

The Art of Nakshatra Analysis
by Hank Friedman

The circle of the nakshatras is one of the earliest elements found in Vedic astrology. Because the Moon returns to the same stars every 27 days, the ancient Jyotishis divided the sky into 27 sections and gave each a name. Initially, the nakshatras were used primarily for muhurta, the practice of choosing the best time to initiate an action, such as getting married, starting a war, building a house, and so on. Over time, the nakshatra placement of the Moon became the core element in the calculation of many dasa systems, and was also used to indicate the major life themes in a natal chart.

The placement of both planets and the Lagna in nakshatras reveals pervasive patterns in an individual's life. Because they occupy even smaller spans of the sky than the signs, the nakshatras indicate what is at the core of each individual.

Part One: Which nakshatras are important?

Of primary importance in a person's life are the nakshatras of the Ascendant and Ascendant lord (Lagna and Lagnesha). The nakshatras occupied by the Moon and the Sun are also significant.

Historically, the nakshatra of the Moon has been given primary emphasis in Jyotish simply because natives of Indian/Vedic culture were given birth names using the letters corresponding with their lunar nakshatra. While one's Ascendant might not be known, his Moon's nakshatra was evident.

The nakshatras of the other planets are of lesser importance, but if several planets occupy the same nakshatra, then its themes become more salient. The nakshatra of the current dasa lord can indicate the prevailing life themes.

Finally, the nakshatra occupied by Saturn often indicates where major karma resides.

Part Two: The importance of placement

A planet's placement affects its nakshatra's expression. A positive placement elicits the good themes that a nakshatra represents, and a negative placement elicits the challenging themes that a nakshatra represents. **The importance of this principle cannot be overstated.**

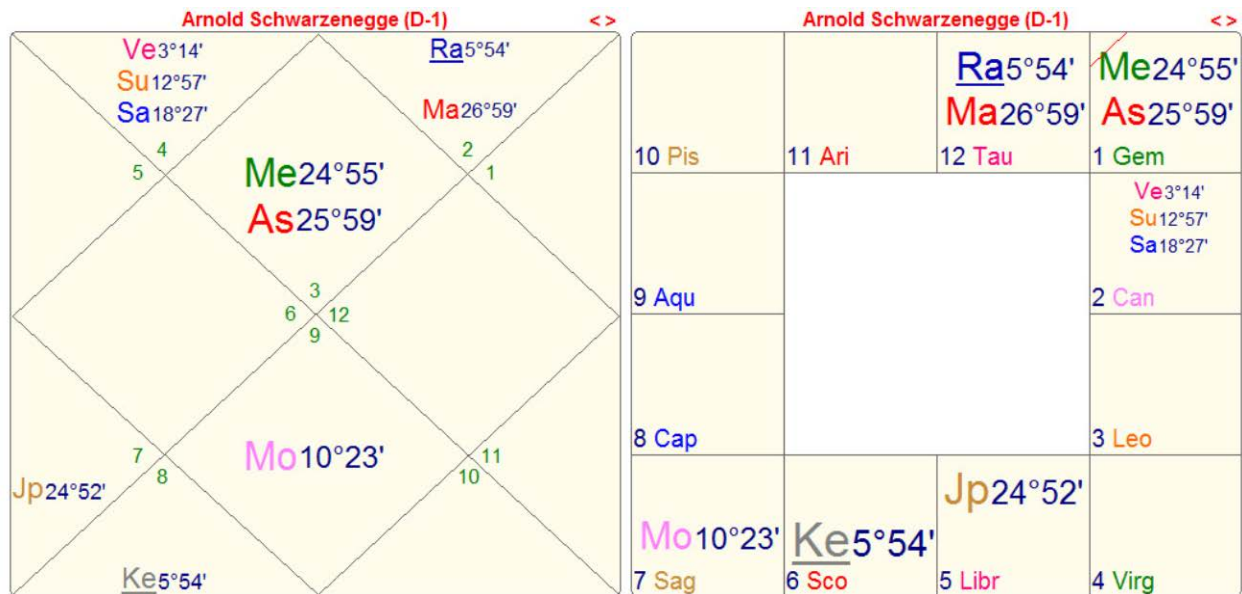
The four elements of placement are:

1. Strength. Strong planets (vargottama, own sign, exalted, dig bala, retrograde, and bright Moon) are well-placed, and weak planets (debilitated, in planetary war, combust, and dark Moon) are poorly placed.
2. House occupation and rulership. Planets in or ruling bad houses (6, 8, 12) are poorly placed. Planets in or ruling good houses (1, 5, 9 and 1, 4, 7, 10) or neutral houses (2, 11) are well-placed. (House 3 occupation or rulership is a mildly poor placement.)

3. Influence of other planets. Planets with or aspected by benefics (Moon, Venus, Jupiter, and sometimes Mercury) have much better placement than planets with or aspected by malefics (Mars, Saturn, Rahu, Ketu and sometimes the Sun).

4. Yogas. Planets participating in positive yogas are very well-placed, and in negative yogas very poorly placed.

In the chart of Arnold Schwarzenegger below, for example, Mercury has as positive a placement as possible. It is strong (own sign and dig bala), occupies and rules good houses, only aspected by benefics (Jupiter and the bright Moon), and participates in many positive yogas (including



Chamara, Dhana, and Bhadra Maha Purusha).

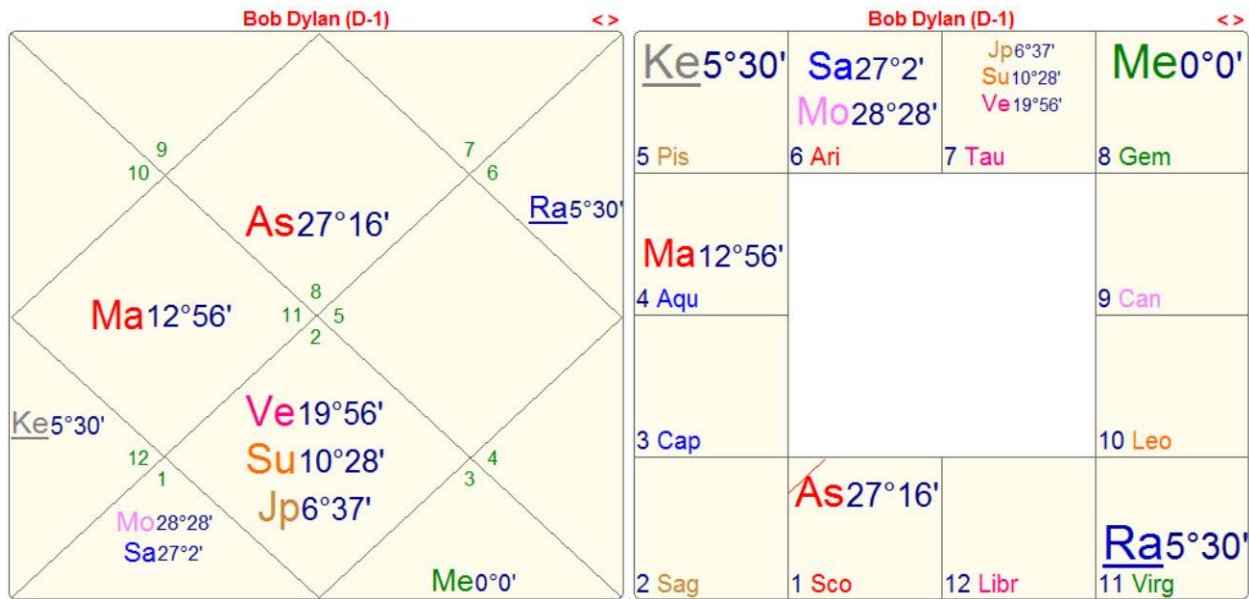
Mercury occupies Punarvasu, and its great placement will bring out the best themes of that nakshatra. It is no accident that in the 1994 movie *Junior*, Mr. Schwarzenegger was chosen to portray the first man to ever give birth to a baby. Punarvasu represents the ultimate mother, the one who cares deeply for and cuddles and nurtures her children. (Pushya, on the other hand, is the mother who lays down the law, and teaches her children ethics.)

Punarvasu also represents protectors, and in many movie roles (e.g. *Kindergarten Cop* and *Twins*), Arnold plays the part of the protector. One of the most common meanings of Punarvasu is repetition, and how many reps does a body builder have to do to develop muscles like his?

Negative placement occurs when a planet is influenced by malefics, occupies and rules bad houses, participates in no yogas (or only challenging ones), and is weak. (Note: when a natural malefic occupies a specific nakshatra, it also can bring out the more difficult sides of that nakshatra.)

Bob Dylan's chart serves as an example of a poorly placed planet in a nakshatra. The 9th lord

Moon is dark and waning in the 6th house very close to a debilitated Saturn, and receives no aspects by benefics. Shortly after the onset of the Moon dasa (at age 5), Dylan’s father was stricken with polio and Bob’s entire life was thrown into upheaval. The Moon occupies the nakshatra Kritika, which reflects the crippling infection of his father, the disruption of Dylan’s



life, and how traumatic it was for him.

Planetary placement dramatically alters the effects of a nakshatra. Those familiar with nakshatras understand that some nakshatras (including Ashlesa, Mula, and Ardra) generally carry negative connotations. Yet a person who has a well-placed planet in one of these three nakshatras will, in fact, generally manifest the positive themes and qualities of these nakshatras, and not the negative ones.

Part Three: Synergy between nakshatras

In the interpretation of a natal birth chart, one of the most effective ways to address nakshatra placements is *to look at the shared meanings* of the three major nakshatras (Lagna, Lagnesa, and Moon).

How does one find shared themes?

There are many ways. All nakshatras have their own symbols, but certain pairs (the Phalgunis – the marriage bed – and Bhadrapadas – the funeral pyre) *share* symbols and therefore the meanings of those symbols. Similarly, some nakshatras share deities.

All nakshatras have several attributes, such as activity (active, passive, or balanced), caste, direction, gender, nadi, nature, sexual type, qualities, species, tattvas, and so forth. When the main nakshatras share any of these attributes in common, they become very significant in an individual’s life. (Please review the table below to see the attributes of each nakshatra, and the section on nakshatra in Hart de Fouw’s book *Light on Life* for more information on the meaning

of these attributes.)

Some astrologers assume that nakshatras ruled by the same planet also share themes as a result of their shared rulership. However, Hart de Fouw teaches that these lordships *are different in each nakshatra dasa system*, and therefore *should not be used as thematic* in understanding nakshatras.

Finally, and most importantly, each nakshatra has a set of themes and qualities that they represent, and when the major nakshatras in a chart share the same themes, those become central in the person's life.

Nakshatra Attributes and Themes by Hank Friedman		
Nakshatra	Attributes	Themes when well-/poorly-placed
Aśvinī	Passive Vaishya Creation Level Male Vata Swift Tamasic	quickness/haste adventurous/foolhardy
Bharanī	Balanced Mleccha Maintain Downward Female Pitta Fierce Rajasic	perseverance/intransigence artistic/affected
Kṛttikā	Active Brahman Dissolve Downward Female Kapha Soft/Sharp Rajasic	passionate/addictive ambitious/compulsive
Rohiṇī	Balanced Shudra Creation Upward Female Kapha Fixed Rajasic	loyalty/favoritism influential/manipulative
Mṛgaśīrā	Passive Servant Maintain Level Neuter Pitta Soft Tamasic	striving/dissatisfied exploring/inconstant
Ārdrā	Balanced Butcher Dissolve Upward Female Vata Sharp Tamasic	empathic/hypersensitive independent/isolated
Punarvasu	Passive Vaishya Creation Level Male Vata Changeable Sattvic	nurturing/overprotective family-oriented/insular
Puṣya	Passive Kshatriya Maintain Upward Male Pitta Swift Tamasic	ethical/moralistic responsible/controlling
Āśleṣā	Active Mleccha Dissolve Downward Female Kapha Sharp	insightful/manipulative direct/blunt
Maghā	Active Shudra Creation Downward Female Kapha Fierce Tamasic	leader/dominant noble/entitled
Pūrvā Phalgunī	Balanced Brahmin Maintain Upward Female Pitta Fierce Rajasic	playful/hedonistic well-dressed/showy
Uttara Phalgunī	Balanced Kshatriya Dissolve Downward Female Vata Fixed Rajasic	helpful/codependent determined/critical

Hasta	Passive Vaishya Creation Level Male Vata Swift Rajasic	persuasive/wily modest/self-effacing
Citrā	Active Servant Maintain Level Female Pitta Soft Tamasic	creative/superficial entrepreneurial/materialistic
Svātī	Passive Butcher Dissolve Level Female Kapha Changeable Tamasic	soft/fragile adaptable/indecisive
Viśākhā	Active Mleccha Creation Downward Female Kapha Soft/Sharp Sattvic	determined/aggressive leading/domineering
Anurādhā	Passive Shudra Maintain Level Male Pitta Soft Tamasic	loyal/playing favorites devoted/over-accommodating
Jyeṣṭhā	Active Servant Dissolve Level Female Vata Sharp Sattvic	heroic/adversarial prosperous/poor
Mūla	Active Butcher Creation Downward Neuter Vata Sharp Tamasic	disciplined/controlling devoted/inhibited
Pūrvā Āṣādhā	Balanced Brahmin Maintain Downward Female Pitta Fierce Rajasic	striving/perfectionistic cooperative/conciliating
Uttara Āṣādhā	Balanced Kshatriya Dissolve Upward Female Kapha Fixed Rajasic	purposeful/willful tolerant/impatient
Śravaṇa	Passive Mleccha Creation Upward Male Kapha Changeable Rajasic	brilliant/cerebral contemplative/dissatisfied
Dhaniṣṭhā	Active Servant Maintain Upward Female Pitta Changeable Tamasic	practical/imperious ambitious/autocratic
Ṣatabhiṣā	Active Butcher Dissolve Upward Neuter Vata Changeable Tamasic	knowingness/bias discreet/concealing
Pūrvā Bhādrapada	Passive Brahmin Creation Downward Male Vata Fierce Sattvic	unflinching/reactive resilient/beleaguered
Uttara Bhādrapada	Balanced Kshatriya Maintain Upward Male Pitta Fixed Tamasic	benevolent/irresponsible powerful/indulgent
Revatī	Balanced Shudra Dissolve Level Female Kapha Soft Sattvic	welcoming/over-accommodating charitable/petty

(The above table was the result of an intensive research project by the author.)

Part Four: Synergy between a planet and its nakshatra

Each planet has many qualities of its own, and when the nature of its nakshatra placement has the same attributes, these qualities are reinforced.

When a hot planet like Mars or Ketu is in one of the nakshatras signifying heat, for example,

Purva Bhadrapada or Krittika, the intensity of the heat is amplified.

Similarly, the nakshatras Pushya and Ashlesa can indicate a person who is cold or formal, so Saturn in one of these would intensify the iciness and strictness.

Having a bright Moon in Punarvasu, on the other hand, ensures that the person will love babies and be incredibly nurturing.

Blending the nature of each planet (and all that it signifies) with the themes of the nakshatra in which it resides is a very effective way of ascertaining the confluent patterns in a person's life.

Conclusion:

The nakshatras add a very important dimension to the understanding of natal charts. One can use their meanings in prediction as well as in birth chart analysis. They can greatly enrich ones astrology readings, and brilliantly illuminate major life patterns.