

EVOLUTION OF INDIAN JYOTISH FROM HISTORY TO CONTEMPORARY: ASTROLOGER'S PERSPECTIVES THROUGH CASE STUDIES

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Abstract:

This research paper tries to uncover the fascinating evolution of Indian Jyotish, also known as astrology, from its historical roots all the way to its modern-day practices. Through engaging case studies and insightful interviews with practicing astrologers, we aim to uncover the changes and continuities within this rich tradition of astrology. Jyotish holds a special place in Indian culture and spirituality, and over time, it has undergone significant transformations influenced by socio-political changes, scientific advancements, and globalization.

Our study takes us on a journey through the development of Jyotish Vidya, starting from its ancient origins in the Vedic period and leading us to the classical and contemporary changes in Jyotish vidya. Integration of Jyotish during medieval period has also been discussed through this study.

By conducting interviews with a diverse group of contemporary astrologers, we seek to gain valuable insights into how traditional astrological practices have adapted to the demands of modern times in the last two three decades. These interviews will delve into various dimensions, such as creating space for s technology in astrological chart calculations, the changing societal attitudes towards astrology and common man getting attracted towards astrology and the challenges faced in preserving traditional knowledge amidst the skepticism of modern science. We also aim to cover the viewpoint of astrologers upon the emergence of astrology based mobile applications. In addition to this, we'll take a closer look at how globalization and the digital age have impacted Jyotish practices. We will try to understand the rise of online astrological services and how social media has played a role in making astrology more popular. We will also examine how astrology consultations have evolved to include contemporary and modern life related issues like mental health and career planning, delayed marriages, love life etc. This shows a shift from just predicting the future to a rather comprehensive and remedial aspects of Jyotish.

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Johnson had quoted long ago in the seventeenth century that CURIOSITY IS THE THIRST OF SOUL. Human race ever since its origin on the earth surface has been immensely curious and fascinated towards a range of phenomenon including natural phenomenon like the rising and setting of sun, sparkle of moon, twinkle of stars, thundering of clouds, downpour of rain that occurred without fail every day or at specific occasions of time. Gradually, humans evolved and started settling down and started growing crops for consumption rather than entirely depending upon hunting and gathering for meeting the food requirements. It was then that people realised the need to study the basics and the science behind the natural phenomenon of rising and setting of sun and moon, clouds coming up and rainfall taking place because better understanding of these events would help them with their cultivation task. For this it became imperative to keep a track and record of time. This is how the foundations of astronomy were laid, although not deliberately but it later developed to become astronomy the scientific subject and further into astrology that used the observation of these natural occurrences over passage of time to predict and forecast human behaviour.

Vedic astrology popularly known as Jyotish is a hallmark of the wisdom that India possessed since the ancient times with its origins tracing back to the Vedas and most ancient Hindu scriptures talking about the fine connection between the movements in cosmos and their impact upon human life. Rigveda dating back to 1500 BC has insights upon the influence of celestial bodies on human life. Vedic texts like Vedang Jyotish and Surya Siddhanta are testimony to the science behind the astronomical calculations derived from planetary movements and the resulting impact upon earth and people living on it.

Renowned figures like Jaimini, Varahmihir, Parasara have further refined the discipline with their tremendous value addition and contributions towards making astrology more organised, structured, scientifically streamlined and also precise by the induction of concepts like nine planets, twelve zodiac signs, dashas, grahas, nakshatras etc. to make it closer to human lives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Vedic Astrology by YVS RAO in **International Journal of Research-GRANTHALAYA 2021** states that Astrology, often dismissed as a pseudoscience by the academic community, has long been an integral part of the rich cultural heritage of India. However, a closer examination of the ancient Indian astrological system, known as "Jyotish," reveals a profound connection to the modern sciences, challenging the

prevailing notions about its validity. The Vedic tradition, of which Jyotish is a crucial component, has long been regarded as a repository of ancient knowledge, encompassing diverse fields such as astronomy, mathematics, and even medicine (Mishra, 2010). Jyotish, one of the six Vedangas or ancillary sciences of the Vedas, is particularly noteworthy for its meticulous study of the celestial bodies and their influence on the Earth and its inhabitants (Mishra, 2010).

Contrary to the belief that astrology is a mere superstition, Jyotish is grounded in the principles of astrophysics, exploring the intricate relationship between the sun, planets, and their impact on the Earth's environment and living beings (Mishra, 2010). Critics of astrology often argue that it lacks the scientific rigor necessary to be taken seriously (Allum, 2010). However, a deeper understanding of Jyotish reveals a comprehensive system of knowledge that has been refined and preserved for millennia, with a strong emphasis on empirical observation and mathematical precision (Beck, 2007).

The paper "A Concise History of Hindu Astrology and Indian Spirituality" by Paulo Martins in **Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science** gives a summary of the fundamental ideas, historical evolution, and integration of Hindu astrology, or Jyotish, with Indian spirituality. It explores how Hindu astrology evolved through influences from Greek and Persian traditions, tracing its roots back to the Vedic era. This study explores the relationship between Indian spiritual ideas like Karma and Moksha with basic astrological notions like birth charts, planetary periods, and zodiac signs. It features important historical authors and characters such as Varahamihira and the "Brihat Samhita." The article concludes with a consideration of its importance and potential avenues for further research. It also discusses contemporary applications of Hindu astrology and the current discussions around its scientific validity.

Sundarjee in Origin and Development of Jyotish Shashtra examines how astrology can be used to analyse human existence, with a focus on how it combines planetary, genetic, and environmental effects. According to astrology, a person's life is greatly influenced by the planets that are in their astrological houses and signs at birth. These aspects help to shape a person's potential. It describes the evolution of Indian and worldwide astrology by contrasting the stationary stars (Sthira Nakshatra) with the roving planets. With its roots in the Vedas, Indian astrology, also known as Jyotisha, or the "science of light," is one of the oldest systems. It includes the forecasts of Phalita Bhaga and the computations of Siddhanta Bhaga. Time divisions and celestial events are described in ancient scriptures such as the Rigveda, and Vedic astrology expresses spiritual insights into human growth under divine supervision.

In the history of astrology, sages like Surya, Vyasa, and Parasara are notable personalities. There are twelve signs in the zodiac, and each one stands for a distinct facet of the human experience. Indian astrology has traditionally been taught through the Guru kula system, which resulted in the knowledge being preserved through important writings and contributions from a variety of scholars, such as Varahamihira and Aryabhata. Since astrology is one of the six Vedangas necessary to comprehend the Vedas, the book highlights its central place in Vedic knowledge. It highlights the importance of astrology in foresight and spiritual awareness by outlining the three primary schools of astrology: Hora (predictive), Ganita (calculative), and Samhita (ritualistic).

METHODOLOGY

This research paper is an exploratory project with ten cases interviewed over a period of one month. The respondents were practicing astrologers from Gujarat and Kashi including traditional jyotishacharyas to modern astrologers. Exploratory approach has been adopted so that we get to know not only the 'what' aspects of changes in Jyotish but also of 'how' and 'why' aspects related to the changes that Jyotish has undergone over the years. Along with case studies, relevant secondary sources describing the evolution of Jyotish in India have been referred.

CASE STUDIES:

Case Study 1: Evolution of Jyotish from vedic period to contemporary times

A practicing astrologer from Varanasi throws light upon the traditional elements and modern incorporations in astrology in last decade. He opines that Jyotish is the eye of the Ved purusha and Indian jyotish is a combination of astrology and astronomy both. He says that jyotish in itself is mathematical and scientific in nature, so modern day pragmatism has not added any value to its basics as they remain inherently intact, only the interpretations have changed and adapted according to the issues of modern life. Jyotish consultation and issues covered have got diversified over the years under the influence of modern education and global exposure. He also revealed that traditional practices of chart calculation were based upon the time of birth usually determined from the time the mouth of the cervix opens during labour pain. That used to be the first time of birth, second being when the umbilical cord was cut and the child was separated from the mother and third being the time of birth given by doctors. So, earlier birth time was the first stage of time and that determined the further calculations. But gradually, with medical science taking over, only the time noted by doctors are taken into consideration. The findings vary based upon the two different timings of birth.

CASE STUDY 2: Influence of Technology on Jyotish Practices

A practicing astrologer from Ahmedabad who also runs his own astrology institute for the last ten years shared his insights on the culmination of technology with Jyotish. Technology according to him has certainly brought a revolutionary change in astrology in terms of time consumption in the preparation of janma kundalis and chart calculations. This task earlier required almost a week which can now be completed in a few hours using technology and artificial intelligence. Software has made chart calculation accurate, precise and accessible. Technological intervention has also attracted common people towards learning jyotish irrespective of their age and professional background. Technology has especially made Jyotish accessible to the youth who prefer learning and doing stuffs at speed and with ease. Software enabled Jyotish vidya has democratized this entire field. Digital apps providing astrological services have also taken over the common people and the ease of accessibility has made the field popular like never before. However, he also expressed concern over the lack of authenticity and reliability in modern day astrological practices propagated through apps and software rather than the traditional practices. Technology has presented a commercialised version of jyotish which was very uncommon two decades back.

CASE STUDY 3: CHANGE IN SOCIETAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS ASTROLOGY

A tech savvy modern day astrologer who has been practising astrology from the last five years noticed a significant shift in the society's attitude towards jyotish. The way people perceived of astrology 20-25 years back, they don't perceive it the same way now. There has been a resurgence of interest in astrology, particularly the youth have got connected to astrology like never before because of social media platforms like Instagram and facebook where every fifth reel or post is related to future prediction, auspiciousness, ill omen, evil eyes etc. He also shared that in this competitive era, every one dreams to have a stable career, overseas settlements, luxurious life and stable love life. In short, youths have started giving immense importance to favourable destiny in crucial matters and decisions related to life. As a result, jyotish has gradually acquired its present day commercialised version in the form of apps like astro talk, Pandit Jee, and jyotish institutes etc. All the professional exposure and technical degrees have failed to keep the youth away from believing in evil eye, ill omen, black magic which in turn have taken them towards astrologers to seek remedy. Such widespread orientation towards astrology has led to the adoption of Jyotish as business or a full time vocation rather than a part time work done out of interest or as a family occupation.

CASE STUDY 4: CHALLENGES IN PRESERVING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF JYOTISH

An astrologer having almost twenty years of experience as a practicing Jyotish says that the scientific acumen of people did pose a skeptical attitude towards jyotish vidya earlier and technically educated people did believe much in seeking astrological consultations for their problems. But, integration of remedial aspects like chanting of mantras, charity, offerings along with ritualistic suggestions have helped to bridge the gap and attract the common people towards jyotish vidya where they are ready to pay 1500-2000 rupees for one or two questions. Doing charity and offering something to the people who are below their status gives them a sort of mental satisfaction and peace that in turn enhances their self-confidence that they are capable of doing something for others and they alone are not troubled in life. Technological assistance is also provided to people who are short of time in their busy lives and are not able to do the mantra chanting on their own. They provided with recorded instruments which are pre feeded with required mantra as per their graha, dasha and gochar. The astrologer says that listening to the mantras while doing their daily chores also has positive impact in improving their lives and getting the desired outcomes in terms of career, marriage, relationships, abroad settlement etc. He believes that an astrologer should try to maintain balance between the traditional jyotish practices and modern remedial approach while taking care of authenticity in all the remedies suggested. I understand that these antiquated customs must be modified to address modern problems. These days, a lot of individuals consult astrologers for advise on relationships, career planning, and mental health. In these situations, I combine contemporary psychology knowledge with conventional astrological interpretations. For instance, in order to provide relevant and helpful advise on mental health, I would integrate contemporary counselling methods with an astrological examination of the individual's chart.

The secret is to strike a balance between preserving Jyotish Vidya's original meaning and adapting it to modern society. When astrology is used with an open mind, I think it may be a very effective instrument for self-awareness and personal development. It's better to complement science with time-tested knowledge rather than discounting science altogether."

CASE STUDY 5: IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND DIGITIZATION UPON JYOTISH

A renowned jyotish from Varanasi who also happens to be a professor of Sanskrit at Banaras Hindu University. He has an international client base as well and he states that social media and online jyotish consultations have democratized astrology's reach and accessibility where international clients are ready to pay several dollars for a single question. But this has snapped off the personal connect between the astrologer and client and jyotish vidya has got reduced to a sort of commercial venture devoid of personal connections and feelings. Commodification of astrology has become new normal. Many people also become victims of online fraud in the name of jyotish consultations. He further states that he understands that the ancient practices of Jyotish need to evolve. But there are drawbacks to this digital shift as well. Because there are so many online astrology services available, not all astrologers follow traditional or moral guidelines, which might result in inaccurate

information and flimsy interpretations. The profundity and gravity of Jyotish Vidya can occasionally be obscured by the commercialisation of astrology, which reduces it to amusement or generalised forecasts. These modifications have indeed affected his methodology as an astrologer in a few different ways. It was impossible for him to imagine a few decades ago that he would be consulting with customers all around the world today. This calls on him to adjust to various cultural settings and exercise caution when sharing astrological insights with a range of people. But communicating with customers online calls for caution. Even in a digital medium, he tries to keep the intimacy and depth that are fundamental to Jyotish. In addition to educating and informing people through social media and other channels, he also stresses the value of individual consultations above readings that are meant to accommodate all readers. In the end, even while he welcomes the potential that the internet age has to offer, he is still dedicated to maintaining the authenticity and integrity of traditional Jyotish practices.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Changes in Birth Time Calculation and Their Consequences:** In the past, several aspects of the childbirth process, such as the moment the cervix opened during labor, were used to estimate the time of birth. But with contemporary medical procedures, the moment the baby is delivered fully—as recorded by the doctors—becomes the norm. The timing used for calculations has changed, which may have an impact on the results of astrological predictions. This change has implications for the interpretation and accuracy of astrological charts.
- **Technology Integration in Jyotish:** The creation of astrological charts (Janma Kundalis) has been transformed by the advent of software and digital tools. Astrologers can now complete tasks that once took a week in a matter of hours, increasing the practice's accessibility and effectiveness. But this technological interference has also resulted in lack of authenticity in the software generate kundalis.
- **The Evolution of Societal Perspectives on Astrology:** A significant revival of interest in astrology has emerged among younger generations, largely fueled by the influence of social media. In contrast to two decades ago, astrology is now perceived as more than merely a conventional practice; it has evolved into a commercial enterprise, with astrology applications and online consultations gaining widespread acceptance. This transformation signifies a change in societal perspectives, as individuals increasingly turn to astrology for guidance on contemporary issues such as career choices, romantic relationships, and mental well-being.
- **The Preservation of Traditional Knowledge Amidst Modernization:** Astrologers encounter the challenge of reconciling traditional Jyotish practices with contemporary expectations. Although technological advancements have enhanced the accessibility of astrology, there exists a potential risk of diminishing the richness and authenticity of traditional techniques. In response, some astrologers are innovating by integrating traditional remedies, such as mantra chanting, with modern conveniences like pre-recorded mantras, thereby accommodating the demands of busy lifestyles while maintaining the core principles of Jyotish.
- **The Influence of Globalization on Jyotish:** Globalization has significantly broadened the audience for Jyotish, enabling astrologers to serve clients from around the globe. This phenomenon, however, has resulted in the commodification of astrology, where the intimate relationship between astrologer and client is frequently overshadowed by commercial interests. Such commercialization has heightened the potential for online scams, as clients may encounter inaccurate or deceptive readings from practitioners who do not adhere to established traditional methodologies.
- **The Function of Astrology in Addressing Contemporary Psychological and Career Challenges:** Modern astrologers are increasingly merging contemporary psychological principles with traditional Jyotish practices. This integration has expanded the role of astrology to encompass pressing contemporary issues such as mental well-being, career development, and interpersonal relationships. This evolution signifies a transition from a focus solely on future predictions to offering comprehensive guidance that harmonizes ancient astrological wisdom with the complexities of modern life.
- **The Digital Transformation and Accessibility of Astrology:** The advent of digital platforms has made Jyotish more accessible, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds and age groups to engage with astrology. While this trend has contributed to the popularization of the discipline and broadened its reach, it has also raised concerns regarding the quality and dependability of online astrological services. The richness of traditional knowledge may be compromised in the digital landscape, leading to a dilution of the expertise that has historically characterized the field.

CONCLUSION:

From its ancient Vedic roots to its modern traditions, Indian Jyotish has undergone an intriguing journey of continuity and change. Through in-depth case studies and interviews with working astrologers, this research shows how Jyotish has adapted to modern society's needs while maintaining its fundamental beliefs. The core ideas of Jyotish haven't changed much throughout the years, despite some notable adjustments. According to one of the astrologers from Varanasi, Jyotish is based on astronomical observations and computations and is mathematical and scientific in character. Like in the past, the integration of ideas like planets, zodiac signs, and

dashas still offers an organised framework for astrological readings. Technology has completely changed Jyotish practices, making them more effective and accessible. The Ahmedabad astrologer, for instance, emphasised how software today makes it possible to quickly and precisely create Janma Kundalis, which used to require days or even weeks of manual preparation. This change in technology has democratised Jyotish and opened it up to a larger audience, particularly the younger generation who are more comfortable with digital media. In conclusion, we can say that the development of Indian Jyotish is evidence of its adaptability and tenacity. It has accepted worldwide influences and technical breakthroughs, but it hasn't lost sight of its historical roots. To ensure that Jyotish continues to be a meaningful and relevant practice in people's lives today, it is imperative that it preserves this delicate balance between tradition and modernity. This study highlights the continuing relevance of this antiquated practice in the contemporary world by examining the shifts and continuities in Jyotish.

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