



## SPECIAL FEATURE

# NAVAGRAHAS AND THEIR WORSHIP

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### INTRODUCTION

*Navagrahas* are the nine planets of Vedic Astrology. The Sanskrit word *Nava* means and the word *Graha* means, “to seize” or “to grasp”. The planets are called grahas because they are the holders and dispensers of the karmic lessons of life and they are the evolutionary forces that teach us to grow and harmonize with the cosmic order. In the same way that the daily weather can affect our feelings and especially our ability to get things done (karma), on a cosmic scale, the Navagrahas affect the *cosmic weather* from which our local planetary and regional weather is derived. If a planet brings rain, our crops grow. If a planet brings heat and drought, the crop all perish. Each graha has a full compliment of energies, that match human characteristics. For example, Surya (the Sun) is considered a *kroora graha*, or harsh personality, because he is so hot and too bright that one cannot even look at him directly. At the same time, Soma (the Moon) is considered a *saumya graha*, or a cooling personality, because the moon brings delight and coolness to the mind and the earth. The Navagrahas are powerful spiritual influences. The Hindu Panchangam (*almanac*), lists daily times for key festivals and prescribes suggested worship, or the avoidance of certain influences, in order to make our lives easier and help us to keep focused on the spiritual path. to a have powerful spiritual influences.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE PLANETS FOR HINDUS

Navagrahas are very important to Hindus. When a child is born the exact time is recorded. According to that time, the exact positions of the Navagrahas are calculated. These calculations help in preparing the birth chart of the child and is called the *Horoscope*. It is believed that each major event, happiness, illnesses, sorrows and even the time of death can be predicted by the astrologers using this birth chart. This birth chart is consulted at the time of cross points in life. The birth chart helps in choosing the right path. There are households that take to consulting the birth chart for every major decision or when a life-changing question arises. Marriage matches, career choices, proper times (*muhurtham*) for weddings, *griha pravesas* (house warming ceremonies) and more often are done only with the help of the birth chart. The birth chart may not always give positive readings. They may also point out impending disasters. This is often due to the malicious positions of the Navagrahas. At certain times, the rival planets may occupy incompatible positions in the birth chart. When such a problem arises, it is important to perform remedial rituals to appease the Navagrahas. The patron Gods of these planets must be worshipped according the directions prescribed by general information or by the astrologers. The *pariharas* (remedial rituals) that one does will bring great changes in one's life. While this is not compulsory, it is certainly good to do so and the results will only be better because of it. But if the deity that you worship has some rules and dietary restrictions to be followed, they must be followed. Not eating non-vegetarian food on that parihara day is a common rule that must be followed, Any pooja performed without looking at the deity may



cause negative effects. It is a common practice to close one's head or bow the head when pooja is done. This is often done due to respect. But for the pooja to create a positive effect in you, you must look at it while it is happening. The Navagrahas should not be treated with more importance than the other Gods. When in temple, you must always go to pay your respects to the Navagrahas *only* after you have worshipped the other Gods.

### NAVAGRAHAS

Navagrahas or the nine planets in the solar system have a very vital significance according to the Hindu astronomy. The nine planets are believed to play a huge role in destining your future and success in life.

The Navagrahas are:

#### 1. Surya or the Sun

He is known as the Sun god and is also called as *Ravi*. In the solar system this planet is usually in the centre facing towards the east and other planets stand around him in eight different directions, but they do not face one another. He travels on a single-wheeled chariot pulled by seven white horses. These seven horses represent the colours of the white light and, also, represents the seven days of the week. This planet is believed to be the lord of planets and, also called as *Grahapati*. The Sun god is the main solar god and is one of the Adityas, the child of Kashyapa and one of his wife is Aditi. Governing Rasi: Simham; Zodiac Sign: Leo; Favourable Colour is Red; Gemstone: Ruby (Maanikkam) Overseeing Deity: Rudra or Siva

#### 2. Chandra or the Moon

It is also called as *Soma*, possibly because of his shining and disappearing potentials and he is never captured as a whole, in images. We only see his upper body from the chest, with his two hands holding lotus in each and riding a chariot pulled by 10 horses or an antelope. Some consider the moon to be the king over rest of the planets and so is known as *Graharaj*. The Moon or Chandra is a lunar god. The planet Chandra illustrates the mind, female nature, attractiveness, and joy. The moon has just a face with two hands and no body. He is the Deity of Fertility. A person's anger issues and stability along with goodness highly depends on the place of this graha at the time of that person's birth.

Governing Rasi: Kataka Rasi; Zodiac Sign: Moon; Favourable Colour: White; Gemstone: Pearl; Overseeing Deity: Gowri or Parvathi.

#### 3. Mangala or Mars

Mangala or the Mars is a fierce deity and so is also known as *Angaraka*. Moon has four hands and of which two have weapons, usually, a Staff and a Spear and the other two in Abhaya and Varada positions. His vehicle is a Goat or Ram. He is believed to be the child of Prithvi or Bhumi who is the Goddess of Earth. He is of Tamas Guna and portrays Active action, sureness, and ego. He is the protector of Dharma and a hot planet. He rules the muscular system and controls the Nose, Forehead and Circulatory systems of the body. Governing Rasi: Mesha and Vrischika; Zodiac Sign: Mars; Favourable Colour: Red; Gem Stone: Coral; Overseeing Deity: Karthikeya or Murugan.

#### 4. Budha or Mercury

Budha is usually seen with four hands and rides a chariot drawn by a Lion or a Carpet or an Eagle. In three of his hands, one holds a Sword and the other a Shield and the third a Staff. The fourth hand is in the Varadha Mudra position showing a gesture. His vehicle is Lion. Budha is the child of Chandra or the Moon along with Tara and Taraka. The planet Mercury signifies one's intellect and communication skills. He is also the deity of goods and guard dealers. This planet protects the nervous system of the body. Governing Rasi(s): Mithuna and Kanya; Zodiac Sign: Mercury; Favourable Colour: Yellow; Gemstone: Emerald (Maragatham); Overseeing Deity: Vishnu



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5. Guru or Brihaspathi or Jupiter

Guru or Brihaspathi is also called as ***Brahmanaspati*** who is the teacher of deity and is praised by the Hymns in the Rigveda. He rides a chariot pulled by eight horses. The horses represent the eight branches of wisdom. His character is of Satva Guna and signifies knowledge and instruction (teaching). He is usually known as **Guru**. The Jupiter god is defined as yellow or golden in colour and holds a stick, a lotus, and a set of beads. The planet represents love, spirituality, and knowledge. This planet has control over the thighs, flesh, kidneys, liver, and arterial system in the body. Governing Rasi(s): Dhanur and Meena; Zodiac Sign: Jupiter; Favourable Colour: Gold; Gemstone: Topaz (Pushparakam); Overseeing Deity: Brahma.

6. Sukran or Venus

Sukran is the instructor of the demons and the writer of Sukraniti. He is usually seen with four hands, riding on a golden or a silver chariot pulled by eight horses. He is white in complexion. In three of his four hands, he holds a Staff, Beads, a gold utensil separately, while his fourth hand is in the Varada Mudra. Lord is the son of Brigu and Ushana, an authority over the Daityas, and the leader of the Asuras, recognized with the planet Venus along with the honorific Sukracharya. Sukra Dosha stays precisely for twenty years in an individual's horoscope and Venus is supposed to deliver more prosperity, fortune and a luxurious lifestyle, if it has a good position in the Kundalini of a person and horoscope. The planet signifies love and desire. Governing Rasi(s): Vrishabha and Tula; Zodiac Sign: Venus; Favourable Colour: White; Gemstone: Diamond; Overseeing Deity: Indrani.

7. Sani or Saturn

Sani Graha is a stormy and bothersome deity who builds and destroys fortunes by his impact and location in the solar system for which he is consistently be frightened and specifically worshipped by all those who have faith in the Hindu astrology system. Sani is usually seen with four hands and rides on a chariot drawn by a Buffalo or a Vulture. In three of his four hands, he is seen carrying an arrow, a bow and a Javelin. His fourth hand is seized in Varadamudra position. Sani's Tattva or components are in the air and his direction in the west. He is Tamas in his character and illustrates knowledge in a difficult way, Career and Long Life. This deity is actually a demi-god and is the son of Surya god and his wife is Chhaya. It is believed that when Sani opened his eyes as a baby the sun went into eclipse which helps to clearly recognize the impact of Sani on the horoscope. Governing Rasi(s): Vrishabha and Tula; Zodiac Sign: Saturn; Favourable Colour: Blue; Gemstone: Bluestone; Overseeing Deity: Yama.

8. Rahu

This planet is believed to be a Demon and not a God. His image is in the likeness of Budha or Mercury in some aspects, but both the deities vary primarily in their character and temperament. He is usually seen on a dark lion, in distinction to the white lion of Budha. Rahu is seated on a throne or rides a silver chariot drawn by eight horses. However, similar to other gods he holds the same weapons, a sword, a Javelin and a Shield in three of his

four hands and his fourth hand is in Varadamudra position. The God of the North Lunar is Rahu. Based on legends, at the time of Samudra Manthan (the churning of the ocean of milk), the asura Rahu consumed a little of the Nectar (heavenly liquid). But before the nectar could get down his throat, Mohini who is the female

our body. The whole science behind a yagna or homam is the connection between microcosm and macrocosm. For example, Mars is connected to the liver and proteins. Like this, there are many connections between different herbs and different materials with cosmic vibrations. It is considered that Navagraha gods and goddesses



incarnation of Vishnu chopped off his head. The head, still, continued to be unforgettable and is recognized as Rahu. However, the rest of his body turned to be Ketu. It is considered that this memorable head rarely gulps the sun or the moon, producing eclipses. Then the sun or the moon gets out through the back of the head, thus putting an end to the eclipse. Governing Rasi: Meena; Favourable Colour: Smoke; Gemstone: Garnet (Gomethakam); Overseeing Deity: Mrutyu

9. Ketu

In the sacred language of Sanskrit, Ketu or Dhuma Ketu holds the meaning of a comet. The texts describe that he has a body that is the tail of a snake, a portrayal which is very much similar to that of a comet. In some pictures, he is commonly seen with a poke patent body, and rides on a Vulture and holds a Mace in his hand. Ketu is the Lord of the Descending or the South Lunar code. Ketu is also a dark planet. Lord Ketu is the portrayal of karmic deeds both decent and evil, religiousness and mystic effects. Governing Rasi: Meshu; Favourable Colour: Multi colour (Chitra Varnam); Gemstone: Cat's eye (Vaidoryam); Overseeing Deity: Chitraguptan.

WORSHIPPING NAVAGRAHA

The Navagrahas should be worshipped just once when they are not worshipped on a Saturday. It is never permissible to go around Rahu and Ketu in an anti-clockwise direction. When you are worshipping Lord Sani, never stand directly in front of him. When going around the Navagrahas, you must never fold your hands in any way. In a nutshell, Navagraha Poojas are done when the grahas in your horoscope are in an unfavourable, negative or ineffective position, as well as when evil houses or zodiac signs are present. Don't think that the Navagrahas are just planets, they are specific vibrations in the cosmos and they relate to different parts of

impact human lives and is accountable for all ups and downs, or good or bad that happens in one's life.

NAVAGRAHA TEMPLES

There is a cluster of Navagraha temples in Tamil Nadu near Kumbakonam, built during the reign of the Chola dynasty. According to Hindu legends, Sage Kalava was suffering from serious ailments along with leprosy. He with utmost devotion prayed to the Navagrahas to cure him of his ailments. The Navagrahas pleased with his devotion cured him of all his ailments. However, Brahma was extremely unhappy with this as he felt that the Navagrahas did not have any authority to bless people. He cursed the Navagrahas to suffer ailments and sent them to the earth in **Vellukku Vanam**, the white wild flower jungle, the modern time **Suryanar Koil**. The nine planets were extremely sad by these series of events and decided to pray to Lord Siva to relieve them of their agony. Siva appeared before them and said that the place Vellukku Vanam belonged to them and they would have to grace the devotees worshipping them from the place. Each temple is located, in a different village, and is considered an abode of one the Navagarhas

Navagrahas are usually found in most Hindu temples as secondary dieties. But there are certain temples which have been built for them only and are adorned as the main gods there. One such Navagraha temple is on the banks of the river Kshipra, which is famous tourist attraction of Saivites and is situated on the outskirts of Ujjain, in North India. Similarly, Surya and Sani also have temples which are exclusively built for them in some parts of India.