

Vastu Shastra and the Celestial Connection: Indian Perspectives on Landscape Architecture

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Abstract

As an ancient tradition with a strong foundation in celestial observation, Indian astrology has had a profound impact on how people perceive and engage with their surroundings. This study examines the relationship between astrology and landscape design via the prism of Vastu Shastra and other traditional traditions, with a sole focus on the Indian environment. This case study illustrates how planetary alignments and celestial patterns influence the creation of harmonious landscapes and how astrology is connected to flora by comprehending ancient Indian philosophies and their applications in other sacred spaces as well as through some architectural layouts. Additionally, to build a sustainable and culturally relevant environment and a good place to live, this research also investigates modern adaptations of these ideas. The goal of this multidisciplinary study is to reveal the symbolic and useful meaning of Indian astrological principles in landscape architecture, emphasizing how they can both inspire contemporary design techniques and strengthen the bond between all living things and cosmic energies.

“अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां, देवर्षीणां च नारदः।
गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः, सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः॥”

भगवद्गीता (अध्याय 10, श्लोक 26)

“Among trees, I am the sacred fig tree (Peepal); among divine sages, I am Narada; among Gandharvas, I am Chitraratha; and among perfected beings, I am Kapila, the sage.”

Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 10, Verse 26)

INTRODUCTION

In Indian traditions, there are significant connections between the seemingly unrelated fields of astrology and landscape design. Together, these disciplines, which have their roots in ancient Indian spiritual and philosophical frameworks, highlight the balance between cosmic forces and human life. The application of Vastu Shastra, an age-old Indian science that incorporates astrological concepts into landscape and architectural design, is essential to this relationship. Designing places that are in harmony with the energies of the cosmos is crucial because Vastu Shastra sees the environment as a dynamic entity that is influenced by celestial bodies and their alignments [1].

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With trees, plants, and landscapes being connected to heavenly qualities and cosmic symbolism, nature is revered in Indian culture. The spiritual value of natural components is expressly acknowledged in the Bhagavad Gita, for example, when Sri Krishna declares, “Among trees, I am the Peepal” (Bhagavad Gita 10.26). Traditional Indian landscapes are built on this respect for nature, with each piece thoughtfully selected and positioned to reflect ecological and astrological equilibrium [2].

The philosophical and historical foundations of Indian astrological concepts in landscape design are also examined in this study, along with their development and current applicability. The study intends to demonstrate the timeless value of astrology in designing environments that speak to both cultural and ecological sensibilities by looking at sacred texts, customs, and contemporary interpretations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TREES AND PLANETS

The idea of the Navgrahas, nine celestial bodies that affect human fate, is closely related to nature and its components in Hindu astrology. The fact that each of these celestial beings is linked to certain trees, which are thought to channel cosmic forces, providing spiritual advantages and fostering peace between the terrestrial and celestial realms, is an important part of this connection. An essential component of the ancient Vedic culture, these revered trees – known as Navgraha trees – reflect a profound comprehension of how nature shapes both the material and spiritual facets of existence. Every tree is a representation of divine energies as well as a natural object, and it is thought that planting, caring for, and meditating next to these trees might result in beneficial changes in a life [3].

Numerous facets of human life, including personal development, health, relationships, and prosperity, are believed to be governed by the inherent relationship that each celestial body in Hindu astrology has with a holy tree. The Arka tree, for instance, is connected to the Sun (Surya). This tree, which reflects the Sun's life-giving energy, is thought to symbolize courage, strength, and vigor. Planting the Arka tree is said to boost self-esteem, develop leadership abilities, and provide one the energy needed to conquer obstacles, according to Hindu beliefs. This is how the Sun's relationship with the Arka tree represents the heavenly impact of strength and power [4].

In contrast, the Bilva tree, which is adored for its association with the god Shiva, is associated with the Moon (Chandra). The Bilva tree is thought to be lucky for encouraging peace and emotional equilibrium. It is a tree that encourages creativity, intuition, and mental clarity because of its connection to the Moon, which controls the mind and emotions. A vital component of emotional healing and fostering spiritual activities, the Bilva tree is thought to bring greater calm and mental harmony to those who plant or meditate near it [5].

In a similar vein, the Khadira tree and Mars (Mangal) are associated with tenacity and resolve. Mars' courage, strength, and protection are reflected in the Khadira tree's hardy and resilient nature. It is said that this tree protects its followers from bad energy, encouraging them to succeed in the face of difficulty. Its planting is thought to give people the strength they need to accomplish their objectives and get past challenges, which is in line with Mars' ferocious and warrior-like spirit [6].

The Ashvattha tree, which stands for intelligence, wisdom, and communication, is associated with Mercury (Budha). Since Mercury is the planet that rules intelligence, communication, and learning, the Ashvattha tree is said to improve one's capacity for clear concept expression, which promotes both professional and academic achievement. Its religious connection to the god Vishnu emphasizes its spiritual importance, especially when it comes to learning and communication.

The Peepal tree, one of the most sacred trees in Hinduism, is associated with Jupiter (Brihaspati), the planet of wisdom, spirituality, and plenty. Those who worship the Peepal tree are said to get knowledge, insight, and spiritual development. It is said that meditating beneath a Peepal tree can help people align their life with cosmic wisdom by offering them heavenly counsel [7].

The tree's connection to Jupiter signifies its importance in fostering understanding, higher knowledge, and prosperity in both the material and spiritual realms.

The Audumbara tree is associated with Venus (Shukra), a symbol of harmony, beauty, and love. This tree is believed to foster a happy life, improve relationships, and draw love. The nurturing

qualities of the Audumbara tree, which is auspicious for people looking for peace and harmony in their personal lives, are in harmony with Venus, the planet of relationships, beauty, and the arts [8].

The Shami tree, which is connected to the god Rama, is connected to Saturn (Shani). Similar to Saturn's impact on self-control, tenacity, and endurance, the Shami tree is renowned for its toughness and capacity to endure adverse circumstances. It is believed that the Shami tree offers stability and safety, as well as the fortitude to overcome obstacles and foster long-term success. It is very favorable for people who want to endure and succeed through times of hardship.

According to the ancient wisdom of Vedic astrology, our fates are significantly shaped by the nine celestial bodies, or Navgrahas. Certain trees that are thought to transmit cosmic forces and bring favorable influences into our lives are linked to each Navgraha. Come along with us as we explore the mysterious realm of Navgraha trees and learn about the special advantages they are supposed to provide.

Sun (Surya) – Arka Tree

- The Arka tree, associated with the Sun, symbolizes strength and vitality.
- Planting Arka is believed to enhance courage and boost energy levels.
- It is considered auspicious for those seeking success and leadership qualities.

Moon (Chandra) – Bilva Tree

- The Bilva tree, linked with the Moon, is sacred to God Shiva.
- Planting Bilva is believed to bring emotional balance and tranquility.
- It is considered auspicious for fostering creativity and intuition.

Mars (Mangal) – Khadira Tree

- The Khadira tree, associated with Mars, symbolizes resilience and determination.
- Planting Khadira is believed to bring courage and protect against negative energies.
- It is considered auspicious for overcoming obstacles and achieving goals.

Mercury (Budha) – Ashvattha Tree

- The Ashvattha tree, linked with Mercury, is sacred to God Vishnu.
- Planting Ashvattha is believed to enhance communication skills and intellect.
- It is considered auspicious for academic success and career growth.

Jupiter (Brihaspati) – Peepal Tree

- The Peepal tree, associated with Jupiter, is revered for its longevity.
- Planting Peepal is believed to bring wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual growth.
- It is considered auspicious for seeking guidance and blessings.

Venus (Shukra) – Audumbara Tree

- The Audumbara tree, linked with Venus, symbolizes love and beauty.
- Planting Audumbara is believed to enhance relationships and attract love.
- It is considered auspicious for those seeking a harmonious and fulfilling life.

Saturn (Shani) – Shami Tree

- The Shami tree, associated with Saturn, is sacred to God Rama.
- Planting Shami is believed to bring discipline, perseverance, and protection.
- It is considered auspicious for overcoming challenges and obstacles.

Rahu – Khadira Tree

- The Khadira tree, also associated with Mars, is believed to have protective qualities.

- Planting Khadira is thought to neutralize the malefic effects of Rahu.
- It is considered auspicious for spiritual growth and transformation.

Ketu – Apamarga Tree

- The Apamarga tree, linked with Ketu, is believed to have purifying properties.
- Planting Apamarga is thought to neutralize the malefic effects of Ketu.
- It is considered auspicious for those seeking spiritual cleansing and enlightenment.

Table 1. Here is the table with the rows jumbled for a varied arrangement.

Constellations	Sacred Tree	Common Name	Deities	Sacred Beliefs
Pushya (The Chameleon)	Ficus religiosa	Peepal Tree	Guru	Revered as a cosmic connector, linking earth to heaven; represents knowledge.
Bharni (Triangle)	Emblica officinalis	Indian Gooseberry (Amla)	Yam	Symbolizes health and vitality; used in rituals for longevity and strength.
Saibhisha	Anthocephalus chinensis	Kadamba Tree	Varun	Sacred to rain and water deities; symbolizes fertility and renewal.
Kritika (The axe)	Ficus glomerata	Cluster Fig Tree	Agni	Represents fertility and abundance; associated with Agni's purifying energy.
Aridra (Betalguse)	Vepris bilocularis	Krishna Guru Tree	Shiv	Represents wisdom and spiritual awakening; linked to God Shiva's meditative state.
Uttara Bhadrapada	Azadirachta indica	Neem Tree	Abibudhanya	Symbolizes healing and purity; revered for its antibacterial properties.
Revati	Madhuca longifolia	Mahua Tree	Pusha	Associated with nourishment and prosperity; linked to nurturing deities.
Ashlesha (Hydra or Serpent)	Mesua ferrea	Nagkesar Tree	Sarp	Symbolizes protection and strength; linked to serpent deities and guardianship.
Jyestha	Solmalia malabarica, Bombax ceiba	Silk Cotton Tree	Indra	Represents wealth and power; linked to thunder and rain.
Poorvasadha	Calamus sps	Rattan Palm	Jal	Represents adaptability and flow; connected to water's life-giving essence.
Rohini (Alderbaran or charlot)	Eugenia jambolana	Black Plum (Jamun)	Bramha	Considered sacred for its fruit, symbolizing sustenance and cosmic order.
Dhanishta	Prosopis spicigera	Shami Tree	Vasu	Represents victory and valor; sacred in rituals for Mars and warriors.
Mrigsira (The onion or antelope's head)	Acacia catechu	Cutch Tree	Chandra	Revered for its strength and resilience; linked to lunar energy and protection.
Chitra	Aegle marmelos	Bael Tree	Tawasta	Believed to purify surroundings; linked to offerings for Shiva.
Punarvesa (Pollex or potter's wheel)	Bambusa arundinacea	Bamboo	Aditi	Symbol of resilience and flexibility; believed to be the mother of all creation.

Makha (Regulus or palnguin)	Ficus benghalensis	Banyan Tree	Pitter	Symbol of immortality and shelter; associated with ancestors and spiritual growth.
Swati	Terminalia arjuna	Arjuna Tree	Vayu	Revered for healing and protection; associated with strength and courage.
Poorva Bhadrapada	Mangifera indica	Mango Tree	Ajaik/Ajakapad	Represents sweetness and prosperity; linked to celebrations and divine love.
Moola	Canarium strictum, Vateria indica	Black Dammar Tree	Jal	Symbol of deep-rooted stability; used in rituals for water deities.
Aswini (Horse's head or face)	Stychnos-nux-vomica	Poison Nut Tree	Ashwini	Believed to have medicinal properties and associated with healing powers.
Uttara Phalguni	Elaeodendron glaucum	Spindle Tree	Ayarma	Symbolizes clarity and divine insight, fostering stability and focus.
Uttarashada	Artocarpus heterophyllus	Jackfruit Tree	Vishwa deva	Symbolizes abundance and divine blessing; linked to universal harmony.
Pubba or Purba Phalguni	Butea monosperma	Flame of the Forest	Bhag	Represents passion and fire; sacred in fertility and purification rituals.
Sravana	Calotropis gigantea	Crown Flower	Vishnu	Associated with transformation and cosmic balance; used in Vishnu's worship.
Visakhe	Mesua ferrea	Nagkesar Tree	Indraghi	Represents unity and balance of fire and rain; invokes prosperity.
Hasta (Hand)	Jasminum auriculatum	Jasmine	Surya	Represents purity and devotion; offered to the sun god in prayers.
Anooradha	Mesua ferrea	Nagkesar Tree	Mitra	Symbolizes loyalty and friendship; linked to harmony and protection.

The association of Ketu (Table 1) with the Apamarga tree and Rahu with the Khadira tree highlights the spiritual importance of these plants in counteracting the negative effects of these celestial entities. When connected to Rahu, the Khadira tree is thought to provide defensive properties that aid people in overcoming obstacles brought on by Rahu's eerie influence. The Apamarga tree, associated with Ketu, is thought to help people achieve inner calm and spiritual enlightenment by cleansing and purifying the soul.

In addition to being a spiritual exercise, planting and meditating close to these trees is a means of bringing one's life into harmony with the cycles of the natural world and the universe. By paying respect to the Navgraha trees, people open their lives to beneficial cosmic forces that promote prosperity, well-being, and spiritual development. Hindu astrology's revered trees remind us of our interdependence with the cosmos by acting as live representations of cosmic alignment. For those who accept their spiritual importance, each tree is a manifestation of divine wisdom that provides protection, healing, and enlightenment [9].

A chart that connects trees, planets, and cardinal directions (such as East, West, North, and South), which are often associated with specific planets and elements in various traditions like astrology, folklore, symbolism, and some trees associated with them (Figure 1):

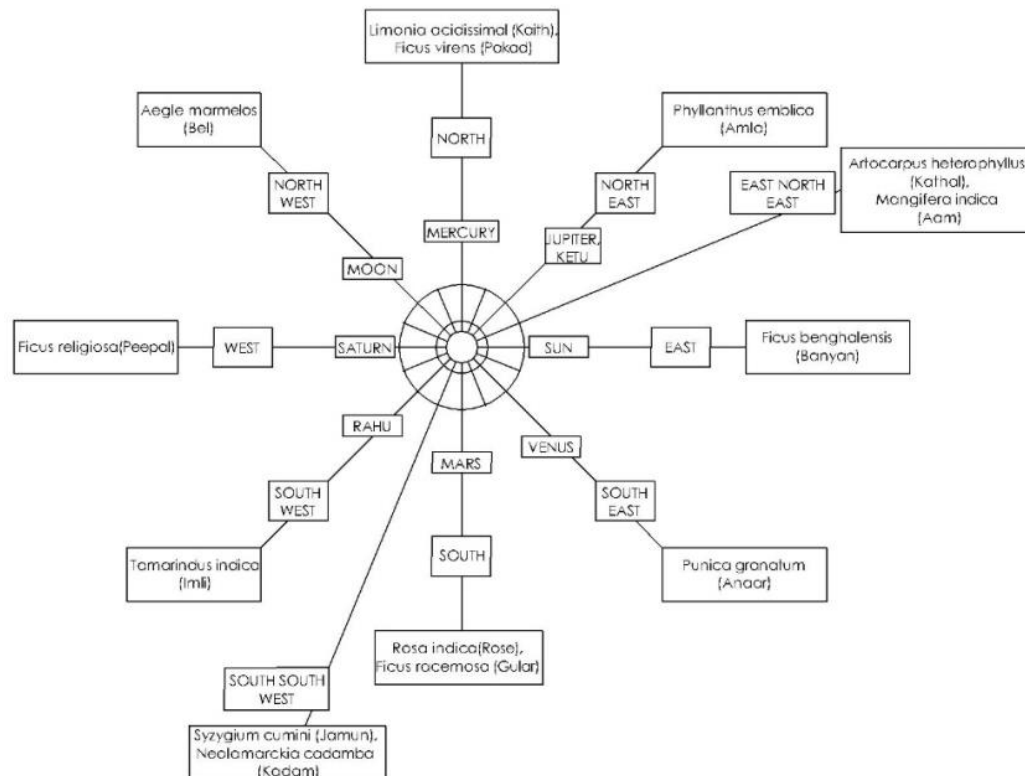


Figure 1. Illustration of planet-direction and tree (copyright@Aman Harjai).

Some of all direction trees/plants: *Calophyllum inophyllum* (Punnag), *Saccharum officinarum* (Eekh), *Azadirachta indica* (Neem), *Punica granatum* (Anaar), *Saraca indica* (Ashok), *Mesua ferrea* (Nagkesar), *Santalum album* (Chandan), *Crocus sativus* (Kesar), *Clitoria ternatea* (Aprajita), *Sesbania sesban* (Jayanti), *Madhuca indica* (Mahua), *Acorus calamus* (bacha), *Mangifera indica* (Aam), *Cinnamomum verum* (Dalchini), *Zingiber officinale* (Nagara), *Cocos nucifera* (Narial), *Bambusa tulda* (baint) (Table 2).

Table 2. Direction and planets.

Directions	Planets
East	Ravi (Sun)
North	Buddha (Mercury)
North-East	Guru (Jupiter)
South	Mangala (Mars)
South-East	Shukra (Venus)
West	Shani (Saturn)
North-West	Chandra (Moon)
South-West	Rahu (Dragon's head)

EXPLANATION OF THE CARDINAL DIRECTIONS

- East (Sun):** The east is linked to fresh starts, development, and rejuvenation. It is the direction in which the sun rises, signifying optimism and hope. According to astrology, the east is linked to the element of air, which encourages us to be flexible and open-minded. When making plans or beginning a new endeavor, facing the east might assist in attracting possibilities and positive energy into your life [10].
- North (Mercury):** The north is frequently linked to guidance, wisdom, and understanding. It is thought to be the guru's or spiritual teacher's direction, therefore facing north when praying or meditating might help you gain greater insight and wisdom. In astrology, the north is also linked to the earth element, which helps us remain grounded in our principles and convictions [11].

- *South (Mars)*: Passion, inventiveness, and life are linked to the south. It is the path of fire that ignites our inner spark and motivates us to follow our aspirations and interests. The south is also linked to the element of fire in astrology, which inspires us to pursue our goals with bravery and boldness. When looking for inspiration or motivation, facing south might help you stay motivated and creative.
- *West (Saturn)*: Emotions, intuition, and reflection are linked to the west. It is the direction in which the sun sets, signifying changes and endings. According to astrology, the west is linked to the element of water, which inspires us to connect with our inner selves and explore our emotions. You can achieve inner calm and navigate through challenging emotions by facing west when you are looking for clarity or closure [12].
- *North-East (Jupiter, Ketu)*: Brihaspati (Jupiter), the planet of wisdom and spiritual development, is the “direction’s representative planet. The primary source of general prosperity, health, and riches is the North-East, which produces a very strong magnetic energy axis that extends to the South-West”.
- *South-East (Venus)*: According to Vastu Shastra, the south-east direction is very strong and active and is connected to the element of fire. This orientation is thought to strengthen positive energy in the home and is ruled by the planet Venus, which is linked to riches and prosperity [13].
- *North-West (Moon)*: Chand (Moon) is the planet in this direction. The North-West is extremely unstable since it is driven by the element of wind. This potent path is renowned for opening doors in life and, when applied in line with Vaastu principles, can propel your career to new heights.
- *South-West (Rahu)*: Rahu is the planet that corresponds to Southwest. Given that magnetic energy is flowing from the northeast, this is the plot’s strongest direction. When used properly, Southwest provides a robust and healthy lifestyle. It can boost your health, prosperity, and self-esteem [14].

More than only a symbolic gesture, incorporating these trees into daily life is a potent way to harmonize one’s own energies with the cosmic forces that control the cosmos. People can form a closer relationship with the cosmos by planting these trees, caring for them, or just sitting in their presence while meditating. This will open transformative energies that will help them on their path to self-realization and cosmic peace. With their ageless knowledge, spiritual insight, and ecological equilibrium, the Navgraha trees provide us with valuable lessons that enable us to coexist peacefully with the natural and cosmic worlds [15].

SOME TREES, PLANTS MENTIONED IN ANCIENT HINDU SCRIPTURES

- *Ashok (Saraca Asoka)*: A-Shok, as the name suggests A stands for Anti and Shok stands for grief/sadness. Planting this tree wear off any negative energies from the area it is planted in, therefore, since ancient times, Ashok tree is planted in front of residentials and other properties to ward off evil and negative energies. The existence of this tree is mentioned in Vishnu puran and the Hindu epic Ramayana of Valmiki, and all subsequent versions, including the Ramacharitamanas written by Tulsidas, where the Sundara Kanda is also mentioned. The Vatika has garden houses around it, built by Vishvakarma himself.
- *Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum)*: There are three major accounts of the origin of the Tulasī that has been given in the Purāṇas. These accounts are given the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Padma Purāṇa*, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, *Devī Bhāgavat Purāṇa*, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavat Purāṇa*
- *Lotus (Nelumbo)*: In Hinduism: Lotus, used in the worship of goddess and gods has puranic reference. In Mahabharata, it is mentioned that goddess Lakshmi emerged from a lotus that grew on the forehead of God Vishnu.

In Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 5.10)

“*Brahmany adhaya karmani sangam tyaktva karoti yah
Lipyate na sa papena padma patra ivambhasa.*”

Meaning

“One who does all work as an offering to the God without attachment to the results is untouched by Karma, just as a lotus leaf is untouched by water”.

According to Mahanarayana Upanishad, “In the citadel of the body there is the small sinless and pure lotus of the heart which is the residence of the Supreme”. The lotus of the heart is the center of the infinite omnipresent consciousness which connects with the consciousness of the universe.

CONCLUSIONS

The Navgraha trees embody the deep wisdom of Vedic astrology and serve as a sacred bridge connecting the earthly and heavenly realms. Every tree embodies the vibrational essence of the Navgraha that it is related to, acting as a conduit to balance cosmic forces with our terrestrial lives. We invite beneficial forces that direct our destinies by planting, caring for, and meditating next to these holy trees, which expose us to the universe’s changing power.

These trees serve as living conduits of spiritual energy, providing protection, healing, and enlightenment in addition to being symbols of harmony and balance. They serve as a reminder of our interdependence with the universe and our capacity to synchronize with its cycles. The Navgraha trees provide comfort and stability during turbulent times, keeping us rooted and reunited with the infinite celestial dance above.

Additionally, growing these trees is a way to respect long-standing customs and maintain natural harmony. They strengthen our spiritual development and encourage environmental care by fostering a close bond with nature. Every tree serves as a quiet teacher, urging us to accept the cyclical patterns of life and the wisdom of the stars while speaking timeless truths.

A path toward self-discovery, a commitment to living in accordance with universal rules, and an act of cosmic alignment, incorporating the Navgraha trees into our lives is more than just a spiritual exercise. Accept these trees’ spiritual energy and allow them to lead you to abundance, inner serenity, and a deep understanding of your role in the universe.

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