

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.

Vanilla, Chocolate, or Strawberry?

Ever notice how many things are categorized in groups of three? Small, medium, and large; hot, cold, and just right; executive, legislative, and judicial; and, until Baskin Robbins came along, the venerable vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry.

So, perhaps it won't come as a surprise that one's karmic account can likewise be regarded as tripartite. As we will see, this perspective can give powerful insight into how a person's destiny pattern interacts with free will.

In the Vedic tradition, the result of one's past actions is called *karmaphala* — *karma* ("action") + *phala* ("fruit"). The distinction between karma and *karmaphala* is often blurred or even lost. Your ability to consistently find a good parking space in San Francisco is not due to your good karma (the actions you are currently performing), but to your *karmaphala* — the results of right action in the past that have brought good juju into your life, manifesting as your parking-space genie.

Not every previous action will manifest as a noticeable, lifelong desirable or undesirable pattern. There is a kind of intensity dial for a given topic visible in a chart, which can be a predictor for how strongly conditioned a person might be. These natal triggers can be about behavior, emotions, physiological/biochemical responses, etc.

Deeply etched patterns are akin to the ruts that carriage wheels make when repeatedly driven on a wet country lane. It is hard for subsequent carriages to avoid falling into those grooves. Such a pattern of *karmaphala* is referred to as *dridha karma* — firm or fixed.

Let's consider the following configuration in an Aries rising chart. The person has the Sun and Mars in Libra in the 7th house within three degrees of each other, making both the 1st-house lord Mars weak by combustion and the Sun weak by debilitation (being in Libra). Venus, the lord of the 7th, is in the 6th house with Saturn, where it is debilitated in the sign of Virgo and afflicted by its association with a natural malefic. Furthermore, Venus is sitting twelve houses away from the 7th (counting inclusively), as well as six away from

the Ascendant — double trouble, as neither the 6th nor the 12th house is a positive house relative to both the Ascendant and the 7th. And finally, Venus is the significator (*karaka*) of the 7th house, since it represents marriage in a general way for anyone's chart. We would not want the significator to be in this configuration if we are looking for auspicious results.

This is a loaded deck when it comes to relationship outcome. The 7th house of marriage is afflicted. The 7th lord (Venus in the 6th) is weak, afflicted, and in a house that is undesirable both thematically (obstacles, enemies, etc.) and by being twelve houses away from the 7th house; also, Venus as the significator of relationships doubles up both the weakness and the poor placement, creating a perfect storm of dysfunction.

You could likewise imagine a *dridha karma* situation of a very desirable sort in a different chart, with Venus sitting in the 1st house in its own sign of Taurus. This strong benefic 1st lord (also the strong *karaka* of the 7th) powerfully aspects into the 7th house. What if Mars (in Capricorn) is exalted as the 7th lord in the auspicious 9th house, and Jupiter is in its own 11th house (Pisces), where it too aspects into the 7th? To make the example even better, let's assume that there are no natural malefics influencing either the 1st or 7th house or their lords. This would indicate (all other things being equal) a destiny pattern giving desirable outcome for relationships from several independent factors of analysis.

The opposite of *dridha karma* is called *adridha karma* — karma that is not fixed or firm. This could be likened to driving a carriage on a hard, smooth surface without any lanes or ruts. The driver has the choice to negotiate the road in any way he likes. This could show up, for example, in a Taurus rising chart, as the 1st and 7th lords — Venus and Mars — having no strong connection with one another that promotes relationship, and there is no particular activation of the 7th house. The lack of a discernible pattern forming around the topic of relationship suggests less fixed karma and greater free will.

Then there is the third possibility. The country road is neither hard nor particularly soft. The carriage has left grooves, but they are not very deep. Although there is some tendency to slip into the ruts, they can be more easily avoided by a skillful driver. This situation is *dridha/adridha karma*. What if the 7th house of a chart seems fine, but the 7th lord is in a problematic situation? There is a lack of confluence, yet something is going on that needs to be clearly discerned.

This threefold classification provides food for thought on the age-old question of destiny and free will. *Adridha karma* is a signature for greater free will around a particular topic, and *dridha karma* points to a more entrenched destiny pattern. It is crucial for a Jyotishi to understand this, as it shows the degree of effort on the part of the native that might be involved in helping auspicious combinations to fructify and neutralizing or aligning productively with those patterns that are more challenging.

The branch of Jyotisha known as *upaya* (remedial measures) speaks directly to this question and is undoubtedly one of the most profound ways a Jyotishi can be of service to others. By understanding the nature of the obstructing planetary configurations, the Jyotishi can suggest various modalities such as charity, service projects, mentoring, and prayer tailored to address the specific issue showing up in the chart. Hmm, sounds like a great topic for a future column.

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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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