

In Search of Destiny: Biography, History & Culture As Told through Vedic Astrology by Edith Hathaway
Vintage Vedic Press, San Diego, California, USA,
544 pages, www.edithhathaway.com

One of the most outstanding books on Vedic astrology to come out of the West in recent times, biographies of notable figures are presented in all their historical and socio-cultural grandeur carefully selected from all walks of life in the volume under review. The author combines technical and non-technical material quite deftly. A layperson would enjoy delving into this book, a novice would learn immensely from it and an experienced astrologer would delight in the depth of its content. Who would not like to understand why great men like Gandhi, Einstein, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King did what they did under the influence of their stars? The author can take pride in presenting 12 notable women (as against 19 men) as her biographical subjects. As one providing editorial assistance across the continents on astrological points and Sanskrit terms to the author this reviewer is a witness to the painstaking efforts she has put into preparing the manuscript.

The volume is of particular interest to global readers as it contains a clear exposition and introduction to Vedic philosophy and astrology. Among the 31 biographies, five are of the illustrious sons and daughters of India. Organized sign-wise there are four to five biographical subjects per Ascendant covering only seven signs from Aries to Libra leaving the reader eager for the remaining five signs. Though trained originally in Western astrology the author's grasp of Vedic astrology is no less. She brings a real freshness to the subject by the treatment of planetary transits at the time of specific events showing an uncanny eye for detail. Her use of stationary retrogression of planets at the time of crucial events reflects a thought process that is original and an approach which is meticulous.

The innovative opening chapter presents 1000 years of history starting from 1405 A.D. The author's research of the 20-year Jupiter-Saturn conjunction cycles in various element-ruled signs such as fire, earth, air and water carries a good sampling of momentous events and inventions in human history and provides a unique way to view both historical developments and the lives of individuals as influenced by this conjunction.

The introduction to Vedic philosophy and astrology (Chapter 2) prepares a new student to savour the rich texture of the book's narrative. It has everything from significations of planets to signs, houses, Navamsas and Nakshatras. In short, it is like a rapid primer of Vedic astrology presented in a style that is not too basic. Both in its breadth and depth the volume stands out as sensitively and meticulously researched.

Those interested in learning about the more important characteristics of various Ascendants will find this volume instructive. With full index and an exhaustive glossary this book becomes a very good reference tool while also including twelve review questions at the end of each chapter in the true guru-sishya parampara tradition.

by **Vinay Aditya**, (New Delhi, India), Vedic astrologer, author, teacher and Sanskrit scholar