



Uranus, Neptune & Pluto

A Neo-Vedic Perspective

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Artwork by Victor Lunn-Rockliffe based on a sketch by Douglas Harding

The outer planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto were not used in traditional *Jyotish* ('Vedic' or Indian astrology) because they were not officially discovered until relatively recently; their astrological significations often attributed to Rahu and Ketu, the north and south nodes of the Moon within a traditional *Jyotish* framework. However, just because they were not discovered with telescopes, does not mean ancient seers were unaware of their existence.

There are other things, not referred to in any ancient *Jyotish* texts, that are used by modern *Jyotishi* (Vedic astrologers). The combination where all the visible planets placed one side of the nodal axis, for example. Modern Vedic astrologers use it extensively, although it is not referenced in any ancient astrology texts. I would argue that just because the traditional Vedic system does not easily incorporate the outer planets, it doesn't mean we shouldn't do so, albeit very carefully, so as not to confuse a system that has worked perfectly well for thousands of years.

In his article, 'Pluto: A Neo-Vedic View', Dennis Harness recounts a meeting with Narendra Desai who claimed 'he saw an ancient Vasistha Nadi palm leaf in a museum in Madras, India, predicting three important planets would be discovered by the *jyotishis* of the Kali Yuga' (the astrologers of the current age). He goes on to write that 'according to the ancient palm leaf the names of the planets would be *Prajapati*, [the god of creation]; *Varuna*, [the god of sustenance], and *Yama*, [the god of death]'. We can easily see the correlation between these three gods and the modern astrological significations of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

Uranus, Neptune and Pluto could be described in terms of the three *gunas* or 'impulses' of Vedic thought: *rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas*; simply expressed as 'creation, 'preservation' and 'transformation'. Uranus seems to represent the impulse to create, often translated as individuality and innovation; Neptune seems to represent the impulse to preserve, to maintain life, no matter the form; and Pluto seems to represent the impulse to transform, to change and transcend.

Regardless of whether ancient astrologers knew of their existence, as modern seekers of knowledge and self-realization shouldn't we welcome an expanded view of who we are? If we are shown something in the depths of space that expands our view, shouldn't we use it to turn that view inwards, into the depths of our being?

When these 'invisible' planets conjoin or aspect a visible planet, or sensitive degree, they seem to manifest their results more obviously. But I've also seen them play a role on an ongoing basis, based on their house position by transit, albeit in a much subtler way.

They are invisible to the naked eye, so I don't see them (no pun intended) ruling visible, tangible things. When they do interact with visible planets, however, they do impact that visible thing in a profound way. I, like other Vedic astrologers, do not give the outer planets rulership of any signs and prefer to think of them as underlying impulses that become more apparent when influencing a visible planet, and the tangible things associated with these planets. The outer planets are more powerful than the visible planets, in my experience, but we need to be more open to the subtlety.

Subtlety is lost in the modern world. If something doesn't run up to us, flinging its arms around us to proclaim its presence, we often miss it. The less conscious we are of something, the less awareness we have of it, and the more influence it has on us - exactly because we are not aware of it. If there's a part of you working against you unconsciously, how on earth can you overcome its influence without first making it conscious?

Uranus ☿

Uranus was officially discovered with a telescope in 1781 by William Herschel (it was observed previously by others but not categorized at the time), while he was trying out a new telescope. This is very apt when the modern astrological significations of Uranus are said to include ingenuity, invention and all things brand new. The discovery of Uranus came at a period of revolution and invention: the American revolution occurred between 1765 and 1783 and the French revolution, between 1788 and 1789. America gained independence during this period and the French built an entirely new society; both very Uranus-type movements. Just two years after its official discovery, there was the launch of the first hot air balloon (Uranus is said to rule aviation).

The impulse of creativity, reactivity and agitation, called *rajas* in Vedic thought, is clearly seen in the modern significations of Uranus. *Rajas* is selfish, goal-orientated and turbulent. Uranus is seen as creating shocks, unexpected surprises and volatility. Creation is shocking, as something new disturbs the status quo. Creation is unexpected, as anything new must be, even if you are the creator!

And creation is volatile, as every creation struggles to make it into being. This impulse can scatter our energy. Uranus transits, aspects and natal position can give us clues into how much this erratic impulse impacts us and in what area of our life. When conjunct planets at birth or by transit you may observe the need to create and disrupt, all on your own terms, as Uranus represents freedom and originality.

Neptune ♆

Neptune came into conscious awareness in 1846 when it was first discovered with a telescope. There was a growing interest in spirituality around the globe at that time, and a sort of melting pot of philosophies from East to West. It is no wonder we think of Neptune as representing something that is not so clearly defined, blurry and vague. Think about the 'you' you think of as you in your everyday life, the person you identify with that can be seen by others at a certain distance. Now zoom in until your outline becomes blurry, a patch of skin and obscure shapes.

Neptune's transits and aspects bring a vagueness which, from a spiritual perspective, is just fine. However, from a practical point of view this creates a lot of confusion as to what is real or what one should do. The balancing act of being in the world, while orientating ourselves to our spiritual nature, is reflected in the impulse of *sattva*, which is sustaining, harmonious and luminous, instilling a higher impulse of cooperation and preservation, no matter the form. In other words, if you see all of life as sacred, no matter the form, you would wish to sustain it. When Neptune impacts a visible planet in your chart, as well as the house it was placed in when you were born, or currently by transit, you can be sure that these significations are at least a little, well, vague.

Pluto ♇

Pluto was first discovered with a telescope in 1930, marking the beginning of a decade of greater understanding of destruction and of energy, as well as the building blocks of matter; the constituents of the atom. In Vedic thought, this corresponds to the impulse of *tamas* which represents the material realm. *Tamas* is dark, inert and decaying, as everything material must one day die. In the late 1930's, with the advent of the atomic bomb, we saw the release of massive amounts of energy in a destructive process: one of the key components of *tamas* and the principle of materiality. We can now give *tamas* a modern twist and name: Pluto.

The concurrent discovery of these capabilities, and of the planet Pluto itself, are no coincidence to an astrologer. Pluto may have taken on this expression in a more conscious way since its discovery but may I point out an obvious, yet often overlooked point: Pluto, just like Uranus and Neptune, have been there since the formation of our solar system! Although Pluto transits out in the very far reaches of our solar system, it reflects our innermost core, which is why I find it hard to believe that ancient seers and higher minds did not at least have an inkling.

Perhaps they were known to ancient cultures through other means. This is not so incredulous when you see how modern planets have been discovered, initially observing the visible planets and the way in which they behave due to the influence of other, hitherto unseen planets; the gravitational pull on observable planets.

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In modern astrological analysis, the destructive release of energy is analogous of Pluto's destruction of the ego and the energy such a transformation creates. In other words, if you do not identify with your ego it frees up a lot of energy to simply be, instead of holding your story together. This type of energy release follows massive changes to our perception of who we really are, destroying all that we are not. I think it's fitting that Pluto had initially been categorized as a planet and then demoted as a 'dwarf planet', as Pluto is said to disintegrate the structures which make us who we are on an egoic level; something quite fragile; something that can be torn down quite easily, just like our fragile egos. The debate around Pluto's classification is ongoing.

Although Pluto came late to our astrological family when it was first discovered, it completed a stage of evolution which required destruction for new growth to occur. It blew apart many limiting factors in relation to how we could see ourselves - including the range of our destructive capabilities. It's just that we may have solely focused on the destruction process involved.

Pluto is said to disintegrate what it influences and can be a painful experience when things are blown apart. However, if you are more conscious of the need to dismantle the part of your life, and of yourself, in relation to the areas of the chart it influences, you can release an enormous amount of energy in the process.

You could either mourn the loss of who you thought you were and end up feeling despondent, or you could free your soul and soar, like a phoenix from the flames.

While many things can be destroyed in a very real sense, there is always the opportunity to experience a release from bondage and true liberation when Pluto is involved. But this is but one part of a trinity of impulses which make up every living thing. Once your story or identification is removed (Pluto), you can begin to tell a different story (Uranus) and keep the dream of it alive in your mind's eye (Neptune).

The trinity of birth, sustenance and decay: Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, is happening at every level of our being and in every moment. And while I would not argue with any astrologers using ancient techniques who do not include them in their repertoire, how anyone could ever deny their impact now that we are more aware of them is beyond me. To do so would be to deny ourselves more knowledge, more awareness and alignment with the universe and, more importantly, with ourselves.

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Reference

1. Dennis Harness, Pluto: A Neo-Vedic View, <http://dennisharness.com/plutoneo-vedic.html> [accessed November 6, 2019]