



the astrology of relationships

a conversation between astrologers tamiko fischer and linda johnsen

by tamiko fischer

I FIRST BECAME FAMILIAR WITH Linda Johnsen's work fourteen years ago when I read her work *Daughters of the Goddess: The Women Saints of India*. This book was an integration of scholarly clarity and heartfelt devotion, serving as a genuine bridge for Westerners thirsting to know more about Hindu spirituality. Since then, I've appreciated Linda's informative and engaging books and articles on a variety of topics related to Yogic and Vedic traditions. In writing about Jyotish or Vedic astrology, she presents this immense, technical and esoteric subject with clarity, a gift for story-telling and loving reverence for the divine origins and noble intentions of the astrology of India. I recently had the opportunity to talk to Linda about relationships, *karma* and even the astrological view of the current economic crisis.

TF: In *A Thousand Suns*, you illustrate the deep roots of Vedic astrology in Indian daily life by giving the example that in the personals section of Indian newspapers prospective mates will request each other's birth data, making it a priority to first check their astrological compatibility. To most Westerners, this seems curious, exotic or even superstitious. Without necessarily casting charts before a first date, how can Vedic astrology help Westerners find more happiness in their romantic life?

LJ: Traditionally in Hindu India it's the parents' responsibility to arrange a marriage for their children. Once a prospective mate is selected, the first step is to go to an astrologer and compare the couple's charts. If the charts don't match up, often the wedding is cancelled. It's a kind of marital pre-screening that's been practiced for centuries.

Orthodox Hindu children are assigned names that reveal to within three degrees where the Moon was in the sky when they were born. That way an astrologer already knows a lot about you and who you're compatible with before he or she even calculates your chart. Imagine living in a country where astrology is that much a part of the culture. Compatibility analysis isn't as high a priority in the West where couples often live together before they get married, so they already have a pretty good idea if they're compatible or not. Still, by comparing charts a Vedic astrologer can foresee problem areas that are likely to emerge in the future, and make recommendations to head off trouble.

TF: Can couples with challenging astrological compatibility be happy together anyway?

LJ: If two people are emotionally and spiritually mature, they can always find joy in their relationship. Saints are compatible with everyone. The more we see our self in others and others in our self, the more delight we take in engaging with them. The stars rule the sky, but spirit rules the stars.

TF: Vedic astrologers can often see very specific information about their clients' lives such as if and when someone might marry, have children, change jobs, move or face ill health. Because of its predictive nature, there is a tendency for people in the West to regard this astrology as fatalistic (that events seen in the birth chart are predestined.)

LJ: The founders of Vedic astrology were Yoga masters like Parashara and Jaimini, who completely rejected the idea of *niyati* or inescapable fate. Instead they embraced the

theory of *karma*, which says that through our thoughts, words and actions, we create our own future. They taught, "You are the architect of your destiny." Only a small percentage of the probabilities shown in your birth chart are beyond your ability to change. Most future events the horoscope reveals can be modified, for better or worse, through your actions in this incarnation.

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The chart is a map of your future. If you don't like what the astrologer sees, you have the power to alter your route and head in a different direction. The whole point of having a Vedic reading is to become more conscious of your *samskaras* or past life tendencies, so that you can correct your course and shape a more positive future.

TF: The birth chart can also be a profound tool for helping a very willful person let go of a tendency to push against life. To understand one's own divinely guided path makes it easier to face life's challenges less personally.

LJ: Look at the thousands of people who want to become the next American Idol. For almost all of them, it's not going to happen. The Vedic chart can help us look at our potentials realistically. Then we can turn within to find the guidance that will lead us to our true *dharma*,

the purpose for which we were born. One of the most amazing and useful features of a Vedic horoscope is how it can help us understand what our *dharma* really is.

TF: You had mentioned to me earlier that when you teach classes on Jyotish, you choose to present it as a system that allows people to understand the workings of *karma* more accurately and fully. Can you elaborate?

You are the architect of your destiny.

LJ: For those of us working with our Vedic horoscopes, *karma* is no longer an abstraction. We can actually watch it playing out in our lives, often manifesting just when the horoscope indicates it will, unless we take preventive action to redirect it.

We can also clearly see how group *karma* impacts our lives. Look at the Vedic chart of the US right now and you'll instantly see the financial meltdown starting in September, 2008, when the country shifted into its Mars cycle. The ancient yogis also described great Earth cycles, like the increasingly inauspicious phase the Earth is in right now.

The Winter Solstice is occurring in the star of the ancient Vedic goddess Nirriti, who withdraws prosperity and brings enormous changes. *Karma* is for real folks, and the better we understand it, the more constructively we can deal with it.

TF: What role does Vedic astrology play in Yoga?

LJ: Advanced spiritual masters don't need astrology because they've internalized the energies of the stars and mastered the forces of their destiny. The rest of us could use some help, though.

In India, astrologers are called the physicians of the soul. They don't just diagnose a *karmic* problem, they prescribe a remedy. There are time-honored ways to correct the *karmic* imbalances shown in a chart. That's why in India even great saints like Ammachi or Shree Maa often recommend that their disciples see an astrologer. The astrologer will recommend specific Vedic rituals, tantric practices, or Yogic meditations to help burn off obstructive *karmic* residue festering in the *karmashaya*, the part of the unconscious mind where our *karma* from past lives is stored.

As we Yoga students learn more about how the force of *karma* actually works, we're no longer so deeply controlled by the unconscious tendencies hidden in the causal body. We become increasingly proactive in shaping our future. Enlightenment means, in part, freedom from the bondage of *karma*. Vedic astrology helps us understand what our *karma* is and what we can do about it.

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Linda Johnsen, M.S. is the author of A Thousand Suns: Designing Your Future with Vedic Astrology and seven other books on Eastern spirituality and the Vedic Astrology editor for The Mountain Astrologer magazine. She will be speaking on how astrology helps us understand our karma sponsored by Himalayan Yoga Meditation – Los Angeles in Encino on April 18. Linda can be reached at: johnson108@aol.com. For more info visit: bymla.com.

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