

Celestial Influences: The Enduring and Multi-disciplinary Impact of Astrology Over Civilizations

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ABSTRACT

This research explores astrology's role across civilizations, showing how figures like Jyotish, Sudines, and Ptolemy shaped its integration into agriculture, politics, health, social practices, and architecture. Rooted in the belief that celestial movements influence human life, astrology guided practical applications such as Babylonian farming calendars, Indian rituals, and architectural alignments in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Cultural exchanges, especially during the Islamic Golden Age, enriched astrology, influencing the Renaissance and bridging mysticism with science. Examples include Augustus using astrology to legitimize his rule and Ayurvedic treatments aligned with celestial cycles. While astronomy evolved as a scientific discipline, astrology remains culturally significant, as seen in its modern resurgence online, reflecting humanity's enduring fascination with the cosmos and its influence on life.

Introduction

For centuries, humanity looked up into the sky to make sense of life on Earth. A pillar of Western and Eastern societies has been astrology, a belief that the stars, planets and celestial bodies affect human affairs. Astrology — from Babylon to the Indus valley— shaped major aspects of culture, politics, religion and science. Astrology's importance to a lot of civilizations was cemented with the help of figures like Jyotish in South Asia, Sudines in Babylonian and Ptolemy in Greece. In today's times, the pioneer astrologers who created the foundation of astrology across diverse cultures are starting to get a lot of recognition. This paper examines how astrology has developed in various parts of the world, and how everything from agriculture, to politics, to health, was shaped by celestial movements. The work of figures like Jyotish, Sudines, and Ptolemy exemplify how diverse cultures—Babylon, South Asia, Greece, and the Islamic world—shared common beliefs about how the movements of stars and planets influence human destiny and natural events, leading to astrology's deep integration into every aspect of life, including agriculture, politics, social practices, health, and architecture.

Compare and Contrast: Astronomy vs Astrology

In earlier days, astrology and astronomy were practiced as a single subject to investigate celestial bodies which in turn helped get insight on earthly occurrence. The basic knowledge of the universe we take for granted today was unknown in ancient times, but many civilizations watched the skies for the movement of stars, sun and moon to discover more about the divine and the earthly. Observational components to both subjects included the stars, planets and cosmic cycles but the purposes and methodologies of the two differed. Astronomy is the study of the physical properties and motion of celestial objects through empirical research, mathematical modeling and technological observation. It is an explanation of how the universe arose and acts entirely from natural laws with supporting evidence that it continually changes as science and technology progresses.

Astrology, by contrast, takes celestial patterns and makes them interpretive about human personality, human behavior and even human destiny. Astrology is unlike astronomy in that it relies, not on empirical tests, but on

established systems of interpretation, including the fundamental belief that the universe mirrors our understanding of it, symbolically. Astronomy parted ways with astrology in the 17th century, to pursue the scientific inquiry, yet the latter remains a powerful cultural and spiritual practice of the people, a testimony to the fact that the human has always been baffled with the cosmos as its mode of self-understanding, and perhaps a belief that science and technology have yet not discovered all about the ways of the universe that may actually bring astronomy and astrology together as humans discover and learn more about the workings of the universe.

The Origins of Astrology and Astronomy: A Global Perspective

Both, astronomy and astrology, started off as similar subjects, with ancient civilizations using the objects in space for scientific and mystical purposes. Around 2000 BCE, Astrologers who resided in Babylon meticulously charted the night sky, as they presumed that space held the key to success on Earth. Their creation, the zodiac system, divided the sky into 12 constellations forming the foundation of western astrology as it established a framework for interpreting human behavior and events which was a core principle in the development of western astrology. The zodiac system helped predict human behavior by associating each constellation with personality traits, which allowed astrologers to understand a person's character and future. The Babylonian zodiac system differs slightly from today, as the Babylonians used fixed star groupings and a different set of dates based on their lunar calendar, which only aligns with the modern zodiac system once every 26,000 years! To add, the modern zodiac system was influenced by the Greeks (more specifically astronomer Claudius Ptolemy), which uses seasonal alignment rather than fixed constellations and accounts for the Earth's axial precession, making it distinct from the Babylonian model.

Babylon and Indus valley civilizations were also trading which led to the exchange of knowledge and practices including astrology. Astrology had evolved in the Indus valley within the Vedic tradition where celestial knowledge helped people understand the spiritual and the material world. Indian astrology (Jyotisha) made observations of the planets, sun, moon and stars to learn about the best times for religious rituals, agricultural tasks as well as royal affairs. This synthesis of astrology provided the basis for an enduring practice which is still seen in modern policy decision making from the mundane to the most personal. Time cycles -such as lunar phases, seasonal shifts and planetary shifts- were believed to affect practically everything in life from individuals to society at large.

The movement of astrological knowledge from Babylon, Greece, Indus and later the Islamic world is evidence of a belief that the planets, stars, sun and moon affected activity throughout different regions and cultures. Ideas were thus transmitted and astrological practices became enhanced all over the world. In particular, this exchange gave rise to Hellenistic astrology; this was the combination of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Greek traditions with much effort from Ptolemy to create a system of horoscopic astrology (3rd millennium BCE). Hellenistic astrologers introduced the concept of planetary houses and aspects like conjunctions and oppositions to interpret planetary influences which were believed to influence a person's character and fate. This showed a person's birth moment as the defining blueprint of their destiny. As a result, astrology developed into a global system of knowledge that transcended its local origins, embodying the interconnected nature of early intellectual traditions.

In the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries), astrologers and scientists built on this common inheritance adding Greek, Indian and Middle Eastern astrological principles in the texts. Astrolabes -instruments which were used to measure the position of celestial bodies, helping with navigation, timekeeping, and astrological calculations - were enhanced by Islamic scholars, who also introduced other tools like astronomical tables increasing the precision of astrology, and thereby setting the stage for the creation of astrology in Renaissance Europe (14th - 17th century). Humanity's deep and universal desire is to know exactly where it fits into the cosmic puzzle, and this is done through an interconnected web of celestial readings, observations and teachings. Astrology was a shared knowledge of a cross cultural legacy passed on in the intellectual, spiritual and practical warp of civilizations.

During the Islamic Golden Age, the period of great intellect had started, astrology underwent a great deal of transformation. Preserving and expanding upon inherited Babylon, Greek and Indian astrological knowledge. Al-Biruni was an Islamic astrologer who was very influential as he wrote about both astrology and astronomy. Al-Biruni's

work used astrological concepts to help Islamic science, particularly the development of horoscopes. His comprehensive studies on astrology which was developed in India showed the cultural exchange between South Asia and The Islamic world.

The contributions made by the Islamic world had a great impact on both Eastern and Western traditions. Many works of the astrologers and astronomers of the Islamic world translated during this period were introduced to Europe, causing the development of Renaissance astrology. The Islamic discoveries with astrology bridged the gap between mysticism and science. Islamic scholars, like Al-Biruni and Avicenna, translated and built upon Greek and Indian astrological works, which were later reintroduced to Europe through Arabic translations. This reintroduction of classical knowledge, including astrological texts, set the stage for the Renaissance's intellectual and astrological revival, allowing scholars like Marsilio Ficino and Johannes Kepler to further develop and reinterpret astrology in a new cultural and scientific context. (15th to 17th century)

This exchange of knowledge, developed by Jyotish, Sudines, Ptolemy, and Al- Biruni reveals how cultures like Babylon, South Asia, Greece, and the Islamic world shared a belief in celestial influence, integrating astrology into various aspects of life like agriculture, politics, society, health and architecture.

The Role of Astrology in Agriculture: Time-Keeping

Astrology served a vital role in agriculture which was the backbone of ancient civilizations. Babylonians were the first to apply what they knew of the moon and stars to create the lunisolar calendars, a calendar system that combines both lunar and solar cycles to keep track of time, for the farmers to guide them in planting and harvesting their crops. For example, while Hammurabi was in power (1792-1750 BCE) Babylonian astrologers observed the cycles of Venus and the moon to find the best planting season for wheat. Babylonian astrologers could also predict seasonal changes for a successful harvest by observing the phases of the moon and the changing positions of constellations. But these were not mere superstitions, but predictions drawn from the understanding and learning of the way in which the patterns of the moon, sun and stars influenced weather and growth of crops.

In India, Jyotish helped farmers select the best times for sowing, planting, and harvesting. Astrologers analyzed the positions of celestial bodies to develop detailed calendars called panchang that connected natural cycles to farming. This ancient practice is still in play in rural India, where many communities continue to follow traditional astrological guidance for their crop growing. Astrology and farming continue to remain connected in South Asia: festivals like Pongal or Makar Sankranti which coincide with key agricultural cycles, show the relationship between astrology and farming in South Asia. The timing of Pongal, a major harvest festival in South India, is closely linked to astrological events. Pongal is celebrated around mid-January, coinciding with the astrological event of Makar Sankranti, which marks the transition of the Sun from the zodiac sign Sagittarius (Dhanus) to Capricorn (Makara).

While Nebuchadnezzar II was in rule (605–562 BCE) in Babylon, astrologers learned about the effect of Sirius (a star) on rivers and used that knowledge to predict the annual flooding of the Euphrates River. This was crucial for agriculture, as it helped farmers make a planting schedule for their crops.

These agricultural practices, guided by astrology in both Babylon and South Asia, illustrate how figures like Jyotish and Sudines shaped the integration of celestial knowledge into farming cycles, reinforcing the shared belief across cultures that the movements of stars and planets directly influence agriculture, natural events and human prosperity.

Political Decision Making through Astrology

Many ancient civilizations relied on astrology in their decision making of any political kind. In Babylon, astrology was part of statecraft and the kings would consult the astrologers on matters of war and politics as early as 2000 BCE. Babylonian astrologers prepared horoscopes as a prediction of wars' outcomes or time for signing treaties or passing

laws, for example, during the reign of King Esarhaddon of Assyria (681–669 BCE), Babylonian astrologers prepared horoscopes to predict the outcome of his campaign against Egypt, finding the most favorable times for military action based on celestial alignments. Also, astrology helped leaders justify their domination by allying their behaviors with divine cosmic patterns thereby giving a message of approval from the Gods.

Astrology was also considered of great importance by Indian rulers for political matters. Vedic astrologers, (1500 - 500 BCE), were employed for coronations, diplomatic meetings and military expeditions to find the best dates, but it was not only a question of divination: the astrologer also had to ensure a harmony between celestial bodies and Earth. In the Mughal time (1526–1761) this belief continued and emperors like Akbar the Great used astrology to scheme out military campaigns and political alliances, the court astrologers of Akbar's court played a major role in advising the emperor concerning governance, adding fuel to astrology's central placement in political generalship. Astrologers drew up horoscopes to predict the outcomes of wars and determine the most auspicious times to sign treaties or enact laws. Astrology allowed leaders to align their actions with divine cosmic patterns, thereby using this as a means legitimizing their rule.

Similarly, in ancient Egypt (2000 BCE), astrology influenced royal decision-making, as pharaohs consulted astrologers to ensure that their actions aligned with favorable celestial events.

During the reign of Emperor Augustus (27 - 14 BC), Roman astrologers guided him on what time is the best to rise to power. Astrologer Theogenes looked at Augustus's horoscope, and after analyzing, he found out the best time for Augustus to begin his rule. The Emperor's reliance on astrology showed how astrology was deeply connected with Roman culture, especially when it came to politics.

Astrology's influence on politics persists beyond South Asia, with examples in the Middle East and parts of Europe as well. In Iran, some leaders and high-ranking officials have consulted astrologers for advice on political decisions, especially regarding significant state events. For example, In modern Iran, reports indicate that former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (in office from 2005 to 2013) consulted astrologers to choose favorable dates for important speeches and public appearances, showing the important influence of astrology in today's world. In Europe, figures like former French President François Mitterrand are said to have relied on astrologers for guidance on key decisions, like when he called upon astrologer Élisabeth Teissier for guidance on significant political decisions throughout his presidency (1981–1995), reflecting astrology's subtle but enduring role in modern political strategy across various regions. The reliance on astrology for political decision-making, from ancient Babylon, Egypt and India to modern India, Iran and Europe, demonstrates how over the years astrology continued to be a key part of politics and governance, including some of the most important decisions in history.

Astrology in Social and Religious Practices: From Marriage to Festivals

The influence of astrology on social life was profound, as it determined marriage and religious rituals, shaping the temples and cities. Astrology is still very important in Hindu traditions in India. Janam Kundli is an individual's birth chart that predicts the life path and is a means to find your potential spouse. Astrologers compare the birth charts of prospective partners to see if their union is harmonious. Today, this practice of astrological matchmaking continues, particularly in arranged marriages where family harmony and compatibility is often decided with the help of astrology. In fact, now it has become normal to get horoscope matching done from an astrologer. The continuing role of astrology in wedding decisions is reflected in the fact that in many parts of India, families will not proceed with wedding plans until an astrologer has divined that it is perfect.

Astrology in ancient Babylon also affected social customs and religious practice. Major public events were communicated to the public by reference to the position of the stars, like in ancient Rome, major public events such as the founding of temples. Temples were also built in conjunction with celestial phenomena. Astrology serves as a helpful and meaningful tool in a person's everyday life, which is manifested and exhibited in this integration. Astrologers enjoyed prominent positions in temples, advising on matters that affected both the state and the soul. An example of an astrologer's role is the construction of ancient Egyptian temples, such as the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak (1550

BCE). Astrologers determined the temple's orientation to align with the sun during specific solstices. This alignment signified the pharaoh's role as a mediator between God and humanity.

The integration of astrology into social and religious practices, from marriage rituals in India to temple construction in Babylon and Rome, reflects how the foundation laid by figures like Jyotish, Sudines, and Ptolemy shaped a universal belief in the celestial influence on human relationships and community harmony, embedding astrology deeply into the cultural and spiritual fabric of civilizations, Social and religious practices across various civilizations and regions.

Impact of Astrology on Medicine and Health

Astrology had its influences not only in ancient politics and agriculture, but also ancient medicine. The belief held that the positions of the stars and planets could affect human health and hence medical astrology, also called iatromathematics. Different parts of the body were associated with a certain zodiac sign, and diseases were reasoned to be driven by imperfect celestial forces. It was a belief that guided medical practices from Greece to India.

The Greeks, particularly Hippocrates and Galen, thought that the stars had a profound effect on the body. They developed a system of medical astrology that linked astrological signs to various parts of the body. This method was used in medieval Europe, where doctors would look at astrological charts before treating patients.

Astrological principles influenced Ayurvedic medicine in India as well, for example, in Ayurvedic medicine, the timing of treatments is often aligned with favorable planetary positions, such as performing detox therapies during specific lunar phases to enhance their effectiveness. Consultation with astrologers was not uncommon before administering medical treatment and before timing surgical procedures. The individuals that practiced Ayurveda believed that bodily function was in relation to the position of planets, and the treatment could be made more effective with the help of astrology. During the medieval period, doctors in Europe were influenced by the works of Claudius Galen, as they would use astrological charts to time bloodletting treatments. Like, the moon's position in certain zodiac signs was thought to make bloodletting more effective or dangerous.

There continues to be a connection between astrology and health as many traditional medical systems today, particularly in South Asia, use astrological charts to influence health related decisions. The belief that astrology and movement of stars, planets and sun affect health is evident across cultures and regions.

Impact of Astrology on Architecture and Urban planning

Astrology had a major effect not only on the design of ancient cities, but also on the construction of important buildings. Many ancient civilizations designed their cities and their temples in the order of celestial phenomena, and believed such an ordering would bring in harmony and prosperity. Astrology and architecture were considered to be complementary subjects, creating order and balance between humans and the cosmos.

The pyramids of Egypt were built based on stars, particularly the constellation Orion, which was associated with the God Osiris. Adding on, astrology played a role in architectural practice, as it was believed to help the Pharaohs' passage into the afterlife by aligning the pyramids with the celestial bodies.

Similarly, in ancient Mesopotamia, Ziggurats (temple towers) were also aligned with cardinal directions and such movement of the planets, exemplifying the link between the skies and Earth. These giant structures were both religious monuments and observational platforms for astrologers, affirming the tight weaving of spirituality and celestial observation in the day to day lives of Mesopotamian people.

The great pyramid of Giza, constructed during the reign of Pharaoh Khufu (2580-2560 BCE), is a popular example of astrology's influence on architecture. The pyramid is properly aligned with the stars in the constellation Orion, which was associated with the God of the afterlife, Osiris. Ancient astrologers and priests believed that this would clear the way for the pharaoh's soul's journey to the after life.

Vastu Shastra, an ancient system of architecture and urban planning in India, combined astrological principles in the design of buildings in accordance with cosmic energies. Today, Vastu Shastra is still practiced: buildings are built to auspicious directions and timings as per astrological charts, and architects are consulted to advise whether the home or temple will have a bright future. Principles from astrology weren't just there to be pretty — they were thought to be crucial to the success, safety — and spiritual health — of the citizens. This reflects the lineage of architecture based on principles of astrology and links to celestial bodies.

Astrology in the Digital Age: The Internet and Social Media

With the expansion of the internet and social media, astrology has gained a new station and it has been able to touch a global audience like never before. There is a new generation of enthusiasts that have found online platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to be the best spots for astrological content. Social media influencers who specialize in astrology have gained significant followings, offering daily horoscopes, astrological readings, and educational content. Online access to astrology has been revolutionary as it makes it easier for people from all backgrounds to engage with and learn about astrology.

The same digital age has also started debating about the role of astrology in today's society. Some have taken to viewing it as a way of entertaining or as a spiritual tool, while others have reacted against it as one more pseudo science. While it would be radical to suggest that Astrology doesn't have an effect on how most modern people interpret cultural practices, the vast amount of astrological material online indicates that Astrology continues to play a major role in general life and take decisions on several politics, social, health, architecture and investments.

Conclusion

Astrology and astronomy have played an enormous role in various cultures, as this research paper focuses on the key figures, foundations and progressions through various periods that shaped the two side of the cosmologies – Jyotish built West as well as East, and Babylon and South Asia shared the belief in the stars' touch on all humans. We discover how far astrology pervaded agriculture, politics, social customs, medicine, and architecture – all woven into the fabric of daily life and governance across regions – through examining how astrology guided them. In both South Asia (Jyotish) and Babylon (Sudines), there were figures who set the foundation of practices which connected celestial phenomena to people's affairs in a manner that shows a cosmic order which people find resonates spiritually and practically.

Astrology spread, between Babylon, Greece, India, and later throughout the Islamic world, becoming a globally cross connected tradition that expressed our common drive to find meaning in the stars. Paradoxically though, this cross-cultural legacy preserved and re-interpreted over centuries continuing to influence elements of modern society even as some of them are rekindled on digital platforms in South Asia and even elsewhere. While astronomy eventually became its own separate scientific discipline, astrology lives on – a not entirely dead idea that the universe is still structured around human destiny in the stars.

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