

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.

The Ecliptic Olympians

In modern times, we all tune into our devices to watch extraordinary athletes strut their stuff in their various events, all moving in some way or another. There are some who jump around in both predictable and novel moves; some who sprint at incredible speeds; some who run marathons, pacing themselves for the distance; some who contort themselves into amazing shapes; and some who are experts at stilling themselves in preparation for letting something fly.

Those who enjoy people-watching likewise pick up on the variations in people's movements. The hit song "Stay," by Rihanna, has a great lyric about how compelling movement can be: "Not really sure how to feel about it / Something in the way you move / Makes me feel like I can't live without you / It takes me all the way."

The ancients also found movement compelling and studied it not just in the terrestrial realm but also in the heavens. They observed a team of ecliptic Olympians, the *nava grahas* (nine planets) — the luminaries Sun and Moon; the true planets (*tara grahas*) Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; and the shadow (*chaya*) grahas, the mathematical points Rahu and Ketu (the North and South Nodes of the Moon), who were immediately disqualified from the team because they could never be seen.

As discussed in the first column in this series,¹ the Sun is the steady marathoner. Rather than 26 miles, the Sun will move at an even *gati* (gait) seemingly until its lights go out. The Moon, the great shape-shifter, gives us a show month-in and month-out, but its actual *gati* (degrees of ecliptic longitude covered in a day) does not vary as wildly as the star athletes, the *tara grahas*. This even gait is called *sama gati*.

Athletes are not machines. The most gifted sprinter can finish last, and another runner seemingly not in contention can grab that Olympic gold.

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The fastest of the *tara grahas* at times can be motionless, and the slowest can be a reckless driver.

Though I can't speak to other computer programs, the one I use shows the velocity per day for each of the *grahas*. It is also important to check how the *graha* is trending. What was the velocity a few days before? Is it fast and increasing, or fast but starting to slow down? When I first learned about *gati*, I was tasked by my teacher to spend several years tracking the daily motion of the *grahas*, along with other astronomical phenomena. Unequivocally, this shaped my ability to understand the planetary cycles in a much deeper way than reading a computer output.

So, what does all this have to do with chart interpretation? The texts of the tradition have names for all of these *gatis*, and the name will imply a portfolio of characterizations useful in understanding the way a native will navigate aspects of their life. Of course, there will need to be supporting combinations that give confluence. One swallow doth not a summer make.

Let's start with the hares or sprinters. These will be *grahas* that are moving faster than their average daily speeds. Depending on the *graha*, they can move quickly and smoothly for a long period of time, or they might go pedal to the metal and accelerate to their highest possible speed. These *gatis* are called *Shighra* or *Cara*,² and when they are very fast, they are called *Shighratarata* or *Aticara*.

Whether this enhances a particular *graha* or not depends on the environment of the horoscope. Let's take a look at the horoscope for tennis star Serena Williams.

In a chart, the thighs, knees, legs, and feet are indicated by the 9th through the 12th *bhavas* (houses), respectively. In her birth chart, these four *bhavas* are owned exclusively by Jupiter and Saturn. (See **Chart 1**, following page.) When she was born, Jupiter was moving at a velocity of almost 13 arc minutes per day, or around two-and-a-half times its usual speed, and was continuing to accelerate. Saturn was moving at more than three times its usual speed! Both are in the 6th *bhava* of competition and physical exertion, forming exceptional *yogas* for pre-eminence. Is this a good indicator?

The next question must always be: Good for what? For a fiercely competitive tennis player, this incredible and even reckless speed is a gift. On the other hand, this *gati* of extreme speed invokes qualities like excessiveness or

even dangerousness. Serena has had more than her share of injuries impeding her otherwise stellar career. And if we look at other concepts associated, for example, with her 9th bhava, such as “right action” or “do no harm,” she has been explosive, jarring, and hasty to the point of transgressing the norms of tennis — all possible interpretations of the fastest gati.

On the other extreme, we have the tortoises. These gatis are known as Manda and Mandatara — slow and extremely slow. The rapidity, swiftness, and energy of cara gati becomes plodding, indifferent, and even dull, depending again on concurrent chart factors. In the worst-case scenario, these gatis can give extreme lethargy, feebleness, misery, ignorance, and even stupor.

Let’s look at the chart of Don Imus. It has a number of grahas in extreme conditions, making it a ripe environment to factor in any significant gati. (See **Chart 2**, below right.) For starters, there are two debilitated grahas, Saturn and Mars, aspecting the *lagna* (Ascendant). In addition, Saturn and Jupiter are in a *Graha Yuddha* (planetary war)³ in the 7th bhava, which carries the meanings of the partner, the public at large, and all others with whom we deal. Mercury in the 10th bhava of career and visibility is retrograde and completely combust, while the lord of the 10th, the Moon, though almost full, is isolated and aspected only by the debilitated Mars.

The gati we will look at is that of the *lagna* lord Venus. Though in the positive 9th bhava, it is afflicted

by the very unstable Saturn. Venus is Mandatara, moving at only 20% of its average speed. By his late teens, Don Imus was already addicted to alcohol. Thanks to some strong yogas in his chart, he did have a career as a radio announcer. He moved into some big markets, such as WNBC in New York, with a big salary. On his second day at WNBC, he overslept and missed the show. When he did work, he was funny and popular, but when drinking, he often did not come to work — or, when he did show up, he would often arrive late and nap on the floor while the records he’d cued were playing. In one year, he missed 100 days of work. Needless to say, he was terminated.

This pattern of success and instability plagued his whole career, exacerbated by another addiction, cocaine. Despite being a celebrated talk show host, even making *Time* magazine’s list of the top 25 Most Influential People in America, his ignorant, controversial, and even slanderous on-air commentary resulted in suspensions, firings, and the subsequent lack of continuity in his career.

In addition to career issues, Imus suffered from poor health as a result of his addictions, as well as injuries sustained from an accident, which led to lifelong breathing problems that sapped his energy and vitality.

Both of these natives have shown more extreme instances of gati, with their underlying charts indicating confluent themes that enable the implied

meanings of the gatis to manifest quite visibly in their lives.

The next column will feature the remaining three gatis, which, when present in a chart, are particularly interesting to interpret.

Chart Data and Sources

Serena Williams, September 26, 1981; 8:28 p.m. EDT; Saginaw, MI, USA (43°N25', 83°W57'); AA: quoted BC/BR.

Don Imus, July 23, 1940; 1:33 p.m. PST; Riverside, CA, USA (33°N57', 117°W24'); AA: BC/BR in hand.

References and Notes

1. Penny Farrow, “The Eastern Window: The Ecliptic Highway: Hares, Tortoises, and Contrarians,” in *The Mountain Astrologer*, Aug./Sept. 2021, pp. 14–15.
2. In Sanskrit, *ca* is pronounced like “cha.”
3. A Planetary War occurs when two of the *tara grahas* (true planets) are within one degree of ecliptic longitude.

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	As _{9°33'}		
12 Pis	1 Ari	2 Tau	3 Gem
	Chart 1: Serena Williams		Ra _{4°40'} Ma _{21°58'}
11 Aqu			4 Can
			Mo _{26°47'}
Ke _{4°40'} 10 Cap			5 Leo
		Ve _{22°43'} Me _{6°3'}	Sa _{18°6'} Jp _{23°26'} Su _{10°12'}
9 Sag	8 Sco	7 Libr	6 Virg



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	Jp _{19°48'} Sa _{20°44'}		Ve _{4°17'}
6 Pis	7 Ari	8 Tau	9 Gem
	Chart 2: Don Imus		Me _{5°1'} Ma _{19°56'} Su _{7°48'}
Mo _{28°49'}			10 Can
5 Aqu			
			11 Leo
4 Cap		As _{24°46'}	Ra _{21°40'}
3 Sag	2 Sco	1 Libr	12 Virg

Charts are in the South Indian format, using the Lahiri ayanamsha and the Mean Node.