

Navagraha – Significance of 9 Planetary Gods in Sanathan Dharma

It is an established fact that planets are considered to have a major role to play in the life of each human being. This is not just based on Jyotish Shastra or Vedic Astrology but, it is what modern science also talks about. Great seers of the past understood the whole cosmos very well and the cosmic significance on the living beings of planet Earth. Few of those seers like Parashara Rishi, Jaimini Rishi, compiled the knowledge of light or heavenly body, known as Jyotisha Shastra based on Vedas.

As per Jyotisha Shashtra (also known as Vedic Astrology), there are nine planets having their particular function in the natal chart and represent special energies. These nine planets are collectively known as “Navagrahas“. Effects of these planets are influenced by the zodiac sign it occupies.

As senses control our body, Grahas control possibilities, and potentialities of a human’s life and energies with respect to the positions they are located at the time of a person’s birth. Graha means planet or controlling, seizing, grasping, or cognizing which is why it is associated with many other concepts including marriage (Panigraha, which means a connection between bride and bridegroom as the bridegroom holds the little finger of a bride with his little finger). They are worshipped for good luck, or to overcome adversity, bad luck, or misfortune arising from past karmas or birth-related defects (doshas).

Significance of Navagrahas

The Navagrahas are not just planets but they are specific vibrations in the cosmos having influence over different parts of the body. Navagrahas are actually the Vedic Gods and as every object to each other in the universe, each Navagraha has the capacity to influence different aspects of our lives. In the body, they facilitate the working of individual karma while in the macrocosm, the unraveling of collective karma as well as the fate of the world.

Of these nine planets (Navagrahas), seven are physically existing; Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, whereas two are physically non-existent; Rahu and Ketu. All of these planets influence human life in varying kind of way, some planets are benefic while some are malefic.

Surya (Sun): Standing in the center facing east in the company of the other planets, Surya is the Sun-god also called Ravi and he is considered the lord of the planets (Grahapati). He rides a one-wheeled chariot pulled by seven horses representing the seven colors of the white light and seven days of the week. The day of Sun is Sunday and the gemstone is Ruby. The ill placement of the Sun in the horoscope can lead to mental tension, headache, fever, body ache, problems of heart, etc. Surya Namaskar is a good practice to have a healthy life.

Chandra (Moon): Never depicted full in his images, Moon who is also known as Soma due to his waxing and waning qualities is seen every time in the upper body with two hands holding one lotus each and riding a chariot led by 10 horses. Known for representing the mind, feminine nature, beauty, and happiness, the mental stability, and well-being of a person largely depend on the position of the moon in the horoscope. Urinary Infections, colitis, bronchitis, abdominal problems, etc. can occur with an ill placement of the Moon in a horoscope. Monday is his day and Pearl is his gemstone.

Mangal (Mars): The ferocious god with four hands, Mars is also called Angaraka. He the protector of dharma. Also referred to as 'hot planet' Mars, in two of his hands hold a mace and a javelin in each and hold the other two hands in Abhaya and Varada mudra. He rules over the muscular system of the body and also, nose, forehead, and circulatory system. Placement of Mangal in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th and 12th house of horoscope causes Mangal Dosha which brings about many malefic effects in human's life. Tuesday is the day of Mars and Coral is his gemstone.

Budha (Mercury): Governing the nervous system, Budha aka Mercury represents intelligence and communication. Riding a chariot or a lion, Mercury has four hands, three of which are embellished with a sword, a shield, and a mace respectively, and the fourth one is held in Varada mudra. The day of Mercury is Wednesday, and the gemstone is emerald. With his misplacement problems like stammering, bronchitis, asthma, paralysis, brain fever, etc. can happen.

Brihaspati (Jupiter): Symbolizing knowledge, love, and spirituality, Jupiter also called Brahmanaspati is the teacher of gods and is praised in many hymns in Rigveda. Seated in a chariot driven by eight horses, Jupiter has two hands, and the horses represent eight branches of knowledge. Moreover, indicated by the day of Thursday and yellow sapphire as gemstone, his ill placement can cause diabetes, piles, tumors, liver malfunction, blood cancer, gout, etc. and he rules over the thighs, flesh, kidney, liver, fat, and arterial system

Sukra (Venus): The symbol of love and passion Venus, is the teacher of demons and the author of Sukraniti. Generally shown with four hands riding a silver or golden chariot with eight horses, three of his hands hold a staff, a rosary, and a vessel of gold respectively and the fourth hand is in Varada mudra. His day is Friday and the gemstone is diamond. His ill placement can cause eye diseases, indigestion, skin rashes, pimples, impotence, and venereal diseases.

Sani (Saturn): Dark planet Sani, is a turbulent and troublesome god who is invariably feared as especially worshipped by people believing in Hindu astrology. He makes and breaks fortunes by his influence and position in the planetary system. Holding an arrow, a bow, and a javelin in three of his hands and holding Varada mudra in his fourth hand, he rides either a chariot or a buffalo, or a vulture. He symbolizes longevity, misery, grief, and old age. Saturday is his day, and his gemstone is blue sapphire. His erroneous placement can lead to asthma, gout, rheumatism, impotence, etc.

Rahu (Shadow planet- Snake's head): He is similar to Budha in resemblance, but they are not the same in nature and temperament. He generally rides a dark lion while Budha rides a white lion. Rahu doesn't have any special day for him, and it is said that he swallows the Sun and the Moon causing an eclipse. Bothered Rahu can cause several obstacles and miseries in one's success. His gemstone is Gomed.

Ketu (Shadow Planet- Snake's tail): Known as Comet (Dhuma Ketu) in Sanskrit, he has the body of a serpent making him similar to a comet in appearance. However, in images, he is usually shown with a snake marked body riding upon a vulture and holding a mace. According to Vedic astrology, Ketu is the representation of karmic collections both good and bad, spirituality, and supernatural influences. The Gemstone of Ketu is Cats Eye.

Interesting facts about Navagrahas

Each Navagraha except Rahu and Ketu rules one day each of the weeks.

Navagrahas are present in every Hindu temple as sub deities.

Navagrahas are worshipped after Lord Ganesh is worshipped in any Aayojan.

Rahu and Ketu are not planets but are ascending and descending nodes of the Moon.

Almost in every Hindu temple, there are Navagrahas meant for protecting the temple and those entering the temple.

No two grahas shall face each other if they are housed in a separate mandapa.

The Sun is one of the Adityas, son of Kashyap and Aditi. He is notably mentioned as the visible form of God that one can see every day.

The moon is connected with the dew and is one of the gods of fertility. He got married to the daughters of Daksha Prajapathi, thus he has 27 wives representing the 27 constellations (Nakshatras).

Mars is considered as the son of Earth thus called Bhauma,
Budha (Mercury) is the son of the Moon and Tara.

In Astrology, there is a dasha or planetary period known as Shukra Dasha which remains active in a person's horoscope for 20 years. This dasha is believed to give more wealth, fortune, and luxury to one's living if a person has Shukra positioned well in his horoscope, as well as Shukra, being an important benefic planet in his/her horoscope.

Shani is the demi-god and son of Surya and his wife Chhaya.

During Samundra Manthana, Rahu drank some of the divine nectar but before it could reach his throat Mohini avatar of Lord Vishnu cut his head off thus leaving an immortal head called Rahu and the rest of the body became Ketu.