

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO VEDIC ASTROLOGY

(Preparing Birth and Navamsa Charts Manually)

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I grew up in Jaffna, a town in the northern part of Sri Lanka in the 1940's in an orthodox Catholic family. My great grandparents were Hindus, but we had set aside those ways by the time my generation was born, converted to a religion introduced to our island by the Portuguese before the turn of the last century. In the 1940's and 50's, we went to church every day. On Sundays, we dressed in our Sunday best to attend Sunday mass. For the first twenty years of my life, religious activities were the most important activities in our family. In this island paradise Christians and Catholics were a minority, and our centuries- old customs prevailed in everyday life. Astrologers and palm readers roamed the streets; at best they were seen to be frivolous entertainment, and at worst they represented heresy against God; the devil's work, to be precise. Until I was in my twenties, any subject that was outside the school or university curriculum did not interest me in the least. Still, when I started reading newspapers, I found myself intrigued by the astrology column in the entertainment section of the local newspaper. The notion of predicting the future based on a date of birth seemed preposterous, yet there seemed to be some sort of pseudo-science at work in astrology. It seemed almost pedantically mathematical – and, as a mathematician, this made me curious. Witchcraft and heresy that relied on mathematics? Strange indeed! Something didn't add up. During this phase of my curiosity, I came to know that my father had a deep interest in astrology – deep enough to consider writing a book on it (which he eventually did, by the way under the name 'Sothida Thiravukol'). My father was a worldly character with a very balanced and open view of life. He was a mathematician, a teacher, author, philosopher and a businessman who could confidently navigate the polar opposites of religion and astrology. I wondered how he reconciled our religion and this obviously pagan belief with its oddly scientific structure. I must admit he had a reasonable and balanced view; one that I've tinkered with and adapted to my own view of life over the last half a century. It allows me to retain my deep spiritual and religious beliefs while indulging in my passion for this fascinating aspect of occultism. Astrology is not for everyone, and I certainly respect the views of those who don't believe in it, but here it is in a few short sentences.

- 1) God created all things on earth; stars and planets in the cosmos, things we can see and things we can't (yet) see.
- 2) He gave us the capacity to understand the purpose of His creations.
- 3) He gave us the capacity to understand and make use of any knowledge relevant to our lives.

Many people get hung up on the apparent accuracies and inaccuracies in astrology. I have a more relaxed attitude to accuracy. My hypothesis is that astrology is a bit like a weather forecast, some sort of guidance that allows us to plan the barbecues of life. Not a foolproof means of predicting rain, hail and sunshine, but something that gives us an inkling of whether an umbrella or sunglasses should be in our bag. The purpose of this book is to shed some light using my own teaching style, on the basics of Vedic Astrology and the manual method of preparing birth charts with reference to Tamil Panchangam. Although one can get birth charts using computer astrological software, those mathematically minded prefer to get an understanding of the interesting calculations and references involved in preparing them. For people who are curious about planetary major and sub-periods a basic knowledge of these is also given in this book.