td>
<td>entwiners</td>
<td>Sarpāḥ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Maghās (pl.)</td>
<td>Maghās</td>
<td>mighty ones</td>
<td>Pītarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Phalgunyau (dual)</td>
<td>Phalgunyau (dual)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Bhagā</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Phalgunyau (dual)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Aryaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hasta</td>
<td>Hasta</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>Saviṁt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Citrā</td>
<td>Citrā</td>
<td>brilliant</td>
<td>Tvaṁt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Svātī</td>
<td>Svātī</td>
<td>sword</td>
<td>Vāyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Viśākhe (dual)</td>
<td>Viśākhe (dual)</td>
<td>two with spreading branches</td>
<td>Indrāgni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Anurādhā</td>
<td>Anurādhā</td>
<td>success</td>
<td>Mitra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Rohini</td>
<td>Iyeṣṭhā</td>
<td>ruddy, eldest</td>
<td>Indra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Vīcṛtau (dual)</td>
<td>Mūla</td>
<td>two releasers, root</td>
<td>Indra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Aśādhās (pl.)</td>
<td>Aśādhās (pl.)</td>
<td>unsubdued</td>
<td>Āpaḥ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Aśādhās (pl.)</td>
<td>Uttara Aśādhās (pl.)</td>
<td>unsubdued</td>
<td>Viśvedevāḥ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. --</td>
<td>Abhijit</td>
<td>conquering</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Śrīpā</td>
<td>Śrāvaṇa</td>
<td>lame, ear</td>
<td>Viṣṇu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Śraviṣṭhā</td>
<td>Śraviṣṭhās (pl.)</td>
<td>most famous</td>
<td>Vasava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Śatābhīṣaj</td>
<td>Śatābhīṣaj</td>
<td>having 100 physicians</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Proṣṭhapadās (pl.)</td>
<td>Proṣṭhapadā</td>
<td>having ox feet</td>
<td>Aja Ekapād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Proṣṭhapadās (pl.)</td>
<td>Proṣṭhapadā</td>
<td>having ox feet</td>
<td>Ahirbudhnya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Revati</td>
<td>Revati</td>
<td>wealthy</td>
<td>Pūṣa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Aśvayuaujau (dual)</td>
<td>Aśvayuaujau (dual)</td>
<td>two horsemen</td>
<td>Aśvinau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Apabharanīṣ (pl.)</td>
<td>Bharanyas (pl.)</td>
<td>bearers</td>
<td>Yama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it does not appear that in these early times any rules had been arrived at about the influence of planets in certain nakṣatras or about horoscopes with planets in nakṣatras or rāsis, or in certain ‘houses’ (bhāvas). Prognostications in those days were confined mainly to nakṣatras, days and natural phenomena, bodily marks and from the sight, flight or cries of birds and other animals (śākunas). As a part of divination Indians had for long predicted the characteristics of a native on the basis of the nakṣatra occupied by the Moon at his birth. The result of the dependence on ideas of lucky and unlucky days and nakṣatras was that some people began to make observations and deduce conclusion and a lore called nakṣatra-vidyā arose.

For example, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VII. 1.2.4), daiva and nakṣatra-vidyā, meaning the knowledge of the utpātas or natural disturbances and jyautiṣa respectively, are included in the list of the sciences studied by Nārada. Pāṇini refers to the belief in divination from bodily signs and to fortune-telling by soothsayers, while the inclusion in the Rgyanādīgana of utpāta, sāṇvatsara, muhūrtā and nimitta as subjects of study indicates the study of astrology and omens in his days. After analyzing the main early Indian astronomical texts on the identification of the coordinates of star (yogatāra), Pingree comes to the conclusion that the Indians did not observe the positions of the stars and planets with accuracy. The idea that the star-coordinates, like the polar coordinate system itself and so much else of the astronomy of medieval India, came from Greece seems more plausible to him. But concerning the question of the units of time, there are famous verses in this connection in Rgveda:

“"The wheel of rta has twelve spokes; it revolves round the heavens; it does never wear out. O Agni, in this (wheel) seven hundred and twenty sons in pairs abide. Some say that the father (Sun) who sends down water has five feet and twelve forms and remains endowed with fullness in the disant half of heavens while others say that he, all-seeing, is placed in a lower (place) that has seven wheels and six spokes; all the worlds abide in the revolving wheel and five spokes; on wheel and twelve rims (of the wheel) and three naves – who is there that knew these (thoroughly)? In that (wheel, i.e. year) are placed together three hundred and sixty very unstable nails.""

In these passages a riddle is passed by sages in a very metaphorical and mystic language about a year divided into three, five or six seasons, twelve months, 360 days and 720 days and nights. It is possible also to hold that the wheel of rta means the zodiacal belt divided into twelve parts (dvādaśāra).

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23 Various references to an ominous bird (śākunas) are found in the Rgveda (II. 42–43 and X. 165) and in the Atharavaveda (VI. 27–29 and VII.64). The earliest attempts to list and classify omens and to provide their ritual countermeasures (śānti) occur in the Kausikasūtra of Atharvaveda (XII. 93–136). See: A. Weber, "Zwei Vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta", Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1858, pp. 313–413.

24 See: V. S. Agrawala, India as known to Pāṇini, Lucknow, 1953.


Hardly anything can be said about the astrological significance of planets in the ancient Vedic literature. The study of planets appears in late astronomical-astrological works and the Vedas do not mention them. Unlike the Babylonians, the ancient Indians were not particularly interested in the study of stars as such and in the preparation of star catalogues. They were primarily interested in the study of the motions of the sun and the moon with a view to developing a workable calendar. Yet it is impossible to deny the knowledge of the planets to the Vedic Indians, even if we have to agree that the cult of the worship of planet that we find well developed in the Purānic texts had not yet arisen in Vedic times. At least Brhaspati (Jupiter) and Uṣas (Venus) appear to be clearly meant in some Vedic verses. (RV. IV.50.4; X.123.1; X.123.5; At. XX. 88. 4) There are also many verses mentioning in an enigmatic form the main seven planets as “seven priests” (sapta viprāh), “five oxen” (adhvaryubhiḥ paścambhīḥ), “five gods” (paścadevām) and so on. (RV. III.7.7; III.31.5; IV.2.15; VI.22.2; X.55.3.) “The mighty five (gods) are seen in the middle of the vast expanse of the sky” (RV, I.105.10). It may be interfered that ‘mighty five’ (paścekṣane) could be the five planets. Jupiter as Brhaspati is mentioned in Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (2.8.2), Rgveda Sanhitā (IV.50.4), Atharvaveda Sanhitā (20.88.4). As the “Star of Planets” (osadhitārakā) Venus is mentioned in an early Buddhist text, the Majjhima Nikāya (M.N. 2.3.7.). Chāndogya and Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣads mention Śani (Saturn), Rāhu (ascending node of the Moon), and Ketu (descending node of the Moon). The earliest literary references to Mangala (Mars, named also as Angāraka and Bhauma) are also in the late portions of Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana. The very remarkable feature of the Indian Epics is that while they put forward dozens of times the positions of the Sun, the Moon and planets in reference to nakṣatras, not a single passage gives the position of the planets in relation to rāśis, the signs of the Zodiac, or weekday.

Assimilation of the Greco-Roman Traditions

From the time of Indo-European dispersal in the 4th and 3rd millennium, no contact of great significance could have taken place between Greeks and Indians before Alexander’s penetration into Bactria. There are reports by writers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that Greeks had visited India in much earlier times; Plutarch in his Lives reports that legendary Lycurgus of Sparta visited India (Lycurgus, 6). In fact, Plutarch, Diodoros Sikeliotes (known as Siculu) and Diogenes Laertius manage between them to send just about every Greek sage into the East, including Pythagoras and Democritus, but notably not

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27 D. M. Bose, S. N. Sen, V. Subbarayappa (eds.), A Concise History of Science in India, New Delhi, Indian National Science Academy, 1971, p. 66.
29 Chāndogya Upaniṣad, VIII. 13; Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad, VII. 6.
Socrates and Aristotle. Even if such journeys did take place, these sages are more likely to have brought back with them philosophical rather than scientific ideas.\(^{32}\) And it is much likely that iconographic material would have reached Greece through merchants or through conscripted Indian soldiers in the Persian armies in the 6th (in Ionia in the eastern Aegean) and early 5th centuries (mainland Greece).\(^{33}\)

In the 5th and early 4th century B.C. much of Mesopotamian omen literature, perhaps from Aramaic versions\(^{34}\), was translated into an Indian language, and these translations, though undoubtedly considerably altered to fit with Indian intellectual traditions and with Indian society which the diviners had to serve, form the basis of the rich Sanskrit and Prakrit literatures on terrestrial and celestial omens. Thus the Babylonian astral sciences, in a form that they had reached in the Achaemenid period, became the foundations of Indian jyoti śāstra. According to Pingree, even the mathematical astronomy of the Vedāṅga Jyoti śa heavily depends on Mesopotamian science of the Achaemenid period and cannot be dated earlier than 400 B.C.

"It is my suggestion that some knowledge reached India, along with the specific astronomical material in the fifth or fourth century B.C. through Iranian intermediaries, whose influence is probably discernible in the year-length selected by Lagadha for the Jyotisavedāṅga [...]. Iranian influence in the early fifth century was sufficient strong to make possible the safe completion of Scylax's exploratory voyage down the Indus and Takšašā, in the region where Pāṇini seems to have worked, was certainly a city where cross-cultural contacts were frequent. And it is arguable that the enormous and often-studied Iranian influence discerned in Maurian poity, architecture, sculpture, epigraphy, and the like in the third century B.C. was an inheritance from the pre-Mauryan Nandas' rather than from the post-Alexandrian Greeks' adaptations of Achaemenid forms. And parallel to the suggested Mesopotamian-Iranian influence on Indian mathematical astronomy is the influence of the same cultural complex on Indian omens, which first are mentioned in the Upaniṣads and Buddhist canonical texts of the pre-Mauryan period, though the oldest codifications of these omens available to us were compiled in the early centuries A.D. I believe, to see the origins of mathematical astronomy in India as just one element in a general transmission of Mesopotamian-Iranian cultural forms to norther India during the two centuries that antedated Alexander's conquest of the Achaemenid empire."\(^{35}\)

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\(^{33}\) Possible contacts between Greece and India from most ancient to Roman times have been extensively examined by J. W. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World. A study in the Transmission of Culture*, Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1980; and Klaus Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World* (Studia Orientalia 83), Helsinki, 1997.

\(^{34}\) David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology, From Babylon to Bikāner*, Roma, Instituto Italiano per L'Africa e L'Oriente, 1997, p. 33.

The history of the traditional zodiacal and planetary symbols is virtually unknown. The general outline of the development of the idea of the zodiac is summed up by Rupert Gleadow: "The zodiac grew up, and must have grown up, as a device for measuring time. Only later did it come to be used for divination, and later still for the analysis of character." Since Assyriologists began to reveal the astronomical knowledge in the valley of the Euphrates, the Babylonian origin of the Zodiac has been taken for granted by almost all scholars. The Zodiac of 12 times 30 degrees as a reference system for solar and planetary motion was in use at the end of the prehistory of Babylonian astronomy which extends from about 1800 B.C. to about 500 B.C. The word 'Zodiac' itself is derived from a Greek word zodion meaning 'little animals' and means literally 'a circle of animals'. The zodiacal signs are referred to already by Plato, though named and described first by Eudoxus. By the Persian period (538–331 B.C.) all the zodiacal constellations were considered in Mesopotamia to represent virtually the same figures as they do in Greek tradition. The expression 'signs of the Zodiac' may be used in two senses, in one sense as the 12 groups of constellations which are found sown in the vicinity of the ecliptic (the path of the Sun) irregular in position, unequal in extent and in brightness; in another sense the twelve equal artificial divisions of the belt in the sky each extending 30 degrees of longitude. The picture signs are already mentioned in part in a Hittite text of the 13th century B.C. As Bruno Meissner points out, the most ancient text of Babylonian observation belonging to the 37th year of Nabuchadnezzar (567 B.C.) knows only the figures or pictures of the constellations, while the twelve equal divisions of the belt occurs first of all in a text of the reign of Darius II (about 418 B.C.). The zodiacal signs themselves, of course, where developed as a convenient measuring device for the longitudes of the planets.

In the Hellenistic period the Greeco-Babylonian iconography of the signs became known to all areas dominated by Greek dynasties, but some regional peculiarities developed which persisted for many centuries. It is quite possible, that planetary astrology was introduced into India from Greece in conjunction with astronomy as it was essential to possess some means of determining planetary positions in order to be able to cast horoscopes. The form of planetary


37 For instance, see: A. Bouche-Leclercq, L'astrologie grecque, Bruxelles, 1963, p. 53.
astrology originally transmitted represented Greek adaptations of the Babylonian astronomy of the Seleucid period; this was supplemented by other elements of early Greek astronomy, especially elements associated with Hipparchus (140 B.C.). In the Seleucid period the standard arrangement of planets in cuneiform texts was: Jupiter-Venus-Mercury-Saturn-Mars, and the reason for this arrangement is unknown. An ordinary arrangement in Greek horoscopes is: Sun-Moon-Saturn-Jupiter-Mars-Venus-Mercury. Professor O. Neugebauer thinks that Hindu arrangement of planets is obviously Greek in origin for the following two reasons: it is based on the arrangement according to distance from the earth and also on a division of days into 24 hours. The ruler of the first hour is then considered to be the ruler of the day and thus one obtains for seven consecutive days the following rulers: Sun-Moon-Mars-Mercury-Jupiter-Venus-Saturn, which is still our sequence of the days of the week and also the arrangement of the planets in Hindu astronomy. Such arrangement is not Babylonian but Hellenistic and ultimately of Egyptian origin. It was also elsewhere suggested that the teaching that every planet has its exaltation i.e. the strongest pitch of its might and influence when in a particular sign as well as the concept of benefic and malefic planets also goes back to ancient Babylonia.

With the spread of Buddhism under Asoka to the north-west India, the confrontation with Greco-Roman astrology begins with the break-up of the Mauryan empire. P. V. Kane stresses, that India’s contacts with Mesopotamia became very close after Alexander’s invasion of India about 325 B.C. and in the 3rd century B.C. To him probably appears that Indians, who had already the nakṣatra astrology, saw the signs of the Zodiac on Babylonian monuments and boundary stones and adapted them to their own astrological purposes just about the time when the Greeks derived their inspiration for individual astrology from Babylonians. However, both O. Neugebauer and D. Pingree are tempting to assume the way through the Greek and Persian civilization of the Sasanian period rather than through a direct contact between India and Mesopotamia:

"Much seems to point toward astrology as a real carrier of astronomical knowledge – specifically, astrology in a form which has definitely gone through the Hellenistic medium. This is confirmed by the use in loan words of Greek terminology and by explicit references in the Hindu sources to the Greek (or Byzantines) as their authorities for the science of astronomy."

But let’s take a look at the earliest Sanskrit astrological text. The main Sanskrit text that has preserved for us what remains of Greeco-Babylonian planetary astrology in India is the

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45 O. Neugebauer, op. cit., p. 160
The Followers of the Stars

Yavanajitaka (‘The Horoscopy of the Greeks’) of Sphujidhvaja composed perhaps around 270 A.D. The Greek origin of this treatise is reflected by its title, and its Babylonian character – of its planetary theory. From the concluding three verses of Yavanajitaka we are informed that it is a versified version of a prose translation of a Greek text, with a high degree of probability from Egypt, Alexandria, made by one Yavanesvara, in the year 149/150 A.D. probably at the court of the Western Kṣatrapa Rudrādāman in Ujjainī. The prose translation of Yavanesvara was evidently deemed an unsuitable vehicle for the transmission of śāstraic knowledge, therefore Sphujidhvaja undertook to versify the work. Sphujidhvaja himself was an Indianized Greek and his name may be a compound of Greek and Indian vocables and regarded as equivalent to the Sanskrit Śukradhvaja.

The great work was made by David Pingree in establishing of text, transcription, translation and writing the commentary on it. The conclusions of his work are unassailable: “the greater part of the Yavanajitaka was directly transmitted (with some necessary adjustments) from Roman Egypt to Western India, and this text is one of the principle sources for the long tradition of horoscopic astrology in India.”

P. V. Kane does attach due importance to the fact that a vast literature in Sanskrit has perished beyond recovery, as it is admitted was the case in Greece after Ptolemy composed his Almagest, and that what we now have is a mere fraction of what once existed. But the Yavanajitaka is the earliest surviving Sanskrit text concerned with horāśkandha, and together with another, lost translation of a Greek text on astrology known to Satya, constitutes the basis of all later Indian developments in horoscopy before the injection of Islamic theories through translations from Persian into Sanskrit of tājika works in the 13th and the following centuries. A large number of later commentators and compilers have preserved verses of the Yavanajitaka, and other astrologers – Minarājā, Kalyāṇavarman, Govindasvāmin, Utpala, Viṣṇusārman, Kamalākara and Nṛśīnha – have depended directly on Sphujidhvaja. There exist other horoscopic treatises in Sanskrit that are attributed to Yavanas. D. Pingree mentions more than sixteen identified works, but they all seem to be posterior to the Yavanajitaka. The most important of these texts is Vṛddhayavanajitaka, a long treatise in 71 chapters written in Western India by Minarājā, a Yavanādhirājā of the early fourth century.

Probably Yavanesvara and Sphujidhvaja, who gives himself the title of rājā, both were "the lord of the Greeks", that is to say, men exercising some sort of authority over Greeks settled in the domains of the Western Kṣatrapas in those areas of India later known as Gujarāt, Mālwā and Rajasthan. According to Klaus Karttunen,

“The word [yavanas] was used in both of the Bactrian Greeks living in the Northwest of India, and those living in the Hellenistic West, and even, in Tamil literature, of the merchants sailing to the

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harbours of South India. Later, when there were no more real Yavanas in the neighbourhood, the name was used for all westerners, especially for Arabs.\textsuperscript{48}

We have ample evidence that Greeks settled in India, composed inscriptions in Sanskrit and wrote extensive works on astrology in Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{49} The Yavanas appear to have had some sort of political organization within the state, of which Yavanešvara, Rājā Sphujidhvaja, and Minarājā the Yavanadhirājā, Yavanācārya were all leaders. As the evidence of these early Yavana scholars seems to be concentrated in Gujarat, it seems plausible to think of the commercial relations of the early centuries A.D. as their origin. But what extraordinary privileges these Greek settlers and merchants may have enjoyed in the kingdom of the Western Kṣatrapas is not known. It is clear from the \textit{Yavanajātaka} that despite their superior station, they tended to accept either Buddhism or Brahmanism, because throughout the text the values of the casta system are constantly stressed and the Greek planetary deities are given Brahmanical equivalents.\textsuperscript{50} An early work on divination, the \textit{Gargasamhitā}, written probably in the first century B.C. or A.D., contains an important section called the \textit{Yugapurāṇa}, which includes an interesting, but also problematic, reference to Indo-Greek history.\textsuperscript{51}

The prime indisputable evidence that the \textit{Yavanajātaka} is indeed influenced by Greek astrology is the presence in it of a large number of technical terms that are, as it was proved by Pingree, simply transliterations of their Greek equivalents. It was perhaps Sphujidhvaja who being himself an indianized Greek further indiainized the text introducing the chapter on reincarnation; the list of minerals, plants and animals which is influenced by the Āyurvedic material medica; the section on military astrology and other elements of Indian culture. The original Greek system was further modified so that the predictions fit the social and economic expectations of people born in India, and:

"Indian astrologers after Sphujidhvaja considerably developed genethlialogy (\textit{jātaka}) by emphasizing some aspects at the expense of others or by creating new and more complex techniques

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Yavanajātaka}, 77. 1.
\textsuperscript{51} Garga appears to be somewhat mythical personage, and according to Kern he is a meteoric phenomenon and his name originally denotes 'thunder', 'lightning', as a derivative from 'garja'. (BS, Introduction, p. 30) In a few verses of Garga cited by Utapa on BS I.5, it is stated that Garga studied Jyotisa Vedānga from the Self-Born who created it for use in sacrifices and then from Garga other sages received it and wrote work thereon. The fact of about 430 verses of Garga being quoted by Utapa in his gloss on BS and about 60 verses on BJ indicates that Garga wrote an important work on Horāsākara. See: K. P. Jayaswal, "Historical Data in the Garga-Saṭhitī and the Brahmin Empire", \textit{Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society}, 14, 1928, pp. 397-421; K. P. Jayaswal, "The Paris Manuscript of the Garga-Saṭhitī", \textit{Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society}, 15, 1929, pp. 129–13; D. Pingree, \textit{Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit}, Philadelphia, 1970–1994, vols. 1–V, A2, 116a–117b; A3, 29b; A4, 78a; A5, 78b.
of interpreting horoscopes; but basically all of jātakas before the introduction of tājika texts in the thirteenth century, and even most jātakas after that, can be traced back to the Yavanajātaka.52

It seems that an Indian zodiac has not existed before Yavanesvara.53 Sphujidhvaja’s zodiac is the common Hellenistic one with certain features indicating an Egyptian origin. The most common terms of zodiacal signs (rāsīs) that were used in early Indian astrological texts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek terms</th>
<th>Parāśara (IV.3–24)</th>
<th>Brhimājātaka (I.8), Horāśāra (I.25)</th>
<th>Sārāvali (III.7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriōs</td>
<td>mesa</td>
<td>kriya</td>
<td>kriya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tauros</td>
<td>vr̥sa</td>
<td>tāvuru</td>
<td>tāvuri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didymoi</td>
<td>mithuna</td>
<td>jituma</td>
<td>jutuma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karkinos</td>
<td>karka</td>
<td>kulīra</td>
<td>kulīra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lēōn</td>
<td>simha</td>
<td>leya</td>
<td>leya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parthēнос</td>
<td>kumārikā</td>
<td>pāthona</td>
<td>pāthona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zygōn</td>
<td>tulā</td>
<td>jūka</td>
<td>jūka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpions</td>
<td>vr̥scika</td>
<td>kaurpi</td>
<td>kaurpika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tōkōtēs</td>
<td>dhanu</td>
<td>tauksika</td>
<td>tauksa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aigōkerōs</td>
<td>makara</td>
<td>ākokerā</td>
<td>ākokerā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrochōōs</td>
<td>kumbha</td>
<td>hr̥droga</td>
<td>hr̥dayaroga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ichtēs</td>
<td>mina</td>
<td>itthā</td>
<td>antya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject matter, methodology, and termini technici, all indicate that the Yavanajātaka is indeed an offshoot of Hellenistic astrology, though it is true that the nature of the predictions has been extensively modified to suit a Hindu audience. Many of the Śaiva elements in the descriptions of planets, decans and horās can be found in the Greco-Egyptian material.

“So it may fairly be concluded that the figures described in the Yavanajātaka are, for the most part, based on illustrations which adorned the Greek manuscript utilized by Yavanesvara, but that their interpretation has been colored by an attempt to understand them in Hindu, especially Śaiva, terms. But it must be added that they have also been subject to additions reflecting social conditions in Western India in the second, third and fourth centuries A.D.”54

It seems that among the other things, Sphujidhvaja was the first to use a symbol for zero (bindu) in the decimal place-value system in his Yavanajātaka (79, 6 and 7), though, of course,

a dot or a circle had been used previously by both Babylonians and Greeks in the sexagesimal place-value system to represent a place with no other number in it. Āryabhaṭa (5th century A.D.) invented a different way of expressing numerals, in which the consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet are used to indicate the number and the vowels their place (up to eighteen).

It is in Śphujidhvaja’s work that interrogational astrology (prāśna) was introduced to India from the Hellenistic world. Interrogational astrology was developed in India in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. on the basis of Greek catarchic astrology, and historical astrology in Sasanian Iran in perhaps the 5th or 6th century A.D. on the basis of continuous forms of Greek genethlialogy (jātaka). In catarchic astrology the jyotīṣi determines for his client the moment (muhūrta) at which it is most propitious for him to undertake a specific act. In interrogational astrology (prāśna) he responds to a query about some aspect of the client’s life on the basis of the horoscope of the moment of the query. The amount of detail in prāśna texts was enlarged in the poem Vidvajjanavallabha written by the Paramāra Bhojarāja of Dhārā in the first half of the eleventh century.55

The Concept of Astrology in the Texts of Varāhamihira

One of the greatest Jyotiṣa writers of ancient India indeed was Varāhamihira and his fairly numerous writings on the subject truly depict the exuberant life, spirit and culture of the Gupta age, justifiably treated as the classical age of early Indian history. The combination of astronomical-astrological erudition coupled with his keen observation and literary talent made his works supplant most of the earlier writings on the subject. As Ajay Mitra Shastri has remarked:

"He is among the writers on jyotīṣa what Pañini is among vaiyākaraṇas, Manu among dharmaśāstrastrakāras, Kauṭilya among writers on political science and Bhārata among dramaturgists."56

Varāhamihira, the son of Ādityadāsa ("slave of the Sun") was a Maga Brāhmaṇa – that is, descendent of one of those Persian Zoroastrians who entered India toward the beginning of the Christian era. We learn from the penultimate verse of Varāhamihirās Brhajjātaka (XXVIII, 9) that he was a native of Avantī or Western Mālāwā and resided in the village called Kāpithakā. His date is delimited by his use of Lātadeva’s epoch, 505 A.D., in the Pañcasiddhāntikā and by the fact that Brahmagupta was familiar with his work when he wrote the Brāhmaṇasphuta sidhānta in A.D. 628.57 It has further been suggested that he was

55 The Vidvajjanavallabha of Bhojarāja, ed. by D. Pingree, Baroda, 1970.
connected with the Aulikara court at Dāsapura (modern Mandasor), and in particular with Yaśodharman who is known to have been ruling in Samvat 589 = A.D. 532, though, according to D. Pingree, no definitive assertion can be made with regard to this hypothesis.58

As a Maga Brāhmaṇa, Varahamihira was subject not only to Greek influence, but to Iranian. The Magas were the Sun-worshipping Magi priests who were originally inhabitants of Medea which came to be included in the Achaemenid empire after Cyrus 1st conquest. Thereafter they gradually spread over the whole of the Achmaemenian world, particularly Iran. Some of them found a foothold in Zoroastrianism at some time in the fifth century B.C. They appear to have entered India when it passed on to the Achaemenids in the sixth-fifth century B.C. and the second wave in the wake of Scytho-Parthian invasion in the second-first century B.C.59 The second wave appears to have been a much more powerful and probably played an important role in the transformation of the Sun-cult in India, which explains their association in Indian tradition with Śaka or Śaka dvīpa. The next wave came after the invasion of Islam in the first half of the seventh century A.D. That the immigration of the Magi priest in India has to be dated fairly early is evidenced by the mention by Ptolemy (mid-second century A.D.) of the presence of the Brāhmaṇised Magas (brāhmanai magoi) as far south as parts of Mount Bettigo.60 Not by chance, commenting the verse of Brhat Sādhiti Bhaṭṭotpala the Magas describes as a class of Brāhmaṇas who were the priests of the sun.61

The story of migration of the Magi priests of ancient Iran at some early date is found, in the shape of an elaborate legend, in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (Brāhma-parva, 127–149). According to most scholars Śakadvipa, from where the eighteen families of a Maga-Brāhmaṇa priests came to Jambudvīpa (India), has been after the Śakas or the ancient Scythians and its geographical position was the same as that of ancient Sākasthāna or modern Seistan in Iran.62 After the fall of the Maurya empire the north-western region of India fell an easy prey to foreign invaders. These consisted chiefly of the Yavanas (the Greeks), the Śakas (The Scythians), and the Pahlavas (the Parthians). In spite of their foreign origin, these invaders gradually succeeded in settling down in this country as permanent inhabitants and in the course of time acquired a place in the contemporary Indian society. The Magas were probably responsible for popularizing the anthropomorphic representation of the Sun-god,
who was earlier worshipped in the symbolic form, and the emergence of the Saura sect. The opening verse of the *Hora$atpaiicasikii*, astrological work by Prthuya$as, the son of Varahamihira, also shows that the latter like his father, was a devotee of the Sun.

The fact that the Magas were Iranian magi priests was known even as late as the first half of the eleventh century A.D. when al-Biruni wrote: “There are some Magians up to the present time in India where they are called Maga.” According to A. M. Shastri, the Magas are referred to in numerous inscriptions and literature up to the twelfth century A.D.

“The *Maga-vyakti* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Miśra gives a detailed account of the Maga priests. They are still present in various parts of North India including Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where they are called *Sākadvipin* Brāhmaṇaś, Bengal where they are known as *Graha-vipras*, evidently due to their interest in astrology and lore of planets [...]”

The influence of Varahamihira’s Iranian ancestors, which perhaps reached him through his father and teacher Ādityadāsa, is found mentioned in *Pañcasiddhāntikā* (I. 23–25). His own name-ending Mi$ra being a sanskritised form of Mi$ra, which itself is corrupted form Mitra, the Iranian Sun-god, his obtaining the boon from the Sun, his obeisance to the Sun in the beginning of all his works, except the *Vivahapat$ala* (which opens with an invocation to Kāma, the Indian god of love) and his devoting a comparatively larger number of verses to the description of Sūrya icons (BS. LVII. 46–52), all indicate that the Sun was his family deity. As his commentator Bha$otpala tell us, he himself was regarded even as an incarnation of the Sun who descended to this world in the Kali age in order to rescue *Jyothi$śāstra* from wholesale destruction. The name Varahamihira is also highly significant in this connection inasmuch as it leaves no doubt that even though the Magi priests were thoroughly Indianised and absorbed in the Brähmanical fold enjoying the status of the Brähmaṇaś, the highest class in the Brähmanical social order, their Iranian origins were not altogether forgotten.

Varahamihira was an encyclopaedic writer and naturally he refers to a host of earlier or contemporary authors not only on astronomy and astrology but also on various other subjects. From the point of a study of the history of astrological ideas in India, it is important that Varahamihira’s main source for his knowledge of Hellenistic genethialogy, aside from *Yavanajñātaka*, was the lost poem of Satya. For that reason Bha$otpala persistently styled him as ‘the writer on entire *jyoti$śāstra*’ (*jyoti$śāstra sangraha kṛt*).

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67 Satya is quoted by Bha$otpala in his commentary on *Brha$ajñātaka*, I.12 “tathā ca satyaḥ”. P. V. Kane has brought together the names of all the predecessors of Varahamihira and gave extensive references in his
Varahamihira states that the science of Jyotiṣa is divisible into three departments (skandas); the first branch called Tantra, or Gaṇita, deals with the determination by mathematical calculation of the heavenly bodies; the second known as Horā treats the horoscope or the casting of the horoscope; and the last is natural astrology called Aṅgavinīścaya or Śākhā and that the treatment of the whole course of Jyotiṣa is named Samhitā. The reasons, why the third branch was called Śākhā is not satisfactorily explained.68 Horā again had three sub-sections, viz jātaka or janma – that is judicial astrology, predictions from the situations of the zodiacal signs and planets at a person’s birth; yātrā or yātrika – that deals with prognostications on starting on a journey or on a king’s marching against an enemy derived from the tithi, nakṣatra, the week-day and mūhurta, the moon’s position, dreams, cries of birds; and vivāha – examining the horoscopes of the parties to a marriage.

A clear-cut distinction between these three branches of jyotiṣa cannot be drawn. He tells us that a real astrologer is one who ‘knows both text and meaning of the works on mathematical astronomy, natural astrology, and horoscopy (graḥa gaṇita horā sanhitā ärthavettī)’. It is said in another place that only a person fully accomplished in natural astrology can be an efficient diviner (sanhitā pārgaś ca daiva cintako bhavatī). Varahamihira said a famous sentence about a high position of astrologer in society:

“The twice-born one who knows this entire [science] both in word and in meaning, should be the first to eat at an ancestors ceremony (śraddha), an honoured purifier of the row of guest. For although the Greeks are barbarians, they have brought this science to perfection and so are honored as sages; how much more [honorable], then is an astrologer who is a twice born! [...However,] he who assumes the role of astrologer without knowing the science should be known as a wretched defiler of the row, a mere gazer at the stars.”69

Moreover, as already Weber has remarked, Varahamihira uses as many as thirty-four Sanskritised Greek words as technical astrological terms70, and among his authorities on


68 According to P. V. Kane, it was so called probably because it had to deal with numerous circumstances, such as the fruits of the simple and retrograde movements, the conjunctions and oppositions of planets, haloes, meteors, earthquakes, lore about the movements and cries of birds, and so on. See: P. V. Kane, History of Dharmāśāstra, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1994, vol. V, Part I, p. 479.

69 granthata śāstra caitāla kṛṣṇam jānāti yo dvijaḥ / agrahātuk sa hāvec chrāddhe pūjitaḥ puṣṭ-tipāvānāḥ //
melecchā hi yavānāḥ tesu sannyak śāstraṁ idaṁ sthitam /
piṣat te 'pi piṣijante kīṁ punar daivavid dvijaḥ //
[...]
aviditvaiva yaḥ śāstraṁ daivajñātavam propadyate /
sa patkūṭīnākacchāḥ pāpo jāyeo naksatraśīṣčākacchah // -- Brhat-saṁhitā I.31–32, 34

70 The Sanskritised loan-words from Greek astrology are: kriya, tāvuri, jītuma, leya, pāthena, dyūka or ḥūka, kauryya, tavṣaika, ḥoṣkera, hṛdṛga, iθtham, heli, hinna, hūra, ṣyo, koṇa, asphujit, hora, kendra, dṛṣṭkāra or dṛṣṭkāra, liptā, anophā, sunaphā, ṽādurdhara, keṁadruma, veśi, āpoklima, pāṇḍapurā, ṣibuka, jāmītra, meṣūraṇa, dyūnam, dyutam, rilpha, kulīra and trikoṇa, cf. A. Weber History of Indian
Jātaka is one Yavana. By the time of Varāhamihira even learned men had forgotten the Greek origin of the word horā. In some cases the name Yavana occurs in plural, indicating that the references are not to a Yavana author, but to Greek authors in general or a school of the Yavanas. These evidences merely indicate Indians’ acquaintance with Greek astronomy and astrology and at best an exchange between the two.

Jyotiṣakalpadruma: the traditional representation of the magical tree of Jyotiṣa with its Vedic, Tantric and Purānic roots, three main branches (samhitā, horā, siddhānta) and all leaves-subjects (viṣaya, granthā).

From: The Jātaka Pārijāta of Sri Daivajña Vaidyanātha, edited with the Sudhāsālīni Sanskrit Commentary by Sri Kapilesvara Chaudhary, Banaras, 1953.

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71 Brhajītaka, VII.1, XI.1, XXI.3, XXVII.19–21.
Varahamihira holds a unique position in the history of astronomical and astrological literature in India. He was a prolific author in the three traditional skandhas (branches) of jyotihśāstra which reflects the amalgamation of Indo-Iranian traditions in socio-religious spheres. On gāñita he composed only the Pañcasiddhāntikā; on horā he wrote the Brhaajātaka and the Laghujātaka; and on sanhitā the Brhaṭsamhitā and the Samāsasamhitā. He also composed three works on military astrology – the Bṛhadyātra, the Tīkanīyātṛā, and the Yogayātṛā as well as a Vivāhapatāla on the astrology of marriages. Military astrology (yātra) is based on a combination of omens with catastrophic astrology. Several other works have been attributed to him, but their authenticity is doubtful.  

Of the relative chronology of the works of Varahamihira some notion may be derived from his cross-references. In Brhaajātaka (XXVIII. 4–6) he seems to indicate that his karaṇa, the Pañcasiddhāntikā, as well as treatises on interrogations, on military astrology, on omens (sanhitā), and on the time of marriage had already been written. Varahamihira in Brhaṭsamhitā (II) states that there are five siddhāntikīs, which he urges an astrologer to study: the Pauliśa, the Romaka, the Vasiṣṭha, the Sūrya and the Paitāmaha. Moreover, Pañcasiddhāntikā (I.22) seems to refer to the fact that he had not yet composed his books on horā, which include the Brhaajātaka. The Brhaajātaka, then, was written after the Pañcasiddhāntikā. Furthermore, Brhaṭsamhitā (II) lists the subjects to be covered by a work on horoscopy, but this is not a table of contents to either the Brhaajātaka or the Laghujātaka. According to Pingree, the Pañcasiddhāntikā and Brhaṭsamhitā were composed simultaneously towards the beginning of his writing career, the Brhaajātaka towards its end, and at least one work on military astrology and the Vivāhapatāla in between.

Brhaajātaka of Varahamihira itself became the model for much of the subsequent Sanskrit literature on jātaka, and remains the most authoritative text-book on the subject today. Horāśāstra, or astrology, includes, according to Varahamihira the following topics: the strength or weakness of Zodiacal signs (rāsi), half-signs (horā), third parts (dreskāna), ninth parts (navāṃśaka), twelfth parts and degrees; determination of various kinds of power of the seven planets due to the direction, the place occupied, the moment and the orientation; the temperaments (prakṛti), bodily elements (dhatu), substances (dravya), caste (jāti), and the sphere of activity, etc. belonging to the department of each planet; conception, time of birth, prognostication of prodigious accessories, instant death of the child, span of life, destiny and intervening changes of it, the most favourable combinations of planetary positions as may exist in theory (aṣṭakavarga), the constellations in which kings are born (rājayoga), the lunar constellations (candrayoga), the constellations formed by only two planets and so on, the


celestial constellations, etc. and the effects of all these; descent and character, the planetary aspects (avalokana), manner of death (nirya-nta), state in a former birth and after death (anuka), good and bad symptoms at the time of queries, the calculations of lucky periods for nuptial and other ceremonies.\footnote{For detailed description of Bhartsanhitas content see: Ajay Mitra Shastri, Varahamihira and his times, Jodhpur, Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1991.}

In Varāhamihira’s Brhajājataka the twelve rāśis starting from Mesha are already identified respectively with the following limbs of the Kālapuruṣa, the head (Mesha), mouth (Vṛṣabha), chest, heart, stomach, waist, the abdomen, the private parts, the pair of thighs, the pair of knees, the two shanks, the two feet. Varāhamihira adds that the words rāsi, kṣetra, grha, ṛkṣa, bha and bhavana are used as synonyms in Jātaka. (Brhajājataka, I. 4) In the BJ both the Lagna and Moon position are important in this natal astrology, the Sun’s position to a much lesser extent.

A very popular extensive work on jātaka entitled Horasāra, which is traditionally attributed to Varāhamihira’s son, Prthuyaśas, is known in South India.\footnote{Horasāra of Prthuyaśas, edited with an English translation by V. Subrahmanya Sastri and M. R. Bhat, Bangalore, 1949.} However, the author has borrowed verses from Kalyāṇavarman and so this text must have been written after 850 A.D. That is the reason, why Pingree refers to him as pseudo-Prthuyaśas. Manreśvara (fl. c. 1550?) in his Phaladiipikā (adhyāya XXIV)\footnote{Phaladiipikā by Manreśvara, Sanskrit text, English translation, notes and commentary, by Dr. G. S. Kapoor, New Delhi, Ranjan Publication, 1996.} and Viṣṇuśarman quotes some verses from Horasāra, the oldest manuscript of which is dated 1583 A.D. It seems that Prthuyaśas introduced a dasā, or a system of “life-periods”, that is quite different from the one in the YJ and BJ. This new system has set years for the planets, including Rahu and Ketu – not recognised as planets by Varāhamihira – and omits Lagna.

At some time after 600 and before 700 A.D. the pūrvakhanda was written which was to become known as the Brhat Pārāśara Horā Śāstra ascribed to the sage Parāśara,\footnote{Brhat Pārāśara Horā Śāstra, English translation, commentary, annotation and Sanskrit editing by R. Santhanam, New Delhi, Ranjan Publication, vol. I–II. 1992. Traditionally, Parāśara is held as the most ancient Indian astronomer and is referred several times by Varāhamihira (BJ VII.1; XII.2). BS VII.8 mentions him as having declared seven kinds of motions of Mercury and names his work Parāśara-tantra to which Utpala refers also (III.1; XXXII.26). Al-Birūnī also refers to the Sanhitā of Parāśara and it appears that it contained some legendary matters, viz., stories about the war of gods and demons, origin of planets, etc. Utpala profusely cites prose passages and verses from Parāśara-Sanhitā. From the occurrence of Arya verses, Kern concludes that Parāśara-Sanhitā is of later origin than the Garga-Sanhitā, (BS Preface, p. 33).} who was deeply indebted to the Brhajājataka, has borrowed two verses from Sphujidhvaja (YJ I. 59–60), and was extensively used by Kalyāṇavarman. Parāśara also puts forth serious requirements to an astrologer:

“Expert in calculations, taking pains in the science of grammar, versed in logic and intelligent, studying and reflecting on the branches of judicial astrology, skilled in argumentation and refutation,
conversant with time and place, controlling his senses: such an astrologer will no doubt predict truly.78

The second part (uttarakhaṇḍa) of Brhat Pārāśara Horā refers to the first as already existing and was commented on by Govindasvāmin (fl. c. 850), and probably can be dated in c. 650–750. Despite the questionability of the authenticity of some parts of the pūrvakhaṇḍa, the Brhat Pārāśara Horā Śāstra itself represents some notable developments in the long process by which the original Hellenistic astrology that was transmitted to India in the second century, was made increasingly complex as to generate predictions more closely approximating reality.79 Perhaps from the 12th century Indian astrology became dominated by the so-called Nirayāna system of calculations based on the immovable zodiac that is represented in Brhat Pārāśara Horā Śāstra.

Another famous astrologer was Kalyāṇavarman (7th century A.D.) who enjoyed a high reputation as an astrological writer and the importance attached to his only known work, the Sāravali80 is evident from the fact that a commentator of the eminence Bhaṭṭotpala (9th century A.D.) has profusely quoted from it in his commentaries on Varāhamihira’s Brhatatsaṃhitā and Brhajjātaka. Bhaṭṭotpala’s relation with the Kalyāṇavarman’s Sāravali has been generally known to go only to the extent of his quoting largely from it, as a work of undisputed authority, in his commentary Jagaccandrikī on Varahamihira’s Brhajjītaka and other works. Sudhakara Dvivedi opines that the Sāravali was composed in the age of Brahmagupta, i.e. about 628 A.C.81 S. B. Dikshit is inclined, but possible not with much justification, to identify Kalyāṇavarman with Vittesvara, who is stated by Al-Birūnī to have composed the Karṇaṇasāra about 900 A.C. The gross view, generally accepted and warranted by hitherto known external evidence, is that Kalyāṇavarman flourished some after 505 A.C., the date of Varāhamihira, who is mentioned in Sāravali (I.2; XXXIX.9), and before 966 A.C., the date of Bhaṭṭotpala, who quotes profusely the Sāravali.82 Kalyāṇavarman certainly lived later than the pūrvakhaṇḍa, the Brhat Pārāśara Horā Śāstra and is quoted by Govindasvāmin.

The details regarding Kalyāṇavarman are found in the Sāravali (I.5–6, and LIV.10). From these verses we can only gather that he was a renowned, pious, liberal and learned king of a region named Vyāghrapadi with his capital at the town called Devagrāmapura and that he

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78 ganitesu pravino ’tha śabdasāstre kṛtaśramaḥ /
nyāyavid buddhimān horāshandhasaṃsaṃmataḥ //
ūtākopaṭaur desākālaviḥ sanvyatendriyāḥ //
81 See Dvivedi Sudhakara, Gaṇakahārāṅgī, Benares, 1933, pp. 13–16.
Audrius Beinorius wrote the *Sārāvali* on the lines of his predecessors for the use of the students in astrology. Among a host of authors and works Kalyāṇavarman mentiones not only Varāhamihira, the biggest number of these allusions go to Yavanas, mentioned variously as Yavana, Yavanarendra, Yavanapati, Yavanādhirāja, Yavanarāja, Yavanavrddha, Yavanādhīpati, Yavanendra, Purva Yavanendra, Vṛddha Yavanācārya, etc, and a Yavanendra-dārsana, too, has been mentioned. From an important verse "yathā matam brahma-pūrvāṇām" (*Sārāvali*, XI.2), giving an allusion to Brahmagupta himself, S. L. Katre concludes that Kalyāṇavarman’s exact data may be fixed somewhere about 650 A.C.83

**Intercourse between India and the Arabs**

The works of Greek authors such as Dorotheus of Sidon (first century A.D.) and Vettius Valens of Antioch (2nd A.D.) had been translated into Pahlavi in the 3rd century and developed in new ways by Sasanian astrologers. The Pahlavi texts that informed most of the early ‘Abbāṣid astrologers were rooted not only in translations from the Greek, but as well from Sanskrit’.84 Portion of Indian literature and sciences reached the Arabs either through direct translations from original Sanskrit texts with the help of Indian scholars or indirectly through Persia. From the Indians the Sassanians derived the interrogational (*prasāna*) branch of astrology, the techniques of military astrology. Combining the Dorothean idea of anniversary horoscopes with the Indian theories of vast *yugas*, the Sassanians invented historical astrology, which foretells the fates of nations, prophets, dynasties and individual kings.

When the province of Sindh came under the direct rule of Khalif Mansur (753–774 A. D.), there began, for a short duration, a direct intercourse between India and the Arabs, and embassies from Sindh paid regular visits to Baghdad; these included scholars who brought with them Sanskrit texts including the *Brāhma-sphuta-siddhānta* (*Sindhind*) and the *Khandakāhyaka* (*Arkand*) of the famous Indian astronomer Brahmagupta which were translated into Arabic. These works for the first time introduced the Arabs to astronomy even before Ptolemy’s system. Under Hārūn (786–808 A.D.) another influx of Indian learning took place, and Sanskrit texts on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy, astrology and other subjects were translated into Arabic, while in later times these activities continued on a limited scale.85

Among Persians and Arabs both interrogational and catarchic astrology were popular and the latter transmitted their versions of these astrological techniques to the Byzantines through a series of translations.86 One of the most important transmitters of a knowledge of Indian

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83 S. L. Katre, “Kalyāṇavarman’s *Sārāvali*: Fresh Light on its Date”, *Indian Culture*, vol. XI, N.1, 1944–1945, p. 9.
astrology to the Arabs was Abū Maʿshar, (787–886), who had some direct contact with India. He was an early representative of Hellenistic and Iranian astrology among the Arabs. Abu Maʿshar was born in Balkh (now in Afghanistan) and spent most of his active life as an astrologer and astronomer in Baghdad. He utilized a Persian translation made in 542 A.D. of the *Spharea Barbarica* of Teucrus and his writings were translated into Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His treatise, *Kitāb al-madkhal al-kabīr* contains Indian material and is, in fact, one of the principle conduits for the transmission of genuine Indian astrological doctrines to the West. The iconography of decans (*drekānas*) and *horās* as described by Abū Maʿshar had a considerable impact on astrological illustrations in the West. It has long been recognized that his descriptions are derived through a Sasanian intermediary from Varāhamihira’s *Bṛhajjātaka*. It has been recently demonstrated that Varāhamihira’s descriptions are a mixture of those of the decans and horās in *Yavana-jātaka* of Sphujidhvaja, and that these later are misinterpretations (influenced by Śaivite iconography) of the Greco-Egyptian pictures in a Greek manuscript translated into Sanskrit by Yavanesvara in A.D. 149/150.87

None of the contemporary Persian works on the history of astrology in Iran during the Sasanian period (226–652) written in Pahlavi language have been preserved in their original form. Sasanian astrology was syncretistic—a blend of concepts and methods derived not only from Iran’s indigenous traditions, but also from these of their neighbours, and especially of India and the Hellenistic world. This later influence was felt both directly through Greek and indirectly through Syriac. The first two Sasanian emperors — Ardhashir I (226–240) and Shāpūr I (240–270) — were dedicated to the expansion of the Iranian intellectual tradition and supported the translations of Sanskrit books into Pahlavi.

Indian astrological ideas were spread to Sasanian Iran mainly through the translation of Buddhist texts, which were made in Eastern provinces of the empire. The part of *Divyāvadāna*, so called *Sārdulakarṇāvadāna* (by the way, translated into Chinese in 148 A.D.) contains a summary of the Babylonia-influenced astronomy and astrology, which was current in India between 500 B.C. and 100 A.D. Another text was *Mahānayurīmaṇījāri*, and from such sources as these the Iranian references to the nakṣatras, to Rāhu (who is called *Gocihri*) and to Shadow tables are probably derived.

The Islamic astrologers of the early Abbasid period quote many Persian authors, like Teucrus, Buzurjmihr and al-Andarzghar, who had used Indian sources and calculated in Indian manner horoscope for the birth of the highest type of *mahāpuruṣa* in which all the planets are in their exaltations.88 Furthermore, a number of Indian astrologers visited Baghdad in the Abbāsid period. The most notable of these was Kanaka, who served Harūn al Rashīd, he is perhaps identical with the homonymous astrologer cited by Kalyāṇavarman in his

The Arabs attributed to him writings on the *numūdār* – that is, on the method of ascertaining a fictitious ascendant of the nativity, on the nativities, on the conjunctions of the planets. As Pingree has remarked, Kanaka’s (*Kankah al-Hindi*) name became a favorite symbol used by intellectuals of the Islamic tradition to indicate the partial dependence of some of their sciences upon Sanskrit sources. But in general, Muslim astrologers cited simply ‘the Indians’ (*al-Hind*), without particular names of authors. Some Muslim astrologers used electional astrology of Indian origin, which consists in deducing the fitting moment for action from the place which the moon then occupies in one of the 28 lunar mansions (*manāzil*).

Al-Bīrūnī, who visited India and composed his account known as *Kitāb-ul-Hind* in the first half of eleventh century A.D., is all admiration for Varāhamihira and speaks of him as an excellent astronomer who clearly spoke out the truth. From al-Bīrūnī’s account we get valuable information on the question of Varāhamihira’s period as well as his works. Having translated several astrological and astronomical Sanskrit texts into Arabic around 1030 A.D. (*Brhatsanhitā* and *Laghujātaka* of Varāhamihira, *Brāhmaśphuta-siddhānta* and *Pulisa-siddhānta* of Brahmagupta), he regrets that others did not follow Varāhamihira’s example and passes strictures on Brahmagupta’s (6th–7th centuries A.D.) lack of sincerity and his support to imposture.89 Al-Bīrūnī had so great admiration for him that even when he found some wrong notion in his writings, he was so much obsessed by the excellence, truthfulness and supremacy of Varāhamihira that he supposed some esoteric meaning concealed behind it which he was unable to follow. (II. 117)

Among the Muslims the technical name of astrology is ‘*‘ilm (or šinā‘at) ʿaḥkām an-nujūm* – ‘science (or art) of the decrees of the stars’; ‘*‘ilm al-ʿaḥkām* – ‘science of the decrees’. Another name is *an-najāmah* (nijāmah) or ‘*‘ilm (šinā‘at) an-nujūm*, ‘science of the stars’. ‘*‘ilm at-tanjūm*, mean astronomy as well as astrology, and they also mean both of these sciences taken together. Avicenna, Muḥammad al-Akfānī as Sahāwī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Arabī, Ḥājjī Ḥalīfah, and other considered astrology as one of the seven (or nine) *furū* – ‘secondary branches’ of the natural sciences, placing it beside alchemy, medicine, physiognomy, interpretation of dreams, etc.90 Al-Kindī, this ‘philosopher of the Arabs’, regarded astrology as an integral part of philosophy (*ḥikmah, falsafah*), he seeks its basis not only in the mathematical, but in the physical and metaphysical doctrines as well. About the middle of the 9th century we have already several small astrological works of Al-Kindī formed expressly on Indian astrological models.91 But at the same time, Averroes, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, Ibn

Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, al-Farabl and others, under the increasing influence of Aristotelian philosophy and dogmatic theology, contended against astrology, as having no scientific foundations and contradicting the religious doctrine.

Although medieval Arabic astrology and astronomy began with the translation of Indian, Iranian and Greeks works, its history after the early ninth century may be said to be a history of the interpretation and improvement of the Ptolemaic theory.\textsuperscript{92} The influence of Arabic Ptolemaic theory upon Indian astronomy and astrology can be traced back to Muñjāla in the tenth century, who wrote two works – Brhanmānasa and Laghumānasa, which are referred to by al-Birūnī in his Indica.\textsuperscript{93}

Aby Warburg has showed that those odd Egyptian deities, that illustrate the decans and horās, at some time before the sixth century of our era had made the long voyage to India, thence they had traveled to Islamic lands; and so finally, through the doctrines of Abū Ma’shar’s astrology, they returned to Byzantium and the West. Even the famous astrological paintings in the decoration at the Palazzo della Ragione (Salone) in Padua (1306 A.D.), and in the Salone dei Mesi of the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, made in the second half of the 15th century, are influenced by the doctrines of Abū Ma’shar’s astrology.\textsuperscript{94} What is also important there is that Indian asterisms (nakṣatras) appear in Abū Ma’shar, and their source is found in the astrological writings of Varāhamihira. Astrological tables of Al-Khwarizmi, who belonged to the period of scientific activity of Islam originated under the Abbāsid Khalifate in Baghdad (9th century), also show a curious mixture of Hindu and Greek astrological and astronomical methods.\textsuperscript{95}

After centuries of development of astrology in India, jātaka was joined by a new form of genethlialogy entitled tājika, which reveals that Hindus and Muslims shared common intellectual interests. Since the early eight century, the Arabs and Persians who encroached on the Western coast of India (present Gujarāt) were called Tājikas. The word tājika is derived from the Pahlavi Tāzīg, a term which the Iranians applied to the Arabs; it in turn is derived from the name of the Arab tribe Tāyyr and came to signify any foreigner from the West without greater specificity. As the name for a branch of genethlialogy the term tājika refers to Indian adaptations of Arabic/Persian astrology, which was itself a combination of elements from Greek, Syriac, Sasanian, and Indian science. The most noteworthy and popular book on tājika is the Tājikanilakanṭhī composed by Nilakanṭha at Kāśī in 1587. This work is divided into two sections, which are often presented separately: the sanjñātantra – on general tājika, and the varṣatāntra – on anniversary horoscopes or, as it is called today, returns of planets (varṣaphala, hāyana).\textsuperscript{96} The Tājikanilakanṭhī has spread the knowledge of tājika throughout


\textsuperscript{96} See Srinilakanṭhaduvajñānaviracita Tājikanilakanṭhī, 2nd ed. by M. Jha, Banaras, 1950.
all of India, and made it one of the most common systems of genethlialogy in use in the subcontinent in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Conclusions

By way of conclusion, with some generalization it can be said that horoscopy astrology in India, being itself not indigenous science but a local adaptation and development of Mesopotamian, Greco-Babylonian, and Greek texts, has passed through a complicated process of transformation and hinduization. Indian divinatory tradition was able to absorb contrasting and diverging options. Thus, while the various passages from the Yavanajātaka were of crucial importance and continued to be reused in many subsequent texts, they obviously were unsatisfactory in fulfilling the needs of the Indians’ religious needs and eventually had to be modified in order to become more culturally viable. At an early stage of the development of Indian astrological and divinatory practices, parts of Indian tradition had influenced Sasanian and Syriac science before the rise of Islam. When Sanskrit texts on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy, astrology and other subjects were translated into Arabic, they made tremendous impact on the development of the later Islamic astrology. It is quite evident that Indians’ understanding of foreign scientific systems and their elaborations thereof led to theories and methods which differ drastically from their Babylonian, Greek, and Islamic counterparts, but that nevertheless do not obscure their ultimate origins. The origin and development of the Indian astrological and divinatory systems reveals a complex interaction of numerous cultural components, both foreign and indigenous. In traditional Indian context astrology occupied a far more central position in any plausible map of ancient bodies of knowledge than one could anticipate from a modern perspective. Therefore history and sources of Indian astrology and divination should be studied in its fullest social and intellectual contexts as far as practically possible.

Sanskrit Sources and Catalogues:

BJ – Brhañajātaka with Bhāṣṭotpalas Cintāmaṇi commentary, ed. by Sitaram Jha, Varanasi, 1934.
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149


VJ – *Vedāṅga Jyotiśa, ed. with corrected readings and interpretations in his commentary, by Himmatram M. Yajnik (Jani), Vedhashala, Ahmedabad, 1985.


ŠVIESULIŲ SEKĖJAI:
ANKSTYVIEJI INDŲ ASTROLOGIJOS ŠALTINIAI IR ISTORINĖ JOS RAIDA

Audrius Beinorius
S a n t r a u k a

Kaip sudėdami indų kultūrinio konteksto dals, astrologija yra itin svarbi kultūrinės ir istorinės civilizacijų raidos požiūriu, nes atskleidžia daug socialinės, religinės, kultūrinės gyvensenos aspektų. Remdamasis išlikusiais klasikiniais sanskrito šaltiniais ir įvairiausių šiuolaikinės kritine, istoriografinės medžiaga bei pasitelkės įstorinių, deskriptyvių ir tekstinių semantinių metodus, autorius glaudžiai apžvelgia istorinius indų klasikinės astrologijos (jyotiśa śāstra, jyotiśa vidiyā) raidos vingius, nuo Vedų civilizacijai būdingo tikejimo pranašavimui iš įvairių ženklų iki pirmųjų klasikinių astrologinių traktatų. Del išskirtinės geografinės padėties Indija slenkant amžiams buvo įvairių tautų ir kultūrų sąveikos židinys. Straipsnyje atskleidžiama Mesopotamijos ir helenistinių astrologinių metodų įtaka ankstyviesiems indų astrologams Sphudžidhvadžai (II a.), Varāhamihirai (V a.) ir Kaljanavarmanui (VII a.). Glaustai apžvelgiama ir arabų astrologinė tradicija, kuri formavosi veikiai helenistas, klasikinės astrologijos. Per šią tradiciją viduramžiais kai kurie indų astrologų tekstai tapo žinomi ir Europoj e. Savo ruožtu, pasižiūrėjus ar įvairių persų, arabų, sasanidų ir indų astrologinių elementus. Daroma išvada, jog ankstyviejų indų astrologijos teksto buvo amžyste apie sudėtingus moderni helenistinės astrologijos adaptacijos ir jos hinduizacijos procesus bei liudija astrologijos vaidmenį vykstant idėjų perdavimui ir difuzijai. Pabrėžiama, jog senųjų civilizacijų šaltinių astrologija yra ne tik reikšmingas senosios kultūros paveldo sandas, bet ir itin svarbi tradicinių žinių perdirbimo ir jos asimiliacijos pažinimo priemonė.

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