

## Tajika Astrology Podcast Episode Outline

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This is an abridged version of the show notes from episode 268 of The Astrology Podcast, titled [Tajika: Medieval Arabic Astrology in Sanskrit](#).

### Outline

- Recorded on Thursday, August 20, 2020, starting at 8:15 AM in Denver, CO
- Episode 268
- An interview with Dr. Martin Gansten
- On his new translation of a 17th century Sanskrit text on Tajika astrology
  - Tajika is medieval Arabic astrology translated into Sanskrit.
  - The text focuses on making yearly predictions based on the solar return.
- Introducing Martin and talking about his background.
  - Doctorate from Lund University, Sweden.
- Historian of religion and Sanskrit scholar specializing in astrological traditions.
- Author of *Primary Directions: Astrology's Old Master Technique* (2009)
- His new book is titled:
  - [The Jewel of Annual Astrology](#):
  - A Parallel Sanskrit-English Critical Edition of Balabhadra's Hāyanaratna
- Published by academic publisher Brill.
- Released as a free ebook on August 3, 2020
  - Open Access publication, due to a grant.
- Published as a print book August 6, 2020
- 1000 page book
- Critical edition of the Sanskrit text on the left and English translation on the right
- Balabhadra's *Hāyanaratna*
  - Written in 1649 CE
  - Contemporary with *William Lilly's Christian Astrology* (1647)
- Balabhadra Daivajña
  - Court astrologer to Shāh Shujā', governor of Bengal
- Martin has been really focused on the Tajika tradition for more than a decade now.
- Why translate this specific Tajika text rather than another?
  - It is very comprehensive
  - Cites 40 earlier Tajika authors, some of which don't survive.
  - Could have translated an earlier but less comprehensive text.
- What is Tajika?
- Three eras in Indian astrology
  - Pre-horoscopic astrology, e.g. nakshatras
  - Horoscopic astrology, transmitted from Greek
  - Tajika, Perso-Arabic astrology
- Tajika transmission occurred sometime between 10th and 13th century

- Gansten suspects later in the range rather than earlier (13th century)
- Tajika means “Persian,” although it is from a Persian word that means Arab
  - Perso-Arabic astrology, or Arabic astrology in Sanskrit
- Tajika is mainly known in India today for solar returns
  - Solar return doctrine not used in Indian astrology prior to Tajika
  - Interesting since it is somewhat sparse in Hellenistic texts as well
  - Balabhadra’s work primarily focuses on annual astrology.
- Tajika flourished in the 13th to 16th century
  - During a period of relative openness to external influences
  - Tajika is more obviously foreign as a type of astrology in India
  - Some courts would have a Vedic and Tajika astrologer practice side by side
  - Surge of Hindu neo-traditionalism in seventeenth-century India onward
- The original texts were written in Arabic, then translated into Sanskrit
- Sahl ibn Bishr (9th century) was an early major source
  - Other sources: Umar al-Tabari, Abu Bakr, Abu Ma’shar, and possibly al-Kindi
- Samarasiṃha (c. 1274CE) early foundational Tajika author
  - Most of his works are lost.
  - Quoted extensively by Balabhadra.
- Martin thinks Tajika was based on a medieval compendium from different authors
  - Called the Great Teaching
  - Possibly attributed to al-Kindi
  - Perhaps similar to the Book of the Nine Judges?
- Most popular Tajika text was written by Nīlakaṇṭha Daivajña of Benares in 1587.
  - Astrologer royal to the emperor Akbar.
- Balabhadra studied under Nīlakaṇṭha’s younger brother
- Balabhadra also wrote a work on classical Indian natal astrology called *Horāratna*.
- Balabhadra completed the *Hāyanaratna* on afternoon of Wednesday, 14 April, 1649 CE
  - His later work, the *Horāratna*, was completed in January, 1654 CE.
- Even though it uses Perso-Arabic astrology it employs the sidereal zodiac
- Surviving Tajika texts mainly focus on solar returns and annual astrology
  - Not as much general natal principles
  - The solar return doctrine is what makes Tajika unique and appealing probably
- Balabhadra has quotations from 40 earlier works
  - Two thirds of the text consists of quotations, largely in verse
- Some parts of the medieval Arabic aspect doctrine were misinterpreted
  - Sahl’s geometric definition of aspect angles become fractional values of strength
  - Right and left sided aspects misinterpreted as being above or below the horizon
  - Martin suspects they were working from a paraphrase or abbreviation of Sahl.
- They have no term for sect, and don’t treat the topic very thoroughly.
- Disagreement over whether cazimi is a dignity or debility.
- The 16 yogas in Tajika are derived from Sahl’s *Introduction*
- A number of misunderstandings in the reception of Arabic astrology in Tajika
  - Perhaps due to the pre-existing approaches to astrology in India.

- Martin says that the pre-existing tradition was perhaps “acting as a distorting lens through which the foreign knowledge system was viewed.”
  - Studying these issues may give us insight as we recover ancient sources.
- My interest in Tajika was to see if it could clarify some questions about western tradition
  - Instead the transmission errors and misunderstandings are making that unlikely.
- Modern state of Gujarat in western India as the main locus of activity for Tajika
  - Due to the proximity to Muslim lands.
- Access to manuscripts in Indian libraries restricted, especially for foreigners
- It is interesting how in this era Yavana means Arab or Persian foreigner
  - While in the earlier era it meant Greek foreigner.