

Astrology as a Cultural and Cosmological Belief System - A Historical and Cross-Religious Analysis with Special Reference to Indian Traditions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines astrology as a complex and enduring belief system by situating it within its historical, cosmological, and religious contexts, with special reference to Indian traditions. Tracing its origins from ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and India, the paper highlights how astrology evolved from a divinatory practice into a structured system of knowledge that integrates observation, symbolism, and philosophical reflection. Over time, astrology has adapted to changing intellectual environments, engaging with developments in science, religion, and culture while retaining its foundational premise of a meaningful relationship between the cosmos and human life. The study further explores the intersection of astrology with major religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, demonstrating how each has responded differently to the idea of celestial influence—ranging from rejection and theological caution to symbolic and mystical integration. In the modern context, the relationship between cosmology and religion is examined as a dynamic dialogue rather than a conflict, where scientific discoveries about the universe coexist with spiritual interpretations of cosmic order. The paper also considers alternative cosmological frameworks such as Theosophical, New Age, and Pagan perspectives, which reimagine the universe as a living and interconnected whole. Special emphasis is placed on Indian astrology (Jyotisha), which continues to function as a living tradition embedded in social practices, ritual life, and academic discourse. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from history, sociology, philosophy, and the study of religion to argue that astrology persists not merely as a residual cultural artifact but as an adaptive system of meaning. It fulfills important psychological and social functions by providing individuals with a sense of orientation, identity, and connection to the cosmos. While debates regarding its scientific validity continue, astrology's resilience lies in its symbolic richness and its capacity to address fundamental human concerns about existence, destiny, and the nature of the universe.

Keywords: Astrology, Belief System, Cosmology, Vedic Astrology, Cultural Practices, Religious Perspectives, Cross-Cultural Analysis, Indian Traditions, Symbolic Interpretation; Social Function, Interdisciplinary Study

INTRODUCTION

Astrology has occupied a distinctive place in human thought for millennia, functioning not only as a system of celestial observation but also as a deeply embedded framework of belief that connects the cosmos with human life. From its earliest expressions in ancient civilizations

to its contemporary manifestations in digital culture, astrology has continuously evolved while retaining its central premise—that there exists a meaningful relationship between celestial phenomena and terrestrial experience. This enduring presence suggests that astrology is not merely a historical curiosity or a marginal practice, but a significant cultural and intellectual tradition

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that has shaped, and continues to shape, human understanding of existence.

The origins of astrology can be traced to ancient Mesopotamia, where systematic observations of the sky were first correlated with events on Earth, particularly in the realms of governance, agriculture, and divination. These early practices were subsequently refined and expanded by Egyptian, Greek, Indian, and Chinese civilizations, each contributing unique philosophical and methodological dimensions. In India, astrology developed as Jyotisha, an integral component of the Vedic knowledge system, closely linked with concepts of karma, dharma, and cosmic order. Greek scholars such as Ptolemy introduced mathematical and theoretical rigor to astrology, while Islamic scholars preserved and enhanced these traditions during the medieval period, ensuring their transmission to Europe. Over time, astrology transitioned through various intellectual phases—from a respected scholarly discipline intertwined with astronomy to a contested field in the wake of the scientific revolution.

In the modern world, astrology exists within a complex and often contested intellectual landscape. On one hand, scientific advancements in astronomy and physics have transformed our understanding of the universe, challenging traditional cosmological assumptions associated with astrology. On the other hand, astrology continues to maintain a strong presence in cultural and social life, particularly as a tool for personal insight, identity formation, and decision-making. This apparent paradox reflects a broader tension between empirical rationality and symbolic meaning, where astrology persists not because of its scientific validation, but because of its capacity to address psychological, cultural, and existential needs.

An important dimension of astrology's persistence lies in its interaction with religious and cosmological thought. Different religious traditions have engaged with astrology in varied ways—sometimes rejecting it as incompatible with divine sovereignty, and at other times incorporating it within mystical or symbolic frameworks. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, for instance, have historically expressed caution or opposition to astrological determinism, emphasizing the primacy of divine will. Yet, within these traditions, there have also been periods of intellectual engagement, where astrology was studied, adapted, or reinterpreted. In contrast, Indian traditions have generally integrated astrology more harmoniously within religious and philosophical systems, allowing it to

function as both a practical and spiritual guide.

The contemporary period has further expanded the scope of astrology through its engagement with modern cosmology and alternative spiritual movements. The dialogue between science and religion has opened new spaces for interpreting the universe not only as a physical reality but also as a source of meaning and wonder. Movements such as Theosophy, New Age spirituality, and contemporary Paganism have reimagined cosmology as a living, interconnected system, within which astrology serves as a symbolic language of cosmic participation. At the same time, the rise of digital technology has transformed astrological practice, making it more accessible and globally interconnected, thereby reinforcing its relevance in a rapidly changing world.

In this context, the present study seeks to examine astrology as a cultural and cosmological belief system through a historical and cross-religious lens, with special reference to Indian traditions. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon history, sociology, philosophy, and the study of religion to explore how astrology has been constructed, interpreted, and practiced across different societies. By analyzing its historical roots, its evolution across ages, and its interaction with religious and cosmological frameworks, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of astrology's role in both past and present contexts. Ultimately, it argues that astrology endures not merely as a relic of pre-scientific thought, but as a dynamic and adaptive system of meaning that continues to offer insight into the human quest for order, identity, and connection within the vast expanse of the cosmos.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The existing body of literature on astrology reflects its treatment as a complex and interdisciplinary phenomenon, studied across history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and the study of religion. Classical foundations of astrology are rooted in ancient texts and traditions that sought to explain the relationship between celestial movements and human affairs. In the Greco-Roman world, Claudius Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* provided one of the earliest systematic formulations of astrology, combining observational astronomy with philosophical reasoning. In the Indian tradition, texts such as the *Bṛhat Parāśara Hora Śāstra* and Varāhamihira's *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* articulated a comprehensive framework in which

astrology (Jyotisha) was closely linked with cosmic order, karma, and social life. These foundational works established astrology as both a technical discipline and a metaphysical system embedded within broader cultural and religious contexts.

Modern scholarship has approached astrology from multiple perspectives. Historians such as Nicholas Campion have examined its evolution as a cultural and intellectual tradition, emphasizing its role as a form of cosmological thinking that persists across societies. Patrick Curry has argued that astrology should be understood as a symbolic and participatory system rather than a purely empirical science, highlighting its interpretative and ecological dimensions. At the same time, critical perspectives have been offered by scholars such as Geoffrey Dean and Ivan Kelly, who have questioned astrology's empirical validity while acknowledging its enduring appeal. This duality between critique and acceptance has shaped much of the contemporary academic discourse.

Psychological approaches have further expanded the understanding of astrology by linking it with human cognition and self-perception. Carl Gustav Jung's concept of synchronicity provides a theoretical basis for interpreting astrology as a system of meaningful, though non-causal, connections between cosmic patterns and human experiences. Building on this, thinkers such as Dane Rudhyar and Liz Greene have developed psychological astrology, emphasizing its role in self-awareness, personality analysis, and emotional growth. Empirical studies in psychology have also explored belief in astrology in relation to cognitive biases and the human tendency to seek patterns and meaning, thereby situating astrology within the broader framework of human perception and behavior.

From a sociological and anthropological standpoint, astrology has been interpreted as a cultural system that organizes human experience through symbolic structures. The work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance, allows astrology to be understood as a form of cultural code that classifies and interprets reality through archetypes and oppositional categories. Similarly, Max Weber's analysis of rationalization and disenchantment provides insight into the marginalization of astrology in modern scientific discourse, while its continued popularity suggests a parallel process of re-enchantment in contemporary society. In the Indian context, scholars and practitioners such as K. N. Rao have attempted to

reinforce astrology's methodological and empirical dimensions through case-based analysis, while academic institutions such as Banaras Hindu University and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University have contributed to its formal study and institutional recognition.

Recent literature has also focused on the relationship between astrology, cosmology, and religion. Studies in comparative religion highlight how different traditions—such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have engaged with astrology in varied ways, often balancing theological concerns with cultural practices. At the same time, modern cosmological thought, influenced by scientific discoveries and philosophical reflection, has opened new avenues for dialogue between science and spirituality. Alternative frameworks, including Theosophical, New Age, and Pagan cosmologies, have further expanded the interpretative scope of astrology by presenting the universe as an interconnected and evolving system of meaning. The rise of digital technology has added another dimension, with online platforms and mobile applications transforming astrology into a global and accessible practice.

Within this broad intellectual framework, the present study adopts an interdisciplinary research methodology to examine astrology as a belief system, with particular emphasis on its historical evolution, cosmological interpretations, and religious interactions. The research is primarily exploratory and descriptive in nature, aiming to synthesize theoretical insights with empirical observations. Data for the study are drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with a diverse group of respondents, including general individuals and practicing astrologers, ensuring representation across different cultural and social backgrounds. Secondary data have been obtained from classical astrological texts, modern scholarly works, journal articles, and relevant digital sources, providing a comprehensive foundation for analysis.

A purposive and stratified sampling approach has been employed to capture variations in belief and practice, particularly within the Indian context where astrology operates across multiple social and regional settings. The tools of data collection include structured questionnaires designed to assess patterns of belief, usage, and perception, as well as interview schedules and case studies to explore deeper experiential and cultural dimensions. Quantitative data have been analyzed using

basic statistical techniques such as percentage distribution and frequency analysis, while qualitative data have been interpreted through thematic and analytical methods to identify recurring patterns, symbolic meanings, and narrative structures.

The study also incorporates a comparative framework to examine similarities and differences between Indian and non-Indian contexts, particularly in relation to the role of astrology in social life, religious practice, and individual decision-making. Ethical considerations have been carefully maintained throughout the research process, including informed consent, confidentiality of respondents, and objectivity in interpretation. At the same time, certain limitations are acknowledged, including the inherent subjectivity of belief systems, the diversity of astrological interpretations, and the challenges of applying empirical methods to symbolic and experiential phenomena.

Overall, the methodology is designed to provide a balanced and comprehensive understanding of astrology as a cultural and cosmological belief system. By integrating historical analysis, theoretical perspectives, and empirical data, the study seeks to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary academic inquiry, offering a nuanced perspective on the continuing relevance of astrology in the modern world.

Historical Roots of Astrology

Astrology has ancient origins, with its roots tracing back to Mesopotamia around 2000 BCE, where the Babylonians developed one of the earliest systems of celestial observation and divination. They identified planetary movements and their correlation with earthly events, laying the foundation for later astrological traditions. The Egyptians integrated astrology into their religious and calendrical systems, while the Chinese developed their own zodiac-based astrology, emphasizing cosmic balance. In India, Vedic astrology (Jyotisha) emerged as a key component of Hindu philosophy, linking planetary positions to karma and destiny.

Greek scholars, particularly Ptolemy (2nd century CE), formalized astrology into a structured system, distinguishing between natal, horary, and mundane astrology. This knowledge was preserved and expanded by Islamic scholars during the medieval period, influencing Renaissance Europe, where astrology was integrated with astronomy until the Scientific Revolution. Despite its

decline in academic circles, astrology continued to thrive in popular culture and spirituality, adapting to modern psychological and sociological perspectives while retaining its foundational belief in the influence of celestial bodies on human affairs.

Origins in Ancient Civilizations

The origins of astrology can be traced back to some of the earliest human civilizations, where it emerged as a tool to interpret celestial patterns and their relationship with earthly events. Astrology's foundation lies in the belief that the movements of celestial bodies—such as the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars—directly influence human life and natural phenomena. Over time, this belief developed into a structured system of knowledge, enriched and expanded by the contributions of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and India. These civilizations laid the groundwork for astrology as both a spiritual practice and a scientific endeavor, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to shape astrological thought today.

In Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, astrology began as a means of divination. Dating back to the third millennium BCE, the Mesopotamians observed celestial movements and correlated them with events on Earth. The earliest known astrological records come from the Sumerians, who regarded the heavens as a realm governed by divine beings. They believed that the gods communicated their will through celestial phenomena, such as eclipses, planetary alignments, and the appearance of comets. The Babylonians, who succeeded the Sumerians, developed a more systematic approach to astrology. They identified the zodiac—dividing the celestial sphere into twelve equal segments corresponding to constellations—and began to record planetary positions with remarkable accuracy. These observations were used to predict natural events, such as floods and droughts, and to guide political and military decisions. The Babylonian “Enuma Anu Enlil”, a collection of celestial omens, became one of the earliest astrological texts, influencing later traditions in Greece and beyond.

In Egypt, astrology was closely tied to religion and the rhythms of the natural world. The Egyptians aligned their temples and monuments, such as the Great Pyramids of Giza, with specific celestial events, demonstrating their advanced understanding of astronomy. Egyptian astrology emphasized the importance of the fixed stars, particularly Sirius, whose heliacal rising heralded the annual flooding

of the Nile. This event was crucial for agriculture and ensured the prosperity of the kingdom. The Egyptians also developed a calendar based on lunar and solar cycles, integrating astrological principles to mark auspicious times for religious rituals and state ceremonies. Egyptian astrology incorporated a strong symbolic dimension, linking celestial bodies with deities. For example, the Sun was associated with Ra, the supreme god, and the Moon with Thoth, the god of wisdom and time. These associations reflected the Egyptians' view of the cosmos as a sacred, interconnected system where celestial and terrestrial realms influenced one another.

In Greece, astrology underwent significant intellectual development, transforming from a divinatory practice into a more structured philosophical system. The Greeks inherited Babylonian astrological knowledge and combined it with their own philosophical and mathematical traditions. Pythagoras and his followers viewed the cosmos as a harmonious system governed by numerical principles, laying the groundwork for astrological calculations. The philosopher Plato emphasized the connection between the heavens and the human soul, while Aristotle explored the natural influences of celestial bodies on Earth. However, it was the Greek scholar Ptolemy who formalized astrology in his seminal work *Tetrabiblos* during the 2nd century CE. Ptolemy established the geocentric model of the universe, where the Earth was at the center, and outlined the principles of natal astrology, linking planetary positions at the time of birth to individual characteristics and life events.

Evolution of Astrology Across Ages

The evolution of astrology reflects humanity's changing understanding of the cosmos and its influence on life, transitioning from ancient divinatory practices to the sophisticated medieval and modern systems we recognize today. Across different historical periods, astrology has adapted to cultural, scientific, and philosophical advancements while retaining its core principle of linking celestial phenomena with human experiences. This dynamic evolution highlights astrology's resilience and its ability to integrate new knowledge and methodologies, ensuring its relevance across millennia.

In ancient times, astrology emerged as a tool for divination and governance. Civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and Greece laid the foundational principles of astrology, observing celestial movements and interpreting their correlations with earthly

events. Mesopotamians were among the first to systematically record planetary positions and develop the zodiac, which divided the celestial sphere into twelve equal parts corresponding to constellations. Egyptian astrology, with its emphasis on the fixed stars and the Sun's movements, was closely tied to religious rituals and agricultural cycles. Greek scholars such as Ptolemy advanced astrology by introducing a more scientific framework, formalizing the geocentric model, and codifying principles for natal and predictive astrology in his seminal work, *Tetrabiblos*.

As astrology transitioned into the medieval period, it became deeply intertwined with religious and philosophical thought, while expanding its influence into medicine, politics, and daily life. In the Islamic Golden Age, scholars preserved and enhanced Greek astrological knowledge, translating key texts into Arabic and contributing innovations of their own. Figures like Al-Biruni refined planetary calculations and introduced advanced mathematical methods to improve astrological predictions. Astrology also became integral to Islamic medicine, where planetary influences were linked to bodily humors, guiding diagnoses and treatments. Similarly, medieval Europe adopted astrological concepts through translations of Arabic texts, integrating them with Christian theology. During this period, astrology flourished in universities, where it was studied alongside astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. Astrological charts were used to determine auspicious timings for political decisions, military campaigns, and even royal births, demonstrating astrology's widespread application.

The Renaissance marked a significant revival of astrology, fueled by renewed interest in classical knowledge and advancements in science and technology. Astronomers like Copernicus and Galileo, while challenging the geocentric model, were deeply influenced by astrological thought. The Renaissance saw the rise of humanistic astrology, which emphasized individual potential and self-awareness. This period also witnessed the production of detailed ephemerides and star charts, which improved the accuracy of astrological calculations. However, the scientific revolution of the 17th century, with its emphasis on empirical observation and the scientific method, began to challenge astrology's credibility. Figures like Johannes Kepler, though critical of traditional astrological practices, sought to reconcile astrology with emerging scientific principles, advocating for a more simplified and rational approach.

In the modern era, astrology underwent significant transformations as it adapted to the changing cultural and intellectual landscape. By the 19th and 20th centuries, psychological astrology emerged as a major development, linking astrological symbols with human psychology. Influenced by the work of Carl Jung, psychological astrology emphasized the archetypal significance of celestial patterns and their role in understanding the subconscious mind. Astrologers such as Dane Rudhyar and Liz Greene redefined astrology as a tool for self-awareness and personal growth, moving away from deterministic predictions to a more interpretive and therapeutic approach. This shift aligned astrology with the broader humanistic and spiritual movements of the 20th century, further enhancing its appeal in an increasingly individualistic society.

The advent of technology in the 21st century has revolutionized astrological practices, making it more accessible and widespread than ever before. Digital platforms, mobile applications, and online tools now enable individuals to generate birth charts, receive personalized readings, and access astrological content with ease. Social media has amplified astrology's presence, popularizing concepts such as zodiac compatibility, daily horoscopes, and astrological memes. Artificial intelligence and machine learning have further refined astrological calculations, offering greater precision and customization in interpretations. These technological advancements have not only democratized astrology but also introduced it to new audiences, ensuring its continued relevance in modern society.

Throughout its evolution, astrology has demonstrated remarkable adaptability, integrating advances in science, philosophy, and culture while retaining its foundational principles. From its origins as a tool for divination and governance in ancient civilizations to its integration with medicine, philosophy, and theology in the medieval period, and its transformation into a psychological and digital framework in the modern era, astrology has continually redefined itself to meet the needs of the times. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to bridge the ancient and the contemporary, the cosmic and the human, offering insights into life's mysteries and a sense of connection to the universe.

Cosmology and Religion in the Modern World

The relationship between cosmology and religion has never been static. It has been a dynamic and evolving

engagement between two distinct yet interwoven ways of understanding existence. In the modern world, this relationship has become more complex, nuanced, and perhaps more fascinating than ever before. While science and technology have dramatically reshaped our understanding of the universe, the religious imagination continues to find resonance in the mysteries of cosmological inquiry. It is in this interplay—sometimes harmonious, sometimes in tension—that we find a profound narrative of human longing: the search to know not just what the universe is, but why it exists.

Religious cosmologies have long provided symbolic and spiritual maps of the universe. In ancient India, the Vedas sang of a universe born not in a linear act of creation, but in rhythmic cycles of manifestation and dissolution. The *Zgveda*'s *Nasadiya Sukta* does not assert cosmological dogma; instead, it questions, ponders, and embraces the ambiguity of origins (Kapila Vatsyayan, 1997). Such poetic humility is strikingly relevant even today, in an era where cosmologists speak of dark energy, multiverses, and cosmic inflation—concepts that remain mathematically modeled yet experientially elusive (Stephen Hawking, 1988; Brian Greene, 2011).

Modern cosmology, grounded in empirical observation and theoretical physics, offers a radically different narrative. From the Big Bang model to the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation, the scientific story of the universe's birth has grown increasingly detailed (George F. Smoot; Alan Guth; Roger Penrose). However, these findings have not rendered religion obsolete. On the contrary, they have deepened the sense of mystery and awe for many religious thinkers. The idea that the universe appears finely tuned for life has led some to suggest an intelligent design or divine orchestration (Paul Davies; John Polkinghorne).

In theological and philosophical domains, there has been a clear shift from conflict to conversation. Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and paleontologist, proposed an evolutionary cosmology in which consciousness is unfolding throughout the cosmos, moving toward an ultimate point of spiritual convergence—the Omega Point (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1955). In India, Sri Aurobindo articulated a vision of cosmic evolution that integrates material development with spiritual ascent, aligning biology with metaphysical purpose (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*).

Scholars like Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme have developed what is called the “New Cosmology,” which

sees the universe not as a cold mechanism, but as a sacred unfolding—a “communion of subjects”, not a “collection of objects” (Thomas Berry; Brian Swimme, 1992). Their work has inspired ecological theology and a renewed reverence for creation as divine manifestation.

Religious communities today are increasingly engaging with cosmology, not to reject it, but to reinterpret it. Buddhist teachers such as the Dalai Lama have welcomed dialogue with astrophysics and cognitive science, asserting that Buddhism has long embraced a non-static, causally interconnected universe (Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, 2005). In Islamic thought, scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr have emphasized the spiritual symbolism of the cosmos as a mirror of divine order (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1964).

Even in the scientific community, voices like Carl Sagan and Neil deGrasse Tyson have invoked language that borders on the spiritual—expressing reverence for the cosmos as a source of existential humility and wonder. Sagan’s iconic reference to Earth as a “pale blue dot” reinforced a moral and philosophical responsibility to preserve life and understand our place in the vast expanse (Carl Sagan, 1994).

The academic world has also seen the emergence of interdisciplinary fields such as science and religion studies, cosmotheology, and astrotheology. Scholars like Ian Barbour and Arthur Peacocke have worked extensively to bridge the gap between scientific cosmology and Christian theology (Ian Barbour, 2000; Arthur Peacocke, 2001). Their contributions emphasize complementarity rather than contradiction between faith and reason.

Ethically and existentially, modern cosmology has reshaped our self-understanding. The realization that humans are made of stardust, forged in the cores of ancient stars, has spiritual implications that transcend any one tradition. For many, the universe has become a new sacred text—read through telescopes rather than scriptures, but no less profound in its meanings (Ursula Goodenough, 1998).

In conclusion, cosmology and religion in the modern world are not at war—they are co-pilgrims in the age-old human quest for meaning. One speaks in the language of observation and mathematics, the other in the language of myth, metaphor, and transcendence. When these languages meet in dialogue, they enrich one another. They help us imagine a universe that is not only intelligible but also deeply meaningful—a cosmos that invites not just

knowledge, but reverence.

Theosophical, New Age, and Pagan Cosmologies: Reimagining the Cosmos in a Postmodern Spiritual Landscape

Theosophical, New Age, and contemporary Pagan cosmologies represent diverse but interconnected attempts to re-enchant the universe in an era where scientific rationalism and institutional religion often fail to meet the human longing for cosmic meaning. These belief systems offer symbolic, esoteric, and experiential models of the cosmos that blend ancient traditions with modern reinterpretations, creating alternative spiritual frameworks that emphasize the interconnectedness of all life, the evolution of consciousness, and the sacred nature of the universe.

Theosophy, founded in the late 19th century by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and further developed by Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and others, was one of the earliest and most influential movements to articulate a synthetic esoteric cosmology in the modern West. Drawing upon Hinduism, Buddhism, Neoplatonism, Western occultism, and Hermetic thought, Theosophy proposed a multilayered view of the universe inhabited by spiritual hierarchies and governed by karmic law. According to Theosophical cosmology, the universe is an evolving manifestation of the Absolute, structured through planes of existence—from the dense physical world to the subtler astral and spiritual realms. The soul progresses through cycles of reincarnation and spiritual development, moving toward eventual union with the divine source. Astrology, in Theosophical thought, is not merely predictive but symbolic—representing the soul’s karmic blueprint and its journey through cosmic cycles. The planets and stars are seen as conscious beings, participating in the grand symphony of divine evolution.

The New Age movement, which emerged in the mid-20th century and gained momentum during the 1960s and 70s, inherited many elements from Theosophy but adapted them to a more eclectic and experiential ethos. New Age cosmology is decentralized, fluid, and deeply personal, shaped by a wide array of influences including Eastern mysticism, quantum physics, psychology, astrology, Gnosticism, indigenous traditions, and environmental spirituality. It typically posits a holistic, living universe where consciousness is fundamental and matter is an expression of vibrational energy. Humans are seen

as spiritual beings undergoing a process of awakening or ascension, often aided by cosmic forces, planetary alignments, and energetic frequencies. In this view, astrology, chakras, energy healing, and channeling are tools to align with higher dimensions of existence. Rather than focusing on a fixed doctrine, the New Age worldview encourages experiential exploration of the cosmos as a mirror of the self—leading to widespread practices like meditation, crystal therapy, past-life regression, and planetary rituals.

Pagan cosmologies—especially those emerging in the contemporary revival of pre-Christian European traditions—offer yet another vision of the cosmos, one deeply rooted in cyclical time, immanence, and nature worship. Neo-Pagan movements such as Wicca, Druidry, and Heathenry typically reject dualistic or hierarchical models of spirit and matter, favoring instead a sacred worldview in which the Earth, the elements, and the celestial bodies are alive and divine. Pagan cosmology emphasizes the Wheel of the Year, the lunar cycles, and the four directions, with rituals and festivals timed to solstices, equinoxes, and cross-quarter days. The gods and goddesses of Pagan traditions are often associated with planets, constellations, and seasonal forces, and astrology is employed as both a magical and spiritual tool—used to understand the rhythms of nature and the inner workings of the soul.

What unites Theosophical, New Age, and Pagan cosmologies is a shared rejection of mechanistic materialism and a turn toward a symbolic, interconnected, and spiritually infused universe. These worldviews seek to restore the sacred dimension of cosmology, treating the stars not merely as distant physical bodies but as spiritual archetypes, guiding forces, or divine intelligences. They offer alternatives to both secular scientism and orthodox theology, advocating a cosmology that is participatory, evolving, and deeply meaningful.

In the 21st century, these cosmologies continue to evolve, finding expression in popular astrology, eco-spirituality, alternative healing, space-age mysticism, and digital spirituality. Though often criticized for their eclecticism or lack of empirical grounding, Theosophical, New Age, and Pagan cosmologies reflect a profound yearning to locate the human self within a greater cosmic story—one that transcends dogma, integrates diverse traditions, and embraces the mystery and majesty of the universe as a living, conscious whole.

Astrology and Judaism: A Complex Relationship Between Divine Will and Celestial Influence

The relationship between astrology and Judaism is both intricate and historically rich, marked by periods of acceptance, reinterpretation, and opposition. While Jewish tradition is fundamentally centered on the belief in one sovereign God who governs the universe and human destiny, astrology has, at various times in Jewish history, been seen as either a complement to divine wisdom or a threat to pure monotheism. The evolving Jewish attitudes toward astrology span scriptural prohibitions, rabbinical debates, mystical appropriations, and contemporary reinterpretations—demonstrating how Jewish thought has continuously grappled with the tension between human inquiry into the stars and submission to divine providence.

In the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), astrology is not given explicit prominence, but the general outlook tends to discourage divinatory practices. The Torah contains strong prohibitions against soothsaying, divination, and consulting omens. For example, Deuteronomy 18:10–12 warns the Israelites against engaging in such practices, declaring them abominable in the sight of God. This biblical stance reflects the theological foundation of Judaism: that God alone controls the fate of individuals and nations, and seeking knowledge of the future through other means is both spiritually dangerous and a form of idolatry. Consequently, early Jewish law viewed astrology and similar practices as belonging to neighboring pagan cultures, particularly the Babylonians and Egyptians, whose astrological systems were well developed.

However, despite these prohibitions, astrology gradually made its way into Jewish intellectual and mystical thought, especially during the Hellenistic and Talmudic periods. Jewish communities living under Greek and later Roman influence encountered astrological traditions that were widely accepted in the surrounding cultures. The Babylonian Talmud, compiled between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE, contains several references to astrology (mazalot), and while the sages were divided on the issue, it is evident that belief in celestial influence existed within the Jewish scholarly community. A famous saying from the Talmud—“Ein mazal l’Yisrael” (“There is no [deterministic] constellation for Israel”)—has been interpreted in different ways. Some rabbis took it to mean that Jews are not bound by astrological fate because of their covenant with God, while others saw it as indicating that astrology might apply to other nations but not to the uniquely guided destiny of the Jewish people.

This dual stance persisted throughout Jewish history. On one hand, some rabbinical authorities and philosophers, such as Maimonides (Rambam), rejected astrology outright. Writing in the 12th century, Maimonides condemned astrology as irrational and unscientific, firmly asserting that Jews should rely solely on reason and divine revelation. He believed that astrology undermined moral responsibility by suggesting that human behavior is governed by the stars rather than free will. Maimonides' views strongly influenced rationalist Jewish thinkers and became the basis for rejecting astrology in many rabbinical circles.

On the other hand, astrology found a more sympathetic reception among the Jewish mystics, especially within the Kabbalistic tradition. The Kabbalists, particularly in medieval Spain and later in Safed (16th-century Ottoman Palestine), developed elaborate cosmologies that incorporated celestial spheres, planetary influences, and angelic hierarchies. They believed that the stars were part of God's divine architecture and could be used to understand deeper spiritual truths. Astrology in this context was not a form of idolatry but a contemplative tool to understand the flow of divine energy (shefa) from the higher realms to the material world. In Kabbalistic texts such as the *Sefer Yetzirah* and the *Zohar*, cosmic patterns, zodiacal symbols, and planetary dynamics were interpreted as reflections of divine will, harmonized with the Jewish calendar and sacred cycles.

Astrology also played a role in Jewish medicine and daily life during the medieval and early modern periods. Jewish physicians and scholars, often well-versed in Arabic and Greek scientific texts, studied astrological medicine, using charts to diagnose illnesses and choose times for treatment. Jewish almanacs, containing astrological and calendrical information, were used for agricultural, medical, and ritual purposes. Prominent figures such as Abraham ibn Ezra (12th century), a rabbi, philosopher, and astrologer, wrote extensively on astrology and helped bridge Jewish and Arabic astrological traditions.

In the modern era, the rise of rationalism, secularism, and scientific thought among Jews led to a sharp decline in the formal study of astrology within mainstream Jewish communities. Many rabbis and Jewish institutions, particularly in the Orthodox and Reform movements, view astrology as incompatible with Jewish theology and ethics. However, interest in astrology has never completely disappeared. In recent decades, particularly among Jews

involved in New Age spirituality, neo-Kabbalistic movements, or Jewish mysticism, astrology has seen a quiet resurgence. Some modern Kabbalists explore the use of astrological charts in spiritual guidance, emphasizing the soul's journey, karmic lessons, and the influence of lunar and planetary energies within a theocentric framework.

Furthermore, Jewish culture still retains traces of astrological thinking in popular phrases and customs. The Hebrew word *mazal*, often translated as "luck" or "fortune," derives from *mazalot* (constellations), and phrases like *mazal tov* ("good luck" or "congratulations") subtly reflect a belief in favorable celestial influence. The Jewish calendar, which is lunar-based and astronomically precise, also incorporates zodiacal and seasonal cycles that are aligned with festivals and ritual observances.

In conclusion, the Jewish relationship with astrology is one of cautious engagement, oscillating between prohibition and mystical integration. While scriptural law emphasizes God's absolute control over destiny and discourages divination, Jewish thought has nevertheless found ways to engage with astrology, especially through philosophical, medical, and mystical frameworks. Today, although astrology remains a controversial and often marginalized subject in mainstream Jewish life, it continues to hold symbolic and spiritual value for some—reflecting an ancient desire to harmonize divine wisdom with the rhythms of the heavens.

Astrology and Christianity: A History of Tension, Integration, and Reinterpretation

The relationship between astrology and Christianity is marked by centuries of theological tension, cautious accommodation, and symbolic reinterpretation. From the early Church's firm opposition to divinatory practices to the more nuanced medieval incorporation of celestial influence within a Christian worldview, astrology has occupied a complex position in Christian history. At times it was condemned as heretical or associated with paganism, and at other times it was accepted as a legitimate natural science used to understand God's creation. In the modern Christian context, astrology remains largely marginalized by mainstream churches but continues to attract interest among individuals seeking spiritual meaning outside institutional religion.

In its formative years, Christianity emerged in the Greco-Roman world where astrology was widely practiced and philosophically sophisticated. Greek and

Roman societies inherited and expanded upon Babylonian and Egyptian astrology, embedding it into medical, agricultural, and personal decision-making systems. However, early Christian leaders viewed astrology with deep suspicion, primarily because it seemed to contradict core Christian doctrines such as human free will, divine omnipotence, and moral responsibility. Astrology, which claimed to predict fate based on the position of celestial bodies, was seen as undermining the Christian belief that humans are free agents under God's moral law.

The Bible contains multiple passages that caution against divination, omens, and consulting with astrologers. For instance, in Isaiah 47:13–14, the prophet mocks the Babylonian astrologers who attempt to interpret the heavens but fail to save anyone from divine judgment. Similarly, Deuteronomy 18:10–12 forbids the practice of soothsaying, astrology, and similar acts as abominations before the Lord. The Magi in the Gospel of Matthew—often mistakenly called “Three Wise Men”—are sometimes seen as an exception, since they follow a star to find the newborn Jesus. However, most Christian theologians interpret this episode as a demonstration of God's sovereignty over all creation, including the stars, rather than an endorsement of astrology.

The early Church Fathers, such as Augustine of Hippo, were particularly critical of astrology. Augustine's arguments in *The City of God* present a theological and philosophical critique, asserting that astrology denies personal accountability and attributes moral actions to planetary influences, which he viewed as absurd and spiritually dangerous. For Augustine and other theologians, true prophecy comes from divine revelation, not from interpreting the movement of stars.

Despite official disapproval, astrology was never entirely absent from Christian societies. During the Middle Ages, especially from the 12th century onward, astrology re-emerged in Christian Europe through contact with Islamic scholars who had preserved and developed Greco-Arabic astrological texts. Thinkers like Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas acknowledged the possibility that celestial bodies could influence the physical world—such as weather or bodily health—without necessarily determining human will. This distinction allowed astrology to be practiced within limits: it could describe natural tendencies or inclinations but not override human freedom or divine grace.

Astrology became institutionalized in medieval universities as part of the quadrivium (arithmetic,

geometry, music, and astronomy), and astrological knowledge was employed by doctors, farmers, and even monarchs. Christian rulers often had court astrologers, and astrological symbolism appeared in religious art and cathedral architecture. Yet theological caution remained. The Church allowed astrology only insofar as it respected divine providence and did not promote fatalism.

With the Reformation in the 16th century, Protestant leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin reasserted strong opposition to astrology, linking it with superstition and idolatry. The rise of modern science during the Enlightenment further diminished astrology's intellectual credibility. Astronomy, once closely tied with astrology, became a separate empirical science, while astrology was relegated to the realm of folklore and pseudoscience. The Catholic Church also gradually distanced itself from astrology, especially after the Council of Trent, emphasizing doctrinal purity and spiritual discipline over speculative cosmology.

In modern Christian contexts, especially within Catholic, Orthodox, and mainstream Protestant churches, astrology is generally discouraged or rejected. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (section 2116) clearly states that consulting horoscopes or engaging in astrology is contrary to the honor, respect, and loving fear due to God alone. Evangelical and Pentecostal movements often classify astrology as occult and spiritually harmful.

Nevertheless, astrology has seen a resurgence in recent decades, particularly in Western societies characterized by religious pluralism and spiritual seeking. Many Christians, especially those identifying as “spiritual but not religious”, find astrology meaningful not as a deterministic science but as a symbolic language that offers psychological and existential insight. This modern engagement with astrology is often reframed through Jungian or archetypal interpretations, emphasizing personal growth and self-understanding rather than fixed destiny. Some liberal theologians and Christian mystics have explored astrology as a metaphorical tool to reflect on the rhythms of creation and the interconnectedness of all life, though this remains a minority view.

In conclusion, astrology and Christianity have had a long and ambivalent relationship—one shaped by theological concerns, philosophical debates, and cultural adaptation. While traditional Christian doctrine rejects astrology as incompatible with divine revelation and free will, history shows periods of intellectual accommodation and symbolic synthesis. Today, while institutional

Christianity largely distances itself from astrology, its persistence in the cultural and spiritual imagination suggests that the human longing to find meaning in the heavens endures—even in a world shaped by faith in a transcendent God.

Astrology and Islam: Between Celestial Order and Theological Boundaries

The relationship between astrology and Islam is complex and multifaceted, shaped by rich intellectual traditions, theological caution, and historical engagement with the cosmos. While Islamic theology generally prohibits forms of astrology that claim to predict the future or determine human destiny, Islamic civilization historically engaged deeply with the science of the stars—leading to significant developments in both astronomy and aspects of judicial astrology. This paradox reflects the broader Islamic worldview: a deep reverence for the created universe as a sign (*āyah*) of God’s wisdom, balanced against the strict monotheistic prohibition of associating partners with God (*shirk*) or claiming knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*).

In the early period of Islam, the Qur’an and Hadith literature strongly emphasized that knowledge of the future is known only to Allah. The Qur’an (Surah Al-Jinn, 72:26–27) declares, “[Allah] alone is the Knower of the unseen, and He reveals it to none except a messenger He has chosen”. This forms a theological foundation against practices such as divination, sorcery, or astrology that purport to foretell events or influence fate. Several Hadiths also warn against consulting soothsayers and astrologers. The Prophet Muhammad reportedly said, “Whoever learns any part of astrology has learned a part of sorcery” (Sunan Abu Dawood).

Despite these prohibitions, Islamic societies—especially during the Golden Age (8th to 13th centuries CE)—became leading centers of astronomical and astrological knowledge. Muslim scholars inherited, translated, and expanded upon Greek, Persian, and Indian texts, integrating astrology within the broader fields of astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. The Islamic caliphates in Baghdad, Damascus, and Córdoba housed major observatories, and scholars such as Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Battani, and Al-Zarqali made significant advancements in celestial measurement, planetary theories, and astronomical instruments. These developments were essential not only for scientific purposes but also for religious needs, such as determining prayer times, the

Qibla (direction of Mecca), and the Islamic calendar.

Judicial astrology—particularly *ilm al-ahkām al-nujūm* (the science of rulings from the stars)—found support in some intellectual circles. Certain scholars accepted the idea that stars and planets could influence worldly affairs like weather patterns, epidemics, or agricultural productivity. Others believed that heavenly bodies had an indirect effect on human temperament or physical constitution. Astrological treatises were sometimes integrated into medical texts, guiding diagnoses or treatment timings in accordance with planetary configurations, much like the Hippocratic-Galenic system of humors.

However, most mainstream Islamic theologians and jurists drew a clear line between permissible astronomy (*‘ilm al-falak*) and impermissible astrology (*tanjīm*). Figures like Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and later scholars such as Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb explicitly condemned predictive astrology. They argued that claiming the stars govern human destiny not only lacked empirical basis but also violated *tawhīd* (the Islamic concept of God’s absolute oneness), by attributing divine powers to creation. Some scholars made a distinction between natural astrology, which involved celestial influences on the physical world and could be studied within God’s natural laws, and judicial astrology, which tried to predict individual fate or human decisions and was deemed forbidden.

Despite theological restrictions, astrology continued to thrive culturally in the Muslim world. In courts and royal circles, astrologers were consulted for auspicious timings (*ikhtiyārāt*), natal chart readings, and omens related to battles, coronations, or urban planning. In Persian and Mughal India, astrology was often blended with Sufi cosmology and pre-Islamic traditions, leading to a rich esoteric symbolism in poetry, art, and architecture. The twelve signs of the zodiac were widely depicted in Islamic manuscripts, palace frescoes, and ceramics—not necessarily as instruments of divination, but as expressions of cosmic harmony.

In modern Islamic societies, astrology remains both influential and controversial. In many Muslim-majority countries, horoscopes are popular in newspapers, social media, and television, particularly among the urban middle class and youth. At the same time, religious authorities and conservative scholars frequently denounce astrology as un-Islamic or even as a form of hidden *shirk*. Fatwas (Islamic legal opinions) issued by prominent Islamic

institutions such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt or Dar al-Ifta in Saudi Arabia have consistently ruled against the use of astrology for predicting future events or personality traits.

However, a growing number of individuals within Muslim communities—especially those influenced by global spiritual movements—seek to reinterpret astrology not as a deterministic science but as a symbolic language of self-awareness and divine signs. They frame astrology within the Qur’anic concept that celestial bodies are placed as signs (āyāt) for those who reflect (Surah Al-An‘ām, 6:97; Surah Yunus, 10:5). For such individuals, the study of the stars becomes a means of contemplation, not prediction—a spiritual bridge between the inner self and the vastness of God’s creation.

In conclusion, astrology and Islam share a rich and paradoxical history. While Islamic theology has consistently warned against attributing autonomous power to the stars or claiming knowledge of the unseen, Islamic civilization contributed profoundly to the development of astronomical science and even hosted complex astrological traditions. Today, the practice of astrology continues in Muslim societies, often as a cultural or psychological tool, even as religious orthodoxy maintains its doctrinal boundaries. This enduring tension reflects a broader Islamic negotiation between spiritual symbolism, scientific inquiry, and divine sovereignty.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the present study clearly indicates that astrology continues to occupy a significant position as a belief system across different cultures and intellectual traditions. The discussion reveals that astrology is not confined to a single domain of knowledge but operates at the intersection of history, cosmology, religion, and social practice. Its evolution from ancient civilizations to the modern digital era demonstrates a remarkable continuity, suggesting that astrology has adapted itself to changing contexts without losing its foundational principles. The historical exploration shows that from Mesopotamia to India, Greece, and the Islamic world, astrology has been closely associated with governance, religion, and everyday life, thereby functioning as both a practical and symbolic system of knowledge.

The comparative discussion of religious traditions highlights that astrology has been received in diverse ways depending on theological and cultural frameworks. In

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, astrology has often been approached with caution due to concerns regarding divine sovereignty and free will. Despite this, periods of intellectual engagement and symbolic adaptation can be observed, indicating that astrology has never been entirely absent from these traditions. In contrast, Indian traditions have generally incorporated astrology more seamlessly within their philosophical and religious structures, allowing it to function as an integral part of social and ritual life. This comparative perspective demonstrates that astrology is not a static belief but a culturally negotiated system whose meaning and application vary across societies.

The results derived from the study suggest that astrology continues to be widely accepted and practiced, though its interpretation and usage differ across contexts. In the Indian setting, it remains deeply embedded in social institutions, influencing decisions related to marriage, career, health, and religious observances. In more modern and global contexts, particularly in Western societies, astrology is increasingly interpreted as a tool for psychological insight and self-reflection rather than strict prediction. The rise of digital platforms has further expanded its reach, making astrology more accessible to younger generations and transforming it into a global cultural phenomenon. These findings support the argument that astrology persists not merely as a traditional practice but as an adaptive system that responds to contemporary needs.

From a theoretical standpoint, the discussion underscores that astrology functions as a system of meaning-making. It provides individuals with a framework to interpret life events, understand personal experiences, and cope with uncertainty. The symbolic nature of astrology allows it to transcend empirical limitations, offering narratives that connect the individual with a larger cosmic order. This interpretative flexibility is one of the key reasons for its enduring relevance, as it enables astrology to coexist with scientific knowledge while addressing aspects of human life that lie beyond empirical measurement.

At the same time, the study acknowledges the ongoing debate regarding the scientific validity of astrology. Critics argue that it lacks empirical evidence and fails to meet the standards of scientific methodology. However, the findings suggest that evaluating astrology solely through the lens of empirical science may overlook its broader cultural, psychological, and symbolic functions. Astrology operates within a different epistemological

framework, where meaning, belief, and experience play a central role. Its continued presence across societies indicates that it fulfills fundamental human needs related to identity, orientation, and existential understanding.

In conclusion, astrology emerges from this study as a dynamic and multifaceted belief system that bridges the domains of cosmology, culture, and human experience. Its persistence across historical periods and cultural contexts reflects its ability to adapt and remain relevant in changing intellectual landscapes. While scientific critiques remain valid within their own framework, they do not diminish astrology's significance as a cultural and symbolic system. The study thus affirms that astrology should be understood not merely as a contested field of knowledge but as a meaningful and evolving tradition that continues to shape human thought and social practice in the modern world.

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