

The Differences between Western & Vedic Astrology

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Zodiac

The most foundational difference between Western and Vedic astrology is each system's choice of Zodiac. Western astrologers use the Tropical Zodiac, where the beginnings of the twelve signs are determined by the Sun's apparent orbit around the Earth, i.e. the onset of the four seasons, i.e. when the Sun crosses the Equator (going North at Spring which defines Aries and South in the Fall indicating the beginning of Libra) and its uppermost and lowest points (the Summer and Winter Solstices).

Vedic astrologers, on the other hand, use the Sidereal Zodiac, which is based upon the physical positions of the constellations in the sky. They choose a starting point (most commonly the place in the sky opposite to Spica) for the beginning of Aries, and proceed in equal 30 degree segments for subsequent signs.

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<http://www.learnastrologyfree.com/vedicsigns.htm>**

House System

In addition, most modern Western astrologers use one of the many house systems that places the degree of the Ascendant as the beginning of the First House, with either unequally- or equally-sized houses. Vedic astrologers, by and large, use Whole Sign Houses, where the Ascendant can fall anywhere in the First House, and each house comprises all of one sign. Many also use Bhava/Shri Pati houses for a portion of their work.

Planets and Sign rulerships

Western astrologers use all of the major planets including Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, and most attribute rulership of Aquarius to Uranus, Pisces to Neptune, and Scorpio to Pluto. Vedic astrologers, on the other hand, stick to the visible planets, i.e. those through Saturn, using the traditional rulerships, of Aquarius to Saturn, Pisces to Jupiter, and Scorpio to Mars.

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Aspects, Orbs, Aspect Patterns & Chart Shape

Western astrologers use an assortment of aspects, always including the five Ptolemaic aspects (conjunction, sextile, square, trine, and opposition), with tight orbs of 10 degrees or less, determined by the type of aspect. Planets only aspect other planets and the angles (Ascendant and Midheaven).

Vedic astrologers use a different approach: each planet associates with all planets in the same house, and aspects the opposite house and any planets in that house. Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter also have additional (unilateral) special aspects to both planets and houses.

Western astrologers also place importance upon aspect patterns like Grand Trines, T-squares, Yods, etc. which are unused by Vedic astrologers. However, while many Western astrologers employ the seven whole chart shapes originated by Marc Edmund Jones (e.g. Bucket, Splash, etc.), Vedic astrologers have a very large set of delineations of whole chart patterns, seen as yogas.

Differences in Approaches and Methodology

Strengths and Weaknesses of Planets

In Western astrology, retrograde planets are seen as weak, but since Vedic astrology is oriented towards how planets appear in the actual sky, retrograde planets are seen as strong (because planets that are retrograde are at their closest approach to the earth, and therefore visibly both brighter and larger).

Western astrologers also see planets occupying the sign opposite to the sign they rule as weak (which they call debilitated), while Vedic astrologers do not see such sign positions as weak. (This gets confusing to Western readers of Vedic texts, because Vedic astrologers do see planets in the sign opposite to their exaltation sign as weak, and call such planets either debilitated or fallen interchangeably.)

Modern Western astrologers seldom employ the concept of combustion (i.e. when a planet is near the Sun), but Vedic astrologers utilize combustion as a

fundamental principle: a planets is weak when within 6 degrees of the Sun (and very weak within 3 degrees of the Sun).

Some Western astrologers interpret 8 lunar phases, but they generally don't assess Lunar strength by phase. Vedic astrologers place great importance on Lunar phase, and delineate 30 different Tithis, and consider the Moon as weak when it's within 72 degrees of the Sun, and strong when within one sign of opposite to the Sun. (They also see the Moon as weaker when waning than when waxing.)

Vedic astrologers consider true planets (Mercury through Saturn) that are within one degree of each other as at war, and this indicates a major weakness. This is not used in Western astrology.

When a planet is in the same sign in both the natal chart and the Navamsha chart (with the exception of it being in fall), this gives the planet strength, (in Vedic astrology), but this is not used in Western astrology.

In Vedic astrology, planets get directional strength (Dig Bala) by occupying specific angles: Jupiter & Mercury in the 1st, Moon & Venus in the 4th, Sun & Mars in the 10th, and Saturn in the 7th. Western astrologers do not use this concept.

The status of a planet's dispositor is rarely focused on in Western astrology, but in Vedic astrology, each planet's dispositor is seen as the soul of the planet, and is therefore very important. In fact, while exalted planets in Western astrology are always seen as very strong without qualification, in Vedic astrology, if the planet ruling the sign occupied by an exalted planet is weak by sign, then the exalted planet is not seen as strong. Similarly, Fallen planets are seen as invariably weak in Western astrology, but in Vedic astrology they are strengthened if their dispositor is strong, angular, or meets other criteria.

Mutual reception is used by some Western astrologers and by all Vedic astrologers. In Vedic astrology, it is called a Parivartana yoga, and has extensive interpretive meanings including strengthening planets in both the natal and divisional charts.

Benefics and Malefics

While Western astrology recognizes Saturn as challenging, the concept of benefic and malefic planets is employed to a much greater extent in Vedic astrology. E.g.

Mercury is benefic unless solely under the influence of other malefics, the Moon is benefic unless within 72 degrees of the Sun, and Jupiter and Venus are always benefic. The Sun, Mars, Saturn, and the Nodes are malefics.

House Meanings and Rulership

Houses in Western astrology are rarely classified beyond their angularity or lack thereof, and their elemental affiliation. In Vedic astrology, houses are classified by a multitude of criteria including good/bad, upachaya/apachaya (improving or not), kendras & trikonas, marakas, and more.

The rulership of houses is used by some Western astrologers, but is at the core of Vedic astrological interpretation. The analysis of planetary yogas in the Vedic chart relies mainly upon the houses ruled by individual planets and pairs of planets.

Additional Methods of Analysis

Transits, especially by the outer planets, are the main predictive device used by Western astrologers, but some use progressions and/or directions too. Vedic astrologers rely primarily upon the Vimshottari dasa system (cycles and sub-cycles wherein specific natal planets are activated), and secondarily employ the transits of Jupiter and Saturn (but not the transits by Uranus, Neptune, or Pluto). Some also employ other dasa systems.

Lunar Mansions/Nakshatras

It is the rare Western astrologer who uses lunar mansions, but Vedic astrologers, who call them Nakshatras, use them for dasa calculation, electional astrology (Muhurta), and for natal work. In fact, the use of Nakshatras for Muhurta may even precede the use of the 12 signs in astrology.

Harmonic/Divisional Charts

Harmonic charts, called Varga or Divisional charts in Vedic astrology, are essential to natal and predictive analysis in Jyotish, but are largely unused in Western astrology.

Synastry

Western astrology is rich in methods of compatibility analysis including examining placement of planets in each other's houses, inter-aspects (between the

charts), and a variety of combined (e.g. Composite) charts.

Vedic compatibility assessment is primarily done by examining the two partner's Moon positions, examining many Lunar attributes. In addition, the Navamsha chart is used in both in assessing the partner and in timing of relationships (and the changing relationship climate).

Additional Points

Western astrologers often add the comet Chiron and the four major asteroids to charts, as well as the Part of Fortune. Some even add many other points. Vedic astrologers generally don't add other points, but a small minority add Upagrahas (hypothetical points) or Sahams (aka Arabic Parts).

A Note on Traditional Astrology: There are many more commonalities between Traditional (aka Hellenistic) Astrology and Vedic Astrology than between either of these with modern Western astrology , including the aforementioned Whole Sign Houses and aspects, traditional rulerships, the use of only the visible planets, good and bad houses, and more.

The Differences Between Western and Vedic Astrology

Component	Western	Vedic
Fundamental differences		
Zodiac	Tropical (Seasonal)	Sidereal (Constellational)
House System	Ascendant on First House cusp, one of many house systems selected	Whole Signs (Ascendant in the 1 st) two major house systems used
Planets	Visible plus Uranus, Neptune, Pluto	Visible only
Planets in signs	Central to chart interpretation	Used differently, especially to assess planetary strength
Sign rulerships	Aquarius to Uranus, Pisces to Neptune, Scorpio to Pluto	Traditional (Aquarius to Saturn, Pisces to Jupiter, Scorpio to Mars)
Aspects	conjunction, sextile, square,	conjunction & opposition by

trine & opposition with <10 degree orbs; aspects only to planets & angles

whole sign, with Mars, Jupiter & Saturn having special whole sign aspects

Differences in Approaches and Methodology

Assessing Strength and Weakness

Retrogradation	weakness	strength
planet in sign opposite to ruled	weak, called debilitated	not used
Combust	rarely used	important weakness
strong-weak Moon by phase	unused	Dark Moon/ waning is weak, Bright Moon strong/waxing strong
planetary war	unused	major weakness
vargottama	unused	significant strength
dig bala	unused	major strength
dispositorship	sometimes used	of major importance
mutual reception	used by some astrologers	a major yoga used in delineation
exalted by sign	strong	strong unless sign ruler weak
fallen by sign	weak	weak unless sign ruler strong +
benefic/malefic planets	not used per se (although Saturn is seen as highly impactful)	Sun, Mars, Saturn & Nodes malefic Venus, Jupiter benefic & usually Moon and Mercury too

House Meanings and Rulership

good/bad houses	largely ignored	crucial to chart interpretation
house classifications	angular, succedent, cadent fire, air, water, earth	Western types + maraka, upachaya, good/bad, kendra/trikona & more

rulership of houses	used occasionally by some Western astrologers	deeply central to chart analysis, e.g. the formation of planetary yogas
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Additional Methods of Analysis

Aspect Patterns	Grand Trine, T-Square, Grand Cross, Yod, and others used	not used
Chart shape	Marc Edmund Jones patterns	an extensive set of yogas
Lunar phases	8 lunar phases	16 Tithis
methods of prediction	transits (especially by outer planets), progressions, directions	Vimshottari dasas, secondarily transits by Jupiter & Saturn
lunar mansions aka Nakshatras	rarely used	central to dasa calculation & elections, of major importance
harmonic/ Varga Charts	seldom used	used extensively in both natal and predictive work
assessing compatibility	interaspects between charts, cross-house placement, composite charts	Kuta analysis & Navamsha assessment
added chart points	the comet Chiron, the four major asteroids, and possibly others.	usually no extra points, but some add upagrahas and sahas.