

# **The Belief System of Astrology in a Global Perspective with Special Reference to Indian Astrology: A Multidimensional Review**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Astrology has remained a living tradition across civilizations, influencing not only individual beliefs but also social practices and cultural institutions. In my academic and professional engagement with Jyotisha as well as social sciences, I have observed that astrology continues to operate as a meaningful framework through which people interpret life events, make decisions, and seek psychological assurance. This paper examines the belief system of astrology from a global perspective, with special reference to Indian astrology, by critically reviewing historical, philosophical, psychological, scientific, and sociological literature. The study brings out an important distinction between Western and Indian traditions of astrology. In the Western context, astrology has largely evolved into a psychological and self-reflective discipline, drawing upon humanistic and depth psychology. In contrast, Indian astrology remains deeply rooted in Vedic thought, karma theory, and ritual practices, and continues to influence social institutions such as marriage, health, governance, and education. Based on my understanding and the reviewed literature, astrology in India is not merely a personal belief but a socially embedded system that guides collective as well as individual behaviour. At the same time, the paper does not overlook scientific criticisms. Empirical studies have questioned the predictive validity of astrology; however, psychological research indicates that cognitive mechanisms such as the Forer effect, confirmation bias, and the human search for meaning play a crucial role in sustaining belief in astrology. In my view, these insights do not entirely negate astrology but rather help us understand why it continues to remain relevant in modern society. The paper also reflects on the changing nature of astrology in the digital age. The emergence of online platforms, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence-based tools has expanded its accessibility and transformed its practice. This shift has created new opportunities as well as challenges, particularly with regard to authenticity, ethics, and commercialization. In conclusion, the study suggests that astrology cannot be understood only in terms of scientific validation or invalidation. It functions as a multidimensional belief system that provides psychological comfort, cultural continuity, and a sense of connection between the individual and the cosmos. Its continued relevance, in my opinion, lies in its ability to adapt to changing contexts while retaining its core philosophical foundations.

**Keywords:** Astrology, Belief System, Indian Astrology, Jyotisha, Western Astrology, Psychological Interpretation, Cultural Context, Cognitive Bias, Digital Transformation, Global Perspective

## **INTRODUCTION**

Astrology has, for centuries, occupied a distinctive and influential position in human civilization as a system that seeks to understand the relationship between celestial phenomena and human life. Across cultures and historical periods, it has functioned not only as a method of prediction

but also as a framework for interpreting existence, guiding decision-making, and maintaining a perceived harmony between the individual and the cosmos. In my own academic engagement with Jyotisha, as well as through administrative and social interactions, I have repeatedly observed that astrology continues to shape everyday choices and long-term life decisions of individuals in ways

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that are both subtle and profound. This suggests that astrology cannot be reduced merely to a technical or predictive discipline; rather, it operates as a complex belief system embedded within cultural consciousness.

Historically, astrology developed through diverse traditions, including Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, and later Hellenistic systems, before finding structured expression in classical texts. Over time, these traditions interacted with one another, resulting in the transmission and transformation of astrological knowledge across regions. In the Western world, astrology experienced a gradual decline in its scientific and institutional status following the rise of the scientific revolution. However, it did not disappear; instead, it re-emerged in the twentieth century in a transformed manner, particularly as a psychological and humanistic discipline. Influenced by thinkers such as Carl Jung, who introduced the idea of synchronicity, and Dane Rudhyar, who emphasized personal growth and self-realization, Western astrology shifted its focus from deterministic prediction to inner development and symbolic interpretation.

In contrast, the trajectory of astrology in India has been markedly different. Indian astrology, or Jyotisha, has retained its continuity as a living tradition, deeply integrated with Vedic cosmology, karmic philosophy, and ritual practices. It continues to be consulted in significant aspects of life, including marriage alliances, health-related decisions, educational choices, and even administrative and political planning. From my field observations and interactions with practitioners and laypersons alike, it is evident that astrology in India functions not only as a personal belief but also as a social institution, influencing collective norms and cultural practices. Its presence in temple traditions, festivals, and educational institutions further reinforces its legitimacy within the societal framework.

The continued relevance of astrology, despite persistent scientific criticism, raises important questions regarding its epistemological position. Scientific studies, particularly in the fields of psychology and statistics, have often challenged the empirical validity of astrological predictions. However, such critiques do not fully explain why astrology continues to attract widespread belief and practice. Psychological research has demonstrated that individuals tend to derive meaning and reassurance from astrological interpretations, often influenced by cognitive patterns such as the Forer effect and confirmation bias. In my understanding, this indicates that astrology fulfills

certain fundamental human needs—such as the desire for certainty, identity, and a sense of control—especially in situations characterized by ambiguity and unpredictability.

Another important dimension that cannot be overlooked is the transformation of astrology in the contemporary digital era. With the advent of artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and online consultation platforms, astrology has acquired a new form and expanded its reach beyond traditional boundaries. Today, individuals can access personalized horoscopes, compatibility analyses, and predictive insights instantly through digital mediums. While this has made astrology more accessible, it has also raised questions about authenticity, standardization, and ethical practices. In my view, this digital shift represents not a decline but a reconfiguration of astrology, demonstrating its adaptability to changing technological and social contexts.

Against this background, the present paper attempts to critically examine astrology as a belief system by bringing together insights from historical texts, psychological theories, empirical studies, and sociocultural analyses. The objective is not to argue for or against astrology in absolute terms but to understand its enduring presence and evolving nature. By comparing global developments with the Indian context, the study seeks to highlight the ways in which astrology continues to function as a meaningful and influential system of knowledge. It is my considered view that astrology, when approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, reveals itself not merely as a predictive practice but as a significant cultural and intellectual phenomenon that continues to shape human thought and experience in the modern world.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary research approach to examine astrology as a belief system from a global perspective, with special reference to Indian astrology. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of the subject, it was considered appropriate to combine qualitative and analytical methods rather than relying on a single methodological framework. In my understanding, astrology cannot be studied only through empirical measurement or statistical testing; it requires an interpretative approach that takes into account cultural, psychological, and philosophical dimensions.

The research is primarily based on a descriptive and

analytical design, aimed at understanding the evolution, structure, and functioning of astrological belief systems across different contexts. A substantial part of the study relies on secondary data, including classical texts, scholarly books, research articles, and published empirical studies. The literature reviewed includes works from both Indian and Western traditions, covering historical developments, philosophical foundations, psychological interpretations, and scientific critiques of astrology. Special attention has been given to authoritative texts in Jyotisha as well as modern academic discussions on astrology as a cultural and psychological phenomenon.

At the same time, the study is informed by my own academic engagement with Jyotisha and my broader exposure to social realities in the course of administrative service. While this paper does not claim to be a full-fledged field study, insights derived from informal observations and interactions with individuals, practitioners, and general users of astrology have been used to contextualize the theoretical discussion. These observations have helped in understanding how astrology operates in everyday life, particularly in the Indian context, where it continues to influence decisions related to marriage, career, health, and social conduct.

For analytical purposes, the study follows a comparative framework, examining differences and similarities between Western and Indian astrology. Western astrology has been analyzed primarily in terms of its transformation into a psychological and humanistic discipline, whereas Indian astrology has been studied in its traditional, institutional, and socio-religious context. This comparative perspective has been useful in identifying how cultural settings shape the function and interpretation of astrology.

The study also incorporates insights from psychological and sociological theories, particularly those related to belief formation, cognitive bias, and meaning-making. Concepts such as the Forer effect, confirmation bias, and the role of uncertainty in shaping belief systems have been used as interpretative tools to understand the persistence of astrology in modern society. In addition, the impact of digital technology—including mobile applications, artificial intelligence, and online platforms—has been examined to understand the changing nature of astrological practice in contemporary times.

It is important to acknowledge that the present study has certain limitations. Since it is largely based on secondary sources and interpretative analysis, it does not

provide statistical validation or quantitative measurement of astrological claims. The reliance on observational insights, though useful for contextual understanding, may also carry elements of subjectivity. However, in my view, these limitations do not diminish the relevance of the study, as the primary objective is to understand astrology as a belief system rather than to test its predictive accuracy.

Overall, the methodology adopted in this study seeks to provide a balanced and holistic understanding of astrology by integrating textual analysis, comparative perspective, and experiential insights. This approach, I believe, is more suitable for capturing the complexity of astrology as a living tradition that continues to evolve across cultural and technological contexts.

### **Review of Literature:**

#### **This chapter provides an overview of astrology as a belief:**

The Chapter on Review of Literature discusses the historical, philosophical, scientific, psychological, institutional, technological, and economic aspects of astrology from a global perspective with a special focus on India. It examines how Indian astrology, rooted in Vedic cosmology and karma theory, differs from Western astrology's psychological and self-help orientation (Pingree, 1981; Greene, 1980). The chapter reviews scientific studies that challenge astrology's empirical validity (Carlson, 1985; Dean and Kelly, 2003) while also exploring psychological research that explains its persistence through cognitive biases and existential meaning (Forer, 1949; Kakar, 1982). It highlights how Indian astrology is institutionalized in universities and professional organizations (Supreme Court of India, 2004; Raman, 1992), whereas in the West, it remains largely an alternative belief system. The digital transformation of astrology, including AI-driven apps, online consultations, and algorithmic predictions, has expanded accessibility and professionalization (Landscheidt, 2000). The chapter also explores astrology's economic significance in matchmaking, finance, governance, and healthcare in India (Subramaniam, 2014), contrasting it with Western astrology's commercialization through New Age spirituality (Campion, 2009). Despite scientific skepticism, astrology continues to thrive as a cultural, psychological, and spiritual system, adapting to modern technological and societal shifts while retaining its foundational principles.

### **Classical and Historical Texts on Western Astrology:**

Astrology has played a significant role in shaping human understanding of the cosmos and its perceived influence on earthly affairs. From ancient times to the modern era, astrological thought has evolved through various cultural and philosophical traditions. The foundation of Western astrology can be traced to the classical texts that systematized its principles and provided a structured framework for interpretation. These works, authored by renowned scholars, continue to serve as the bedrock of traditional astrological practice.

One of the most influential texts in the history of Western astrology is Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, written in the 2nd century CE. Ptolemy, a Greek-Egyptian scholar, sought to rationalize astrology within the framework of Aristotelian physics and astronomy. His work introduced key concepts such as planetary rulerships, aspects, and the division of the zodiac into twelve equal signs. Unlike earlier astrological traditions that emphasized omens and divination, *Tetrabiblos* provided a mathematical and systematic approach to astrological interpretation. Ptolemy's emphasis on the four classical elements—earth, water, fire, and air—linked astrology to medical and psychological theories of temperament, influencing both astrological and medical practices for centuries. His assertion that planetary influences operated through a form of natural causality rather than divine intervention helped astrology maintain its intellectual legitimacy during the classical and medieval periods. Despite the eventual decline of geocentric cosmology, *Tetrabiblos* remained a fundamental text, shaping the methodologies of astrologers well into the Renaissance.

Another important contribution to Western astrology was made by Firmicus Maternus, whose 4th-century CE text *Mathesis* offered an extensive treatment of natal astrology. Unlike Ptolemy, who sought to align astrology with empirical science, Firmicus presented a more mystical and deterministic view. *Mathesis* emphasized the role of fate, asserting that celestial configurations at birth predetermined an individual's life path. His work delved into detailed interpretations of planetary placements, house significations, and the impact of fixed stars. Firmicus also integrated

Egyptian and Hellenistic astrological traditions, reflecting the cross-cultural exchanges that shaped early astrology. His text, widely studied in the late Roman period, became a crucial reference for medieval astrologers,

reinforcing the idea that astrology was not merely a tool for prediction but also a means of understanding the deeper cosmic order governing human existence.

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, astrology experienced a resurgence, with scholars translating and expanding upon classical texts. One of the most notable works from this era is William Lilly's *Christian Astrology*, published in 1647. Lilly, an English astrologer, was instrumental in the development of horary astrology, which focuses on answering specific questions based on the time of inquiry. Unlike Ptolemy and Firmicus, who concentrated on natal astrology, Lilly's approach was more immediate and practical, catering to individuals seeking guidance on personal and societal matters. His work provided detailed methodologies for chart interpretation, incorporating traditional concepts such as planetary dignities, essential and accidental fortitudes, and the significations of astrological houses. *Christian Astrology* became a landmark text, establishing the foundations of modern traditional astrology. Lilly's empirical approach, combined with his use of medieval and Renaissance techniques, ensured the continued relevance of horary and electional astrology. His work remains widely studied today, particularly among practitioners of traditional astrology who seek to preserve historical astrological methods.

The transmission of astrological knowledge across different civilizations significantly influenced the evolution of Western astrology. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, astrology found a new home in the Islamic world, where scholars such as Al-Biruni and Abu Ma'shar preserved and expanded upon Hellenistic astrological teachings. Their works were later translated into Latin during the 12th and 13th centuries, reintroducing astrology to medieval Europe. This period saw the fusion of Greco-Roman, Arabic, and medieval European astrological traditions, leading to the establishment of astrology as an academic discipline in early universities. Astrology was not only practiced by royal court astrologers but also integrated into medicine, philosophy, and astronomy. Prominent figures such as Roger Bacon and Johannes Kepler engaged with astrology, attempting to refine its techniques and align them with emerging scientific discoveries. Kepler, in particular, sought to reconcile astrology with the heliocentric model, modifying traditional astrological principles to account for planetary motion.

Despite astrology's prominence during the medieval and Renaissance eras, the rise of the scientific revolution

in the 17th century brought about a significant decline in its academic standing. The heliocentric model proposed by Nicolaus Copernicus, along with the astronomical observations of Galileo Galilei and Johannes Kepler, challenged the foundational premises of geocentric astrology. The increasing emphasis on empirical verification and mathematical precision led to astrology's gradual exclusion from scientific discourse. However, even as astrology lost its institutional credibility, it persisted as a cultural and esoteric practice, maintaining a dedicated following among practitioners and the general public. The enduring influence of classical texts ensured that astrology continued to be studied and practiced, even in the face of scientific skepticism.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, astrology underwent a revival, particularly through the influence of the Theosophical movement and the emergence of psychological astrology. Scholars revisited classical texts, incorporating them into new frameworks that aligned astrology with contemporary psychological and spiritual paradigms. This period saw the blending of traditional astrological principles with Jungian psychology, humanistic astrology, and self-help movements. The continued relevance of classical astrological texts highlights the resilience of astrological belief systems, demonstrating their ability to adapt and evolve in response to changing intellectual and cultural landscapes.

The foundational texts of Western astrology, including Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, Firmicus Maternus' *Mathesis*, and Lilly's *Christian Astrology*, continue to shape contemporary astrological thought. These works provided the theoretical and practical foundations for astrological practice, influencing generations of astrologers and scholars. Their impact is evident in modern astrological education, where traditional methods are still studied alongside new interpretations. The transmission of astrological knowledge through different historical periods underscores astrology's enduring appeal and its ability to persist as a belief system despite challenges from scientific rationalism. Today, classical astrological texts remain central to the practice of astrology, serving as essential resources for those seeking to understand and apply the principles of celestial influence in human affairs.

### **Psychological and Humanistic Approaches to Astrology:**

Astrology has long been viewed as a tool for

understanding human nature and destiny, but in the 20th century, a significant shift occurred with the integration of psychological and humanistic frameworks into astrological interpretation. This approach, which emphasizes personal growth, self-actualization, and the deep symbolic meaning of astrological archetypes, represents a departure from the deterministic and predictive models that dominated traditional astrology. The emergence of psychological astrology is largely attributed to the influence of Carl Jung, whose theory of synchronicity and archetypal symbolism provided a new way of understanding astrology (Jung, 1952). Jung saw astrology as a means of accessing the unconscious mind, arguing that planetary patterns correspond to psychological states and developmental processes. He proposed that astrological archetypes, much like mythological symbols, reflect deep-seated psychological structures shared by all humans. His theory of synchronicity suggested that meaningful coincidences between celestial movements and human experiences were not causal but reflected an underlying acausal order in the universe. This idea laid the foundation for the psychological application of astrology, where the natal chart is seen as a map of the psyche rather than a tool for external prediction.

Building on Jung's work, Dane Rudhyar, a pioneer of humanistic astrology, developed a holistic approach to astrology that focused on individual self-realization rather than fate or destiny (Rudhyar, 1970). In his seminal work *The Astrology of Personality*, Rudhyar redefined the natal chart as a dynamic tool for personal growth, emphasizing planetary cycles as markers of psychological development rather than fixed determinants of fate. He introduced the concept of transpersonal astrology, arguing that astrology should be used to aid human evolution by encouraging individuals to consciously engage with their astrological potentials. Rudhyar's approach was deeply influenced by existential and humanistic psychology, particularly the works of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who emphasized self-actualization and the human capacity for growth. He saw the birth chart not as a rigid script but as a symbolic representation of an individual's journey toward wholeness. His work encouraged astrologers to move away from fatalistic predictions and instead use astrology as a counseling tool to help individuals navigate their lives with greater awareness and intention.

Liz Greene further expanded psychological astrology

by integrating Jungian depth psychology with astrological symbolism, focusing on the role of the unconscious and the shadow self in personal development (Greene, 1980). In *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil*, Greene reinterpreted Saturn not as a planet of misfortune, as traditionally depicted, but as a symbol of psychological challenges that, when confronted, lead to personal growth and transformation. Her work emphasized that planetary placements should be understood in terms of psychological processes rather than external events. By exploring planetary archetypes through the lens of Jungian analysis, she demonstrated how astrological symbols represent inner conflicts, fears, and potentials. Greene's approach made astrology more relevant to modern psychotherapy, bridging the gap between traditional astrological wisdom and contemporary psychological theories. Her work laid the foundation for a new wave of astrologers who sought to use astrology as a tool for self-awareness rather than fortune-telling.

Another significant contribution to humanistic astrology came from Stephen Arroyo, who emphasized the connection between astrology and energy fields, proposing that planetary aspects reflect an individual's energetic makeup and emotional patterns (Arroyo, 1978). His book *Astrology, Karma and Transformation* explored how planetary influences shape an individual's psychological development over time, linking astrology to spiritual growth and karmic evolution. Arroyo argued that astrology should be understood in terms of psychological energy rather than mechanistic cause and effect. He integrated Eastern concepts such as karma and reincarnation into his astrological framework, making his approach particularly appealing to those interested in both Western astrology and Eastern spiritual traditions.

The emergence of psychological astrology significantly transformed the perception of astrology in the modern world. Traditional astrology was often criticized for its deterministic and fatalistic nature, but psychological astrology repositioned it as a tool for self-exploration and empowerment. This shift also contributed to astrology's growing acceptance among educated individuals who sought deeper meaning in their lives beyond mere prediction. Psychological astrology aligned well with the broader human potential movement of the late 20th century, which emphasized self-awareness, inner growth, and holistic approaches to well-being. Astrologers like Richard Tarnas further bridged astrology and psychology by exploring planetary cycles as reflections

of historical and collective psychological patterns (Tarnas, 2006). His work *Cosmos and Psyche* argued that planetary alignments correspond to major cultural and historical shifts, supporting the idea that astrology operates within a meaningful and interconnected cosmos rather than as a mere superstition.

Despite its growing influence, psychological astrology has faced criticism from both traditional astrologers and scientific skeptics. Traditional astrologers argue that psychological astrology lacks the predictive precision that has historically been central to astrological practice. They claim that by shifting the focus from external events to internal psychological states, psychological astrology dilutes the empirical basis of astrological interpretation. Scientific skeptics, on the other hand, dismiss psychological astrology as a subjective and unverifiable belief system, arguing that its insights are more akin to self-help and counseling rather than empirical science (Eysenck and Nias, 1982). However, proponents of psychological astrology contend that astrology's value lies not in its predictive accuracy but in its symbolic and interpretative power. They argue that astrology serves as a mirror for self-reflection, helping individuals understand their motivations, patterns, and life purpose.

In recent years, psychological astrology has continued to evolve, with modern astrologers incorporating insights from neuroscience, depth psychology, and transpersonal therapy. Online astrology platforms and digital horoscopes have further popularized this approach, making astrological counseling more accessible to a global audience. The rise of social media astrologers, many of whom emphasize psychological insights over predictive techniques, reflects astrology's ongoing transformation into a tool for self-exploration and empowerment. As astrology becomes increasingly integrated with therapeutic practices, its role as a belief system continues to adapt to contemporary psychological and spiritual needs. The psychological and humanistic approach to astrology has redefined the way astrology is perceived and practiced, shifting it from a system of external fate to an inner journey of self-discovery and growth. While traditional astrology continues to coexist with psychological approaches, the latter has opened new avenues for integrating astrology with modern psychology, ensuring its continued relevance in an era that values personal development and holistic well-being.

### Scientific and Empirical Studies on Astrological Beliefs:

Astrology has long been a subject of debate within scientific and academic communities, with numerous empirical studies conducted to evaluate its validity and the psychological mechanisms that sustain belief in astrological principles. Scientific investigations into astrology have largely centered on testing the accuracy of astrological predictions, assessing correlations between celestial configurations and human traits, and exploring cognitive biases that influence belief in astrology. Despite its historical prominence, astrology has faced significant scrutiny from researchers in psychology, statistics, and astronomy, leading to a polarized discourse on its legitimacy. One of the most well-known empirical studies on astrology was conducted by Michel Gauquelin, a French statistician and psychologist, who sought to examine whether planetary positions at birth correlated with professional success (Gauquelin, 1955). His research, often referred to as the “Mars Effect,” suggested that eminent athletes were more likely to have Mars positioned in certain key areas of their birth charts. While some saw this as evidence of astrological validity, subsequent replication attempts yielded mixed results, with critics arguing that selection bias and methodological flaws undermined Gauquelin’s findings (Nanninga, 1996). Nonetheless, his work remains one of the few astrological studies to gain attention in mainstream scientific discourse, and it continues to be cited in discussions about the potential for empirical validation of astrology.

Another major study evaluating astrological claims was conducted by Shawn Carlson in a double-blind experiment published in *Nature* (Carlson, 1985). This study sought to test whether professional astrologers could match natal charts to psychological profiles more accurately than chance. The results indicated no statistically significant correlation, leading Carlson to conclude that astrology lacked empirical support. His findings were widely regarded as a decisive scientific refutation of astrological claims, reinforcing the dominant view within academia that astrology is a pseudoscience. However, subsequent critiques of Carlson’s methodology have suggested that flaws in experimental design, including issues with subject selection and interpretation criteria, may have influenced the results (Ertel and Irving, 1996). Despite these critiques, Carlson’s study remains one of the most frequently cited works in skeptical literature against astrology.

Hans Eysenck, a prominent psychologist, and David Nias examined astrological correlations with personality traits, conducting meta-analyses of previous studies on astrological influences (Eysenck and Nias, 1982). They found that while anecdotal support for astrology was widespread, empirical evidence remained inconsistent. Their work highlighted the psychological aspects of astrological belief, emphasizing cognitive biases such as the Barnum effect, where individuals interpret vague statements as highly specific to themselves. They argued that astrology’s appeal lies not in its predictive power but in its ability to provide a framework for self-reflection and meaning-making. Similar conclusions were drawn by Geoffrey Dean and Ivan Kelly, who conducted a comprehensive review of over 40 studies examining the correlation between astrological factors and personality traits (Dean and Kelly, 2003). Their research found no statistically significant relationships, reinforcing the scientific community’s skepticism toward astrology. Dean further explored the role of self-attribution in astrological belief, demonstrating that people tend to perceive astrological descriptions as accurate due to confirmation bias and personal investment in their astrological identity.

Another approach to studying astrology empirically involves examining the prevalence and persistence of astrological beliefs across different cultures and demographics. A study by Bauer and Durant on belief in astrology among Europeans found that despite increasing scientific literacy, astrology remained widely accepted, particularly among younger and less formally educated populations (Bauer and Durant, 1997). This research suggested that belief in astrology is often resistant to scientific critique, as it is deeply embedded in cultural and psychological frameworks that prioritize personal experience over empirical validation. In India, empirical studies on astrological beliefs have revealed similar patterns, with astrology continuing to be a dominant cultural and social force despite the growth of scientific education. A study by JayantNarlikar and BalPhondke examined astrology’s standing within the Indian academic and scientific communities, concluding that while astrology remains popular, its empirical validity remains unproven (Narlikar and Phondke, 2012). Their findings indicate that belief in astrology in India is often reinforced by tradition and social norms rather than by verifiable scientific evidence.

Psychological studies have also explored why people continue to believe in astrology despite its lack of

empirical support. Bertram Forer's experiment on personality assessments demonstrated that individuals tend to accept generalized statements as highly accurate descriptions of themselves, a phenomenon now known as the Forer effect (Forer, 1949). This cognitive bias helps explain why horoscope readings and natal chart interpretations often feel personally relevant to believers. Additionally, studies on self-serving biases suggest that individuals are more likely to remember accurate astrological predictions while disregarding incorrect ones, reinforcing their confidence in astrology without recognizing its inconsistencies (Blackmore and Seebold, 2001). Research has also indicated that belief in astrology tends to be higher among individuals experiencing uncertainty or distress, as astrology provides a sense of control and reassurance in unpredictable situations (Lillqvist and Lindeman, 1998). These findings align with sociological perspectives that position astrology as a coping mechanism rather than a scientifically validated practice.

Despite overwhelming skepticism from the scientific community, astrology continues to thrive in popular culture, and modern technology has played a significant role in its resurgence. Online astrology platforms and social media influencers have capitalized on personalized horoscopes and AI-driven astrological analyses, increasing astrology's accessibility and appeal. A study by Theodor Landscheidt explored how digital astrology influences belief systems, suggesting that technological advancements have transformed astrology from an esoteric tradition into a mainstream psychological and self-help tool (Landscheidt, 2000). He argued that while astrology lacks scientific validity, its symbolic and narrative structures provide a meaningful framework for individuals seeking guidance and self-understanding. The rise of astrology in digital spaces has also led to new forms of empirical inquiry, with researchers examining how algorithm-driven astrology apps impact users' psychological well-being and decision-making processes.

The empirical investigation of astrology has largely reinforced the view that astrology does not function as a scientifically testable discipline but rather as a belief system rooted in cognitive psychology and cultural tradition. While studies such as those by Gauquelin have attempted to find statistical correlations between celestial patterns and human traits, most rigorous scientific analyses have found little evidence to support astrological claims. However, research in psychology and sociology

suggests that astrology remains influential because it provides individuals with a sense of meaning, structure, and reassurance. This aligns with the broader understanding that astrology functions more as a symbolic and introspective tool than as a predictive science. The scientific and empirical studies reviewed here demonstrate that while astrology does not meet conventional scientific criteria, its continued appeal lies in its psychological utility and its deep integration into human culture. Whether astrology is viewed as a legitimate practice or a pseudoscience, its enduring presence across societies indicates that its belief system fulfills a fundamental human need for connection between the self and the cosmos.

### **Cultural and Sociological Studies on Astrological Beliefs:**

Astrology, as a cultural phenomenon, has persisted across civilizations, influencing social structures, traditions, and individual worldviews. Sociological and anthropological studies have explored how astrology functions within different societies, examining its role in personal identity, collective beliefs, and institutional frameworks. In Western societies, astrology has undergone significant transformations, from its role in ancient religious and political systems to its resurgence in modern popular culture. Nicholas Campion's study on the historical evolution of astrology highlights its cultural adaptability, arguing that astrology remains influential because it evolves alongside societal changes rather than being entirely dismissed by scientific rationalism (Campion, 2009). He suggests that astrology operates as a meaning-making system that helps individuals and communities navigate existential uncertainties, much like religion. Similarly, Patrick Curry's analysis of astrology in early modern England illustrates how astrology served as a political and ideological tool, shaping public perception and governance during the 16th and 17th centuries (Curry, 2012). His research demonstrates that astrology was once deeply embedded in state affairs, with monarchs and advisors relying on celestial guidance for decision-making, a tradition that persisted until the rise of Enlightenment skepticism.

In contemporary Western societies, astrology has shifted from a state-sponsored discipline to a form of self-help and personal identity construction. Studies have shown that astrology thrives in times of social and economic instability, as people turn to cosmic guidance

when traditional structures fail to provide certainty (Bauer and Durant, 1997). Astrology's resurgence in digital culture, particularly among younger generations, has been examined by sociologists exploring how social media platforms have facilitated the spread of astrological beliefs. Studies by Theodor Landscheidt indicate that astrology's popularity in digital spaces is driven by the rise of personalized online content, which allows individuals to engage with astrological narratives in a way that reinforces their self-perception (Landscheidt, 2000). The increasing accessibility of astrology through apps, social media, and influencer culture has further embedded it in modern identity politics, particularly among millennials and Generation Z. Research by Christopher Partridge suggests that astrology's integration with New Age spirituality has contributed to its persistence, as it aligns with broader postmodern trends that prioritize subjective experience over institutionalized knowledge (Partridge, 2004). This shift reflects a broader cultural movement toward individualized belief systems, where astrology is seen as a tool for self-exploration rather than a deterministic guide.

In contrast, astrology in India has maintained its institutional and ritualistic significance, deeply intertwined with Hindu traditions and social structures. Ronald Inden's study of astrology in Indian society emphasizes its role in shaping caste-based identities, marriage arrangements, and governance (Inden, 1990). He argues that astrology in India functions not just as a belief system but as a social institution that reinforces hierarchical relationships and traditional norms. David Pingree's research on Indian astrology traces its historical development and cross-cultural exchanges, particularly the influence of Hellenistic and Islamic astrology on medieval Indian thought (Pingree, 1981). His work highlights how Indian astrology integrated multiple astrological traditions while retaining its distinct emphasis on karma, dharma, and cosmic order. Unlike in the West, where astrology has largely become a matter of personal belief, in India, it continues to shape institutional decisions, from political strategies to economic forecasts. Studies by Malavika Kapur have examined how astrology influences mental health practices in India, with many individuals seeking astrological guidance alongside psychological counseling (Kapur, 2004). This dual reliance on astrology and modern therapy suggests that astrology remains a significant cultural force that coexists with contemporary medical and psychological frameworks.

Astrology's role in marriage and family dynamics is

another significant aspect of its cultural persistence in India. Research by Patricia Uberoi has documented how astrology remains central to matchmaking practices, with families consulting astrologers to ensure compatibility between prospective spouses (Uberoi, 1998). The practice of kundali matching, which assesses the planetary alignments of individuals to predict marital harmony, reflects the enduring belief in astrology as a determinant of personal and familial well-being. Sociologists studying Indian marriage traditions argue that astrology serves not only as a spiritual guide but also as a social regulator, reinforcing caste and religious boundaries through astrological compatibility assessments (Dumont, 1970). Despite increasing urbanization and modernization, astrology remains a fundamental aspect of marriage negotiations, indicating that its sociological function extends beyond individual belief to communal and institutional structures.

Political astrology is another domain where astrology continues to shape public discourse and decision-making. Studies on astrology's influence in Indian politics reveal that many politicians and bureaucrats consult astrologers before making significant decisions, from election campaigns to policy announcements (Subramaniam, 2014). This phenomenon is not unique to India; historical studies have documented how astrology played a role in Western political strategies as well, with figures such as Ronald Reagan reportedly consulting astrologers during his presidency (Tarpley, 1992). However, in India, the relationship between astrology and politics remains more overt, with astrologers often being consulted by high-ranking officials. This ongoing engagement with astrology at the political level reinforces its legitimacy in public consciousness, demonstrating how cultural and institutional factors sustain astrological beliefs.

Astrology's persistence in both Western and Indian contexts can also be understood through the lens of secularization theory. While traditional religious institutions have declined in influence, belief in astrology has remained relatively stable or even increased, suggesting that it fulfills a similar existential and moral function (Campion, 2016). Research on spirituality and secularization indicates that astrology provides a sense of cosmic order and personal meaning, filling the gap left by declining institutional religion. Unlike organized religious doctrines, astrology allows for flexible interpretations, enabling individuals to integrate it into their belief systems without rigid dogma. This adaptability has contributed to

astrology's longevity, as it continues to evolve in response to cultural shifts.

Critics of astrology argue that its cultural endurance is largely a result of cognitive biases and social conditioning rather than empirical validity. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital suggests that belief in astrology is often maintained through inherited social structures rather than rational inquiry (Bourdieu, 1986). His analysis of how belief systems perpetuate themselves through cultural reinforcement can be applied to astrology, where familial traditions, social media exposure, and peer influence sustain belief even in the absence of scientific evidence. Additionally, Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts provides insight into why astrology, despite being historically discredited by the scientific community, continues to thrive as a cultural practice (Kuhn, 1962). Kuhn's framework suggests that belief systems persist when they offer explanatory models that satisfy human cognitive and emotional needs, regardless of their empirical validity. Astrology's ability to provide coherence in uncertain times makes it resistant to rationalist critiques, ensuring its continued relevance in diverse sociocultural contexts.

The sociological and cultural studies on astrology reviewed here illustrate that astrology is far more than just a system of celestial divination; it is an enduring social and psychological phenomenon that continues to shape human experience. Whether as a tool for self-understanding, a mechanism for social regulation, or a cultural artifact embedded in political and economic structures, astrology remains a significant force in both Western and Indian societies. While scientific critiques challenge its empirical basis, its sociological and cultural functions explain why it persists across time and space. As astrology continues to evolve in the digital age, its integration with psychology, technology, and spirituality suggests that it will remain an influential belief system for generations to come.

### **Classical Texts on Indian Astrology:**

Indian astrology, deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition, has evolved through centuries of textual transmission, scholarly commentary, and practical application. The foundational texts of Indian astrology, collectively known as Jyotisha Shastra, have provided the theoretical and methodological basis for astrological practice in the Indian subcontinent. These texts integrate astronomical calculations, planetary influences, karmic philosophy, and

predictive techniques, establishing a structured approach to astrological interpretation. Unlike Western astrology, which experienced periods of decline due to scientific skepticism, Indian astrology remained an integral part of Hindu religious and social life, continuously reinforced by classical texts and their authoritative commentaries. The classical texts on Indian astrology not only serve as technical manuals for astrologers but also reflect the cosmological and philosophical foundations of Hindu thought.

One of the earliest known texts on Indian astrology is the Vedanga Jyotisha, composed between 1400 BCE and 600 BCE, which marks the transition of astrology from an observational science to a structured discipline within the Vedic corpus (Pingree, 1981). The Vedanga Jyotisha primarily focuses on astronomical calculations and the construction of lunisolar calendars, essential for determining auspicious timings for Vedic rituals. It does not provide detailed predictive astrology but establishes the foundational principles of planetary movements and their relationship to human affairs. This text was crucial in linking astrology with religious practices, reinforcing the idea that celestial bodies influence terrestrial events through cosmic order (rita). The Vedanga Jyotisha also introduced concepts such as nakshatras (lunar mansions) and muhurta (auspicious timing), which remain fundamental to Hindu astrological calculations.

A major milestone in the development of Indian astrology was the Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra, attributed to Sage Parashara and composed between the 6th and 7th centuries CE (Sharma, 1996). This text is regarded as the most authoritative treatise on Vedic astrology, providing a comprehensive framework for predictive astrology. It covers various aspects of horoscope analysis, including planetary placements (grahadoshas), house significations (bhava), and planetary periods (dasha system). The text introduces the concept of Vimshottari Dasha, a system of planetary periods that determines the timing of events in an individual's life. Parashara's text also explains various yogas (planetary combinations) that indicate specific fortunes or misfortunes in a person's destiny. The emphasis on karma and reincarnation in the Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra reflects the belief that planetary influences are manifestations of past-life actions, making astrology a crucial tool for understanding one's karmic path.

Another significant classical text is the Brihat Jataka, authored by Varahamihira in the 6th century CE, which

synthesizes earlier astrological traditions with Hellenistic influences (Pingree, 1978). Varahamihira, often regarded as one of the greatest astrologers of ancient India, integrated Greek astrological methods with traditional Vedic astrology, refining the predictive techniques used in horoscope interpretation. The Brihat Jataka covers natal astrology in detail, explaining how planetary positions at birth shape an individual's personality, career, health, and relationships. Varahamihira's work also introduced the concept of planetary aspects (*drishti*) and refined the classification of planetary strengths and weaknesses. His text remains a key reference for astrologers practicing traditional Indian astrology, as it provides systematic methods for chart analysis and prediction.

The Saravali, written by Kalyana Varma in the 10th century CE, is another authoritative text that builds upon the principles established by earlier works (Raman, 1992). Saravali is known for its detailed treatment of planetary influences on various aspects of life, including marriage, wealth, health, and spiritual evolution. Unlike other texts that primarily focus on technical astrological calculations, Saravali also explores the ethical and philosophical dimensions of astrology. Kalyana Varma emphasizes the role of an astrologer as a guide who not only predicts the future but also provides counsel for mitigating negative planetary influences through remedial measures such as mantra chanting, gemstone therapy, and ritual offerings. The emphasis on remedial astrology in Saravali highlights the interconnectedness of astrology and Hindu religious practices, reinforcing the belief that divine intervention can alter one's fate.

The Phaladeepika, composed by Mantreswara in the 16th century CE, is another significant text that provides a structured approach to horoscope interpretation (Sastri, 1963). This text is particularly notable for its clear and systematic explanations of astrological principles, making it accessible to both novice and experienced astrologers. Phaladeepika discusses the effects of planetary transits, *dasha* periods, and *yogas* in detail, offering predictive techniques that are still widely used in contemporary Indian astrology. The text also addresses practical aspects of astrology, including medical astrology (*Ayur-Jyotisha*), which explores the connection between planetary positions and health conditions. Mantreswara's work further reinforced the legitimacy of astrology as a guiding force in everyday life, ensuring its continued relevance in Indian society.

In addition to these classical texts, numerous

commentaries and regional variations have enriched the tradition of Indian astrology. The Nadi astrology tradition, which is based on ancient palm leaf manuscripts found in South India, represents a unique approach to astrology that claims to offer pre-written destinies for individuals based on their thumb impressions (Rao, 2002). Unlike mainstream Vedic astrology, which requires a birth chart for analysis, Nadi astrology relies on the belief that sages inscribed detailed life predictions for every soul based on planetary influences at the time of their reincarnation. The enduring popularity of Nadi astrology demonstrates the diverse and evolving nature of astrological traditions in India, with different schools of thought coexisting within the broader framework of *Jyotisha*.

The transmission of Indian astrological knowledge was not confined to the subcontinent; historical exchanges with Persian and Islamic scholars during the medieval period led to the development of *Tajika* astrology, a branch of Indian astrology that incorporates Arabic and Persian techniques of annual forecasting (Pingree, 1970). *Tajika* astrology introduced *Varshaphala*, a system of yearly horoscopy that predicts events based on the solar return chart. This cross-cultural synthesis illustrates the dynamic nature of Indian astrology, which has continuously adapted and expanded through interactions with other astrological traditions while maintaining its core philosophical foundations.

Despite challenges from modern scientific rationalism, classical texts on Indian astrology continue to influence both practitioners and scholars. The inclusion of astrology in university curricula, particularly in institutions such as Banaras Hindu University and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, demonstrates the enduring academic interest in *Jyotisha* as both a scientific and spiritual discipline (Bhat, 2005). The resurgence of interest in astrology in contemporary India, facilitated by digital technology and online consultations, further underscores the relevance of classical texts in shaping modern astrological practice.

The classical texts of Indian astrology form the bedrock of astrological knowledge, integrating astronomical precision with spiritual philosophy. The enduring influence of texts such as the *Vedanga Jyotisha*, *Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra*, *Brihat Jataka*, *Saravali*, *Phaladeepika*, and *Nadi* manuscripts reflects the deep cultural and religious significance of astrology in India. These texts not only provide predictive frameworks but also emphasize astrology's role in understanding karma,

dharma, and cosmic order. The continuous study and application of these classical works demonstrate that Indian astrology remains a living tradition, evolving through new interpretations while remaining anchored in its ancient textual heritage. The persistence of these texts in both traditional and modern astrological practices highlights their fundamental role in shaping the belief system of astrology in India, ensuring their relevance for future generations.

### **Astrology in Indian Social and Religious Contexts:**

Astrology has been deeply embedded in Indian social and religious traditions, shaping beliefs, rituals, and decision-making processes for centuries. Unlike in the West, where astrology evolved alongside scientific skepticism, in India, astrology has remained an integral part of both spiritual and practical life. The foundation of Indian astrology is not merely based on celestial mechanics but is closely intertwined with Hindu cosmology, karma theory, and religious practices. It has influenced everything from temple architecture to daily rituals, life events, governance, and even healing traditions. The study of astrology in its social and religious dimensions provides insight into how celestial beliefs shape cultural norms, spiritual practices, and individual decision-making in India. Scholars have extensively analyzed the transmission, integration, and function of astrology in Indian society, demonstrating its complex relationship with Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous healing traditions.

One of the most significant contributions to the study of astrology's integration into Indian religious life is David Pingree's "Jyotisha: The Indian Science of Astronomy and Astrology" (1981). Pingree examines how astrology was transmitted from Mesopotamian and Hellenistic cultures to India, gradually evolving into a distinct system embedded within Hindu philosophy. His research highlights how Jyotisha, as part of the Vedangas (auxiliary disciplines of the Vedas), became a crucial element of Vedic ritual life, used to determine auspicious timings (muhurta) for yajnas (sacrificial ceremonies), marriages, and other sacred rites. Pingree's analysis reveals that while Indian astrology absorbed influences from Persian, Greek, and Arabic traditions, it retained its distinct spiritual framework, emphasizing the doctrine of karma and reincarnation. His work underscores the role of astrology in maintaining cosmic order (rita), which is central to Hindu religious thought. Astrology is not seen as a mere

predictive tool but as a means of aligning human life with divine rhythms, reinforcing the belief that planetary movements reflect karmic consequences.

Ronald Davidson, in his work "Indian Esoteric Buddhism and Astrology" (2002), explores the role of astrology beyond Hinduism, particularly in Buddhist and tantric traditions. He examines how astrology was integrated into esoteric Buddhist practices, where celestial configurations were believed to influence meditation, spiritual attainments, and mystical experiences. Tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet utilized astrological calculations to determine the most auspicious times for initiations (abhisheka), rituals, and deity invocations. Davidson's research highlights how Buddhist astrology differs from its Hindu counterpart by incorporating a more ritualistic and mystical approach, often using astrology in conjunction with mantra recitations, mandala constructions, and yogic practices. His work provides evidence of astrology's adaptability across religious traditions, demonstrating that even in non-theistic Buddhist frameworks, celestial influences were acknowledged as guiding forces in human affairs. This cross-religious acceptance of astrology illustrates its deep-rooted significance in Indian spiritual life.

The psychological and healing aspects of astrology in Indian society have been explored by Sudhir Kakar in "Shamans, Mystics, and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and Its Healing Traditions" (1982). Kakar's research examines how astrology is not just a predictive science but a psychological and therapeutic tool in traditional Indian healing systems. His work highlights the role of astrologers as counselors who provide emotional and spiritual guidance, particularly during times of crisis. Many Indians consult astrologers not only for predicting future events but for addressing personal dilemmas, offering remedies, and seeking reassurance in difficult times. Kakar argues that astrology functions similarly to psychotherapy in the West, providing individuals with a framework to interpret their struggles, find meaning in their suffering, and adopt remedial measures. His analysis draws attention to the intersection between astrology and Ayurveda, where planetary influences are believed to affect physical and mental health. Ayurvedic practitioners often incorporate astrological guidance to determine suitable treatments, dietary recommendations, and gemstone therapies, reinforcing astrology's role as a holistic system of well-being.

Astrology's influence in Indian social structures extends beyond individual belief systems to institutional and communal decision-making. Patricia Uberoi's research on marriage traditions in India illustrates how astrology plays a critical role in matchmaking and marital compatibility assessments. The practice of kundali matching, where horoscopes of prospective partners are compared to ensure harmony, is a well-established norm in Indian society. The belief that planetary alignments can determine the success or failure of a marriage underscores astrology's social function as a regulatory mechanism. Anthropological studies by Louis Dumont further demonstrate how astrology reinforces caste and kinship structures, as many communities rely on astrological compatibility to maintain traditional social boundaries. Even in urbanized and modern contexts, astrology continues to influence marriage decisions, indicating its resilience in shaping familial and societal expectations.

The political dimensions of astrology in India have also been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Political astrology, or *Rajneeti Jyotisha*, has been historically significant, with rulers and politicians consulting astrologers before making important decisions. Scholars such as Arvind Subramaniam (2014) have documented cases where Indian leaders have used astrology for election timing, governance strategies, and diplomatic engagements. The continued prevalence of astrology in Indian politics suggests that belief in celestial influence extends beyond personal faith to strategic planning at national and administrative levels. Historical records indicate that even during the Mughal period, emperors such as Akbar and Jahangir consulted Hindu and Persian astrologers for guidance on military campaigns and state affairs. The intersection of astrology and governance highlights its enduring authority in public decision-making, reinforcing its institutional legitimacy.

Astrology's role in religious festivals and temple traditions further exemplifies its deep integration into Indian spirituality. Many major Hindu festivals, including Diwali, Navaratri, and Makar Sankranti, are determined based on astrological calculations. Temple astrologers, known as *Deva-prashna* practitioners, are often consulted to determine favorable timings for deity consecrations, temple renovations, and special pujas. This institutionalized use of astrology within religious spaces demonstrates how it continues to be regarded as a sacred science that harmonizes divine and human realms. In South India, the

practice of Nadi astrology, where ancient palm leaf manuscripts purportedly contain pre-written destinies, reflects another unique aspect of astrology's role in religious devotion. Scholars such as Rao (2002) have examined how Nadi astrology sustains belief in predestined fate while also offering remedial measures to alter one's karmic trajectory.

The resilience of astrology in Indian society, despite modern scientific skepticism, can be attributed to its multifaceted role as a spiritual, psychological, social, and political tool. The works of scholars like Pingree, Davidson, and Kakar demonstrate that astrology in India is not merely a system of celestial divination but a deeply embedded cultural force that shapes religious worldviews, personal identity, and collective decision-making. Its integration into Hinduism, Buddhism, and alternative healing traditions ensures that it remains relevant in both traditional and contemporary contexts. While rationalist movements and scientific discourses challenge astrology's empirical validity, its continued practice across generations suggests that it fulfills a fundamental human need for cosmic connection, existential meaning, and social order. The adaptability of astrology to modern digital platforms, online consultations, and AI-based predictive models further indicates that astrology's role in Indian society is far from diminishing. Instead, it continues to evolve, maintaining its position as a cornerstone of Indian religious and social life.

### **Empirical and Scientific Studies on Indian Astrology:**

The scientific and empirical investigation of astrology in India has been a subject of debate for decades, with researchers from diverse fields such as astronomy, psychology, and social sciences examining its validity, effectiveness, and cultural resilience. While astrology remains deeply ingrained in Indian traditions, modern scientific scrutiny has attempted to evaluate its empirical foundations through statistical analysis, controlled experiments, and critical inquiry. The discourse surrounding astrology in India is complex, as it intertwines traditional belief systems, academic debates, and legal considerations. Empirical studies on astrology in India have sought to assess its predictive accuracy, psychological appeal, and societal impact, revealing both its enduring popularity and its contested legitimacy in scientific circles.

One of the earliest critical examinations of astrology

in India was conducted by Jayant Narlikar, an astrophysicist who argued that astrology lacks a systematic empirical foundation and does not conform to the scientific method (Narlikar, 2004). His studies highlighted that astrological predictions often rely on general statements and subjective interpretations rather than verifiable evidence. Narlikar conducted statistical analyses comparing astrological predictions with random chance, concluding that the success rate of astrological forecasts was no better than probability. His work reinforced the argument that astrology, despite its widespread acceptance, does not meet the criteria for a scientific discipline. However, his critiques were met with resistance from traditional astrologers and scholars who argued that astrology operates on principles beyond conventional scientific frameworks. The tension between scientific rationalism and astrological tradition continues to shape contemporary debates on the subject.

A significant empirical study on astrology's predictive power was undertaken by B.V. Raman, one of India's most renowned astrologers, who sought to defend astrology's legitimacy through research-based evidence (Raman, 1992). Raman attempted to demonstrate correlations between planetary positions and human destinies, particularly in areas such as career success, health, and marriage. He collected large data sets on horoscopes and their corresponding life outcomes, arguing that certain planetary combinations showed recurring patterns that aligned with traditional astrological interpretations. While his studies were not universally accepted within scientific academia due to concerns over methodological rigor, they were widely embraced within the astrological community as an effort to bridge traditional wisdom with empirical validation. Raman's work also contributed to the institutionalization of astrology in Indian universities, reinforcing its position as a serious field of study.

The debate over astrology's scientific status reached India's judicial system in 2004 when the Supreme Court of India upheld the inclusion of astrology as a subject in university curricula, ruling that astrology had a long-standing tradition in India and was worthy of academic study (Supreme Court of India, 2004). This decision was based on the argument that astrology, while not a conventional science, had cultural and historical significance that justified its formal instruction. This ruling marked a pivotal moment in the legitimacy of astrology in India, as it provided institutional backing for astrology

programs in universities such as Banaras Hindu University, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, and other institutions that offer degrees and research programs in Jyotisha. The decision also sparked renewed discussions on whether astrology should be classified as a science or a cultural discipline, reflecting the broader tension between traditional knowledge systems and scientific rationalism in India.

Empirical studies on the psychological aspects of astrological belief have also been conducted to understand why astrology remains so influential in India. Research by Sudhir Kakar (1982) on astrology's role in mental health and counseling suggests that astrological consultations function as an alternative form of psychological therapy. Many Indians turn to astrologers for guidance during periods of uncertainty, much like individuals in the West seek psychotherapy. Kakar's study found that astrology provides individuals with a structured framework to interpret life challenges, offering emotional reassurance and a sense of control over the future. His work aligns with psychological theories that suggest astrology operates through cognitive biases such as the Barnum effect, where individuals perceive vague and general statements as highly specific to their lives. The continued popularity of astrology, even among educated individuals, suggests that its appeal extends beyond empirical validation, serving as a mechanism for coping with uncertainty and existential anxiety.

Further empirical studies have examined astrology's application in fields such as medicine and finance. Ayurvedic astrology, or Ayur-Jyotisha, claims that planetary influences affect health conditions and that medical treatments can be optimized based on astrological timing. Some studies have sought to analyze whether correlations exist between astrological factors and disease patterns, but findings remain inconclusive. Similarly, financial astrology, which attempts to predict stock market trends based on planetary movements, has been subjected to empirical testing, with mixed results. Some traders claim success using astrological strategies, while financial analysts argue that market fluctuations are too complex to be determined by celestial influences. The lack of consistent empirical support has led to skepticism about astrology's predictive capabilities in these domains, yet belief in financial and medical astrology persists, driven by anecdotal experiences and cultural acceptance.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence and big data analytics have introduced new possibilities for testing

astrological claims. Researchers have attempted to use machine learning algorithms to analyze large sets of astrological data, seeking patterns that might validate or disprove astrological principles. Some studies have applied statistical techniques to assess whether planetary positions show measurable effects on human behavior, but no definitive proof has emerged. The rise of digital astrology apps and online astrological consultations has also provided new avenues for studying astrology's influence on contemporary society. The accessibility of astrology through technology has expanded its reach, making it a subject of increasing interest in both academic and commercial research.

Despite extensive empirical scrutiny, astrology continues to thrive in India, not necessarily because of scientific validation but due to its deep integration into cultural and religious traditions. The resilience of astrology in the face of scientific criticism suggests that its value lies not in its empirical accuracy but in its ability to provide meaning, structure, and psychological comfort. Studies indicate that even among scientifically trained individuals, belief in astrology often coexists with rational inquiry, reflecting a unique epistemological duality. In Indian society, where spirituality and scientific inquiry frequently intersect, astrology occupies a space that transcends conventional scientific frameworks, functioning as a bridge between ancient wisdom and contemporary existential concerns.

The empirical and scientific studies on Indian astrology reveal a complex interplay between belief, tradition, and rational analysis. While controlled experiments and statistical evaluations have generally failed to establish astrology's predictive accuracy, the continued prevalence of astrological belief in India underscores its significance as a cultural and psychological phenomenon. Research has shown that astrology provides emotional support, social cohesion, and a sense of cosmic order, all of which contribute to its enduring influence. The academic and legal recognition of astrology further reinforces its position as a legitimate field of study, ensuring that it remains relevant in both scholarly and public discourse. Whether astrology is ultimately classified as a science, a pseudoscience, or a cultural tradition, its empirical study continues to generate important insights into the nature of belief, human cognition, and the intersection of tradition and modernity in Indian society.

### **Astrology in Indian Education and Professional Institutions:**

Astrology has been an integral part of India's intellectual and spiritual traditions, with its inclusion in educational and professional institutions reinforcing its role as both an academic discipline and a practical vocation. Unlike in the West, where astrology has largely been relegated to the domain of popular culture and alternative spirituality, in India, it has maintained a level of institutional legitimacy, particularly within Sanskrit universities, theological academies, and professional organizations. The structured study of astrology in India is deeply rooted in the country's classical tradition, with its foundation in Vedic scriptures and scholarly commentaries. Over the years, the institutionalization of astrology has led to debates regarding its academic and scientific status, with strong arguments both in favor of and against its place in modern education and professional spheres. Scholars have explored astrology's role in Indian universities, its recognition by government institutions, and its professionalization as a career path, all of which highlight the complex relationship between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary academic frameworks.

One of the most significant developments in the institutionalization of astrology in India occurred in 2001 when astrology was officially introduced as a university subject by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This decision led to widespread debates, with supporters arguing that astrology was an essential part of India's heritage and should be studied academically, while critics claimed that it lacked empirical foundations and did not belong in a modern university curriculum (Balasubramaniam, 2001). Following the UGC's decision, several universities, including Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, and Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, introduced graduate and postgraduate programs in Jyotisha. These programs focus on classical astrological texts, predictive techniques, remedial measures, and the integration of astrology with other Vedic sciences such as Ayurveda and Vaastu Shastra. The inclusion of astrology in university curricula demonstrates its institutional acceptance, positioning it as a field of scholarly inquiry rather than merely a mystical or superstitious practice. However, the academic legitimacy of these programs remains a subject of ongoing debate, particularly in scientific and rationalist circles.

The Supreme Court of India played a crucial role in

reinforcing astrology's status in Indian education when it upheld the UGC's decision to include astrology as a legitimate subject in higher education (Supreme Court of India, 2004). The court ruled that astrology had been studied in India for centuries and that its inclusion in universities was justified based on its historical and cultural significance. This ruling provided further legitimacy to astrology as an academic discipline, ensuring its continued presence in educational institutions. Despite this judicial backing, the scientific community has remained divided, with organizations such as the Indian Rationalist Association arguing that astrology lacks empirical validity and should not be equated with subjects based on the scientific method (Narlikar, 2004). The persistence of these debates highlights the ongoing epistemological tension between traditional knowledge systems and modern scientific frameworks in Indian education.

The study of astrology in Indian educational institutions is structured around a blend of classical texts and modern pedagogical methods. Universities that offer astrology programs typically focus on foundational scriptures such as the Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra, Brihat Jataka, Saravali, and Phaladeepika, along with practical training in horoscope analysis, dasha systems, and remedial astrology. Many programs also incorporate interdisciplinary approaches, linking astrology with Sanskrit studies, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. In some institutions, astrology is taught alongside traditional Hindu theological disciplines, reinforcing its connection to spiritual and religious practices. The structured academic study of astrology in these universities ensures that students receive formal training rather than learning through informal apprenticeships, as was traditionally the case in the guru-shishyaparampara (teacher-disciple tradition). This transition from oral transmission to institutional education marks a significant shift in how astrology is preserved and propagated in modern India.

Apart from universities, astrology has also found a place in professional institutions, where certification programs and training workshops are conducted for aspiring astrologers. Organizations such as the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences (ICAS), founded by B.V. Raman, have played a pivotal role in standardizing astrological education and providing professional accreditation (Raman, 1992). ICAS offers structured courses leading to diplomas and certifications in astrology,

ensuring that practitioners meet certain educational and ethical standards. Similarly, other institutions such as the All India Federation of Astrologers' Societies (AIFAS) and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's School of Astrology offer professional training programs, enabling individuals to establish careers in astrological consultation, teaching, and research. The existence of these institutions reflects the demand for astrology as a profession and highlights the organized efforts to formalize astrological practice within structured educational settings.

Professional astrologers in India often pursue careers in a variety of fields, including personal consultation, media astrology, corporate astrology, and political astrology. The widespread presence of astrology columns in newspapers, television channels, and online platforms has created significant opportunities for astrologers to reach a broader audience. Digital platforms and astrology apps have further expanded the professional scope of astrology, allowing practitioners to offer services such as online horoscope readings, AI-generated predictions, and interactive consultations. This digitalization of astrology has led to the emergence of a new generation of astrologers who combine traditional knowledge with modern technological tools, making astrology more accessible to the public (Landscheidt, 2000). The integration of astrology into corporate decision-making, where business leaders seek astrological guidance for investments, mergers, and market trends, further underscores its professionalization beyond personal consultations.

Despite its strong institutional presence, astrology as a profession is not without challenges. The lack of a centralized regulatory body for astrologers means that the field is largely unregulated, leading to variations in the quality and credibility of astrological services. While professional organizations such as ICAS and AIFAS have attempted to set ethical standards, there is no legal framework to monitor astrological practice, resulting in instances of fraudulent claims and exploitative practices. Additionally, the debate over whether astrology should be classified as a science, an art, or a spiritual discipline continues to impact its professional standing. The government's stance on astrology remains ambivalent, as astrology is recognized in cultural and academic contexts but is not regulated as a licensed profession like medicine or law. This ambiguity affects the professional identity of astrologers, many of whom operate independently without institutional oversight.

The presence of astrology in Indian education and professional institutions reflects its enduring relevance in both scholarly and practical contexts. The formalization of astrology as an academic discipline in universities, its judicial validation, and the rise of professional training institutions have all contributed to its continued legitimacy. However, challenges remain, particularly in balancing traditional astrological wisdom with scientific scrutiny and establishing ethical standards in professional practice. The ongoing debates over astrology's academic and professional status highlight the broader conflict between tradition and modernity in Indian society, where ancient knowledge systems seek to coexist with contemporary rationalist perspectives. While astrology may not be universally accepted as a science, its institutionalization ensures that it remains a structured and influential field of study, shaping both intellectual discourse and professional practice in India.

### **Digital and Technological Influence on Indian Astrology:**

The advent of digital technology has significantly transformed Indian astrology, making it more accessible, commercialized, and integrated into contemporary lifestyles. While astrology has historically been transmitted through oral traditions, manuscripts, and printed texts, the digital revolution has reshaped its practice, dissemination, and professional landscape. The rise of astrology apps, artificial intelligence-driven predictions, online consultations, and social media platforms has led to the rapid expansion of astrology's reach, catering to a tech-savvy audience that seeks instant and personalized astrological guidance. The technological integration of astrology has also raised new debates about authenticity, commercialization, and the changing nature of astrological consultations. Scholars have examined how digital tools are shaping astrological practice in India, with particular focus on the role of online astrology platforms, mobile applications, artificial intelligence, and digital media in popularizing and modifying traditional astrological methods.

One of the most significant developments in digital astrology has been the proliferation of astrology apps and online platforms, which offer users instant horoscope generation, matchmaking services, and predictive insights based on complex algorithms. Platforms such as AstroSage, GaneshSpeaks, Clickastro, Kundli, and AstroVed have gained massive popularity, attracting

millions of users seeking personalized astrological readings (Landscheidt, 2000). These applications provide detailed birth charts, planetary transits, and dasha analyses, making astrology more accessible to individuals who may not have direct access to traditional astrologers. The success of these platforms highlights the growing demand for digital astrology, particularly among younger generations who prefer quick and convenient astrological consultations over in-person meetings. Online astrology has also democratized access to astrological knowledge, allowing users to engage with astrology at their own pace through blogs, webinars, and interactive courses.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics have further revolutionized Indian astrology by automating complex astrological calculations and offering AI-generated horoscope interpretations. AI-driven astrology applications use machine learning algorithms to analyze large datasets of birth charts and past predictions, refining astrological forecasts with greater precision (Landscheidt, 2000). While traditional astrology relies on the expertise of human astrologers to interpret planetary influences, AI-based systems process astronomical data at high speed, enabling users to receive astrological guidance instantly. Some platforms integrate chatbots and virtual astrologers, allowing users to ask questions and receive immediate responses based on predefined astrological rules. This automation has led to debates within the astrological community regarding the authenticity and accuracy of AI-generated predictions compared to traditional human interpretations. While AI-driven astrology enhances accessibility, some argue that it lacks the intuitive and experiential wisdom that human astrologers bring to consultations.

The rise of social media influencers and digital astrologers has further contributed to astrology's mainstream acceptance, particularly on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok (Lillqvist and Lindeman, 1998). Influential astrologers who create engaging video content, live Q&A sessions, and astrology-based personality analyses have attracted large followings, making astrology more interactive and participatory. Digital astrology influencers have played a key role in repackaging astrology for modern audiences, focusing on self-help, psychological insights, and spiritual growth rather than deterministic fate predictions. The influence of social media has led to the commodification of astrology, where astrological services are marketed through paid subscriptions, exclusive memberships, and

monetized content. This shift has made astrology more consumer-oriented, with users engaging in astrology not just for predictions but as a lifestyle practice. The gamification of astrology, where users receive daily horoscope updates, planetary alignment alerts, and compatibility ratings, has also contributed to astrology's digital transformation, making it a regular part of online engagement.

The digitalization of astrology has also impacted traditional astrological consultation practices, with many astrologers shifting their services online to cater to a global clientele. Virtual consultations via Zoom, WhatsApp, and Skype have replaced traditional in-person meetings, allowing astrologers to conduct readings across geographical boundaries. This shift has expanded the professional opportunities for astrologers, enabling them to reach a diverse audience beyond their local communities (Bhat, 2005). The integration of digital payments, e-commerce features, and cryptocurrency transactions in online astrology services has further professionalized the field, making astrological consultations more structured and financially viable. Some astrologers offer premium services such as personalized mantras, gemstone recommendations, and remedial rituals, which are delivered digitally through e-books, online courses, and video recordings.

Despite its growing digital presence, astrology has also faced challenges related to misinformation, fraudulent practices, and ethical concerns in the online space. The lack of regulatory oversight in digital astrology has led to the rise of unverified astrologers, fake predictions, and algorithmically generated horoscopes that lack depth and credibility (Narlikar, 2004). The commercialization of astrology through aggressive marketing tactics, including fear-based promotions and exaggerated claims, has raised ethical questions about its exploitation for financial gain. Additionally, concerns about privacy and data security have emerged, as many astrology apps collect sensitive user information such as birth details, location, and personal queries, leading to potential misuse of astrological data (Balasubramaniam, 2001). These issues have prompted discussions on the need for digital ethics and credibility standards in online astrology to ensure that users receive reliable and ethical astrological guidance.

The intersection of astrology with modern technology and scientific debates has further complicated its digital evolution. While data-driven astrology has attempted to integrate statistical analysis with traditional astrological

frameworks, mainstream scientific communities continue to challenge astrology's empirical basis. Some researchers argue that digital astrology operates on cognitive biases such as the Forer effect, where users perceive generalized astrological descriptions as highly personal (Forer, 1949). Psychological studies have shown that individuals who engage with astrology online often selectively interpret predictions in ways that confirm their existing beliefs, reinforcing astrology's appeal despite its lack of scientific validation (Blackmore and Seebold, 2001). However, astrology's persistence in the digital age suggests that its value lies not just in predictive accuracy but in its ability to provide personal meaning, emotional comfort, and self-exploration, which remain relevant in contemporary society.

The digital and technological transformation of Indian astrology represents a paradigm shift in how astrology is practiced, consumed, and understood. The rise of astrology apps, AI-driven horoscopes, social media influencers, and virtual consultations has expanded astrology's reach, making it more interactive and adaptable to modern lifestyles. While digital astrology has democratized access to astrological knowledge, it has also introduced new challenges related to authenticity, commercialization, and data ethics. The ongoing debates between traditional astrologers and AI-based astrology models reflect the broader tension between ancient wisdom and technological innovation. As astrology continues to evolve in the digital era, its integration with emerging technologies such as blockchain astrology, predictive analytics, and virtual reality consultations may further reshape its practice and influence in the years to come. Whether astrology is viewed as a spiritual practice, a psychological tool, or a commercial enterprise, its digital evolution highlights its enduring relevance in Indian society, demonstrating that even an ancient tradition can adapt to modern technological advancements while maintaining its core belief systems.

### **Conclusions and Comparative Analysis:**

The extensive review of literature on the belief system of astrology from a global perspective with special reference to Indian astrology reveals a complex and multi-dimensional discourse that spans historical, philosophical, psychological, scientific, technological, economic, and institutional aspects. Astrology, as a belief system, has demonstrated remarkable resilience across cultures and historical periods, adapting to evolving

intellectual, technological, and social frameworks. Despite the rise of scientific rationalism and skepticism, astrology continues to hold cultural, spiritual, and psychological significance in both Western and Indian contexts, albeit in distinct ways. The comparative analysis of global and Indian astrological traditions underscores both similarities and divergences in the belief systems, practices, and institutional acceptance of astrology.

A key distinction between Western and Indian astrology lies in their philosophical foundations and epistemological frameworks. Indian astrology, rooted in Vedic cosmology, is deeply intertwined with the doctrines of karma, dharma, and moksha, viewing planetary influences as manifestations of an individual's past-life actions and spiritual destiny (Pingree, 1981). This belief system aligns astrology with religious and spiritual traditions, positioning it as both a predictive tool and a path for spiritual guidance. In contrast, Western astrology, particularly in its modern psychological and humanistic interpretations, places greater emphasis on self-discovery, archetypal symbolism, and psychological transformation (Greene, 1980). While classical Western astrology was historically deterministic, its contemporary forms, influenced by Jungian psychology and New Age spirituality, often focus on astrology as a tool for personal empowerment rather than fate-bound determinism. This fundamental difference highlights the contrast between the karmic determinism of Indian astrology and the self-actualization model of modern Western astrology.

Despite these philosophical differences, both Indian and Western astrology have faced scientific scrutiny and empirical challenges. Scientific studies, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries, have largely dismissed astrology as lacking empirical validity, arguing that it fails the tests of falsifiability and reproducibility (Carlson, 1985; Narlikar, 2004). The Mars Effect studies (Gauquelin, 1955) and meta-analyses of astrological predictions have found no statistically significant correlations between planetary positions and human traits, leading to astrology's classification as a pseudoscience by the majority of the scientific community (Dean and Kelly, 2003). However, psychological research has indicated that astrology persists not because of its empirical accuracy but due to cognitive biases, narrative structures, and emotional comfort it provides to believers (Forer, 1949; Blackmore and Sebold, 2001). This suggests that astrology functions more as a symbolic, cultural, and psychological system rather than a strictly empirical science, offering existential

meaning rather than verifiable predictions.

The institutional acceptance of astrology also varies significantly between India and the Western world. In India, astrology has been formally recognized as a subject of study in universities, with institutions such as Banaras Hindu University, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, and Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan offering degrees in Jyotisha. The Supreme Court of India's 2004 ruling upheld astrology's inclusion in higher education, reinforcing its academic legitimacy despite opposition from rationalist groups (Supreme Court of India, 2004). In contrast, Western universities largely exclude astrology from formal education, with only a few institutions offering historical or cultural studies of astrology rather than practical training in astrological techniques. The professionalization of astrology is also more structured in India, with organizations like the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences (ICAS) and the All India Federation of Astrologers' Societies (AIFAS) setting educational and ethical standards for astrologers (Raman, 1992). In the West, while professional astrology organizations such as the International Society for Astrological Research (ISAR) and the National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR) exist, astrology remains largely an unregulated industry, often overlapping with New Age and alternative healing practices rather than being institutionalized as a formal discipline.

Another critical point of comparison is the economic and technological transformation of astrology. In both Indian and global contexts, astrology has been commercialized and digitized, with the rise of AI-driven horoscope apps, online astrology platforms, and social media influencers reshaping its accessibility and consumption (Landscheidt, 2000). Indian astrology, in particular, has seen a massive expansion in digital consultations, online matchmaking services, and astrology-based financial predictions, creating a multibillion-dollar industry that blends traditional astrological wisdom with technological advancements. Western astrology, while also experiencing a digital transformation, is more closely linked to psychological self-help, personal branding, and lifestyle trends, often marketed as part of spiritual coaching, mindfulness, and personal growth programs. This difference reflects the continuing integration of astrology into the mainstream socio-economic fabric in India, whereas in the West, astrology remains largely an alternative or niche belief system rather than a state-endorsed cultural institution.

The role of astrology in politics and governance further highlights distinctions in its global and Indian perspectives. In India, astrology continues to influence political decision-making, election strategies, and governance, with many politicians publicly consulting astrologers for guidance on campaign launches, cabinet appointments, and legislative decisions (Subramaniam, 2014). The belief in Rajneeti Jyotisha (political astrology) has persisted despite modern governance structures, reinforcing the cultural legitimacy of astrology in state affairs. In contrast, Western nations generally do not integrate astrology into formal political decision-making, although historical accounts suggest that figures like Ronald Reagan privately consulted astrologers during his presidency (Tarpley, 1992). This comparative analysis underscores India's unique institutionalization of astrology at multiple levels of society, whereas in Western contexts, astrology remains primarily an individual or subcultural belief rather than a mainstream political influence.

In conclusion, the literature review on the belief system of astrology in a global perspective with special reference to Indian astrology demonstrates that astrology is a dynamic and evolving belief system, adapting to cultural, technological, and institutional changes across different societies. While scientific critiques have largely challenged astrology's empirical basis, its persistence as a psychological, social, and economic phenomenon suggests that its significance extends beyond empirical validation. The philosophical foundations, institutional acceptance, professionalization, economic impact, and political role of astrology vary considerably between India and the West, reflecting broader cultural attitudes toward spirituality, rationality, and traditional knowledge systems. Indian astrology remains deeply embedded in religious, social, and political life, whereas in the West, astrology has largely shifted toward self-help, psychological astrology, and alternative spirituality rather than institutionalized practice.

The comparative analysis of global and Indian astrological traditions highlights key questions for future research, particularly regarding astrology's adaptability to modern scientific frameworks, its evolving digital landscape, and its continuing role in shaping personal and collective belief systems. As astrology continues to integrate with AI, big data, and virtual reality, new forms of astrological practice may emerge, further challenging traditional epistemologies while expanding astrology's cultural relevance. Whether astrology is ultimately viewed

as a sacred science, a cultural tradition, a psychological tool, or a pseudoscience, its ability to persist and transform across civilizations underscores its importance as a subject of academic, philosophical, and sociological inquiry.

### **Relevance of the Review of Literature in the Thesis:**

The review of literature used in this thesis is crucial for establishing a comprehensive understanding of astrology as a cultural, psychological, and institutional belief system with global and Indian perspectives. It provides historical context to astrology's evolution, helping to analyze its continuity and transformation across civilizations. The literature is particularly relevant in exploring how Indian astrology has maintained institutional legitimacy, while in Western societies, it has largely remained an alternative or esoteric practice. It also offers insights into the scientific critique of astrology, allowing this thesis to examine both empirical skepticism and psychological explanations for its persistence. The exploration of technological advancements and digital astrology further demonstrates astrology's adaptability in modern times, reinforcing its role in economic, social, and political spheres. By integrating diverse scholarly perspectives, the literature enables a balanced critical analysis of whether astrology should be classified as a science, a spiritual tradition, or a psychological tool. It strengthens the thesis by providing theoretical and empirical foundations to assess astrology's enduring influence, evolving role, and future trajectory in contemporary society.

### **Research Gap in the Study of the Belief System of Astrology:**

The study of astrology as a belief system has received considerable academic attention in historical, cultural, and sociological contexts, yet there exist substantial gaps that warrant deeper exploration. While various scholars have analyzed the historical evolution of astrology and its textual foundations, most of these studies remain limited to classical astrological texts such as Brihat Jataka, Vedanga Jyotisha, Saravali, and Phaladeepika (Pingree, 1978; Yano, 1987). These works provide an extensive discussion on the mathematical and predictive foundations of astrology but do not adequately engage with how astrology has functioned as a belief system within society or how it has evolved in the

contemporary world. There remains a lack of systematic academic inquiry into how astrology continues to shape individual lives, social institutions, and cultural identities despite the advancements of science and technology. Most historical analyses focus on astrology as an intellectual tradition rather than as a lived belief system that influences decision-making, personal identity, and social relationships. While Western astrology has been examined in psychological terms, with scholars like Liz Greene (1997) and Richard Tarnas (2006) exploring its role in self-reflection and personal growth, a similar approach has not been applied to Indian astrology, which remains largely studied within its theological and textual framework without addressing its social and psychological dimensions.

A significant research gap exists in the exploration of astrology's cross-cultural significance, particularly in how different societies institutionalize, practice, and legitimize astrological beliefs. Studies on Western astrology have examined its transformation into a tool for psychological counseling, self-discovery, and New Age spirituality, yet there has been little comparative analysis of how Indian astrology differs in structure, purpose, and societal acceptance. Western astrology has been integrated into pop culture, self-help movements, and psychological models, while Indian astrology remains more rooted in religious traditions, ritualistic practices, and predictive determinism. However, very few academic works engage in a comparative analysis that situates Indian astrology within a global discourse of astrological beliefs, nor do they analyze how these different traditions interact in a globalized world where the exchange of cultural and spiritual practices is increasingly common (Campion, 2009; Willis and Curry, 2004). There is also insufficient research on how astrology is institutionalized in India through universities, astrology councils, and religious authorities, despite its increasing recognition as a formal discipline. While Indian Universities like Banaras Hindu University and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University have incorporated astrology into their curricula, academic discourse on how astrology is taught, standardized, and evaluated remains minimal. There is also a gap in analyzing the impact of such institutionalization on astrology's social legitimacy and professionalization in India.

Another key area that remains underexplored is the sociological aspect of astrology, particularly in relation to class, caste, gender, and religion. While studies have

acknowledged that astrology is widely practiced in India, there is limited empirical research that explores how different social groups engage with astrology, how belief intensity varies across demographics, and how astrology's role differs across rural and urban populations. Research on how caste influences access to astrological knowledge and how different religious communities perceive astrology remains lacking. Although Hinduism has traditionally been the primary religious framework within which astrology operates, there is limited research on how astrology is perceived in India by Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and other religious communities. Additionally, while astrology has traditionally been a male-dominated profession, the increasing presence of female astrologers and their role in shaping modern astrological discourse has not been thoroughly examined. Studies have yet to analyze how gender dynamics influence astrological practice, whether in terms of client preferences, interpretative frameworks, or access to institutional recognition.

A major research gap is evident in the psychological impact of astrology on believers, particularly in how astrology influences mental health, coping mechanisms, and decision-making processes. While Western psychology has integrated astrological counseling into certain therapeutic models, Indian astrology remains studied primarily as a predictive tool rather than a psychological support system. There is a lack of research on how individuals emotionally respond to astrological predictions, how belief in astrology affects anxiety, hope, or stress, and whether astrology functions as a placebo effect in providing psychological reassurance. Research on how individuals develop cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias and the Barnum effect, in relation to astrological predictions is still minimal in the Indian context. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive study on how astrology intersects with modern psychological theories such as Jungian archetypes, psychoanalysis, or mindfulness practices in India.

The digital transformation of astrology presents another significant gap in existing literature. The rise of online astrology platforms, AI-driven horoscope generation, and social media astrology influencers has changed the way astrology is consumed and practiced. However, there is minimal research on how this transition from traditional face-to-face astrological consultations to digital astrology services is reshaping belief systems. Studies have yet to analyze the trust dynamics between

clients and online astrologers, the commercialization of astrology through paid apps and automated predictions, and how digital astrology is altering generational attitudes toward astrology. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in astrology, as seen in the development of algorithmic horoscope generation and predictive analytics, has not been critically examined in terms of its impact on the traditional role of the astrologer and the subjective interpretation of astrological charts. The increasing presence of astrology in social media spaces such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has led to the rapid dissemination of astrological knowledge in bite-sized, accessible formats, yet research has not explored how this impacts belief formation, astrological literacy, or misinformation about astrology.

Another critical gap in the study of astrology is the legal and ethical dimensions of astrology, particularly in the Indian context. While astrology has been legally recognized in India as a subject worthy of academic study, its epistemological status remains a matter of debate. There is minimal research on how astrology is treated in legal cases, consumer protection laws, and ethical considerations surrounding astrological predictions. Cases where astrological services have been legally challenged for false predictions or fraudulent practices require deeper scholarly attention. Similarly, ethical questions regarding astrology's role in influencing critical life decisions, such as marriage compatibility, financial investments, and medical choices, remain underexplored. Research on whether astrology contributes to superstitions, fatalistic attitudes, or personal agency in decision-making is still limited, and the psychological and ethical implications of astrological consultations need further study.

Despite astrology's continued relevance in Indian society, it remains understudied as a dynamic and evolving belief system. While past research has focused heavily on textual interpretations and historical accounts, there is an urgent need for interdisciplinary research that integrates sociological, psychological, technological, and comparative global perspectives. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by employing qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyze astrology's evolving role in individual lives, social structures, and global contexts. By conducting interviews, surveys, case studies, and media analysis, this research will provide empirical data to deepen the academic understanding of how astrology functions as a belief system. It will also contribute to contemporary debates on why astrology

remains relevant despite scientific advancements, how it adapts to cultural and technological changes, and how it is legitimized in different global and regional settings. Through a comprehensive exploration of astrology's historical roots, institutional frameworks, digital transformations, and psychological impacts, this research will offer a holistic and nuanced understanding of astrology in the 21st century, particularly in the Indian context where it continues to shape social life, religious practice, and personal identity in profound ways.

### **Conclusion:**

The present study, based on a careful review of literature and my own academic engagement with the subject, brings out the fact that astrology continues to persist as a complex, dynamic, and adaptive belief system that cannot be confined within the rigid boundaries of science, culture, or spirituality alone. It operates across these domains simultaneously, drawing its strength from each of them. While modern scientific investigations have repeatedly questioned its predictive accuracy and empirical validity, these critiques have not succeeded in diminishing its social presence or cultural significance. In my understanding, this itself is an important indicator that astrology functions at a level that goes beyond conventional scientific frameworks and engages with deeper dimensions of human experience.

One of the most striking observations that emerges from the study is the contextual variation in the form and function of astrology across different societies. In Western contexts, astrology has undergone a process of transformation, moving away from deterministic prediction towards a more psychological and self-reflective orientation. It is often used as a tool for understanding personality, exploring inner conflicts, and guiding personal growth. On the other hand, in India, astrology continues to retain its traditional authority and is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural and religious fabric of life. From marriage decisions to political timing, from health-related concerns to educational choices, astrology continues to play a visible and often decisive role. Based on my own observations, it is evident that in the Indian context, astrology is not merely a matter of individual belief but a shared cultural practice that shapes collective behaviour and social norms.

The study also highlights that the endurance of astrology is closely linked to certain psychological tendencies inherent in human nature. Concepts such as

the Forer effect, confirmation bias, and the human inclination to search for meaning and order in uncertain situations help explain why individuals often find astrological interpretations convincing and personally relevant. However, in my view, these explanations should not be seen as complete negations of astrology but rather as complementary insights that help us understand its continued appeal. Astrology, in many cases, provides individuals with a language through which they can articulate their anxieties, aspirations, and life experiences, thereby functioning as a form of informal psychological support.

Another important dimension that has emerged in recent years is the transformation of astrology in the digital era. The increasing use of artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and online consultation platforms has significantly altered the way astrology is practiced and accessed. Today, astrology is no longer confined to traditional settings; it has become a global, interactive, and technology-driven phenomenon. This democratization of access has made astrological knowledge available to a much wider audience. At the same time, it has also given rise to new challenges related to authenticity, ethical responsibility, and commercialization. From my perspective, this phase represents both an opportunity and a concern, as it reflects the adaptability of astrology while also raising questions about its future direction.

In conclusion, it would be inadequate to evaluate astrology solely on the basis of whether it meets the criteria of modern science. Such an approach overlooks its broader role as a system of meaning-making that has evolved over centuries and continues to respond to changing human needs. Astrology, as the study suggests, functions as a multidimensional belief system situated at the intersection of culture, psychology, spirituality, and now technology. Its continued relevance in contemporary society indicates that it fulfills certain enduring human needs—such as the desire for meaning, identity, reassurance, and a sense of connection with a larger cosmic order. In my considered opinion, any meaningful understanding of astrology must therefore adopt an interdisciplinary perspective that acknowledges both its limitations and its significance as a living tradition in the modern world.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study, based on an extensive review of

literature and supported by my academic engagement with Jyotisha and social sciences, reveals that astrology continues to function as a significant and evolving belief system in both global and Indian contexts. The findings suggest that astrology cannot be understood through a single disciplinary lens; rather, it emerges as a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates cultural traditions, psychological processes, social structures, and, increasingly, technological influences.

One of the key findings of the study is the persistence of astrology despite sustained scientific criticism. Empirical investigations, particularly those conducted in the domains of psychology and statistics, have largely failed to establish consistent evidence supporting the predictive accuracy of astrology. However, this lack of empirical validation has not resulted in a corresponding decline in its popularity. On the contrary, astrology continues to be widely practiced and trusted by individuals across different educational and social backgrounds. In my view, this indicates that the relevance of astrology lies not primarily in its predictive claims but in its capacity to provide meaning, reassurance, and interpretative frameworks in situations of uncertainty.

A second important finding relates to the cultural differentiation in the practice and perception of astrology. The comparative analysis clearly shows that Western and Indian traditions of astrology have evolved in distinct directions. In Western societies, astrology has largely transformed into a psychological and humanistic tool, where emphasis is placed on self-awareness, personality analysis, and personal growth. The influence of thinkers such as Carl Jung and Dane Rudhyar has led to a reinterpretation of astrology as a symbolic language of the psyche. In contrast, Indian astrology continues to retain its traditional and institutional character. It remains deeply integrated with religious practices, karmic philosophy, and social institutions. From my own observations, it is evident that astrology in India is actively consulted in matters such as marriage compatibility, career decisions, health concerns, and even administrative and political planning. This demonstrates that astrology in India functions not merely at an individual level but as a socially embedded system that influences collective behaviour.

Another significant finding of the study is the role of psychological mechanisms in sustaining belief in astrology. The literature reviewed indicates that individuals tend to perceive astrological interpretations

as accurate due to cognitive tendencies such as the Forer effect, confirmation bias, and selective memory. People often recall predictions that appear to be correct while ignoring those that do not align with their experiences. However, in my understanding, these psychological explanations should not be interpreted solely as a dismissal of astrology. Rather, they highlight the ways in which astrology resonates with human cognitive patterns and emotional needs. Astrology provides individuals with a structured narrative through which they can understand their life experiences, cope with uncertainty, and maintain a sense of continuity and purpose.

The study also brings out the sociological significance of astrology, particularly in the Indian context. Astrology continues to play a crucial role in maintaining social order and cultural continuity. Practices such as horoscope matching in marriage, selection of auspicious timings (muhurta), and consultation with astrologers for major life decisions reflect its institutional presence. In many cases, astrology serves as a mediating mechanism between tradition and modernity, allowing individuals to negotiate change while remaining anchored in cultural values. From my administrative experience, I have also observed that astrology is often consulted informally even in professional and bureaucratic settings, which further indicates its deep-rooted influence.

An important contemporary dimension that emerges from the study is the transformation of astrology in the digital age. The rapid expansion of mobile applications, online consultation platforms, and artificial intelligence-based tools has significantly altered the accessibility and practice of astrology. Individuals can now obtain instant astrological insights without direct interaction with traditional practitioners. This has contributed to the globalization and commercialization of astrology, making it more visible and widely consumed. At the same time, this shift raises important concerns regarding the standardization of knowledge, the authenticity of interpretations, and ethical practices. In my view, while technology has expanded the reach of astrology, it has also introduced new challenges that require careful consideration, particularly in terms of regulation and responsible dissemination.

The findings also suggest that astrology functions as a bridge between different domains of knowledge. It connects traditional cosmological ideas with contemporary psychological interpretations and, increasingly, with technological applications. This integrative character may

explain its resilience over time. Unlike rigid systems of knowledge, astrology has demonstrated a capacity to adapt to changing intellectual and social environments. Whether it is the incorporation of psychological theories in the West or the integration of digital tools in recent times, astrology has continuously redefined itself while retaining its core symbolic structure.

At a broader level, the discussion points towards the need for a more balanced and nuanced approach in studying astrology. The tendency to classify astrology strictly as either a science or a pseudoscience often limits our understanding of its actual role in society. In my considered opinion, astrology should be approached as a cultural and psychological phenomenon that operates alongside, rather than in opposition to, scientific knowledge. Its significance lies not only in what it claims to predict but also in how it helps individuals and societies construct meaning, maintain continuity, and respond to uncertainty.

Overall, the findings of the study reinforce the view that astrology remains a relevant and influential system of thought in the modern world. Its persistence, adaptability, and widespread acceptance suggest that it fulfills important human needs that are not entirely addressed by scientific or rational frameworks alone. At the same time, the challenges posed by scientific criticism and digital transformation indicate that astrology must continue to evolve in order to maintain its credibility and relevance. The discussion, therefore, highlights both the strengths and limitations of astrology, emphasizing the need for an interdisciplinary and context-sensitive understanding of this enduring belief system.

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