



The Eastern Window

by Penny Farrow

Editor's Note: Cross ventilation produces a breath of fresh air. It is desirable in a house and even in a magazine! In this spirit, we are introducing a series of short articles designed to make some of the basic building blocks and ideas of Vedic astrology more accessible to all. We anticipate that opening the Eastern Window can clarify the complementarity between great astrological traditions.

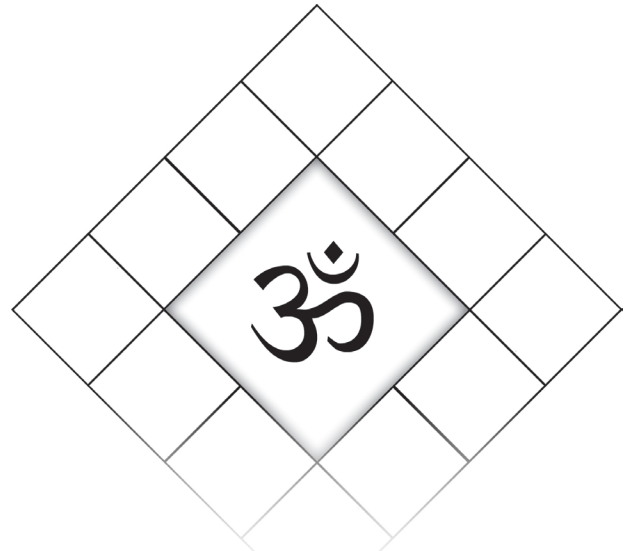
What You See Is What You Get

It all started when someone looked up. We will never know who. Most likely it was an instinctual, collective looking-up because survival depended on it. If our progenitors had not looked up and figured out that when the Sun was low in the western sky it would be good to retreat to the cave before nightfall, they might not have had a chance to contribute their gene pool to subsequent generations!

But the ancients also observed the Moon's waxing and waning as well as its cyclic progress through particular star groups. This built a deeper relationship between humans and the dazzling variety of cosmic patterns. From these observations it became possible to align to the forces of the natural world by understanding the concept of time. Planning a stable future through timing devices, such as calendars, established humankind as a dominant force.

It is not accidental that the Sun and Moon command attention — they are the brightest objects in the sky. A highly visible object sends a message of strength and potency to the viewer. Likewise, as an inherent feature of a planet, the strength or weakness due to visibility will greatly contribute to the role the planet plays in an individual's life.

There are varying opinions in systems of astrology as to what makes something strong. Vedic astrologers consider the planetary strength that occurs as a result of visibility to be "natural astrology" because it is based on direct observation. In contrast, there is the strength that comes from states like exaltation or a planet being in its own sign. These are concepts rather than something that is directly accessible through our sense organs, and therefore they come under the umbrella of what is known as symbolic astrology.



Anyone can observe whether the Moon is full or dark. Its visibility has an immediate impact. However, only a trained observer can look up and understand that the Moon is exalted because it is transiting through the constellation of Taurus. (Vedic astrology uses the sidereal zodiac, which positions planets against the backdrop of the actual constellations.) These are different avenues of knowledge about planetary strength, and their differences can add color to the tapestry of the interpretation.

The brightness of planets and fixed stars plays many major roles in the Vedic tradition. The very foundation for doing astrology at all comes from the ability to measure where a planet is at any time by having a reference point. The radiant light from the star known as Chitra (Spica) provides us with this awe-inspiring orientation. Brilliant Chitra at 0° Libra points directly to 0° Aries, an otherwise unmarked patch of sky. This was the nearly miraculous way the Vedic tradition established sidereal 0° Aries as an unvarying beginning of the zodiac.

Planetary strength is a vital way of assessing the karmic current of themes that a given planet or star represents in a particular horoscope and how they will manifest. Strength or weakness based on visibility has some interesting ramifications. For example, if someone's Venus is quite close to the Sun (a state known as combustion — more to come in a future article), it is less visible due to the glare of the Sun. That reduced visibility could show up in the person's life as an inability to realize a sustainable marriage, as Venus is the planet that symbolizes marriage in a chart.

However, visibility is a raw strength. Both a bully and a hero can be strong but with hugely different outcomes. Thus, although bright planets in and of themselves can be big players in a destiny pattern, they must be carefully scrutinized to see whether they are showering fairy dust or pelting the native with rocks!

Vedic astrology describes how planets clustered in specific sky patterns correlate with particular tendencies in the life. These spatial configurations give us the message from the ancient past that the arrangement of the points of light is deeply impactful in describing our destiny here on Earth.

So, the next time you pore over the triangles, boxes, and circles called a chart on your computer screen or printout,

consider taking a moment to see it as an actual representation of how the sky appeared at the time of the birth or the event that you are analyzing. As you envision what the sky looked like, try letting those impressions start to dance inside you. Imagine telling a person that shortly before their birth, the beautiful morning star Venus was dazzling on the eastern horizon, and then at the exact time of birth, the Sun was just coming up, while on the western horizon a beautiful Full Moon was setting. You might be inspired to convey how the magnificence of that sky translated into their destiny pattern. And, yes, there are charts like that, and these patterns do herald a great personage.

Cultivating your awareness of the sky pattern gives many gifts. It can connect you to that eternal and mysterious order we call the cosmos and provide that extra spice that turns a routine reading into something much tastier.

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Penny Farrow has an M.S. degree from Cornell University and has had an extensive career as a teacher, researcher, and businesswoman. She has been involved in the Vedic tradition since 1971. She has studied Jyotisha intensively since 1991, primarily under the personal tutelage of Hart deFouw, and taught Jyotisha and Sanskrit at Vedic Vidya Institute in San Rafael, California for eight years. Penny was honored with a certificate from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for promoting Jyotisha in the United States. She now resides in Florida, practicing and teaching Jyotisha and Sanskrit full time. Telephone: (415) 497-2014; e-mail: info@vedicchart.com; website: <http://www.vedicchart.com>

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