



VEDIC ASTROLOGY: One Of The Keys To Finding Our Life Purpose And Happiness

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Abstract: The desire for happiness is universal. Not all are able to actively pursue it and if they do, they fall short since the concept of Happiness is vastly misunderstood. Happiness is assured when there is purpose and meaning to life. Finding our life purpose is however challenging. In this article, I attempt to revive one of the ancient tools for revealing our life purpose, Vedic Astrology, describe who the contenders are, and the role played by the Atmakaraka.

The science of happiness is fascinating to many but is certainly the pursuit of all. It is a concept that has been around since the times of Aristotle. During the 18th century, people felt that happiness came from material possessions and achievements in the external world. It was not until the 20th century that there was an interest in learning more about happiness, wellbeing and satisfaction. What are the determinants? What is the journey like? What are the travails of the journey? The Pandemic was an eyeopener for many in terms of what people really valued in life. Happiness was certainly a common denominator. What has always been uncertain is how to get there. Some chose to travel the path of pleasure, confusing it for happiness. For others it is part of a spiritual unfoldment. Irrespective of the motivation, we need to understand the definition of Happiness, what the look-alikes for Happiness are and how do we reach that destination. It is not surprising that there are several definitions, and they do not seem to completely encapsulate the characteristics of what it truly means to be happy. Until the end of twentieth century, it was not uncommon for people to migrate from various parts of the world to find happiness through their American Dream.

Mainstream Medical Sciences had always focused on finding cures for diseases. Happiness was a non-scientific purview. It belonged to the field of Spirituality and Metaphysics. The beginning of the twenty-first century, however, brought with it a new paradigm. According to Layous and Lyubomirsky (2014), looking for happiness inside of oneself as opposed to searching for it in the outer world is much more effective.

Not surprising, for, how long will we put out fires- the fire of disease? We also need to learn how to optimize our life and learn to live with chronic diseases which are increasing. Though the branch of Preventive Medicine existed, the concept of disease prevention and health maintenance was not popular. The focus has primarily been on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases until the pandemic. More and more people started actively seeking health and happiness. We now notice more research focused on the production of Happiness. Therefore it is imperative that we have clarity of the concept of Happiness.

Amidst many definitions and determinants, one of the predictors has been described by the field of Positive psychology, a branch of psychology that promotes human flourishing. According to Positive Psychology, one of the key and powerful predictors of happiness and well-being is the presence of “meaning and purpose” in life. The two are not the same, though they go together. Ivtzan et al., 2016, defines life purpose as “*aspirations that motivate our activities*” [1]. Meaning is how we make sense of life and our role in it [2]. Purpose is one of the determinants of meaning in life. According to Reker and Wong (1988, 2012) there are three components to “meaning in life” [3]. The cognitive component called Coherence is about making sense of what’s going on in life as well as significance of life. The second is a motivational component that alludes to striving for worthwhile goals and attaining them. The third one is the Affective component, the feeling of satisfaction or happiness that is derived from attaining those goals. Heintzelman and King slightly differ in their definition of the meaning in life to include significance which is also a motivational component instead of the affective component. Significance alludes to a feeling that one’s life is valuable [4]. But it is not just about having personal superficial goals and direction, it is above something deeper and meaningful. “*Having a sense of purpose can promote physical health, mental health, and overall happiness*” (Smith, 2021, para. 4) [5]. According to the article by John Coleman in Harvard Business Review, true success comes when one finds true purpose and joy in life, and it doesn’t come with material achievements [6]. Thus, it is clear that finding our life purpose is beneficial to our health and happiness.

The concept of Purpose is universal. The Universe itself is purposive and constantly growing, changing, evolving into higher intelligence and consciousness. The concept of purpose and evolution gels well with Cosmology and evolutionary Biology. It is no surprise that we, as components of the Universe, are similarly trying to grow and evolve in consciousness, provided we recognize and understand that innate desire and need. Many a time, this fact is not understood, and one goes on a circular journey of superficial pleasure-seeking behavior which is a roller coaster ride of pleasure, some happiness interspersed with sadness, unhappiness going round and round as a vicious cycle. The answer is to elevate our consciousness to get off the wheel of base level human condition.

There are many ways to find our life purpose according to Positive Psychology. On contemplation, it is apparent that “Life purpose” and “dharma” are similar in concept with a subtle difference beyond the fact that they come from different cultural backgrounds from the West and East respectively. Dharma has its roots in the ancient Vedic traditions and has social and spiritual implications and as such encompasses the concept of living in harmony with the cosmic order, duties, responsibilities, right conduct, right way of living. Thus, it is not just

about positively contributing to the well-being of the self and society but to do in a pre-ordained manner. To me, this is an important aspect since Eastern cultures and philosophies believe in reincarnation and through the process of reincarnation a soul retains what it has learnt in previous lifetimes, continues to learn and evolve. The concept of pre-birth soul plan is very fascinating in that it describes how we plan out the purpose of a birth and how the lessons are meant to be learnt. We know that when we follow this prebirth soul plan or dharma, it gives us immense peace and happiness and life seems to flow. Life purpose can sometimes be dharma and thus it seems to be a subset of a bigger concept called “dharma”. It has clearly been noted that fulfilling life purpose in the external world doesn’t always result in happiness, aligning with soul purpose, fulfilling one’s destiny seems to have a greater depth of satisfaction. Having said that it ultimately depends on one’s belief system. The other word for “dharma” could thus be “soul purpose” and soul purpose encompasses life purpose.

Life purpose correlates somewhat with the Japanese concept of IKIGAI which means blending life purpose with activities that interests us & brings joy. Ikigai is defined as the common denominator between what one loves and what the world needs with what one is good at, and that which the world will pay. It is not always easy to create joy with our profession. One must balance life purpose with work. Many a time, commitments and social compulsions make us abandon our life purpose, or the quest of one. Even if we were to figure it out and start walking that path, we sometimes feel compelled to abandon that journey. We succumb & abandon the idealistic version of ourselves that yearns to find a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It does feel like a tradeoff. At a superficial level, it seems like we need it because of its physical and mental health benefits, impact on longevity, the feeling of interconnectedness and because it prevents existential crisis. But it is much more than that! Acting in alignment with one’s life purpose and one’s soul truth leads to lasting fulfilment and satisfaction.

Finding our life purpose is nothing but Maslow’s seventh need, the need for self-actualization. When we find our personal mission and put it into action, life becomes much easier. Our life perspective changes and we can look at our relationship and work-place problems in a new light. Understanding the inner logic of one’s own life, we can focus our lives on what is beautiful, good and true. We then suddenly stop serving outer purposes and start serving our inner truth. We achieve balance when we balance outer and inner aspects of our lives. There have been reports of patients being healed from incurable cancer spontaneously once they made a complete and radical change of life course towards meaning and purpose. Thus, Maslow’s concept of self-actualization can not only be key to wellbeing and happiness but can play a role in modern medicine.

Ancient wisdom traditions of the East are replete with the knowledge of finding happiness. For the modern man, it is however hard to decipher how to incorporate them into daily life. Many a time, one is unsuccessful and eventually loses interest in traveling that path. Exploration of the Self liberates one from the world. Classic spiritual teachings also tell us that the way to achieve our life purpose of Moksha or liberation, and self-realization is by going out of the samsara, out of the wheel of birth-death-rebirth in order to explore the nature of the “Self”. These factors are definite deterrents to engaging in spiritual activities in this modern day and age.

Dr. Goswami, a Quantum Physicist and Consciousness researcher and my mentor, affirms that the exploration of the Self Archetype is the highest aspiration for a human being, and it leads to liberation from suffering through the foibles of the human condition. Unfortunately, people were not ready for this lofty goal in the past, nor are they ready now. It almost seems as if one is doomed to suffer in this basic human condition with no recourse. Not anymore, since the introduction of Quantum Physics and its branch Quantum Science which is based on the creative discoveries of the Vedic Period in India. Fortunately for us, Quantum Science gives us a new paradigm to work with. Wisdom traditions couldn't link the spirit and matter- the interface called the subtle world. Quantum Science can fill in this gap and is able to scientifically explain the nature of the subtle world and how it links the material body to the spirit. While we may not be ready to quit the world for self- liberation because we still have desires, the suffering can be abated by bringing in a balance between worldly pleasures and lofty living and thinking. This does bring in happiness. All of us come with a pre-birth plan of exploring the noblest contexts of our thoughts- highest values that religion calls virtues. Plato calls these Archetypes or Forms – they exist in the non-physical realm. These are preexisting ideal templates or blueprints. According to Carl Jung, archetypes come from the collective unconscious. They are innate, universal, unlearned and hereditary. They symbolize basic human motivations, values and personalities. There are four main ones, that intermingle and give rise to 12 archetypal figures that include Ruler, Creator/artist, sage, innocent, explorer, rebel, hero, wizard, jester, everyman, lover, caregiver. Archetypes influence behavior, trigger emotions and provide personal meaning to life itself. They help understand our minds. When we work with our archetypes, we bring the forces of unconscious in balance with our conscious mind and come to psychic wholeness. On the other hand, Quantum Science recognizes Nine ideals to live by, based on spiritual wisdom traditions [7]. The Soul's purpose is the exploration of all facets of all the ideals or archetypes, integrating them into our lives. In addition we need to integrate all the dichotomies to become "Whole". This is the archetype of Wholeness. Once this is completely explored, there are no more desires or worldly aspiration. What is left is the ultimate exploration of one's True Self- the "Self" archetype. There exists no desire at all; everything just is!

For this, we need to begin at the beginning. We all know that man has always been fascinated by abundance, beauty, power, truth since times immemorial. We are never able to explore all facets of an archetype in a single lifetime and thus create blueprint for the exploration. When we embark on exploring the archetypes and this becomes our life purpose, there is bound to be satisfaction and happiness.

Is there such a thing as LIFE PURPOSE? One of the keys to happiness is finding our life purpose, our "dharma". Whether we believe it or not, we come into each lifetime with a specific soul plan- it could be one of action or service to self or others. The concept of a pre-birth soul plan seems to lack scientific backing in the classical sense but there is proof of that Lack of fulfilment or dissatisfaction with one's personal or professional life is an indicator that we are perhaps not following our chosen soul plan. It is described by Robert Schwartz in his book on prebirth soul plan and in the research conducted by Dr. Gary E Schwartz PhD at the *Laboratory for Advances in Consciousness and Health* at the University of Arizona. Many are able to find joy and peace in their chosen

professions where they use their talents and abilities without any extrinsic guidance. What is helpful in both scenarios, the unfulfilled and the fulfilled, is that astrology can help find it in a timely manner and also helps use our purpose-guided life efficiently. Not only will it indicate our pre-birth soul plan, but it also enables us to understand what planets are helping us in this endeavor and where our potential challenges could be. This in turn enables a life of mindfulness; astrology helps live our lives awareness, consciously. Neither retreating to the life of a recluse, nor living life recklessly helps heal our inner wounds. It could be from the current life or past lives or generational. Learning about our preset plan helps us accept our trespasses with self-love and to move forward with self-compassion, embracing and working through our challenges. When we do so, we make room for happiness, peace and transformation. Unfortunately metaphysical concepts cannot be studied or proved with the objective ways of modern scientific methodology (Debats et al., 1995, p. 359) [8]. Yet it would be unscientific to discard ideas that are outside the box simply because current methodologies are not geared to measure or study them.

Role of the soul in life purpose: According to the Vedas, the Soul immortal. It gets housed in a physical body going through life and death, multiple times. It is reborn multiple times since it has unfinished desires, the desires that were unfulfilled in prior lifetimes. The soul wants to fulfil them as much as possible with each birth. This is the life purpose. Only when it is fulfilled can one become detached and seek liberation from desires and from the cycle of birth and death. Thus the main purpose of soul is to be free of cycle of birth & death.

How do we find our life purpose? Introspection is one such method. It is a way of finding what gives us joy & expansion of heart, paying attention to recurring life events or themes, exploring our passion, interests and what one is good at, may lend some clues. The pitfalls to this “figuring out method” is that, quite often our passions and skills are ingrained and can blindside us. The easy path or what we are good at is not necessarily our life purpose. We have been there, done that and it is not spiritually satisfying. So, the “figuring-out method” may not be full proof. Astrology is another tool that can help us find out our life purpose and it can be an additional validation tool. It is a science of prediction of human behavior and destiny based on the positions and connections between certain cosmic bodies. The scientific community regards it as pseudoscience since it cannot be tested by the usual rigorous protocols of scientific methodology.

According to Sounder and Vikram Diwakar, Astrology comes closest to quantum mechanics concepts when compared to all other aspects of Physics. One can explain the scientific basis of the influence of celestial body when we understand that the currency of the Universe is energy; everything is energy, and it is all pervading. Objects are actualized or materialized aspects of this energy and are thus linked to one another at a basic level. What is more, all objects influence every other object because of the intimate link that is shared- a concept called Quantum entanglement [9]. When we realize this, it is not surprising that cosmic bodies, though seemingly inanimate, have Vital energy and it is this energy that influences everything else. Astrology simply tell us the specifics of the influences; what factors influence the relationship etc. It can provide guidance to us regarding our pre-determined life purpose or soul purpose.

Before we attempt to understand how astrology works, we first need to understand the true nature of reality. We are all divine beings, immortal souls, here to have a human experience where we learn who we are and what reality is. But the human experience is finite and is bound by the cycle of birth and death as well as reincarnation, which enables us to fully explore every aspect of life not just in one lifetime, but we get to come back and explore more in a multitude of lifetimes. To do this, we make a pre-birth soul plan. Unfortunately, we promptly forget what we came to explore or learn due to the veil of Maya. The good news is that this prebirth soul plan is identifiable on our personal birth charts. Of course, one can move in the direction of their talents, abilities, and purpose, even without astrology's guidance. But the role of astrology is in its efficiency & timeliness. So far there has been no research done on the role of astrology in finding out one's life purpose. Astrology is a good candidate to indicate one's life purpose due to the metaphysical, spiritual framework it provides in explaining life experiences. It can also be good for self-discovery and can be a good form of coping mechanism during life's stressors.

It is important to clarify and emphasize that life is not just about amassment of wealth or seeking pleasures nor is it only spiritually focused by ignoring the outside world. Astrology helps to navigate Earth life by enjoying both the inner and outer worlds, the material and the spiritual world. It doesn't have to be one or the other, in fact, Astrology helps embrace and integrate both by balancing both aspects of our lives. It helps align all aspects of our worldly lives with our inner calling. This kind of alignment leads to improved satisfaction and happiness. But can cosmic bodies influence us. Can Science explain it? Well, it couldn't before but Quantum Physics/Quantum Science can. Every object in the material world has a vital energy. Celestial bodies or Grhas (meaning that which holds or grabs in Sanskrit) imprint unique cosmic blueprint on our soul. Each heavenly body gathers and gives out forces as it moves emits a particular wavelength or frequency of energy as it moves. It gives different patterns during different times. It is mentioned in some ancient texts, that we receive this energy via the Chakras. Chakras thus act as receivers and transmitters. This energy determines the quality of the phase of life we are living in.

Here are some tables showing the salient features of the basics of Astrology. [10.11].

Table 1 Astrology Terminology

Term	Description
Natal Chart (Birth Chart)	Snapshot of the sky at the exact moment of one's birth, showing positions of planets, the Sun, and the Moon in the zodiac signs and houses.
Zodiac	Belt of the sky within 8 degrees on either side of the ecliptic containing all apparent positions of the Sun, Moon, and planets; divided into 12 equal divisions.
Houses	Division of the chart based on Earth's rotation and the position of planets at birth; into 12 houses representing different "areas of life."
Western Chart	The beginning of the 1st house is located on the eastern horizon.
Ecliptic	Great circle traced out by the Sun's apparent motion against the background of stars as observed from Earth; influences seasons and astrological interpretations.
Constellations	Groups of stars that form recognizable patterns in the sky; zodiac constellations are arranged along the ecliptic.
Zodiac Signs	Based on the position of the Sun relative to the Earth at the time of a person's birth; represent characteristics of life and associated personality traits.
Planets	Represent experiences of life that shape personality.
North Node/South Node	Specific points where the Moon's orbit intersects the ecliptic plane; also known as Rahu (North Node) and Ketu (South Node).
North Node (Rahu)	Ascending lunar node; the Moon crosses the ecliptic plane from south to north.
South Node (Ketu)	Descending lunar node; the Moon crosses the ecliptic from north to south.
Sun	Represents the core essence of our being and clarity on innate talents.
Moon	Represents mind, emotions, intuition, and subconscious; governs deepest feelings and instincts.
Nakshatras (Lunar Mansions)	Imaginary divisions in the zodiac into 28, based on the location of the Moon in relation to star groupings.
Ascendant (Rising Sign)	The zodiac sign on the eastern horizon at one's birth.
Sun Sign	The zodiac sign determined by the position of the Sun at your birth.
Moon Sign	The constellation where the Moon was located at the time of birth.
Astrological Elements	Four elements associated with the signs: Earth, Water, Fire, and Air; reveal personality traits and energies.

Table 2: Constellations, their Planetary rulers and traits

Constellation	Planetary Ruler	Themes/Traits
Aries	Mars	Action-oriented, assertive, courageous, and competitive.
Taurus	Venus	Sensuality, stability, practicality, and appreciation for beauty.
Libra	Venus	Balance, harmony, relationships, and diplomacy.
Gemini	Mercury	Communication, adaptability, curiosity, and sociability.
Virgo	Mercury	Analytical, detail-oriented, practical, and service-minded.
Cancer	Moon	Nurturing, emotional, intuitive, and protective.
Leo	Sun	Charismatic, creative, confident, and leadership oriented.
Scorpio	Mars/Pluto	Intensity, transformation, depth, and passion.
Sagittarius	Jupiter	Adventurous, optimistic, philosophical, and freedom-loving.
Capricorn	Saturn	Discipline, ambition, responsibility, and practicality.
Aquarius	Saturn/Uranus	Innovation, individuality, humanitarianism, and progressive thinking.
Pisces	Jupiter/Neptune	Compassionate, dreamy, artistic, and intuitive.

House	Ruler	Represents
1st House	Sun	Self-image, motivations, goals, and appearance.
2nd House	Jupiter	Money, material possessions, and day-to-day work tasks.
3rd House	Mars	Communication, ideas, and short-distance travel.
4th House	Moon	Home, family, and emotions.
5th House	Jupiter	Creativity, children, education, and spiritual practices.
6th House	Mars	Health, organization, and routines.
7th House	Venus	Relationships (work and romantic), contracts, and marriage.
8th House	Saturn	Mystery, transformation, occult, inheritance, and longevity.
9th House	Jupiter	Learning, spirituality, and long-distance travel.
10th House	Saturn	Career, achievement, tradition, and authority.
11th House	Jupiter	Friendship, technology, and humanitarianism.
12th House	Jupiter	Intuition, arts, liberation, and spirituality.

Table 3 Houses, their Ruler and what they represent

TYPES OF ASTROLOGY

Vedic Astrology [12, 13]

Vedic astrology was a revered science that originated in ancient India. It is also called Jyotish- the “Science of light” and is a holistic science that explains the connection between the influences of the cosmic bodies and individual’s destiny. This is determined by the location of the cosmic body in the sky at the time of a person’s birth. Vedic Astrology relies on both Sun & Moon. It uses the SIDEREAL zodiac to prepare the birth chart. The Sidereal zodiac maps out the location of the cosmic bodies against a backdrop of stars and constellations. In the sidereal year the calendar date corresponds to the relative position of the Earth in its orbit around the Sun. Time taken for the Sun to reach the same spot in the sky relative to the stars is 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, and 10 seconds, it is accurate- it corrects for a phenomenon called PRECISION. Precision is created by Earth’s rotation which leads to a wobble or precession leading to a tilt, this tilt leads to a tilt in ecliptic plane. The earth’s wobble is completed in 26,000 years. There is 1 degree tilt every 72 years and the North pole points to a different star every 7500 years; hence the Pole star which has a fixed position in the sky, keeps changing every 7,500 years. The Pole star is a fixed point of reference in the Celestial sky and helps map out the location of other stars or cosmic bodies. It helps map out the Celestial Equator and the Ecliptic which are in turn needed to map out the sky. Vedic astrology also incorporates lunar constellations called Nakshatras in addition to Grhas or Cosmic bodies. It needs to be noted that the meaning of the Sanskrit word Grha, is something that “grabs” and it doesn’t equate to a planet but a cosmic body. Mapping this way makes for accurate locations of the Grhas. Greater accuracy is achieved by further dividing the houses into lunar mansions or nakshatras. Vedic astrology offers an additional layer of detail and accuracy by creating different divisional charts for different providing insight into different areas of life. The divisional charts are created from the basic birth chart or Rashi chart and each zodiac sign which is 30 degrees is divided into the specific number of divisions. For e.g. Navaamsh or nine division chart (D-9) is created by dividing each zodiac sign into nine equal divisions, totaling 108, with each division subtending an angle of 3 degrees 20 minutes. The positions of the planets are recalculated within this new chart and analyzed. Each division represents a specific area of life. The Navaamsh chart is used to obtain information about a person’s spiritual growth and deeper influences or effects of planets. Thus the divisional charts provide nuanced readings in specific areas of one’s life. In the Navaamsh chart, the key divisions are division #1 where the ascendent sign is. It indicates how one approaches life. The 9th house is the house of spirituality or higher learning and sheds light on one’s spiritual tendencies. The 12th house provides information about transcendence, mystical experiences and sheds light on the spiritual journey or path to enlightenment. An idea of the life purpose, the journey, the facilitators, obstacles remedies can be learnt by looking at the rising sign, the position of the Sun, Moon, Jupiter and the planet that has the highest degree on one’s birth chart.

Western Astrology

It relies on the location of the Sun and other celestial bodies and the Tropical zodiac. It doesn’t correct planetary locations for Precision. It focuses on the job, health, how others view each other (psychology) and the world. It

is based on the 12 zodiac signs, each of which has its traits and characteristics. Each of the signs is associated with one of the four elements. The Fire signs are dynamic, passionate; the water signs are nurturing, emotional; earth signs are grounded, practical and reliable whereas Air signs- are good at communication and are intellectual.

Chinese Astrology

It is based on the Chinese zodiac - **Sheng Xiao**. The calendar relies on both the position of both the Sun and the Moon relative to the Earth. Its emphasis is on the lunar calendar and the five elements, concepts of destiny, harmony & interplay between elements and animal signs. 12 animal signs for 12 years with their traits. It provides guidance on traits, timing, compatibility, and life cycles but not on soul-purpose.

I chose to go with Vedic astrology to evaluate the potential contenders for indicating our life purpose. Vedic astrology embeds the wisdom of the Vedas, specifically Rigveda. It firmly believes in the concept of Free Will. Here destiny implies life situations, and we have the free will to respond to them via our thoughts and deeds that is nothing but Karma - the specific outcome which in turn creates more life situations. According to the Vedas, there four goals of a human life- Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma is our inner compass or reference point for the soul learning that we set out to do in order for the soul to evolve. It guides our conduct to achieve this purpose of soul evolution. Karma is the action that we need to perform, the path or trajectory that we walk on with possible detours and deviations, to arrive at our destination or goal. Vedic astrology not only tells us of our Soul purpose but also sheds light on the map of our Karma. It tells us what our traits are, how we generally respond to situation, what energies affect us or influence us. Thus this road map goes beyond mundane predictions and provides us with tools for self-reflection and growth.

Who are the potential candidates for indicating the life purpose in astrology in general? The ones considered are the Sun sign, the moon sign, the ascending sign and the North node. Considering each of their characteristics,

THE SUN SIGN is a representation of our core identity and the ego self. It is the sign or constellation in which the Sun was present at the time of an individual's birth. There are four elemental themes, and the sun sign sheds light on the elemental themes that rule our signs, tells us how we interact with the world & what each sign is working through or learning, thus playing a role on our personality. The Earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) are learning about stability. It teaches the lesson of working hard, being reliable, staying grounded and connected to the physical world. The Water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) learn about emotions and their management. The lesson for Fire signs is to use the fire energy and take action to realize their dreams fearlessly. Air signs learn to be intellectual, think deeply, share and communicate ideas with others. E.g. if a person's sun sign is Cancer, life experiences teach them how to manage emotions and respond to life situations with equanimity. Thus, the

Sun sign seems to indicate our purpose in the outer world and how we are going to achieve our goals. It points the direction of our fundamental traits and motivation, while providing insight into our personality.

The MOON-SIGN governs our personality and soul. It reflects our emotional nature and inner self and represents our past life abilities, instincts, experiences, comfort zone, our inner world, our emotional needs. Each moon sign has unique qualities and influences emotional response. It provides us with life situations that brings out the hidden or unseen aspects that influence our emotional landscape. Understanding it leads to greater self-awareness and personal growth.

The NORTH NODE or Rahu is not a celestial body but a geometric point, also called the descending lunar node. It indicates the soul's potential, the karmic path we need to take moving forward to learn our life lessons. It guides us toward growth, lessons, and fulfilling your soul's destiny. The house and the sign of North node shows area of life that needs to evolve, the habits to let go of career paths to choose that lead towards contentment, fulfilment and happiness. E.g. if the North node is in VIRGO, it indicates that the path involves Service, organization, attention to detail. The House in which Rahu is located give clues as to the areas of life in which our lessons will manifest.

The South node or Ketu indicates the challenges and gifts that we bring into this lifetime. It is a pointer to our Comfort zone, that which pulls us, but we need to go away towards path shown by north node to grow spiritually.

The ASCENDENT or the RISING SIGN or the LAGNA and its ruling planet influences one's outward demeanor and how others perceive us. The Planetary ruler of house reveals our traits or personalities, characteristics that our persona manifest. It sheds light on the masks we wear to navigate through life by the way of our self-image, physical appearance etc. It influences how we interact with the world. It helps find authenticity.

The ATMAKARAKA is an additional player to this role according to Vedic Astrology. According to Rishi Parashar and his disciple, Jaimini, there are signifiers or indicators of different aspects of life. There are various varieties of which some are fixed, some are changing. The variable Karakas are seven in number changing based on individual chart. The Grha with the highest angle on the birth chart is the Atmakaraka, excluding Rahu (North node) and Ketu (South node). The Atmakaraka indicates the Soul's desire, the lessons that we need to learn and the journey in the current life. The worldly desires we harbor are revealed by Atmakaraka (AK). Thus, it varies for different people since our soul desire varies based on our spiritual evolution. Once we are bereft of desires, we attain Moksha. Atmakaraka directs one towards Moksha as long as we learn the lessons it teaches us (giver of Moksha). Once we figure out what our Atmakaraka is, the next step is see where it is located on the D-9 chart and obtain a more detailed information about an individual's spiritual aspirations and the path as well as relay the challenges and lessons that one needs to learn to achieve that goal. The most potent placement would be if it is placed in its own sign or in exalted position. For example, if Saturn is the Atmakaraka, its most potent placement position would be the 8th or 10th house.

The characteristics of each Grha as Atmakaraka:

Each planet gives its qualities, past desires and lessons to learn. It does so by having us experience the darker qualities of that particular cosmic body or Grha. The finer details are based on the house the Atmakaraka is located in, the ruler of that house, the constellation or Nakshatra, the position in the Navaamsh chart.

The Sun as Atmakaraka give the quality of POWER, position in society and respect. Its qualities are to provide confidence and leadership skills. At the same time, it instills humility and suppresses the ego. The goal is to balance personal strength with humility and to manage power in a responsible manner

The MOON- represents UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, intuition, caring, compassion and empathy. Its main characteristic is to focus on family & social life. The obstacles to happiness are possessiveness & protectiveness. If the moon is one's archetype, it teaches the person how to be caring and compassionate and to love unconditionally without being possessive. It teaches us to balance taking care of ourselves as well as maintaining a good family and social life.

MARS- represents the ENERGY in the physical BODY- It gives one courage to face anything but if taken to the extreme, it can make one aggressive & competitive. It teaches us how to redirect, balance energy and channel energy in a non-violent way. Since impatience is a quality of Mars, having it as Atmakaraka indicates that one needs to learn to be patient and humble and gracefully accept defeat. A great way to constructively utilize the energy of Mars would be to use it to fight oppression and injustice of the downtrodden in a constructive manner.

MERCURY – COMMUNICATION and curiosity are the gifts of Mercury. It gives control over words, fosters effective communication, enables critical thinking and helps one to adapt easily. One learns to speak nothing but the Truth and only if is useful and not harmful to others.

VENUS- represents love, beauty and harmony. Its purpose is to create beauty through art, aesthetics and build relationships. The goal is to balance & harmonize our inner and outer worlds our desires and passions, control sensual pleasures and learn how to master our relationships.

JUPITER- embodies wisdom, expansion, vitality or JEEVATMA. It encourages one to seek higher knowledge, higher truth and enables spiritual growth. Those with Jupiter as their Atmakaraka become teachers, philosophers, guides and the lesson to learn is to trust oneself, trust that one has the wisdom and capability to guide others. Their life theme- is goodness, generosity, compassion

SATURN- represents discipline, Justice, responsibility, karma. With Saturn as the Atmakaraka, the Life purpose is bound to be hard work, perseverance, overcoming obstacles, achieving stability, taking on others suffering and lifting their burden. Through our lessons of pain and suffering, it teaches us how not to cause pain and suffering in others. It teaches us how to go through it with detachment and face it bravely.

RAHU & KETU are not included by most astrologers since they are associated with spiritual liberation. Rahu represents simplicity, innocence, being unconventional, embracing and merging of dichotomies or polarities to become whole. The lessons include integrity, hard work, balancing worldly desires with spiritual exploration and development and overcoming duality. **Ketu** on the other hand, signifies moksha (liberation) from desires and is therefore not included in the system of personal karakas. Moksha is beyond worldly desires, so Ketu's influence is not considered when determining the soul's desires through Atmakaraka. It is associated with past life lessons and influences. It teaches detachment and helps develop intuition. Rahu & Ketu are part of the Karmic axis; Despite popular belief, it is ultimately good to have Rahu as the Atmakaraka. It will ultimately reveal Ketu's desire for liberation.

Conclusions

Utilizing Vedic astrology helps one have a holistic approach to living life, filled with joy, happiness and satisfaction. By identifying the Atmakaraka, our life purpose or dharma is revealed. When we learn life lessons or follow our dharma, we transform spiritually. Moreover, Vedic Astrology provides an accurate assessment since the charts are created with the actual location of the cosmic bodies at the time of birth. The divisional charts help fine tune the predictions with a greater degree of accuracy. Knowing our Atmakaraka provides us with clues about our life events and experiences, providing information regarding the roadblocks and the potential solutions for navigating life. Life becomes exciting, fulfilled and full of Happiness.

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