



Exploring the association of Indian astrological concepts and western psychological concepts

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Abstract

Astrology is an ancient belief system that has scientific roots in the Indian Knowledge System and thus has been considered significant despite the criticism. Interestingly the western world has also learnt and explored the associated knowledge roots. Astronomy focuses on the placements of celestial bodies that affect human behavior, emotions and events. This review paper explores the philosophical connection of psychology and astrology in detail. This paper wants to bring the knowledge connect that exists along with examining the psychological processes and the astrological impacts that underlie its appeal, its historical precedents, its applicability in the present, and the complex effects it has for mental health and well-being. Astrology and Psychology both give us a foundation for comprehending the complexity of the outside world and self. They have a framework that gives life's events meaning, purpose, and order, providing people a sense of predictability and control in an often chaotic environment. Though each of the studies has its own drawbacks, looking at astrology, the subjective interpretations and deterministic worldview could weaken one's capacity for free will and critical thought. Astrology may help in providing psychological advantages such as comfort, self-awareness and social interaction, but it may have opposite effects of causing anxiety, distress and lack of control of overall life. Furthermore, subjectivity is an essential aspect of psychology as well and that enables in-depth understanding of self. Astrology continues to fascinate people's imaginations and have a profound impact on millions of lives worldwide, despite the lack of empirical evidence supporting it.

Keywords: Astrology, psychology, philosophy, mental health and well-being

Introduction

Astrology is a study of the planets and it is believed to be divination in which the fixed stars, the Sun, the Moon, and the planets are observed and interpreted to predict events that will occur and have an effect on the world and people individually. Believers and devotees think they can both forecast and alter the fates of people, groups, and nations by knowing how the planets and stars affect earthly matters. Astrology is now largely viewed as being completely at odds with the discoveries and beliefs of contemporary Western science, despite the fact that it was once frequently accepted as a science. Astrology has produced a symbolic language that is used to figure out the particular meaning of the current moment based on the forces at play and how they are interacting. Since the earliest days of human history, astrology has captivated the interest and exerted significant influence over certain thoughtful individuals. While it has never been universally accepted, it is fair to say that with its numerous followers in the East and the growing number of supporters in the West, few beliefs hold as widespread an application as the idea that celestial bodies influence human destiny (Sephariel, 1920) ^[12].

Conventional view of astrology was that it was event-focused thus implied that the person could be a victim of an indifferent universe over which he had little or no control. Because of this, astrologers were professionals who would provide people with what they desired: forecasts, counsel, instructions, and oversimplified fixes for issues that are now understood to be complex psychological issues. Traditional astrologers were, at most, well-intentioned people who were interested in indepth knowledge and thus would get into deeper analysis and event predictions. They did or intended no harm, in the worst-case scenario, they were considered

fear-mongering parasites that caused a significant deal of harm by preying on the fears and anxieties of those who hired them. The fact being that was a view of the people who were not aware of the knowledge yet, they believed the system was strong to trust the process and practice of astrology.

Historical Roots of Astrology

Astrology has ancient roots, evidence of its use may be found in many different cultures dating back thousands of years. Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) was home to one of the oldest known civilizations to create astrological systems. Around 2000 BCE, priests called "scribes" in Mesopotamia carefully documented astronomical observations and connected them to earthly happenings. These ancient astrologers thought that the motions of celestial bodies might affect human affairs and were a sign of the gods' will. The Babylonians, who came after the Mesopotamian civilization, refined astrology and created complex systems of prophecy and divination based on signs from the heavens. They established the basis for the astrological tradition that is still in use today by dividing the sky into twelve sectors, each of which corresponded to a sign of the zodiac.

In ancient Egypt, where the motions of the sun, moon, and stars had great religious significance, astrology was also very popular. Astrology was a tool used by Egyptian priests to determine the best dates for religious rituals, agricultural practices, and regal decrees. Astrology was very important to imperial and dynastic control in ancient China. Chinese astrologers created intricate divination systems based on the motions of celestial bodies, including the moon's phases and the alignment of the planets. Astrology continued to expand throughout Europe and the Middle East during the Roman

Empire and the Islamic Golden Age, when academics translated and preserved historical astrological books. Throughout the Middle Ages, astrology was still widely used, and European kings sought advice on both personal and governmental concerns from court astrologers (Pingree *et al.*, 2024) ^[11].

Indian Roots of Astrology: In Indian astrology, the true self and personality are believed to be shaped by the position of the planets at the exact time and place of the birth. Predictions about the future are made by comparing the current and future positions of the planets with the birth chart. This forms the foundation of Indian astrology. Hindu astronomy, called Jyotisha in Sanskrit, translates to "the science of light" or "the science of celestial objects." Astrology, known as Phalita Jyotisha, is considered a branch of this, much like how technology relates to fundamental or pure sciences. Indian astrology is a sophisticated system that has evolved over many centuries, both in the East and the West. It is believed that astrology originated in India and has been practiced for over 8,000 years. (Bansal, 2018)

Astrological beliefs in India date back to ancient times, with the Vedic civilization showing a strong belief in predictions and omens. Omens, known as *adbhuta*, *utpiita*, and *nimitta*, have always been seen as a way to predict the future, not only by Indians but also by other cultures. In early Vedic times, predictions were based on *nakshatras* (lunar mansions), which were considered either opportunate or unopportunate, particularly depending on the Moon's position. The belief that certain *nakshatras* were favorable or unfavorable for performing specific actions became common practice in India. Over time, a distinct science emerged that combined this idea of favorable or unfavorable time periods with omens and astrological combinations to determine the best time to begin different activities. This science, called *muhurta*, is similar to Hellenistic horary astrology. Indian texts on *muhurta* place great emphasis on selecting the right time to perform religious ceremonies (*samskaras*) and other rituals, which also influenced the *dharma shastras* (religious texts), many of which focus on such predictive methods (Beinorius, A., 2003) ^[12].

Astrology and its Psychological Mechanisms

Theoretical Foundations: Astrology is based on the idea that the positions of celestial bodies at the time of a person's birth affect their personality, behavior, and life events. This concept resonates with psychological ideas such as determinism and the impact of external factors on human development. Both disciplines highlight the connection between individuals and their surroundings, stressing the importance of context in shaping experiences.

Psychology delves into understanding the human mind, focusing on personality, emotions, and behavior. Carl Jung's archetypal psychology creates a link between astrology and psychology, as he suggested the presence of universal symbols, or archetypes, that influence human experience. Jung's interest in astrology arose from his belief in the symbolic language of the collective unconscious, where celestial bodies symbolize archetypal forces that affect the human psyche.

Astrology was more about working with nature and accepting what your "stars," as messengers of divine will, intended for you than it was about understanding yourself. Not until the writings of the philosopher/astrologer Dane

Rudhyar (1895–1985) and the psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961) did astrological thought and language become focused on personality and personal development. It is evident that astrology's current usage and culture are directly related to its integration with depth, transpersonal, and humanistic psychology. Writer, comedian, and Jungian astrologer Judy Balan notes that Jung frequently referred to astrology as "the elder sister" of psychology. Many cite Jung when he says that astrology is the culmination of all psychological knowledge in antiquity and is a premodern form of the psychological sciences. When faced with challenging psychological diagnoses, Jung would create a horoscope as a way to gain more perspective from a completely different position. "I must say that I very often found that the astrological data elucidated certain points which I otherwise would have been unable to understand" (Jung, 1948). A natal chart, which maps the positions of celestial bodies at the time of birth, is similar to a psychological profile, revealing inherent strengths, challenges, and potential for growth. This blending of archetypal patterns allows for a comprehensive approach to self-discovery, combining insights from both astrology and psychology. According to Jung, an individual's unique basic characteristic originates from within them and is not shaped by their environment. Though Jung acknowledged the significance of parental and environmental influences, he believed that a child's disposition should be the determining factor (Campbell, p.181). In astrology, the mother archetype is often linked to the Moon, symbolizing nurturing and emotional traits, whereas in psychology, it represents the maternal instinct and the dynamics of the mother-child bond. Jung noted that astrology was a precise means of forecasting life crises due to its exceptional and unmatched capacity to reveal relationships between planetary movements and human experience: "I have observed many cases where a well-defined psychological phase or an analogous event has been accompanied by a transit—particularly the afflictions of Saturn and Uranus" (Jung 1954). The Jungian concept of the "shadow," which represents the unconscious and suppressed aspects of the psyche, parallels ideas in astrological interpretation. Challenging planetary placements, like Saturn symbolizing restrictions or Pluto representing transformation, reflect similar themes to those of the shadow. By facing and integrating these astrological shadows, individuals begin a psychological process toward achieving self-awareness and personal growth.

Carl Jung viewed both astrological and Jungian symbols as representations of archetypal forces that influence human experience, whether through celestial movements or the unconscious mind. "The journey through the planetary houses symbolizes the process of overcoming a psychological barrier or an independent complex, which is aptly represented by a planetary deity or demon." (Jung, C. G. (1970). *Mysterium coniunctionis: An inquiry into the separation and synthesis of psychic opposites in alchemy* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). In *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 14, 2nd ed.). Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1955) These complexes were often embodied by planetary deities or demons, serving as metaphors for the inner struggles faced during personal growth.

By the 1960s, the humanistic movement in psychology had given Rudhyar's ambition of reformulating astrology fresh

momentum. Freudian psychoanalysis's grim outlook and behaviorism's robot notion of human potential gave rise to humanistic psychology, which is represented in the works of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and other authors. Both behaviorism and psychoanalysis were deterministic in that they believed that a person's personality was shaped by factors outside of themselves, such as parents, environment, heredity, and so forth. Humanistic psychologists resisted this tendency by creating theories that explained why people behaved in a way that seemed to be purposeful and growth-oriented.

The connection between humanistic psychology and astrology was initially identified by Rudhyar. In a sense, the chart might be used as a mapping tool for the intricate inner world that humanists were beginning to investigate. Humanistic astrology was a reaction to the determinism present in conventional, event-oriented astrology, just as humanistic psychology was a reaction to the determinism present in psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Person-Centered Astrology was created by Rudhyar (1972) using concepts from Carl Roger's (1951) Client-Centered Therapy. Rudhyar was more interested in using astrology to aid in the process of self-actualization than he was in determining whether it is accurate.

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The benefit of the birth chart is that it presents the person as a whole, making it easier to comprehend how internal tensions lead to personality breakdown and the exteriorization of conflict. When the demands that underpin the expression of some parts of oneself are met with suffering and frustration, people separate and deny those parts of themselves. Although the client's internal issues are revealed by the birthchart, the timing of when these conflicts will be addressed for healing is indicated by transits and progressions. The nature, significance, and length of several developmental phases—each with its own chances and challenges—are revealed by these planetary movements. According to astrology, these occurrences are the synchronized outward expression of inward transformations. Stated differently, the environment and the psyche are mirrors of one other. The external occurrences act as a catalyst or stimulant to encourage psychological development on the inside.

When viewed in this light, transits highlight the aspects of a person's personality that are prepared for conscious exploration, integration, or transformation.

Contemporary Relevance

Even with the advances in science and technology, astrology is still widely used in modern life. The emergence of the internet and social media has led to a renaissance of astrology, expanding its reach and adjusting to contemporary lives. Online resources provide customized horoscopes, compatibility evaluations, and astrological advice to people looking for direction and affirmation in their personal and professional life. Furthermore, astrology has influenced trends in fashion, entertainment, and wellness throughout popular culture.

The study titled Prediction of Mental Illness Using Indian Astrology: Cross-Sectional Findings from a Prospective Study examined astrology's ability to predict mental illness

using the Indian astrological system. It involved 150 participants, split equally between those with and without mental illness. Four astrologers, unaware of the subjects' conditions, analyzed computer-generated birth charts based on the participants' gender, and birth details (date, time, and place). Their predictions were compared with clinical assessments. The results indicated moderate agreement in predicting lifetime mental illness ($k = 0.560$, $p = .001$) and substantial agreement in identifying current mental illness ($k = 0.626$, $p = .001$), with good inter-astrologer consistency for lifetime illness. Astrology demonstrated sensitivity and specificity above 75% for lifetime mental illness and over 80% for current mental illness, suggesting its potential as a diagnostic tool (Bhandary *et al.*, 2018) [4]. The application of astrological principles to clinical settings is known as astrotherapy. Astrology serves as a diagnostic tool as well as a philosophy of personality. The psyche is shown as a hierarchical framework made up of emergent ideas and behaviors, cognitive structures, archetypal needs, and related events in this intricate, multifaceted picture of human activity. It is also a potent and adaptable evaluation tool that enables the professional to identify hints to early life experiences, understand the significance of current occurrences, and pinpoint times for future development. Astrotherapy is not concerned with making predictions about the future or with superficial trait descriptions, in contrast to traditional, event-oriented astrology.

Conclusion

Astrology has a strong influence on many people's daily lives, from reading daily horoscopes to following detailed, personalized star predictions. Astrology continues to be a deeply psychological and culturally significant, intricate, and varied phenomenon. Despite being considered a pseudoscience, it continues to hold sway over modern, rational individuals, leaving scientists and scholars puzzled. So far, they haven't been able to fully explain its widespread impact or understand the reasons for its lasting appeal. However, "Astrology, Science and Culture" steps beyond this scientific skepticism, offering an in-depth exploration of the significance and reasons behind this belief system's popularity.

Astrology helps the therapist better understand the client's inner world, which improves their capacity to treat psychological issues, change or eliminate symptoms, and encourage positive personality development and fulfillment. To better investigate the psychological aspects of astrology, multidisciplinary methodologies should be used in future research projects. Research methods including longitudinal investigations, experimental studies, and qualitative inquiries can provide valuable understanding of the causes, mechanisms, and effects of astrological beliefs and practices.

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