

## THE ASTROLOGY OF THE EASTERN MASTERS

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by Malvin Artley

This article originally appeared in The Esoteric Quarterly<sup>1</sup>[1], but the archive does not appear on the net, for whatever reason. It is a very basic introduction to what in reality is a vast subject. It was written at a time when I had my first real exposure to Mahayana Buddhism. In that regard, having learned much since then, I will update minor points at a later date, but the essence is there and true for now.

There is an astrology virtually unknown to Westerners that holds the keys to much of the occultism that we have been given in the Trans-Himalayan wisdom teachings. When the Tibetan Master Djwal Khul dictated his magnum opus *Esoteric Astrology*<sup>2</sup>[2] to the Western world in 1951, he revealed much to us about the inner workings of astrology as we understand it in the West. Yet, there was entire realm of astrological thought and practice that he left unaddressed - a type of astrology that he would have studied extensively throughout many centuries in his Eastern incarnations. The astrological systems which are referred to here are Chinese astrology, along with the *Kalachakra Tantra* from India. These systems that are not mentioned in *Esoteric Astrology* are an integral part of an astrology that has guided the lives of countless people throughout the centuries in the Orient.

In fact, more people use the various systems of Oriental astrology throughout the world than they do Western astrology. Yet, we Westerners are apt to consider our brand of astrology superior in many ways to Oriental astrology. If Oriental astrology has been so integral to the lives of so many people, why does it not feature in a book like *Esoteric Astrology*? To begin to fathom this mystery, we need to take a closer look at just what Oriental astrology is, how it works and what it reveals to us. To do that, however, we need to open our minds to a philosophy that can be as foreign to our culture of thought as it is beautiful. We should recognize that it is a viable system, providing many millions of people with a much-needed service, that it can be as revelatory in its application as any branch of astrology known to the West and that it is a system of astrology in many ways closer to the hearts of our beloved eastern Masters than our western methods of divination.

How many readers of *Esoteric Astrology* have considered the type of astrological training the Tibetan would have received in the monasteries in his earlier days and in lives past? When we pour through the pages of *The Secret Doctrine*<sup>3</sup>[3], *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*<sup>4</sup>[4], or *Esoteric Astrology* we are reading pages of text that have been directed at a Western readership with the expressed purpose of bringing the Ageless Wisdom Teachings<sup>5</sup>[5] to the West - Eastern philosophies being 'Westernized', if you will. Some readers of those texts would be apt to think that the westernized concepts presented therein would be all that is important for us to understand at this point in western history. In one sense they would be correct in that assumption, but it would be a narrow and restrictive view.

A wider perspective is needed if we are to properly understand what has been given in relation to the astrological background of the Wisdom Teachings thus presented to us. As an example, if the Tibetan had included teaching on the Five Element system, the Celestial Stems and Earthly Branches<sup>6</sup>[6], and especially as those relate to the Ray cycles<sup>7</sup>[7], the dispensation of the great Teachings through the ages, geological cycles and so forth, how many more volumes would have been added to *Esoteric Astrology* and, more importantly, how much would the average Western reader have understood of what was being presented along those lines? The Five Elements, the Stems and the Branches are basic concepts well-known in the East, yet they are quite foreign to most westerners and seem to be at odds with the standard elemental system of astrology<sup>8</sup>[8] that has been handed down to us from the Middle East and medieval Europe.

It is not the purpose of this article to go into detail about the philosophies that form the basis of Eastern astrology. However, with an overview of the basic systems involved we can begin to grasp a wider view of the august practice of astrology and expand our mental horizons to include an astrology that would work to bridge the East and the West in astrological practice. (As a point of truth, though, ‘in Christ there is no East or West’[9]) We would begin to get a “world view” of astrological practice. With the ascendancy of India and China in the world stage and the incredible expansions of awareness brought about by the Information Age, it behooves us to be more inclusive and expansive in our thinking. It would also give fresh insights into the teachings we have been given through the works of Blavatsky, Bailey and the like if we understood even brief overviews of the texts that have been used for instruction of disciples, adepts and masters through the centuries, along with the astrological systems that have been used to guide their paths. All we can do at this juncture is to give the barest of overviews and a few pertinent examples of how these other types of astrology factor into wider astrological practice. Hopefully, though, something will ‘click’ to the reader and we may begin to approach a new area of study that has hitherto escaped our notice, thus bringing us closer to the spirit of the occultism in which we have all been schooled. With that, let us begin our journey into a world of astrological practice that is as beautiful as it is strange, as revelatory as it is veiled and as foreign to us as our astrology is to the people of the Orient.

**Chinese Astrology** Of the many eastern astrological systems, Chinese astrology is the best-known. Most Westerners get their first taste of Chinese astrology through the place mats under their bowls of won ton soup and fried rice in Chinese restaurants. The average person who has frequented such an establishment would be able to tell you what their animal sign is because it is an amusing exercise to figure such things out as they wait for their food. ‘Chinese astrology’, as people see it, is a quaint, but fictional system of personality typing that is best thrown out with the meal when it is finished. I would dare say many Western astrologers see it that way, too. However, the same could be said of the daily Western horoscopes that we read in the newspapers and magazines throughout the Western world. On the whole they are generic in the extreme and do little to help people. Those horoscopes are seen as a distracting sideline to the more important parts of the paper, like the sports section or the comics. Competent astrologers shake their heads at the ignorance of people when it comes to Western astrology. At times it is difficult to live in a world that sees one’s life’s-work as fanciful—or worse. It is the same with Chinese astrologers, too.

Just as it is the case with the newspaper horoscopes of the West, there is only a small amount of information that is given out about Chinese astrology on the place mats of oriental restaurants, for instance. What is given out over the internet is seldom much better. In fact, to illustrate just how little information is given out about Chinese astrology, even among ‘Chinese astrologers’, for example, with the animal sign we are given less than 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the information with which a competent Chinese astrologer would even begin to work with. Even that is only the most basic information in any Chinese astrological chart. To make matters worse, animal signs are not even used by the upper echelons of Chinese astrologers. The ‘animal signs’, as we know them, are a stepping-down of the true information that the animal sign veils and are part of a larger system of Chinese astrology, actually, the basis of all Chinese astrology, called the Four Pillars. This system is also sometimes called ‘The Four Pillars of Destiny’.

So, to give a very brief example of how misunderstood true Chinese astrology is, even amongst some of its own practitioners, let us take a look at what is actually described by the Four Pillars and some of the information contained therein. The Four Pillars are based upon the same data that western astrologers use—the date of birth, the time of day and the location of birth. That is where the similarity between the two types of astrology ends, though. The Four Pillars, as the name suggests, yields four sets of data, each describing a particular phase of a person’s life and different affiliations with people throughout the life. The four standard Pillars are the Year, Month, Day and Hour Pillars. What we read about in popular works on Chinese astrology is actually only the Year

Pillar, and then only the animal by itself. There are also other Pillars that are used by some of the more practiced Chinese astrologers, but the standard four will suffice for now. What might be of interest to readers is to note that the Year Pillar does not actually describe the inner essence of a person to any great degree. That task falls to the Day Pillar. The Year Pillar is more descriptive of a person's place in the larger scheme of things and also one's connection with their ancestors and extended family. The Year Pillar is thus a generational influence and is therefore a much more generalized picture of a person than the Day Pillar would be.

Just what do the Four Pillars describe, then? The Year, as we have said, describes one's larger social context. The Month is one's immediate birth family. The Day describes the self and one's spouse. The Hour describes one's children, friends and creative output, as well as one's innermost thoughts. As was pointed out before, the 'animal sign' is actually a veil for something far more significant. The Four Pillars are all representative of phases of cycles, and each one (starting with the hour and getting progressively larger) is a sub-cycle of a larger cycle (Pillar). Thus, we have twelve Chinese hours in a day, twelve sets of days in a Chinese lunar month, twelve lunar months in a Chinese year (most years, that is) and twelve years in a Great Year (of twelve years' duration). There is actually occult significance to this cycle of twelve as it works out in the Four Pillars, because it connects the entire system with the planet Jupiter, whose orbital cycle is twelve years. However, the association with Jupiter does not end there, as we shall see.

Each of the Four Pillars is constructed in three sections: a Celestial Stem, an Earthly Branch and a Combination Element. The Stem, as it is called, is one of the Five Elements of Oriental philosophies: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. In terms with which we are more familiar, these correspond with space (ether), fire, earth, air and water, respectively. All Chinese occultism is based upon five, instead of four, elements. Tibetan astrology is based upon the same five elements as well. The Five Elements are all connected with the Stem in any Pillar. In addition, all Stems are either Yin or Yang. They are polarized, in other words. We should be careful to note that Yin and Yang are not designators of gender in Chinese astrology, though. Rather, they are indicative of the processes of balancing in nature, for all Chinese astrology is experientially and process-based. For instance, Yin represents movement from the periphery to the center, coolness, contraction, softness, amorphousness, etc. Yang represents the opposite polarities to the qualities just-mentioned. Therefore, each of the Heavenly/Celestial Stems represents the method or processes by which any Pillar operates. The Stem defines the parameters of operation for the Pillar.

Each Stem Element is thus given a Yin and Yang expression each. Therefore, there are ten possible combinations of Stem Elements and Polarities, and these endlessly repeat themselves in cycles of ten. The cycle of Stems, however, is based upon the number 5, because without the Five Elements, there would be no cycle to begin with. This brings up an interesting point with regard to the Year Pillar. If the Stems for the Year are endlessly repeated in cycles of ten (based upon cycles of five) then we will perhaps see the sub-cycles of the subjective cycles of the planets[10] in that, respectively. Thus, not only do we have the exoteric (orbital) cycle of Jupiter expressed in the Four Pillars, but we also have the subjective (or Ray) cycle of Jupiter[11] expressed after some fashion (magnitudes of five-year cycles), as well as the subjective cycle for Vulcan[12], and esoteric planet, (magnitudes of ten-year cycles). The Four Pillars are therefore much more than a quaint system of reckoning personality types. They veil something of more importance to the esotericist. In truth, they spring from one of the very foundations of esoteric astrology itself: the science of the Rays[13].

The Branch, on the other hand, is descriptive of the phase of the cycle that the Pillar represents. These phases are where the names of the animal signs come in. The animals are used to describe the phases of the cycles[14] because it is much easier to impart such information with a set of word

pictures than through rote information. It also conveniently veils a greater truth from the masses. As has been stated, there are twelve of these ‘animals’.

That is why it is only the animal signs that are used in standard publications on Chinese astrology. No one would even give it a second look otherwise, because without the animal names there is no evocative or poetic hook for the mind or emotions of the readers. The Branch would only be rote and dry data if the pictorial element were taken away, boring to most readers. A partial example of the sort of dry data the Branch represents is as follows:

“**I TZU** This first branch is the phase of commencement. It is one of the more creative phases because it holds within it all the seeds of the remainder of the 12 cyclic phases. It marks the period of conception and beginnings. The conjectural name for this Branch from the Chinese is “Child” or “Son”. In the hour pillar it marks the beginning of the day—the first double-hour—from 11:00 PM to 1:00 AM. This is a time of day where people are usually in their deepest period of sleep and are thus most easily able to contact and commune with the ancestors as the body is in repose. In the day pillar it marks the 1<sup>st</sup> 3-day period of the month and encompasses the Bat, the Rat and the Swallow (3, 2 and 1 resp.) as day constellations. These day constellations correspond to the 12<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Xiu (Lunar Mansions).....”[15]

From the preceding, we can perhaps see why it was decided to use animal symbolism for a description of the phase represented by the animal instead of the true information.

When the Branch and the Stem are put together, they form a kind of synthetic expression that is the combined working of the phase and the elements. Again, the combined element is expressed as one of the five elements, along with a descriptive phrase. Additionally, each of the “animals” is given a poetic name as well, dependent upon the Stem Element, such as ‘Dragon of Pure Virtue’ or ‘Rat on the Roof’. Once these three factors are put together in an interpretation of any Pillar, then the entire story of what it represents can be told. We thus have:

- **The basic polarity** (Is it expansive [Yang] or contractive [Yin], for example?)
- **The method of its unfolding** (the Element: Fire being inspiration, spiritual pursuits, etc, for instance.)
- **The particular phase that is being unfolded** (Rat/Branch I indicating ‘Commencement’)
- **A particular qualifier for the phase** (Rat on the Roof=hidden abilities and leadership potential)
- **A synthetic expression** (‘Water of Rains and Springs’=emphasis upon healing and clearing away of old matters)

The entire matter then begins to get particularly interesting because what is being described by each Pillar is a subjective quality and not a map-able construct as one would have in western astrology. Instead, each Pillar describes a stage of inner unfolding for an individual, and in a particular area of life. There is no orbital cycle with which one can track the development of these phase relationships. Further, each of the Pillars interacts with all the others. The Pillars can be progressed just as the planets in Western horoscopes can be progressed. However, there is a fair amount of leeway in the interpretation of the Pillars, and it depends upon the skill of the astrologer to bring through the true essence that is being presented. From the foundation of the Four Pillars, then, the Chinese astrologer has the springboard from which all the other systems of Chinese astrology can be read. If this example of this simple system of Chinese astrology seems long, rest assured that there is much more to it than has been discussed here. As we begin to see, there is much more to Chinese astrology than meets the eye of the casual observer.

Probably the main reason that Chinese astrology is not recognized as ‘true astrology’ in the West is precisely because there are no orbital cycles to track, no planetary bodies, no angular relationships between the heavenly bodies, so-on and so-forth. The vast majority of the methods in what is known as Chinese astrology are more sophisticated systems of numerology. It is of interest, that the subjective/Ray cycles as we know them are numerical and that those cycles are tracked in whole Earth years, just as the phases of the Chinese Great Year are listed in whole numbers rather than the actual orbital cycle of Jupiter (which is not exactly twelve years in duration). Of further interest is the fact that the Four Pillars use four of the numbers associated with Ray cycles that we have been given—5, 7, 9 and 10. The numbers 5 and 10 have already been discussed and are associated with Rays 2 and 1, respectively. Number 7 is associated with Ray 7[16], and its place in Chinese astrology is associated with the endlessly-repeating cycle of the Notional Xiu (xiu=lunar mansions), which are also a part of the Four Pillars system. There are twenty-eight Notional Xiu (4x7), and there are twenty-eight true Chinese lunar mansions as well. The lunar mansions are divided into four sets of seven mansions each. The number 9 is not so widely-known, but it is the number associated with Ray 3[17], and it finds application in the Nine Star Qi system of divination, which finds its primary application in Feng Shui, although it is listed as an astrological system.

Virtually every whole number from 1-12 finds a use in Chinese astrology. Number 2 expresses through Yin and Yang. Number 4 expresses through the four directions and the four quadrants of the heavens. Number 6 is not so much used by itself, though its next magnitude (60) is expressed through the hexagesimal cycle of the endlessly repeating Stem/Branch combinations in the Four Pillars. The number 8 (which is the orbital period of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order cycle of Venus) is used in the I-Ching and in the eight directions of the Ba Gua used in Feng Shui. The number 11 finds no real use in Chinese astrology. The numbers 9, 10 and 12 have already been mentioned. Even the number 13 finds use in the cycle of the Indicators for the Day, also in the Four Pillars. The main systems of numerology in Chinese occultism are lumped together into what people call ‘Chinese astrology’, although there is a true Chinese astrology that does use the planets and their aspects, along with a fair amount of information which the Western astrologer would not consider, such as the appearance of the planet on the night, whether it twinkles or not, etc. - and all this in addition to the numerological systems of their astrology. The true planet-based horoscope is not in general use in China. Its use was reserved for the Imperial court, so it never really found much application for the mass of the Chinese populace.

The main forms of Chinese astrology readily found in Western cultures are as follows:

**Four Pillars:** already discussed

**Tzu Wei Dou Shu:** This is known as the king of popular Chinese astrological forms. It employs a chart wheel (a square, like Vedic charts, actually), a plethora of ‘stars’, (usually between 30-50) that are more akin to Arabic parts than actual planets or stars, great and small limits (year measures for the timing of the chart) and the Four Pillars as the basis. It is the most comprehensive of the styles of popular Chinese astrology and comes closest to a psychological reading of the individual of any of their methods (at least in orthodox terms).

**Ming Shu:** This actually means ‘fate calculation’, which is what all these styles of Chinese astrology actually are. This particular form, though, gives a map of the life and a general description of the fate of the individual at a glance. It is a very simple form.

**Nine Star Qi:** This style is most-often used in Feng Shui, especially since it relates to one’s placement within the environment. It gives general information about character, but its main use is with geomancy.

**3 Worlds Physiognomy Rules:** A method based upon the cycle of the 28 Notional Hsiu that gives the general character of the individual along with the person’s birth weight.

**Plum Flower astrology:** An I-Ching based system, but astrological, nonetheless. There are actually several forms that use I-Ching in their calculations, but most of them are passed on by word of mouth and are thus secret.

The be-all-end-all of Chinese astrology, however, is the astrology that was used at the Imperial Court in days gone by. It was a synthetic system that incorporated everything that has just been mentioned along with the true planetary positions and aspects. Thus, it is the form of Chinese astrology that came the closest to our Western horoscope model. For lack of a better term, it is simply designated 'Imperial astrology' here. Imperial astrology was used only for heads of state or for people of importance in the Imperial court. The Imperial court had a staff of full-time astrologers whose sole purpose was to advise in the affairs of state by virtue of the heavens. They had to be good at what they did, too, otherwise their tenure at court was often cut short, literally. Much of what has been handed down about Chinese astrology through the centuries is primarily Taoist, although there are certainly other influences. Perhaps the main aim of most Chinese astrologers, however, is to do two things in the vast majority of cases: to help ensure a good marriage (meaning a happy family life with good children, preferably boys in those days) and to help ensure material success. Such is the materialistic side of Jupiter.

As with all the popularly practiced occult sciences, the true meaning of Chinese astrology has been corrupted through the centuries. One of the sad legacies of the Taoist influence on Chinese astrology is the emphasis on the two preceding points (children and money), and this primarily because the Taoists believed we only had one life. Therefore, life had to be expressed in the fullest, and a good life was seen as material wealth and a happy family. However, the most material systems often veil a profound spiritual beginning that gets corrupted over the years and it is no different with Chinese astrology. The Imperial court had its share of seers, and there was a high spirituality practiced in China in earlier days. Its soul Ray is, after all, the 1<sup>st</sup> Ray[18]. With that, let us have a look at the Indian side of a comprehensive Oriental astrology.

**Kalachakra Tantra** The Kalachakra is a link to India within Tibetan Buddhism. Translated, it means "Wheel of Time". One of the most central themes of Kalachakra is the relation between the human body and the cosmos. A most famous maxim from the work is "As without, so within." Hence, the major key to understanding it is through the laws of correspondence and analogy, probably one of the main admonitions to comprehending the esoteric dispensations to the West. Kalachakra in its outer form is a detailed study of cosmology and astronomy, with the astronomical parts of it being much akin to what is found in *The Surya Siddhanta*[19]. The Kalachakra predates the *Surya Siddhanta* by about 1500 years, though, and it is highly likely that some of it was used as source material for the *Surya Siddhanta*. It is said the Kalachakra was first taught in 881 BCE during the Caitra [Aries] full moon, in an Iron [Metal] Dragon Year[20]. It aims at the relationship between the human and the universals by employing deep meditative states, vital energies within the body, the specific use of some nadis (subtle energy channels) through penetrative, concentrative practice in order that certain initiatory states might be achieved. Thus, there are five main sections to Kalachakra Tantra:

- 1) The outer world, including the formation of this world, its inhabitants, the cycles of the planets
- 2) The inner world, including the development of the body, the channels, the winds and the drops
- 3) Initiations, including the relation between Master and disciple and descriptions of initiations of all grades
- 4) Sadhana (methods of accomplishment), with its stages, deities, accumulations and vajras (psychic bodies)
- 5) Gnosis, with descriptions of various yogas, including pranayama

Kalachakra is a central theme in Buddhist theory and practice, the working out of which puts one in rapport with a great many of the concepts contained within the Wisdom Teachings we have been given in the West. It also contains evidence of Chinese influence, witnessed by the inclusion of Chinese elements and animals (re: Iron Dragon Year mentioned previously). [It may be of interest for readers to note that the Metal (Iron) Dragon is known as “The Dragon of Patience”, which means “Silence is like gold and is often the better part of wisdom. All good things come to those who can wait contentedly. Planning is paramount.” Silence of mind and patience in the work are certainly prerequisites for the study and practice of Kalachakra.]

According to history and legend, Kalachakra was first taught by the Buddha in the form of the deity Kalachakra in the south of India at Dhanyakataka. It was said to have originated from an initiation mandala manifested by the Buddha, in which the constellations, Sun, Moon, and the lunar nodes were uniquely positioned in the four directions. Chief among the attendees of thousands of bodhisattvas and celestial beings was King Sucandra of Shambhala. King Sucandra was said to be the manifestation of the bodhisattva Vajrapani. He returned to Shambhala after the first teaching of the Kalachakra and wrote down the teachings in 12,000 verses, which comprised the Root Tantra of Kalachakra.[21] The teachings were held and propagated there (Shambhala) by the descendants of Sucandra until their appearance in India sometime in the tenth or eleventh centuries CE.[22]

600 years after Sucandra’s death, the Shambhala king Manjusri Yasas compiled an abridgement of the Root Tantra for non-Buddhist adherents in Shambhala, called *Vimalaprabha*, or *Stainless Light*. It is the condensed version of the Root Tantra to which is referred when the term ‘Kalachakra Tantra’ is mentioned. *The Ornament of Stainless Light* (hereafter referred to as *The Ornament*[23]) is an overview of the five chapters of the Tantra. It gives explanation of the major points and seeks to clarify areas of doubt rather than being an exhaustive commentary on *Stainless Light*.

The full, original text of Kalachakratantra has been lost to the world. The tantric text as it exists today is the *Ornament of Stainless Light*, which, as stated, is the condensed version. It was written by Khedrup Norsang Gyatso in the fifteenth century. Khedrup Norsang Gyatso was a ‘wandering hermit’, and he traveled from one solitary place of meditative retreat to the next for more than four decades. As a result of his dedication to intensive meditative practice, he came to be revered in Tibet as a great meditator and teacher, and is included in a long lineage of masters of many important practice traditions. He died in 1513 at the age of ninety-one.

The five chapters of the tantra that form the basis of *The Ornament* are those enumerated above: the external world, the inner world, initiations, accomplishment (sadhana) and completion (gnosis). Without a full empowerment in the practice and a commentary retreat one would only be able to briefly touch on some points of interest in those chapters as they relate to astrology and the esoteric tradition with which we are all familiar. That sort of information is not for public perusal. Even with such a basic knowledge of the Tantra, though, one might gain some insight into the importance of Kalachakra Tantra to the Western esoteric tradition. More importantly, perhaps, we may begin to see some of the thinking that has influenced the true authors (the masters) of the main esoteric texts in the West, namely, the works of Blavatsky and Bailey, for most of those masters would have all been instructed in Kalachakra Tantra at some time or another.

As a first example, we saw previously that the five-element system of Chinese astrology is a key feature of their astrological practice. In the first chapter of the Kalachakratantra (the external world), the five elements are reconciled and interfaced with the four elements that western astrologers use. One would have to know the workings of Chinese occultism to be able to pick it out of the text, though. We read:

“When a world undergoes destruction, there follows a time of emptiness. During this time the earth element is possessed of five qualities, namely smell, form [eventually becoming sight, or visibility], taste, tangibility [eventually becoming touch] and sound. The water element has the above qualities, minus that of smell. The fire element has the above qualities, minus those of smell and form. The air [metal] element has the two qualities of tangibility and sound, while the space element [wood] possesses only the quality of sound.”[24]

To the reader versed in Chinese occultism, the above lineage of elements equates exactly with the controlling cycle within the Chinese five-element system. In this context, the five elements are thus seen to be primordial and to guide the combinations of the four elements as western astrology uses them (fire, earth, air and water) as the process of incarnation by any being begins to take shape. In this we see but one of many examples wherein East and West are actually part of a seamless continuum of esoteric practice and teaching. What has happened through the centuries is that different cultures have taken these teachings and used them for their own purposes, most often to the exclusion of other systems. Both East and West have done this with the base elements in their respective astrological practices. In the paragraphs that follow the one just quoted the methods of the interactions of the elements are outlined.

As a further example, we read the following:

“Firstly, the central channel [of the etheric spine] is purified and empty forms appear to the meditator. These forms are created by the practices of the yogas of withdrawal and meditative absorption which make up the branch of *form accomplishment*. This manifests the mind of clear light, and the appearance of that mind as empty form becomes progressively clearer. The generation of the four joys of descent and ascent develops the mind of clear light into innate bliss, which is applied to emptiness, and the gnosis of bliss and emptiness is developed.”[25]

Although not an astrological reference, for those familiar with the *Light of the Soul*[26] or the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*[27], we see a clear reference here to the processes of raja yoga and a description of part of the path back to a realization of primordial mind (mind uncolored by modifications). This could easily have been a quote from the just-mentioned works. It is included here to show the basis of so much of the teaching we have been given about meditation and its effects and the source of the teaching as given to adepts on the very same matters.

It is of importance to note that astrology is not a feature of Kalachakra. In addition, any astronomy that is found therein is for the purpose of calendrical measure. The astronomy therein is also for the express purpose of allowing the practitioner to equate the motions of the planets with the inner processes of his own vajra (psychic) body as part of completion-stage practices.[28] Tibetan masters of Kalachakra point to two systems of astronomy within the work: siddhanta (as mentioned previously) and karana. Of the two, the siddhanta is said to be the true system used in the *Root Tantra*, while the latter was a form adopted in the conversion of the Brahmin sages to Buddhism. The karana system was reformed in 806 CE to bring it into line with the siddhanta system and thus make it acceptable to the practice.[29]

A quite pertinent question arises at this juncture: If astrology is not in evidence in Kalachakra Tantra, then why would Kalachakra feature in Tibetan astrology? The fact of the matter is that Kalachakra is not really a Tibetan astronomical work at all, nor is it really a part of their astrological practice. Rather, it is a system that synthesizes aspects of meditative discipline. Astronomy is only a very small part of Kalachakra Tantra. Since astrology is based upon the motions of the planets, however, we can see a connection between Tibetan astrology and Kalachakra which becomes very important when we consider that esoteric astrology as put forward by the Tibetan shows, in effect, the meaning behind the motions of the planets in relation to a person's inner unfolding, the process

for which is outlined in Kalachakra Tantra. Kalachakra is where the basis for the Science of Triangles is set out, for instance, the mechanics of which are too involved to discuss here.[30]

If we consider the maxim of the Kalachakra, “As without, so within”, then its connection with Tibetan astrology becomes more telling. Outer events are mirrors of inner unfolding. Anyone who has practiced spiritual disciplines and has marked and traced their life will know the truth of the saying. We also know that everything unfolds in relation to cycles. There are several cycles that feature strongly in Kalachakra Tantra, and those cycles are the 60 year cycle, a 100 year cycle and a 500 year cycle. The 60 year cycle is well-known as the Chinese hexagesimal cycle of their Stem and Branch combinations in the Four Pillars. Of interest to note here is that the Tibetans did not start using the 60 year cycles until 1027 CE.[31] The Chinese had been using it for a long time prior to that.

The 100 year cycle relates to the appearance of the Shambhala kings[32], also well-known to esotericists as a sub-cycle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ray—especially when we note that Shambhala is connected with the first aspect within the spiritual Hierarchy. It will be of especial interest for the reader to note that the Shambhala kings always take up their posts at the 27<sup>th</sup> year of each century[33], and that event coincides very closely with the impulse given for the lesser dispensations of the teachings that come on the 25<sup>th</sup> year of each century (along with a later one at the 75<sup>th</sup> year)[34]. Thus, the Shambhala kings appear just after the fresh impulse for the teachings at the first part of each century and they thus insure the dispensation of those teachings.

The 500 year cycle refers to specific major dispensations of the Teachings[35]. It is, as the esotericist would know, the sub-cycle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ray. It is said that the teachings of the Buddha would persist for a duration of five thousand years[36], and that we are just past the halfway point of that dispensation (2886 years in 2005 CE). We are currently in the five-hundred year cycle called “Morality”, which began in 1620.[37] The positing of the fifty and five-hundred year cycles in Kalachakra at the 20<sup>th</sup> year of a century is somewhat at odds with what we are given in the Bailey material, but is very close to it, nonetheless. The chronology of the Kalachakra is given in the appendices to *The Ornament*. Thus, we see agreement with the Ray 1 and Ray 2 cycles between the Kalachakra and the Bailey works.

In the study of Kalachakra we begin to see the workings of the great minds who have brought through the Teachings as we know them into the physical forms we have before us today. It is one of the primary Buddhists tantras, after all, and without knowledge of it we can gain but slight insight into the mind of the Tibetan, for instance, and what he was trying to impart. Above all else, Kalachakra is a teaching on initiation (liberation), and when we read works like *The Rays and the Initiations*[38], *Letters on Occult Meditation*[39], and the like, and we have an understanding of what is contained in Kalachakra, then we come closer to the source of the works and—much more importantly—the *spirit* of the works. For those familiar with the works of Alice Bailey, there is a quote at the front of some volumes that starts with “The Lord Buddha has said not to believe a thing said merely because it is said...”[40]. There is a similar quote from *The Ornament* that reads as follows, and which might spark a note of recognition in the reader:

“However, it has been stated:  
As gold is burned and rubbed,  
My word is to be accepted by examining well,  
Not out of respect.

Good gold when burned turns red, when cut it shows white, and when rubbed it turns yellow; in these ways it should be tested. Similarly the words of the Buddha should undergo three tests, and

when the teaching is seen to be pure, it should be accepted as valid, not merely out of respect or because of bias.”[41]

There has been much put forward in these few pages that will seem unfamiliar to some readers with regard to what we have been given in our western occultism. We know, though, that a new dispensation is to be given to the West in 2025[42]. From whence will this new teaching come? How much more of the eastern traditions will be revealed to us? How much of the new astrology will incorporate new concepts that will be foreign to us at the time? There is quite a bit coming out to the West now about eastern methods of astrology. How much of this will find its way into the new dispensation? The tides of synthesis and unity will assure that the East/West divide will rapidly fade into obscurity and that what was once obscure on either side of the divide will be common knowledge for all.

We were given information in the last dispensation that we could understand at the time, but little more. Some of that information still eludes many of us. If we are to truly become effective on the world stage, especially in astrological practice, then it behooves us to learn more about the roots of the very astrological system that has been outlined in these pages, for we are dealing with knowledge that has very ancient roots. As always, the three tests just mentioned must be applied to all knowledge. The richness of astrological lore and knowledge that is the legacy of the Tibetan has only slightly been revealed to us. How much richer would our understanding of astrology and our ability to be of service to people of all cultures be if we but took the time to understand even the basics of these ancient and august systems of astrological and philosophical thought!

Malvin Artley  
September 2005

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[1] [www.esotericquarterly.com](http://www.esotericquarterly.com)

[2] *Esoteric Astrology* by Alice A. Bailey, pub. Lucis Publishing Co., NY 1951

[3] *The Secret Doctrine* by Helena Blavatsky, pub Theosophical Publishing Co.,Ltd. 1888

[4] *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* by Alice A. Bailey, pub Lucis Publishing Co. NY 1925

[5] Ageless Wisdom Teachings—a term loosely applied in the West to a group of works given out through a small number of amanuenses at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—most notably H.P. Blavatsky, Alice A. Bailey, Helena Roerich, Florence LaDue and Mabel Collins. In truth, the Ageless Wisdom is the entirety of the sacred works that have been given out through the Ages for the expressed purpose of awakening the divine in humanity.

[6] Five Elements, Stems and Branches: Some of the cornerstones of Chinese astrological data.

[7] Ray cycle: A subjective planetary cycle that is definitive of the manifestation and obscuration of any particular Ray.

[8] Standard elemental system: Fire, Earth, Air and Water, as used in western astrology and alchemical practice.

[9] An adaptation of William A. Dunkerley's (1908) words from the now-famous hymn: “In Christ there is no East or West, In Him no South or North; But one great fellowship of love; Throughout the whole wide earth.”

[10] *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* pp1036-1039; *Esoteric Psychology I*, pp. 265-266; 349-350; 26;

[11] Jupiter as Lord of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ray: *Esoteric Astrology* pg 184

[12] *Ibid* pg 280

[13] *Esoteric Astrology* Ch I.

[14] *Chinese Astrology* by Derek Walters pub Aquarian/Thorsons, England 1987 ISBN 0 85030 382 6. pp 58-66

[15] *The Imperial Astrologer* Chinese astrology software, pub Esoteric Technologies 2005, tutorial section, appendix “The Branches as Phases of a Cycle”, by Malvin N. Artley

[16] *Esoteric Psychology I*, pg 265

[17] *Chinese Astrology*, (Walters) pg 265; *Esoteric Psychology I*, pg26; pg, 348, re: outgoing and decline of Ray 3

[18] *Destiny of the Nations*, by Alice A. Bailey pub Lucis Publishing Co., 1949 pg. 50

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- [19] *Surya Siddhanta*, translated by E. Burgess & W.D. Whitney, from The Secret Doctrine Reference Series, pubs Wizards Book Shelf 1978 , ISBN 0 913510-13-0
- [20] *The Ornament of Stainless Light* by Khedrup Norsang Gyatso Translated by Gavin Kilty, pubs Wisdom Publications, Boston, US, 2004, ISBN 0 86171-452-0 pg 612
- [21] Ibid pg 1
- [22] Ibid pg 1
- [23] This is the first of a series of English translations of Tibetan cultural classics to be known as *The Library of Tibetan Classics*, eventually comprising 30 volumes in all. See note 19 for details of this particular publication.
- [24] Ibid pg 79
- [25] Ibid pg 57
- [26] *The Light of the Soul* by Alice A. Bailey, pubs Lucis Publishing Co., 1927
- [27] *The Science of Yoga, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* with commentary by I.K. Taimni, pubs The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL., 1961, ISBN 0 8356 0023 8
- [28] *The Ornament* pg 16
- [29] Ibid
- [30] See *Esoteric Astrology* pp 407-477; 478-479; 687-693
- [31] *The Ornament* pg 613
- [32] Ibid pp 612-614
- [33] Ibid
- [34] *The Rays and the Initiations* pg 207, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, pg 530, *Esoteric Psychology II* pg 273
- [35] *The Ornament* pp 612-614
- [36] Ibid
- [37] Ibid
- [38] *The Rays and the Initiations*, by Alice A. Bailey, pubs The Lucis Publishing Co., NY, 1960
- [39] *Letters on Occult Meditation*, by Alice A. Bailey, pubs The Lucis Publishing Co., NY, 1922
- [40] *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, pp xv-xvi
- [41] *The Ornament*, pg 153
- [42] *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* by Alice A. Bailey, pubs The Lucis Publishing Co., NY, 1957 pg 530