

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 featuring 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.

Open Auditions

You might have missed an interesting notice in a recent edition of *Vari*ty* magazine. It reads, “Cattle call for nine diverse actors. Work opportunities are virtually endless. Must be able to improvise when the situation calls for it. Successful candidates should be able to flourish in roles that are in and out of their wheelhouse. Their range of expression should be broad enough to accommodate dramatic highs and lows for a particular role while still maintaining the integrity of the character. Above all, they must be able to deliver their lines compellingly at every opportunity they have to command center stage.” Is this going to connect to a chart? Trust me, it will!

*Vari*ty* is the favorite magazine of cosmic accountant Citragupta (whose name means “hidden picture”) and the master booking agent Lord Yama (the king of dharma). Both have important roles in the pantheon of Vedic deities. Citragupta is charged with keeping detailed records on how a life has been conducted, rather like Santa Claus with his list of naughty and nice, but much more profound and impactful. He passes this information along to Lord Yama, who evaluates the accumulated merits and demerits of lives led over many incarnations (known in the Indian tradition as *sanchita* karma). Eventually, the time comes for a portion of that karma (*prarabdha*, or ripening karma) in the accumulated account to find its way into a new vehicle for growth and progress (i.e., a new incarnation). Then the nine actors are booked into a particular play that will unfold the *prarabdha* karma.

A Vedic astrology chart is an amazing tool for understanding the play — the flow of karma throughout the lifetime. It details the important themes, the stature of the individual, and where and when the highs and lows occur. It also provides important understanding regarding the purpose and resolu-

tion of each particular aspect of the drama. It is through the nine actors that the thematic material is enlivened. The individual is “grabbed,” so to speak, and seemingly compelled by the actors to perform their roles and speak their lines. It is, therefore, no surprise that these actors are called *grahas* in Vedic astrology, from the Sanskrit root *grah*, which means to “grab, seize, or capture.” (Although the use of Sanskrit terms can be intimidating or vexatious, they greatly enrich one’s understanding through the elegant web of linguistic connections possible with every word.)

Though some neo-Vedic astrologers include Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, traditional Jyotisha focuses on the nine *grahas* — the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, and Ketu. For those just discovering this system, Rahu represents the North Node of the Moon and Ketu, the South Node. They are called *chaya grahas* (shadow planets) since they not only lack mass and light, but are also central players in the great shadow show of the heavens — the solar and lunar eclipses.

Each of the nine *grahas* plays its role both individually and through its interaction with the rest of the cast. Each also has the potential to surprise. For example, even if a *graha* is inherently nourishing and auspicious, it can, under some circumstances, take on a role at a particular time that might appear to be just the opposite.

If you attend a play where all the actors are on stage yelling out their lines at the same time, you might be writing a negative review on Ticketmaster (unless you are a fan of very avant-garde offerings). Jyotisha manages to avoid that kind of catastrophe. The nine *grahas* are indeed all on stage simultaneously, but they are organized so that only one of them (for our present discussion) is at center stage holding the microphone, bathed in the spotlight. The others are essentially the backup band playing the music that sets the context of the play. But our attention is riveted by the main *graha*. We are caught up in its role and its implications for the tapestry of the life.

Essentially, you can think of each *graha* as having its own act during which whatever it is empowered to do in the chart will come forward in the life. This enables greater specificity in

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predictions. The timing of these acts is calculated along with the chart itself. The timing system is known as the *dasha* system. One could think of the table listing the *dasha* periods as a “playbill,” since it details the sequence of acts and scenes that will unfold in the life, with each *dasha* ruled by a specific *graha* known as the *dasha* lord. One evocative meaning of a *dasha* is a wick — a defined period of time when a particular candle is glowing. The candle in this metaphor is one of the nine *grahas* — the one on center stage who mesmerizes us.

The exciting thing about the *dasha* system is that it gives a threefold confluence to a theme or event in the life, thereby making a prediction much more accurate. First, there is the script, which represents the natal potential of the chart that is ready to be animated at some point in time. Then there is the *dasha* period, when one of the actors comes forward em-

powered to breathe life into a latent promise within the chart. Finally, there are transits (to be covered another time) that precipitate events and trigger specific themes and lines in that actor’s repertoire.

And here we sit, the astrologers, with the script in hand. Curtain up. The play is ready to begin. Will it run word for word, according to the script? Or can the actors improvise? Stay tuned for more!

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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>

“Moments in Time” author bio

Frank Clifford is the author of *Getting to the Heart of Your Chart: Playing Astrological Detective* (Flare, 2012) and the new volume *The Midheaven: Spotlight on Success* (Flare, 2016). His publishing website can be found at <http://www.flareuk.com>, and his new website for consultations and articles is at <http://www.frankclifford.co.uk>

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