

A PRIMER OF MAYAN ASTROLOGY

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Lesson 1

The Maya perceive the universe as an energetic whole made up of two opposing but complementary polarities, expressions of a single, unified force. They mirror each other like opposites: Summer and winter, cold and heat, light and darkness. Ultimately, however, they are of the same essence. In terms of astrology, the polarities are most clearly seen in the idea that day-signs are masculine whereas numbers are feminine, though many of the individual day-signs embody feminine principles as well, just as some of the numbers embody masculine principles.

The Mayan concept of polarity is very similar to the Chinese concept of yin and yang. I will sometimes use those terms here. I am not trying to confuse the issues or to equate one cultural expression with another. However, my friend Don Rigoberto often said: "Sometimes there are no adequate words in English or in Spanish to express many of the basic concepts of Mayan spirituality. Western philosophical thinking is just too different. I have used Eastern philosophical terms in my own lectures and writings because the Eastern concepts are often much more similar to those of our Mayan cosmovision. Since many Western students understand the Eastern terms, their use helps people to comprehend the Mayan concepts."

The concept of polarity applies to the human soul as well. Each human being is born with two souls. One of them is known as the *uxlab*, though the Spanish word *anima* is often used to describe this aspect of soul. It is vested in the body and in breathing. It remains within the body until the moment of our death.

In the K'iche' language, the second aspect of the soul is called *uwach uk'ij*, which literally means "the face of his or her day." In other words, this is the energy template or imprint of the Sacred Calendar day upon which we are born. The Maya use the word *nawal* to describe this aspect of the soul. The word is borrowed from the word *nagual*, a well-known term in the Nahuatl language once spoken by the Aztecs, but it should be emphasized that this word means something different to the Maya than it means in Carlos Castaneda's popular books or even in most anthropological literature. A *nawal* is the spirit inherent in a day-sign; in fact, I never heard the Maya use the term *signo del dia* for day-sign; they always called a day-sign a *nawal*. Since we all have a particular day-sign upon which we were born, we all have a personal *nawal*. Our *nawal* is our day-sign soul, our spiritual essence, our archetypal imprint. The *anima* may be vested within the human body, but the *nawal* is not. It can roam freely through the astral world while we are asleep.

All the numbers are feminine, and may be regarded as the "wives" of the 20 *nawales*. A union between day-sign and number is in the nature of a "mystic marriage" that unites the essentially masculine and changeless nature of the day-signs with the active, vibrant female principle of the numbers.

The existence of a powerful bio-psychological energy within the human body has been postulated by many civilizations. The best known example comes from Hinduism, where this energy is known as the *kundalini* or serpent power. The *kundalini* is in essence a goddess just as much as it is a form of energy. It travels through different energetic centers in the body, known as *chakras*, and can be manipulated through meditation and spiritual practice. In the K'iche' Mayan language, this powerful inner energy is called *koyopa*. The word literally means "sheet lightning." However, the Maya also think of a bolt of lightning as a "sky serpent," so in that sense the *koyopa* is a serpent power too. Sometimes called "the lightning in the blood," the *koyopa*, like the *kundalini*, is essentially feminine because it is associated with the 13 numbers. *Koyopa* collects in the thirteen major articulations or joints of the human body, which thus form a Mayan analogy to the *chakras*.

We may have a tendency to think of the bodily soul or *anima* as a somewhat lesser entity than the *nawal*; after all, it remains within the human body and dissipates at death. But the magical *koyopa* energy itself dwells within the body and is thus connected with the bodily soul; both aspects of the soul are equally important.

The relationship between day-signs and numbers can be usefully understood in the form of a diagram:

DAY SIGNS	NUMBERS
Masculine (Yang)	Feminine (Yin)
Nagual (Spiritual) Soul	Anima (Bodily) Soul
Internal Influence	External Influence
Archetypal Imprint	Personality Determinant

In our next lesson, we will learn how to identify the five most basic nawales which make up an individual's birth chart or Mayan horoscope.