

Reprinted from the October 1997 Arizona Astrologer

Dennis Flaherty

The Moon, East and West

Scribe: Patrick Hesselmann

Dennis returned for his third visit to the ASA, bringing with him great techniques for combining Eastern (Vedic) techniques for judging the Moon with Western reading of charts in general. Dennis likens his fascination with both systems to the quantum theory of light, which states that light sometimes behaves like a particle and sometimes like a wave. So he sees the two systems of astrology, Eastern and Western, as complementary parts of the whole. He also comments that it is like adding spices from different countries to a recipe. They only conflict if one uses “wrong” combination. So it is with combining Vedic and Western techniques. We use selected processes complementarily from each system.

The first thing to note is that there are two basic zodiacs, sidereal and tropical. The starting point of the tropical is defined by the Sun’s arrival at the intersection of the ecliptic and the equator. This marks 0° Aries tropical. The starting point of the sidereal zodiac is defined by the Sun’s arrival at the 0° point of the constellation Aries. From there, we subtract the difference between the tropical and sidereal zodiacs (ayanamsha) to get the position of the planets, cusps, etc. in the sidereal system. A small problem arises. The 0° point of the Aries constellation is not unanimously agreed on, giving rise to a number of different ayanamshas. Dennis advocates using the Lahiri ayanamsha, since it is the one favored by the Indian government. It increases at the rate of about 50’ a year. In 1950, the ayanamsha was about 23°10’. Currently, its value is about 23°50’.

The goals of Vedic astrology are: (a) to discover and fulfill out dharma, finding out who we are; (b) to acquire what is necessary to fulfill out purpose and complete it, freeing us to move to a higher plane. And from this, to obtain Moksha, a state of unity with the Godhead, in which the consciousness we have been given harmonizes with the Universe.

In the Vedic system, the sages defined a number of planetary yogas. These are combinations of planets in specific configurations that reflect characteristics of the native. There are combinations like the Raja Yoga, or royal yoga, indicating very special configurations almost guaranteed to bring success in the life of the individual. But there are many others, including a set dedicated to combinations or configurations of planets with the Moon.

In the Vedic system there are the same 12 signs as we have, but there are also 27 nakshatras, or mansions of the Moon. Nakshatra means “that which never decays,” whereas the Vedic system uses the phrase “a heap of stones” (rasi) for the signs. So their emphasis is on the nakshatras, which occupy 13°20’ each, resulting in the round 360° when repeated 27 times. The span of each nakshatra, 13°20’, is the mean daily motion of the Moon. Ascendant and Moon particularly, the two most important symbols of the Vedic chart, are referred to in terms of their nakshatras. A combination of ascendant and Moon nakshatras can give considerable information about the individual.

Dennis related some of the mythology of the Moon. In one of the myths, the Moon, Soma, falls in love

with Tara (which means a star or planet in general, often used for the lunar asterisms), the wife of Brihaspati (Jupiter). They run off together, enraging Brihaspati. As the forces of each side (Soma and Brihaspati) are preparing for a great war, Brihaspati pleads with Brahma to intercede, which he does. In the end, Brihaspati takes back his wife, who is now pregnant with the child of Soma. The baby born of that union is the planet Saumaya (son of Soma) or Budha, Mercury.

From this we can see a subtlety that the Vedics have defined better than the Western system has. The Moon represents consciousness and the mind. It is connected to our ability to perceive. Our perception, and therefore our choices, are limited and focused by the definition of the Moon in the chart. Our karmic pattern (the Moon's situation in our charts) defines what we can become aware of. These perceptions and awarenesses affect what we do over time. As Dennis said, "What you see is what you get. What you can't see, you can't get."

Mercury is not so much consciousness as the discriminating intellect, the ability to make distinctions, analyze, and reason. This has to derive from consciousness, but it is not the same. And, as Dennis said, "The Moon is your God-given awareness, given according to your karma. You're responsible for all your stuff! The Greeks had Fate in a similar way. We have DNA that flows from one generation to the next. But there is free will, what we do with our awareness, our consciousness to move ourselves beyond our current situation."

One of the major functions of Mercury is to assess where we are in our progress and make the distinctions as to what we need to enhance, what we need to lose about ourselves, and then to monitor our progress along the way. These are all in line with Mercury's function as the rational, discriminating intellect.

Discriminating intellect is the driver of what we do with our consciousness. Dennis used the allegory of coming to a grove of apples, and realizing, from the lovely red color and the delicious odor that they

were ripe and ready to eat. This is the consciousness of the Moon. But so far no judgment has been made as to what to do with them. The Pisces Mercury might see the possibility of telling all his friends about the lovely apples and inviting everyone down to share in them. The Virgo Mercury might decide to hire day laborers to pick them and then sell them to his friends. The Aries Mercury might just jump the fence and start eating right away.

Mercury is the value we place on our consciousness-engendered impressions. Mercury is the root of all the "merc" words, like mercantile, merchant, market, merchandise, etc. This discriminating intellect is born of the mind. Buddhi discriminates, values, names, distinguishes good from bad, right from wrong, covets this and abjures that, and so creates the "ten thousand things" of the Tao Te Ching. At this time in history, it is useful to have a good, strong, functional Mercury to be able to cope with all the ever-faster requirements for decisions and distinctions that we are faced with. The Moon, mind, is what carries the impressions from the past into the present. The intellect, Mercury, is what we do with what we are given from the past.

Karma plays itself out unconsciously through habits, good and bad. The memories built up over time drive the habits, from past lives into the present one, and the habits condition us. These are Moon functions. The function of Mercury is to observe the habits and choose which to keep and which to discard. The Moon's location, waxing and waning, its yogas and planetary contacts, its placement by house and sign all reflect the predilections of the soul, its momentum that builds up over time. The Moon is like the celestial hand you have been dealt or earned. Mercury talks about how you can deal with that hand. A strong Mercury always wants the best (refer to the "merc" words above), sometimes to the extent of being irrational. So it needs to be tempered with wisdom and judgment, functions of Jupiter and Saturn.

In dealing with planetary yogas, Dennis points out that we need to understand the principles rather than all the details and names. B.V. Raman has written a

book on the topic, *Three Hundred Planetary Combinations*. It is a classic in the field, but details the trees at the expense of the forest. If we understand the planets and the principles of the yogas, we can understand the nature of the formations in the chart.

Sunapha Yoga: Planets second from the Moon. In the Vedic chart, these are planets in the next sign/house from the Moon, since signs and houses are the same (in the Southern Indian charts that most Vedic astrologers use). Thus, a planet at 1° Virgo is second from a Moon at 29° Leo. But, in Western charts, we might prefer to use a separation of a house. So a planet in the 3rd house is second from a Moon in the second.

The second house is about how you take nurturance, how you acquire things. It used to deal with bartering, but with money in the picture, it is often considered to be the ability of people to generate income or money. So planets second to the Moon are indicators of an ability to acquire. The better aspected and the more benefic the planets, and the more of them that there are, the more powerful is the ability to acquire, get, take. Acquisition on its own might be regarded as the way a three-year-old goes for a toy. Then Mercury starts to pass judgment and learn lessons about sharing, asking, being nice, etc. and all the early purity of acquisitiveness is covered up with an overlay of civilization. The nature of the planet or planets second from the Moon, and the standing and aspects to that planet, describe how we use them to acquire, give, or take.

Anapha Yoga: Planets twelfth from the Moon (in the 12th house of the Moon, the house/sign immediately preceding it) give the ability to disperse, disseminate, give, lose. The Indian culture tends to place greater emphasis on this ability than on the ability to get or gain, which is the desire of the Western world. People with the Anapha Yoga become channels for dispersing money, goods, food, etc. They might work with charities, welfare agencies, or simply live lives in which the distribution of

substance was more emphasized was more emphasized than its collection.

Duradhara Yoga: This is a combination of the Sunapha and Anapha Yogas, with planets both second and twelfth from the Moon. It has the effect of both acquiring and dispersing. Dennis cited the chart of Andrew Carnegie, which has a five-planet stellium in the second house, and Moon in the third. In his case, the ascendant, which is up there with the Moon in importance, has the second house planets more or less in Sunapha Yoga to it, giving a strong ability to acquire. Then it has the Moon in the third, forming an Anapha Yoga with the second house planets. So he believed that the worst fate in the world would be to die with his money intact. Thus he distributed it through his charities, foundations, university, etc.

Gaja-Kesari Yoga: This is a connection of the Moon to Jupiter by quadrature (by sign-house). So Moon in the same sign-house, opposite or square sign-houses bestows the Gaja-Kesari Yoga. Since Jupiter is the major benefic in Vedic astrology, it is a beneficial contact to have. It gives the dignity, courage, and presence of the elephant (Gaja) and the strength and power of the lion (Kesari). These people have a sense of connectedness to society. In our time, we might use a phrase such as “the Top Gun Yoga,” indicating valor, power and character.

Adhi Yoga: This places the three benefics, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter, in some combination in the sixth, seventh and/or eighth sign-houses from the Moon, basically in 7th house configuration. So these people benefit through others. The planets can be all in one of the houses, or distributed across two or three of them. But all three planets must be involved for the effect to be most significant. It can also be that there are other planets in the same area, including malefics. This does not destroy the Adhi Yoga. These people are generally popular, the kinds of people others like to be around, and so the kinds of people that others are prepared to help and put out energy for.

Vasumati Yoga: Mercury, Venus and Jupiter in some combination of the 3rd, 6th, 10th or 11th from the Moon. These are the growing houses, so the energy of the yoga is toward commercial success. These people work well and successfully with others.

There are two difficult Moon yogas that Dennis defined.

Shakata Yoga: Jupiter in the 6th, 8th, or 12th house from the Moon. the 6th, 8th, and 12th are difficult houses. The 12th is like sunrise, where it is spending its energy burning off the morning fog. The light of the self struggles to come out of the shadows. The 8th represents the Sun getting ready to set, the house of death. The 6th is the house where the Sun has set, and now has a long way to go before it rises again. This is the place of health problems. With Jupiter in these three houses from the Moon, without any of the other benefics in the house of Jupiter, the person doesn't receive the grace of Jupiter. They have ups and downs in life, leading to an emotional roller-coaster. Quoting the Vedic scriptures, "The person will be bereft of happiness, and be common and ordinary." This is a yoga of poor self-esteem.

Kema Druma Yoga: This is a situation of all the above yogas being lacking in the chart, a very rare occurrence. There are no contacts with Jupiter (remembering that Jupiter aspects by sextile and trine as well as hard aspects in the Vedic system, and that we are dealing with aspects by sign-house), no conjunctions or oppositions to the Moon (again, by sign-house), and the Moon is often in the 6th, 8th or 12th house (from the ascendant). There is no connection through the consciousness (the Moon) to the divine, and none to other people. Quoting Dennis: "This is like having no ground to stand on. Any ground is good ground, even if it is hard, dry, or uncomfortable. Ground allows you to get traction, to move. If there are no contacts with the Moon, there is no support in life. It is like being all alone, feeling no connection from family, friends, strangers, co-

workers, etc. These people don't feel support when they are young. It is better to feel pain than to feel nothing." This, like all other Moon situations, is karmic. The goal appears to be to release the karma, to grow beyond it, possibly through acceptance and recognition that something else is possible. It is the type of situation that may create homelessness, a bag-lady or a bag-man.

Dennis went on to summarize more singular contacts with the Moon, starting with the Gaja-Kesari Yoga, Jupiter contacting the Moon through hard aspect. This leads, because it is Jupiter, to expanded awareness and consciousness. Saturn contacting the Moon through conjunction or opposition (sign-house) leads to contracted, highly focused consciousness, especially if Saturn is a benefic in your chart (in a good sign for Saturn, viz. Capricorn, Aquarius, or Libra, and not afflicted by other malefics, e.g. Sun, Mars, Rahu). If Saturn is not well placed in your chart, the controlling energy may be increased, and the person may be depressed. Mars contacting the Moon by conjunction or opposition adds fuel and energy to consciousness. These people can be enthusiastic and expressive. Venus contacting the Moon by conjunction or opposition has a message of, "I aim to please," and is warm and inviting, with a refined consciousness. Mercury is not too friendly with the Moon. It leads to subjective observation. For objective classification, Mercury should not be too close to the Moon. But connected with the Moon, there is a natural curiosity, and it collects information. There can also be a strong memory associated with this combination.

For the outer planets, Dennis uses an orb of 2° - 5° to avoid having the problem of whole generations of people with Leo Moon, say, having the characteristics of Moon-Pluto. Neptune with the Moon indicates the personal consciousness linked to the divine consciousness. This can lead to a sagacity, alcoholism, or to spiritual dementia. These people can be direct oracles of divine consciousness. Dennis says, "You use your Neptune according to your Saturn." Uranus with the Moon has an

interest in technology (e.g. Michael Erlewine of Matrix Software). This can give great genius and can put the mind into a heightened state. But it can also be draining, and can bring sleep-deprivation, burnout, etc. It is the kind of symbol one might find in computer programmers who code all night, living on junk food. It is also the signature of Internet addicts. Pluto with the Moon intensifies, bringing life-and-death consciousness. There are also conscious control issues with this combination. Dennis likes to see this combination linked to personal planets, allowing Pluto to bring higher energy to those personal planets so that the person can use it. Moon-Pluto with Venus close to the Pluto will bring personal knowledge of death, the loss of someone close or well-known to the individual.

The Nodes of the Moon, Rahu (north) and Ketu (South), are part of the eclipse patterns. The Moon with Rahu and Ketu requires us to look at how close to the eclipse the individual was born. Rahu is acquisitive, psychological, brilliant-minded, as well as being the planet of worldliness. The Moon with Rahu creates brilliant people who may use their mental abilities to manipulate or to educate and heal. Moon-Rahu people tend to be “information freaks,” very hungry for knowledge. The Moon with Ketu leads people away from worldliness. Ketu is very other-worldly, very spiritual, as well as elements of fantasy. It does not create a consciousness of this world.

Dennis also mentioned the different cycles of the two systems. Western astrology, led by Dane Rhudyar, works with the synodic cycle, New Moon through Full Moon to New Moon. This is 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes. It consists of the:

New Moon phase (0° to 45° ahead of the Sun) of innocence and instinctive development, like the seed germinating. There is a future orientation, and the native is characterized by impulsiveness and enthusiasm. With these people, what you see is what you get.

Crescent Moon (45° to 90° ahead of the Sun). This is a phase of challenge and struggle, like the seed breaking through the soil and emerging into the light. There is momentum building. These people are constantly struggling to achieve and to develop traction in their lives.

First Quarter Moon (90° to 135° ahead). This is “crisis in action.” The seed has emerged and now must put on a growth spurt to develop its potential. These people are characterized by lives involved with physical crises, and may be in occupations such as ambulance crews, emergency rooms, etc.

Gibbous Moon (135° to 180° ahead). Here there is analysis and growth. These people want to review where they have reached to date, and what the next steps are, and particularly how they should be executed. Planning is a major function. Spontaneity is no longer present.

Full Moon (180° to 135° behind the Sun). Now the Moon is at its brightest, the plant in full bloom. These people can see very clearly, and are strongly relationship oriented. The ability to see so much can lead to procrastination as the alternatives are evaluated.

Disseminating Moon (135° to 90° behind the Sun). Now the fruit is forming and starting to ripen. At this stage, the individual starts to think of how his accumulated knowledge can be passed on, and there is an inclination toward teaching in one variety or another. These people are the sharers of the zodiac.

Last Quarter: The fruit is ripened and harvested. The individual comes to grips with mortality and the need for letting go. There is a tendency to go through crises of consciousness, in which the individual does a great deal of internal soul-searching, becoming aware of the vulnerability of the human condition among other things.

Balsamic Moon: Here the seed drops to the ground and rests before the next season of growth. The individual is retreating into the self to recuperate.

ate from the efforts of the past cycle. They may have great insight, almost prophetic, into the world and what makes it tick. These people can be prophets as they see and understand where things have to go next, while the rest of the world is caught up in the action of the moment.

This synodic cycle, which Rudhyar extended through the progressed Moon cycle, is deeply embedded into the psychology of the individual, forming a very important part of the person's makeup.

Next, Dennis turned to the sidereal cycle of 27 days 7 hours and 43 minutes, which the Vedic system uses. This cycle is not concerned with the relationship between two bodies, but with the Moon's position in the zodiac. Dividing the zodiac and the 27 days, 7 hours, and 43 minutes into the 27 nakshatras of 13°20' each, one nakshatra per day essentially, develops the Soli-lunar calendar. Indian birthdays are celebrated not on the day the Sun returns to its natal position, but on the day within the solar month of birth when the Moon returns to its natal nakshatra. This day may be

before, on, or after the actual day of the month when one was born, but it represents a much more important festival to the Vedic culture because they value the Moon so intensely.

With their system, the Vedic sages teach that pain is necessary, suffering is not. As Dennis pointed out, it is not the insult that does the harm. It is the busi-ness of playing that insult over and over in our minds that ingrains it in our awareness, and so in our makeup for the future. If, instead, we give it no thought, it is trivial. Similarly, those predispositions that we see in ourselves can be modified by constant, Mercurial, awareness. That awareness, combined with the strength of Saturn and the will of the Sun, can be turned into change for our own improvement. And the more we do these things, the more we invite the Grace of God to enter into our lives and continue to accelerate the process of releasing our karma.

And so we come to the end of another great presentation to the ASA. Thank you, Dennis, for this excellent comparison and development of the two-Moon system!