



BARACK OBAMA

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY

by Penny Farrow

Whatever one's opinion of former President Barack Obama, the arc of his life is a compelling story of magical highs and paralyzing disappointments. Such a life inspires examination through the lens of Jyotisha. What in his destiny pattern could describe the magnitude of his achievements and the unparalleled obstruction that dogged him through his eight years as president? And what does the chart say about the character of the man?

To address these questions meaningfully, it is necessary to understand a basic dichotomy in how the *grahas* (planets) are classified. The texts of Jyotisha emphasize the importance of the inherent nature of the *grahas*. A *graha* that stabilizes and supports the manifestation of the higher promise of whatever it is influencing in the chart is called a natural benefic, supporting *dharma* (right action). The reliable natural benefics are Jupiter and Venus. Mercury can also be classified as a natural benefic if it is not afflicted, and the Moon will be a natural benefic if it is more than 72° away from the Sun.

A natural malefic, on the other hand, destabilizes whatever it touches and obstructs the more positive outcomes. It often promotes undesirable results. Such a *graha* accounts for some of the rain that inevitably falls somewhere in every person's chart and in the person's life. Saturn, Mars, Rahu, Ketu, and the Sun are the natural malefics. Mercury will join that group if it is afflicted, and the Moon, too, if it is less than 72° away from the Sun.

This inherent quality of a *graha* is introduced early in the root texts that underscore its importance. Therefore, for example, Jupiter's inherent natural benefic quality remains intact through the many techniques of analysis that might be applied to it, even if another lens reveals that Jupiter could also create problems. No matter what other role a *graha* takes on, somewhere, somehow, its designation as a natural benefic or natural malefic will assert itself, thereby fulfilling that basic job description.

Where things get especially fascinating, albeit challenging, is the contrast between the inherent nature of a *graha* and what is known as its temporal nature. The temporal nature is derived from the kind of *bhavas* (houses) that the *graha* rules. Simply put, a *graha* that owns a positive *bhava* is a temporal benefic, and one that owns a negative *bhava* is a temporal malefic. Since the five true *grahas* (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) each own two *bhavas*, it is possible that any of them could own two positive or two negative *bhavas* and be designated as "wholly temporal benefic" or "wholly temporal malefic."

The 6th, 8th, and 12th *bhavas* are said to be the negative *bhavas*. Some sages add the 3rd *bhava* to that list as a mildly negative *bhava*. The Jyotisha term *dussthana* is used for *bhavas* that have a preponderance of themes that we prefer not to encounter in our lives. The prefix *dus* means "painful" and

*The stamp of Saturn is all over
Obama's appearance, public
persona, and modus operandi.*

sthana means "place," so we can understand *dussthana* to mean a place of suffering or pain.

The texts use hyperbolic language as a device for creating emphasis. This is exemplified by the descriptions of the *dussthana*s. Westerners should be aware of this to avoid overreacting upon reading such statements. Applying these principles is always done in the context of a given chart, which becomes the final arbiter as to whether a combination is actually dire.

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Armed with the above information, let's take a look at the chart of Barack Obama to get the lay of the land. (See **Chart**, below.)

Since the *lagna* (Ascendant) and the lagna lord are the very foundation of the chart, their strength is a primary signature for a person who is a consummate utilizer, one who knows how to draw out from any situation the best possible outcome and is therefore able to navigate successfully through life, by turning its lemons into lemonade. A glance at Obama's chart reveals very impressive strength for these important factors — he could have opened a lemonade stand on the lawn of the White House and made a fortune!

The ruler of his 1st bhava, Saturn, resides in the 1st bhava and is therefore in its own constellation of Capricorn, forming a *Shasha Yoga*, one of the five premier *Mahapuru-sha* (great personage) yogas in Jyotisha. Saturn is close to its maximum retrograde position, being opposite the Sun,¹ so it will be easier to observe — something that is not often true of Saturn. In addition, Saturn gets a boost by being in Capricorn in several important divisional charts,² adding to its already impressive strength quotient.

Saturn is stabilized by its association with the natural benefic Jupiter. This very interesting Jupiter is extremely strong since it is retrograde and has directional strength.³ Yet, at the same time, it is sitting in Capricorn where it is debilitated. When a graha has both significant strength and weakness, interpreting it becomes a paradox that, when resolved, will provide important insight. I'll elaborate more on this later.

For these reasons, Saturn is hands down the most important graha in Obama's chart. The stamp of Saturn is all over Obama's appearance, public persona, and modus operandi. He

is tall and lanky, possessing a cool and contained way of dealing with matters at hand. He is deliberate and careful as well as authoritative, responsible, competent, and a deep thinker. Delays and obstacles are dealt with patiently and diplomatically. Try as they could to foil him, his enemies found that they were often outmaneuvered by his strategic genius.

Saturn exemplifies the paradox mentioned in the above discussion on temporal benefics and malefics. In a Capricorn-rising chart, it rules two positive bhavas — the 1st and 2nd — making it a wholly temporal benefic. Saturn delivers by forming powerful yogas for leadership and bringing its strength through the themes of the 1st and 2nd bhavas into the karmic current of positive outcome. Yet it is a natural malefic, and though it greatly strengthens Obama's fortitude and stature in society, it also brings a separative tendency. This plays out in his life as being "a stranger in a strange land," with a host of enemies arrayed against him and a public passionately divided on how they view him.

But, as we will see later, it is this fascinating Saturn that gave Obama his second term.

The Ascent

Jupiter was pivotal in Obama's transition to public service, forming two important yogas for pre-eminence that became operative when his Jupiter *dasha* (planetary period) started to run. (See **Table**, following page.) It was at the very beginning of his Jupiter period in 1996 that Obama was elected to the Illinois State Senate, where he was instrumental in working across the aisle to sponsor and create meaningful legislation that helped underclass citizens; this included larger tax credits for low income workers, welfare reform, and increased subsidies for childcare.

That success prompted Obama to assess the possibility of running for a United States Senate seat in the 2004 race.

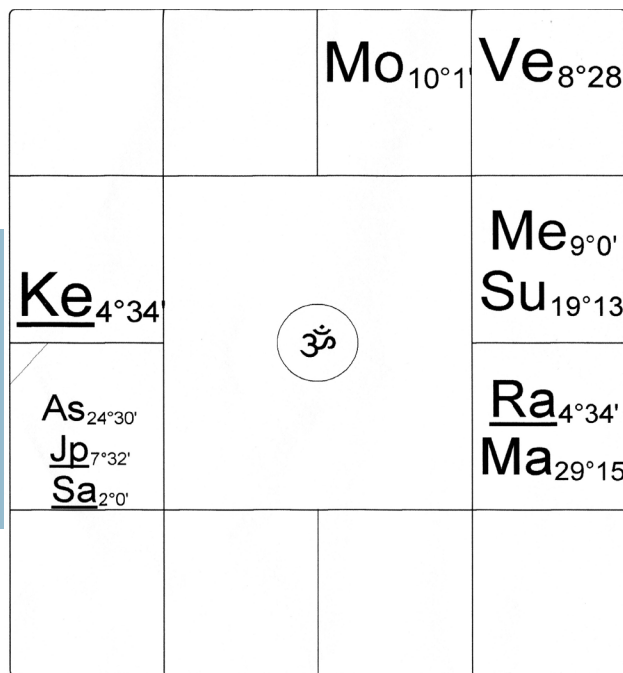
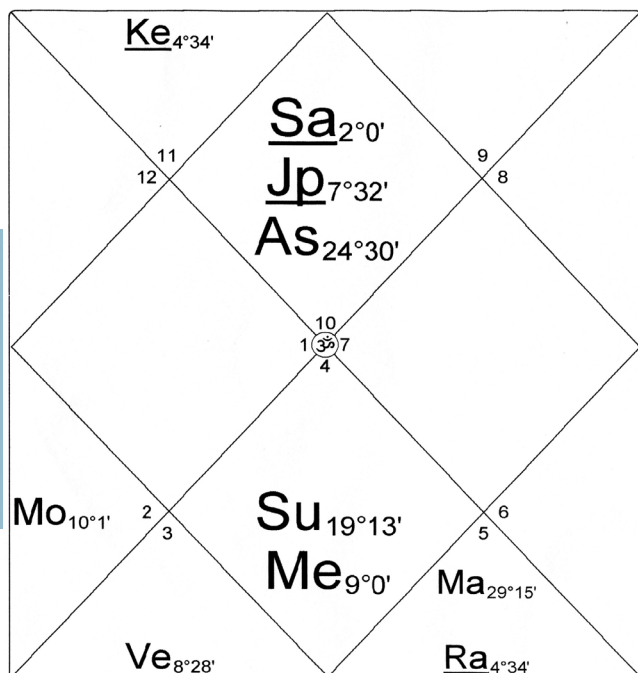


Chart: Barack Obama North (l) and South (r) Indian Charts, Lahiri ayanamsha, and the Mean Node

He won the primary handily and in the process became a rising star in the Democratic Party, which opened the door to his momentous keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic convention. More than nine million viewers heard that address, and he was hailed as a serious future presidential prospect.

Still in his Jupiter dasha, Obama won the Senate race and halfway through his first term announced that he was running for the U.S. presidency. The wheel of time was incredibly good to him. His campaign went into full throttle mode in December 2007, just as he entered one of the most remarkable periods in his life: the Jupiter dasha and the Moon *bhukti* (sub-dasha).

Why was this such a golden time for him? One of the two yogas involving Jupiter in Obama's chart is a relatively rare combination called a *Gauri Yoga*. It forms when Jupiter associates with or aspects an exalted Moon (Taurus) or a Moon in its own constellation (Cancer). There is an additional condition — the Moon must be either in a *kendra* (angular bhava: 1st, 4th, 7th, or 10th) or a *trikona* (1st, 5th, or 9th bhava). It's amazing that Jupiter and the Moon were the very grahas that came to the center of the stage to deliver the goods at the very end of November 2007, when the primary season for the 2008 election was about to launch.

Gauri, the fair one, is an epithet for Parvati, the consort of the powerful Lord Shiva. She is considered to be the mother goddess imbued with divine strength and power. In some stories, she is said to have golden skin and is described as the strongest among the lights, or the "illuminated" ones. Though the texts give some brief indications of what this yoga signifies, such as "success always kissing the feet of such a native" and "praised by one and all," it is really up to the astrologer, looking at the environment in which such a yoga operates, to gauge its potential results.

Examining Obama's chart, we see Jupiter on the lagna aspecting an exalted Moon in the 5th bhava. In fact, the only graha influencing the Moon is Jupiter. The absence of any malefics impinging on the Moon increases its ability to promote auspicious outcomes for whatever the Moon signifies in the chart, as well as making the Gauri Yoga itself powerful.

In Obama's case, the Moon sits in the very auspicious 5th bhava, which is considered a place of grace and good fortune. The 5th also signifies the formation of government. The Moon

In Obama's case, the Moon sits in the very auspicious 5th bhava, which is considered a place of grace and good fortune.

itself represents the public and, specifically, as the ruler of the 7th in a Capricorn-rising chart, it further represents the public since the 7th bhava signifies all others with whom we deal, except for our blood relationships. Jupiter, the other member of the Gauri Yoga, sits in the 1st bhava and brings the results directly to the native's character, fame, and status in life.

Start	Age	Dasha	Bhukti
7/26/1996	35.0	Jp	Jp
9/14/1998	37.1	Jp	Sa
3/27/2001	39.6	Jp	Me
7/3/2003	41.9	Jp	Ke
6/8/2004	42.8	Jp	Ve
2/7/2007	45.5	Jp	Su
11/26/2007	46.3	Jp	Mo
3/27/2009	47.6	Jp	Ma
3/3/2010	48.6	Jp	Ra
7/27/2012	51.0	Sa	Sa
7/30/2015	54.0	Sa	Me
4/8/2018	56.7	Sa	Ke

Table: Barack Obama's Vimshottari Dashes

But wait — there's more! Obama's mother (chart not shown) also happens to have a Gauri Yoga in her chart. This is one of those moments that cause an astrologer to get goose bumps. Her Gauri Yoga forms with Jupiter, the exalted 5th lord of children, joining the Moon in its own *rashi* of Cancer in her 9th bhava of good fortune. We could, therefore, attribute the meanings of this yoga to both her and her child, bringing in all the dignified meanings and implications of the 5th and 9th bhavas. It is as if her Gauri Yoga presages his and the heights he was destined to rise to, once this yoga was activated in his life.

So, let's step back and wonder at the brilliant display of destiny asserting itself at this most pivotal time in Obama's life. In anyone's chart (with a Gauri Yoga or not), a Jupiter-Moon or Moon-Jupiter period will last for only 14 months. Should someone run Moon-Jupiter, they won't run Jupiter-Moon until 43 years later. If they run Jupiter-Moon, they won't run Moon-Jupiter until around 80 years later. What are the chances that Obama would run this extremely auspicious Jupiter-Moon combination in the very 14 months when he was vying for and winning the presidency of the United States?

A Very Short Honeymoon

But as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. Obama was inaugurated on January 20, 2009, and in February, while still in his Jupiter-Moon dasha, he signed the American Recovery Act of 2009. However, on March 27, the Moon bhukti gave way to Mars and then, about a year later, the Rahu bhukti — both vulnerable time periods that unleashed what could be described as "the tyranny of the temporal malefics," which we'll explore in more detail below.

As soon as the Moon bhukti was over, the wall of opposition to anything Obama proposed started to solidify, so that any further gains were hard fought and necessitated much more compromise than he would have liked, even when he still had a Democratic majority in Congress.

The situation deteriorated further when Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell announced his number one agenda

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item: making Obama a one-term president. That Congress will go down in history as one of the least productive and most obstructive, with an unprecedented number of filibusters rendering the Democratic majority impotent. The level of disrespect for the president shocked the country; even ideas that the Republicans themselves had put forward in the past were scuttled as soon as Obama evidenced any agreement with or enthusiasm for them.

Why were the Jupiter–Mars and Jupiter–Rahu periods so dramatically different from the Jupiter–Moon period? Looking at Obama’s chart, we can see that these back-to-back bhuktis involved grahas that are in the 8th bhava — one of the three potent dussthanas. The themes of the 8th bhava involve manipulation, enemies, secrets, plots, scandals, and litigation.

Jupiter and Mars are in a 6/8 relationship. Counting from Jupiter, Mars is eight bhavas away, and counting from Mars, Jupiter is six bhavas away. When a dasha and bhukti lord have a 6/8 relationship, they are open enemies and fail to cooperate. The same thing happens with Jupiter and Rahu.

By contrast, the Moon is five bhavas away from Jupiter, and counting from the Moon, Jupiter is nine bhavas away: a 5/9 trinal relationship. This relationship signals support, flow, cooperation, and smoothness. In the uncooperative environment set up by the 6/8 relationship, the current of karma coalesces around the nonsupportive elements in the chart,

and grahas can start to show their shadow side — cue the temporal malefics.

The Role of Temporal Malefics in Obama’s Chart

Our first task is to identify which of the grahas are temporal malefics in Obama’s chart by checking the rulers of the 6th, 8th, and 12th bhavas and, optionally, the 3rd. We find that Mercury rules the 6th bhava; the Sun rules the 8th bhava; and Jupiter, the 12th and 3rd bhavas. All of Obama’s temporal malefics are arrayed on the 1/7 axis where they will assail both the lagna and the lagna lord — a truly striking pattern.

Let’s examine the outcomes promised by this rowdy bunch, starting with the Sun. It is probably the most dramatic of the three, as it is a natural malefic as well as a temporal malefic and the ruler of the 8th. The 8th bhava is greatly highlighted all through Obama’s first term by the Mars and Rahu bhuktis (sub-dasha periods), since both Mars and Rahu reside in that house. The Sun is also fully enabled at this time to bring 8th-bhava themes directly to the lagna and the lagna lord Saturn, by its 7th aspect to the 1st and its mutual 7/7 relationship with Saturn. Obama’s life was surrounded by conspiracy theories and lies concerning his birth and religion. There were open hostilities and secret plots to bring him down in any way possible. He dealt with terrorist attacks and agonies over mass killings, all while battling the National Rifle Association (NRA) over the most incremental measures to prevent guns from falling into dangerous hands.

Turning now to Mercury, as lord of the 6th bhava, we can see that it will project themes of debt, litigation, sickness, obstacles, and enemies. Obama faced two government shut-downs over the debt ceiling and threats of defaults on U.S. loans that weakened the country’s credit standing. Obama’s struggle with passing and implementing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) combines all three dussthanas — the 6th in dealing with healthcare delivery in general and lawsuits, the 8th for insurance, and the 12th for hospitals and spending. The constant votes to repeal the ACA (“Obamacare”) and the multiple lawsuits that went all the way to the Supreme Court reflect the vehement opposition to the legislation, which emerged during the Mars and Rahu bhuktis. However, Mercury also owns the positive 9th bhava, and we will see its role flip when we examine the Saturn dasha, which began July 27, 2012.

And then there is Jupiter, the very graha that helped give Obama the presidency. In the troubled 6/8 relationship with Mars, and in concert with the other temporal malefics, Jupiter shows more of its adverse side. Jupiter gives us two conundrums to resolve. The first is that it is a strong natural benefic stabilizing Obama’s lagna and lagna lord, softening and humanizing his strong Saturn, and creating the Gauri Yoga that helped sweep him to victory. Yet, it also has a major weakness — it is debilitated in Capricorn.

The second is that, though Jupiter is a natural benefic, it does not rule a positive bhava, so it is a wholly temporal malefic. This is where many astrologers might tear up the chart and throw their hands in the air. But there is a path through this. When such a graha, which has both constructive and challenging qualities, is operating in a positive time period and is part of an auspicious pattern like the Gauri Yoga, it will mainly contribute its strength and positive results, along with

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some of its less supportive roles in the background. When it is operating in a negative time period and environment, it will go with that flow and add its dissonant voice to the chaos, while behind the scenes providing some strength and support.

How did that play out for Obama? We saw that, with supportive bhukti sub-periods, trinal relationships and positive bhava activation, the Jupiter dasha gave a rise to the top through its strength and yogas. As soon as the pendulum swung in the direction of clashes and discord, with the 8th bhava and 6/8 relationships coming to prominence, Jupiter fell into line as the lord of the 12th. Now its placement in the

As far as re-election chances in 2012, without two astrological timing “miracles” involving Saturn, Obama may well have gone down in defeat.

1st bhava conjoining the lagna brought the difficult themes of expenditure, debt, difficulties associated with foreign powers, secret enemies, and being an outsider — different, not one of us. Jupiter joined in with its “buddies,” the rulers of the 6th (Mercury) and 8th (Sun), in a tidal wave of obstruction rarely seen in such intensity in a chart. Obama was inundated by the effects of all of the essentially unimpeded temporal malefics, and he might not have prevailed, were it not for his innate strength. He was also aided by the ultimate truth that Jupiter, for all the problems it brings as the 12th lord, is a natural benefic and, in some way, will support his endurance and promote the success that he still managed to pull off.

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Saturn to the Rescue

It seems like an oxymoron to think of Saturn as a savior. Yet, as far as re-election chances in 2012, without two astrological timing “miracles” involving Saturn, Obama may well have gone down in defeat.

Obama's approval ratings, unsurprisingly, peaked from January through May 2009, right after his inauguration, with positives as high as 60–67%. Though the ratings remained over 50% for a while longer, by the summer of 2010 they were down in the mid to high 40% range. By the summer of 2011, they plunged to a low of 40% and stayed under 45%, while rising somewhat starting in early 2012 (45–48% range). By this time, Mitt Romney was shaping up as a formidable opponent, and Obama's approval ratings were under 50%.

And then it happened. A few weeks before the Democratic National Convention, Obama's Saturn dasha began (July 27, 2012). A week later, Saturn transited into Libra where it is exalted in his 10th bhava, recreating the natal Shasha Yoga, this time in the bhava of government and authority. Natal Saturn provided the exclamation point by its aspect to transiting Saturn.

Mother Nature added the drama of Hurricane Sandy in late October, giving Obama the opportunity to demonstrate once again the positive side of his powerful Saturn: being

responsible, competent, and level-headed in times of great stress. Jupiter, in the new environment of Obama's Saturn dasha, had a chance to contribute when it really counted — on election day itself. Jupiter and the Moon reprised their major role in Obama's rise to the top. It was one of those times when one can only sit back and wonder at the perfection of it all.

On November 6, 2012 (election day), the Moon transited Cancer. Why, you might ask, is that a big deal? Cancer falls in Obama's 7th bhava, and his natal Jupiter is in his 1st bhava. Therefore, the transiting Moon and natal Jupiter, by mutual 7/7 aspect, recreated the Gauri Yoga. Recall the formation of this yoga: Jupiter must aspect or be in *yuti* (conjoined) with an exalted Moon or the Moon in Cancer, while that Moon is in a kendra or trikona bhava. Where was transiting Jupiter? Are you sitting down? It was transiting the 5th bhava in Taurus where the natal Moon sits, recreating the Gauri Yoga again, but the other way around — transiting Jupiter and the natal Moon. And, for the cherry on top: Transiting Jupiter from the 5th bhava was also aspecting its own natal position in the 1st bhava, completing the loop.

The Aftermath and the Legacy

In the years following the 2012 election, Obama was able to face down some of the obstruction, but still there were anguishing defeats, such as the inability to pass any kind of gun control legislation after the Sandy Hook and Orlando tragedies.



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However, the Saturn–Saturn (dasha–bhukti) transitioned to Saturn–Mercury in the summer of 2015, a combination that enabled several auspicious yogas to fructify, including a couple that highlighted his intelligence and strategic prowess. The list of accomplishments, given the continuing obstruction in Congress, is remarkable. Highlights include the decrease in the unemployment rate to 4.9% — the lowest it had been since the great recession in 2008. The rate of uninsured Americans fell below 10% for the first time ever as a result of the ACA. Historic accords on climate change and Iran’s atomic program were consummated. Relations with Cuba were restored and normalized after 55 years of diplomatic severance. And on the civil rights front, same-sex marriage became the law of the land.

At the close of his historic presidency, how do we see Obama — the legacy and the man?

The Agony and the Ecstasy Reprised

In the months leading up to the 2016 election, the election that would seemingly seal or doom Obama’s legacy, Obama saw some of his highest approval ratings. They ranged up to 56%, which is rare for any sitting president, let alone one who had struggled with getting any kind of legislation passed, while also being vilified and marginalized by the opposition.

Indeed, it was often reported that many Americans wished he could hang around for another term, and were loath to see him go. Some of this popularity undoubtedly resulted from comparing him to the two unpopular candidates who were running to succeed him.

Obama threw himself into the campaign with a commitment and vigor that was unprecedented for a sitting president. He was the shadow candidate essentially running on the idea that preserving all he accomplished would be ensured by electing Hillary Clinton. On November 8, 2016, in a stunning blow to Obama’s legacy, the country elected Donald J. Trump. How can we account for this in the Saturn–Mercury period that also brought such late-term successes? A shadow candidate is not “the candidate,” and in any election, the charts of the two major party nominees must be assessed for the outcome.

However, the days following the election revealed Obama, the man, more dramatically than any victory could have. He modeled for the entire world great dignity and responsibility by reaching out to the man who opposed what he himself stood for and envisioned. He offered his support and mentorship to the incoming president, thus embodying the continuity of the orderly transfer of power. In this way, he tried to soothe the fractious nation by his example. This is a noble expression of the essence of Saturn, especially as it is coupled with the 9th lord of dharma, Mercury.

As the Trump presidency unfolds, the nation will have to grapple with the reality that the Obama agenda will be partially or completely dismantled. No one can envision the extent of this. Only time will tell.

But the question still remains: What is Obama’s legacy? Is it his signature legislative achievements that might be wiped out by this next administration? Certainly on one order of reality, that is a big piece of the picture. But legislation is the

child of the president’s vision, and it is he who has to work with Congress to craft and fructify it. Obama’s legislative victories are significant, but is that how he will be measured?

Obama’s call to serve was driven by his vision of a different way that government could function. He hoped to unite the country and end the gridlock in the halls of Congress. Though frustrated in this goal, he nevertheless stayed the course of patience and dignity. Therefore, Obama’s legacy might be on a different order of reality. It might be an echo of the words of another great leader, “I had a dream,” and as we all know, dreams are the potent drivers of the winds of change.

Chart Data and Sources

Barack Obama, August 4, 1961; 7:24 p.m. AHST; Honolulu, HI, USA (21°N18', 157°W52); AA: birth certificate in hand, Taglilatelo.

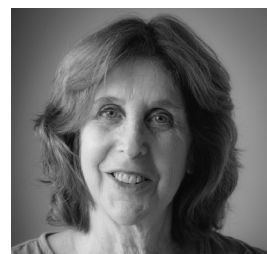
Ann Dunham, November 29, 1942; 8:34 a.m. CWT; Sedgwick, KS, USA (37°N55', 97°W25); AA: birth certificate in hand, Taglilatelo.

References and Notes

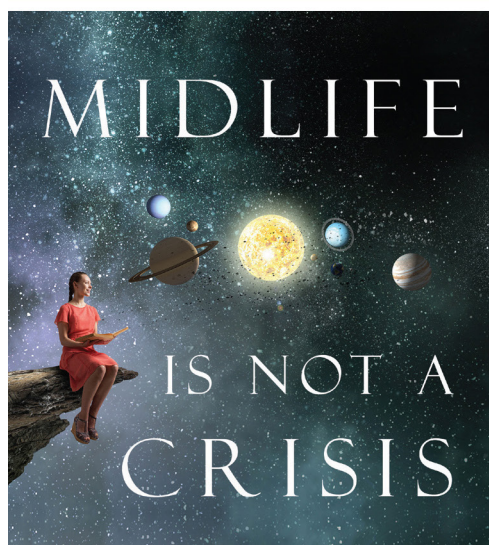
1. The astronomical phenomenon of retrogression for outer planets occurs when the Earth catches up to slower-moving Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn. This means that the Earth will be located between the Sun and the outer planet and closest in its orbit to that planet. Hence the outer planet will be more visible than at other times in its cycle.
2. Mathematical formulas are used in Jyotisha segmenting the zodiac into various sub-charts known as varga charts. They correlate with specific themes, such as marriage, children, and career, and provide greater insight into how these areas of life operate.
3. All of the grahas except Rahu and Ketu (North and South Nodes of the Moon) attain a special strength in a particular *kendra*. Since the kendras are the cardinal directions, this strength is known as *dig bala* or directional strength. Jupiter has this strength in the east (i.e., 1st bhava).

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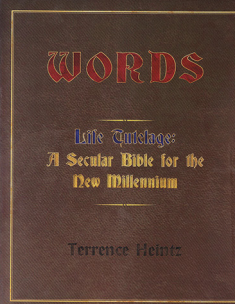
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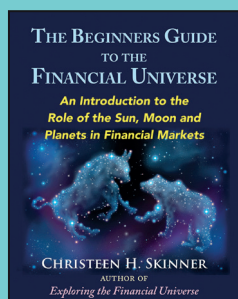
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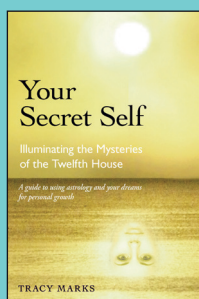


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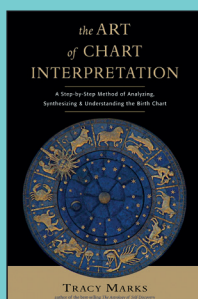
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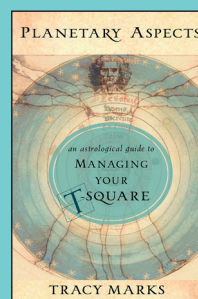
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