

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.

Tweaking the Script

Imagine you are the playwright and director of the musical play of your life's story. At the final rehearsal, you listen intently to the performers' delivery of the lyrics you wrote. A good thing, because you realize your lead singer is emphasizing some words that convey a different meaning than what you had in mind. Then you hear another cast member singing off-key. To top it off, the splendid harmonious duet blending two great voices is unbalanced because one of the singers is drowning out the other. You are very thankful that all of this came to your attention while you still have the time and opportunity to make important revisions to improve the performance.

What if you, the author, had a similar opportunity to "preview" the play you wrote for this lifetime? Could that possibility ever exist? Not as literally as a dress rehearsal, but yes, it is possible with Jyotisha because it provides a way to live an aware, self-examined life — and, as Socrates put it, "an unexamined life is not worth living." The basis of astrology is the concept that there is some overarching order shaping our lives. Jyotisha correlates sky patterns with patterns of human destiny, thereby providing insight that helps us to "preview" our own destiny and perhaps remediate areas of concern or weakness.

Jyotisha is often described as a *darpana* (mirror) reflecting back the patterns of past action that you have brought into this lifetime to resolve. *Karmaphala* (the results of one's actions) is extensively explored in the Vedic literature. In a previous column (*TMA*, Dec. 2016/Jan. 2017, pp. 22–23), I introduced ways to measure the intensity of karma in analyzing a chart.

The theater analogy is compelling in this regard. If we relate the story of our life to a cosmic kaleidoscope of discernible sky patterns unfolding through time, the *grahas* (planets) can be thought of as the actors who are specifically empowered to bring forward certain themes. In this way, astrology becomes an amazing tool for self-examination, which can lead to a

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more skillful approach to patterns that obstruct us in an inner or psychological way or prevent us from manifesting forward momentum in the outer arenas of life: success, security, relationships, etc.

Jyotisha not only makes visible the unseen current of karmaphala that inexorably shapes our life, but also humanely offers resources to deal, either generally or remarkably specifically, with containing or even reversing the impact of our karmic "script." These

measures come under the collective name of *upaya* (remediation).

You may have noticed, if you have attended yoga classes or other classes rooted in the Vedic tradition, that most teachers start and end the class with chanting (a form of *upaya*), which creates a special sacred space for the class. Traditionally these chants end with "*shanti, shanti, shanti*" (peace, peace, peace). Ever stop to think why? It is because the tradition teaches that karmaphala comes from three sources: self-generated karma (*adhyatmika*); the karma generated between the individual and external conditions, which include our immediate environment, especially other living beings (*adhibhautika*); and those overwhelmingly powerful events and forces in life (what insurance companies call "acts of God") that are beyond human control (*adhidaivika*). This prayer invokes peace and resolution on all three levels.

In an analogous way, the toolbox of remediation can operate on each of the three levels. Suppose an astrologer notices an obstructive pattern like anger in a chart. The person might be advised to pursue some specific behavior modification through psychological therapy. However, a Vedic astrologer, after identifying the *grahas* involved in the problematic pattern, might also suggest other modalities that are prescribed in the ancient texts, or more contemporary approaches that maintain the spirit of traditional prescriptions but are tailored to our current time and culture. Let's check out what that might look like in the chart of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an outspoken young woman who has gone viral these days. (See **Chart**, following page.)

Known as AOC, this youngest-ever female member of the House of Representatives has eclipsed even the Speaker of the House in terms of social media

hits, news articles, interviews, etc. In her election, she fearlessly challenged and unexpectedly defeated one of the most established incumbents while waving the banner of an unabashed progressive agenda. Fueled by anger at the inequities she has experienced and observed in her community, she often draws blood in verbal battles with her detractors, of whom there are many.

AOC's chart is a study in contrasts, with a disarmingly lovely Venus sitting unafflicted in her 1st house, while the *lagna* (Ascendant) lord is a tank of gas ready to explode with a mere spark: Mars in the 11th house is combust and afflicted by enemies Saturn and Mercury. There is a striking Full Moon and a boatload of compelling combinations for rise in life (to be unpacked in a future column). Her 2nd house of speech, however, is seriously afflicted by that volatile Mars and by Saturn. Although Jupiter's aspects give her the capacity to rein in her confrontational speaking style, will she?

The sky could be the limit for this chart, but the weak *lagna* lord, Mars, is decidedly troublesome and would therefore be my primary focus. It is tricky to simply strengthen a malefic, as doing this can have undesirable collateral consequences, so the best approach is to ennoble it. In a way, AOC is naturally inclined to do that because her intention is to fight for what she perceives as just causes.

So, from the *adhyatmika* (self-generated karma) perspective, using the chart as a mirror for self-examination, I would discuss how her success could

be thwarted by not staying on the high road. She tends to strike back hard, but I have also observed her using charm (Venus), sassy wit (Mercury), razzle-dazzle (brilliant Moon), and wisdom (Jupiter). By clearly understanding that her fighting spirit is an asset when linked to these stronger positive influences in her chart, she is better

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equipped to handle the strong tendency for fury to rise up and explode into cutting and blunt verbal warfare. I would also make specific recommendations, along traditional lines, for changing diet and daily routines in order to better handle excessive heat in the body and head.

With respect to *adhibhautika* (karma with other living beings), there are so many avenues for serving and ennobling Mars. Mars represents a young child below school age. AOC could champion programs targeted for the underserved in that age group, ranging from health care (especially in

terms of infectious diseases) to school readiness programs and physical fitness. She could support programs like Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, coupling accidents (Mars) and alcohol (Mars). The possibilities are limited only by the vision of the astrologer.

Adhidaivika (beyond human control) considerations are a no-brainer. AOC is a passionate voice for curbing global warming through the Green New Deal, whose central platform is implementing ways to cool down our too-hot-to-handle planet.

One of the most prominent ancient texts of astrology, *Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra*, opens with a beautiful invocation to Ganesha, a deity said to remove obstacles. To remind us of the purpose of Jyotisha and the role of the Jyotishi, Ganesha is addressed as *shokavinashakarana*, the cause of the removal of sorrow. As we help people to resolve or have the right perspective on chart patterns indicating the limitations we all face in our human existence, we fulfill the ultimate purpose of Jyotisha: bringing the light of self-understanding so that people can grow and become fully human.

Chart Data and Source

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, October 13, 1989; 11:50 a.m. EDT; Bronx, NY, USA (40°N51', 73°W54'); A: from memory; e-mail from her assistant.

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Mo _{9°32'}			Jp _{16°46'}
5 Pis	6 Ari	7 Tau	8 Gem
4 Aqu			Ke _{28°56'}
Ra _{28°56'}			9 Can
3 Cap			10 Leo
Sa _{14°25'}	As _{22°30'}		Ma _{21°58'}
2 Sag	Ve _{11°51'}	12 Lib	Su _{26°34'} Me _{9°10'}
	1 Sco		11 Virg

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

South Indian chart,
Lahiri ayanamsha,
and the Mean Node

