

Beyond Contradictions in Astrology

by Hank Friedman

[I am deeply grateful to Hart de Fouw for his superb tutelage in Jyotish, without which I would have never developed in Vedic astrology.]

Note: while the focus of this article is primarily on Vedic astrology, its principles apply to Western astrology too, so it is worth reading if you're a Western astrologer, even if you don't understand the Vedic terminology and examples.

A primary task of every astrologer is sorting through the myriad of contrary influences in charts, developing both artistry and effectiveness in the process.

There are so many polarities in the planets and signs, such as hot/cold, strong/weak, positive/negative, fortunate/unlucky, active/passive, stable/unstable, assertive/receptive and so on.

Anyone reading an astrology report for the birth chart, for example, will notice that one paragraph often contradicts the next! While it is true that we all behave differently in different contexts (e.g. at work vs at play), and charts can describe these disparities well, still, most people have dominant behaviors despite factors in the chart to the contrary.

In both Western and Vedic astrologies there are strategies to resolve conflicting factors about each placement, such as using planetary weighting systems that add and subtract the strengths and weaknesses of planets (or signs or houses) to come up with a score.

But think of a Spring day. It can be sunny or overcast, warm or cold, windy or still, fragrant or polluted, colorful or drab, and each of these and many more attributes of the day all create an overall feeling that can make one feel glorious, calm, or beleaguered or a mixture of sensations.

One cannot simply add factors like clear and fragrant, and subtract factors like windy and cold, to come up with a score that represents how the day feels to you. And that's an analogy of why all mathematical strength methods, while useful as guidelines for beginning astrologers, ultimately fail. (I've already explored some of the themes mentioned below [here](#), and am bringing them together a bit more in this article.)

On the way to achieving a clear view of a person through their chart, several principles are useful to consider.

AND

I have previously introduced the AND principle, that a planet, for example, can have both strengths **and** weaknesses and both attributes will manifest in a person's life in different ways.

For example, the Moon in my chart is both weak (debilitated in Scorpio) and strong (both Dig Bala and bright). It's also the lord of a bad house (the 12th). And the Moon participates in

multiple positive yogas, including the Neecha Bhanga Raja Yoga (amelioration of its weakness by sign).

Since the Moon is both the natural significator of my mother and also placed in the house of mother (4th), it becomes the primary indicator of my mother.

My mom was an incredibly anxious person who was deeply traumatized when I was 5 months old by the sudden death of my father (a tree fell on his car at a red light during a hurricane). So the 12th lordship (loss) and the debilitation (trauma and anxiety) definitely played out in my experience of my mother.

But unlike most parents, my mom was unconditionally loving, never tried to shape me -- instead loved who I was and let me grow into myself fully, and I always knew that she would jump in front of a car to save me, if need be. All of these pointing to her strength and deep integrity and greatness. Using AND describes her much better than any weighting scheme could.

But I've recently come to realize that even the AND principle has its limits, and so I wanted to expand upon this understanding.

Tilt/Confluence

Specifically there's another principle in astrology, the Tilt or Confluence principle, which outweighs the AND principle in assessing how life themes will actually manifest **overall** in a specific chart.

The tilt assessment is simply an appraisal of the chart as a whole, and of specific life themes, to see if the general trend is towards positive or negative (good or bad). In the example of my chart above, the Moon has two core strengths and one weakness, and also participates in several positive yogas, so it definitely "tilts" positive, and as my sisters agree, it was a blessing to have my mother as our parent.

When we were looking at Paul Newman's chart in my Vedic guru Hart de Fouw's class, I focused on Saturn aspecting the Ascendant and Ascendant Lord, and he instructed me not to "mismatch". He pointed out that Paul Newman's chart -- as a whole -- was so positive that to give Saturn too much weight was to put undue attention on Saturn, which was a mistake. I had missed the overall tilt of the chart towards success, fame, happiness, and accomplishment.

And so a mature, deeper understanding of people, and astrology charts, requires a step back. Yes, taking into account all of the ANDs, (strengths and weaknesses, positive and negative influences) while remembering both that "the strongest planet wins*" and that the cumulative influences of all of the placements in a chart will usually point to both a clear picture of each life theme for a person, and their basic nature.

And, of course, the evaluation of all of the factors influencing the Ascendant is vital, because a powerfully positive Ascendant has great influence, as does a very challenged one. (Factors to

consider are the condition of occupants of the First House and condition of the First Lord, aspects to both, their Nakshatras, their Navamshas, and placements in Vargas.)

*Note: while "the strongest planet wins" is a very useful principle, it is important to remember that "the weakest planet prevails" can also be true. When a planet is both exceptionally weak and a major influence in a person's chart, it can represent huge challenges that define a person's life.

Personality vs. Quality of Life

"Bad things happen to good people" is a reality that often perplexes people. Why would this be so?

Jyotish would, of course, point to Karma, but in addition provides a clear and simple method to determine both whether a person is likeable and happy, and whether a person's life is mainly easy or hard.

The principle is: Who is the person? Look at the planets in relationship to the First House. What happens in their lives? Look at the house rulerships (as especially influencing the First House).

Assess personality by examining the **natural** benefic/malefic nature of planets in and aspecting the First House and with and aspecting the First Lord. (Secondarily, placements of planets in other houses can also influence the personality.)

Assess quality of life by examining the **temporal** benefic/malefic nature of planets in and aspecting the First House and with and aspecting the First Lord. (Both positive and negative yogas can also influence quality of life)

The Effects of Natural and Temporal Significators		
	Natural	Temporal
origin	the planets	the house(s) ruled by each planet
qualities	the attributes of the planets	the attributes of the house(s) ruled
area impacted	personality and orientation	life events

How natural and temporal status is determined		
	Benefics	Malefics
Natural	Jupiter, Venus, Mercury*, Moon*	Rahu, Ketu, Saturn, Mars, Sun*
Temporal	Rulers of 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 (2, 7)	Rulers of 3*, 6, 8, 12
Marakas		Rulers of 2, 7

*** Modifying influences:**

Mercury is a benefic unless it has no contact with other benefics while being aspected by a malefic other than the Sun.

The Moon is a benefic unless it is dark (within 72 degrees of the Sun).

The Sun is considered a mild malefic or cruel in most contexts, but positive in some contexts.

The ruler of the 3rd house is considered a mild temporal malefic.

The rulers of houses 2 and 7 are mixed in influence: if well placed they are positive and if poorly placed negative. As rulers of Maraka houses, they can indicate hardships such as poverty, illness, and death.

Combined Influence

Note: there are four combinations of natural and temporal status:

Confluent pairs:

Natural and Temporal Benefic -- E.g. Jupiter for Sagittarius and Pisces lagnas is both a natural benefic and rules two good houses. Very positive personality and life.

Natural and Temporal Malefic -- E.g. Saturn for Cancer and Leo lagnas is both a natural malefic and rules two bad houses. (Because the 7th house is both the weakest of the angles and also a maraka house, it counts as bad in this context.) Very negative personality* and life.

Divergent pairs (mixed effects):

Natural benefic and Temporal malefic -- E.g. Jupiter for Taurus and Libra lagnas retains its natural benefic status but rules two bad houses. Nice person, challenging life (including Jupiter transits being challenging).

Natural malefic and Temporal benefic -- E.g. Mars for Cancer and Leo lagnas is a natural malefic but rules two good houses (and in fact is the Raj Yoga Karaka for these lagnas). Challenging person, great life.

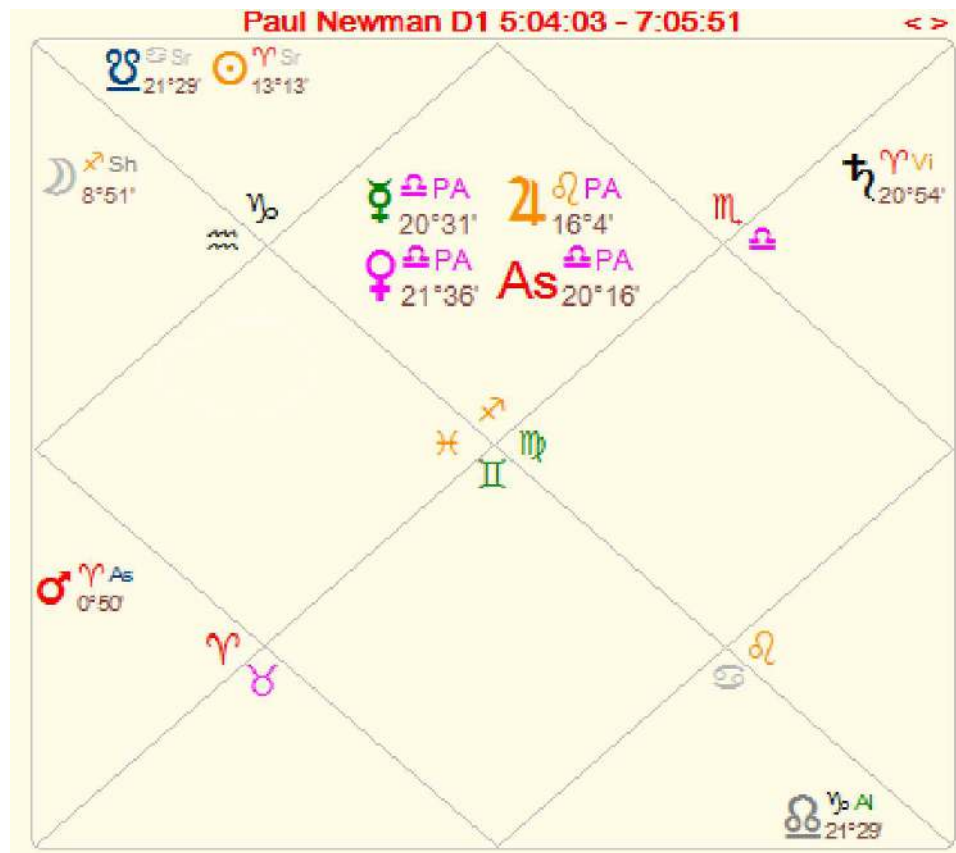
*Recently, I discovered that multiple malefic influences on the First House (and/or Lord) can make a person seem offensive to others, or simply make them feel very beleaguered, anxious, lost, or vulnerable.. (I'd previously only focused on the first option.)

Note also that a malefic like Saturn, for those with Venus Lagnas (Taurus and Libra) rules two good houses and so is a natural malefic but a temporal benefic and that means that its transits bring forth fortuitous opportunities and events.

An easy way to think of what **Temporal** means is that it is akin to the word "temporary". What makes it temporary? The fact that the Lagna (Rising Sign) changes every two hours, and so while Jupiter is always a natural benefic, it is only temporarily, at any specific time of day, a Temporal benefic or malefic, and changes from one to the other as the Rising Sign changes.

Some examples will clarify the use and application of these approaches:

Paul Newman

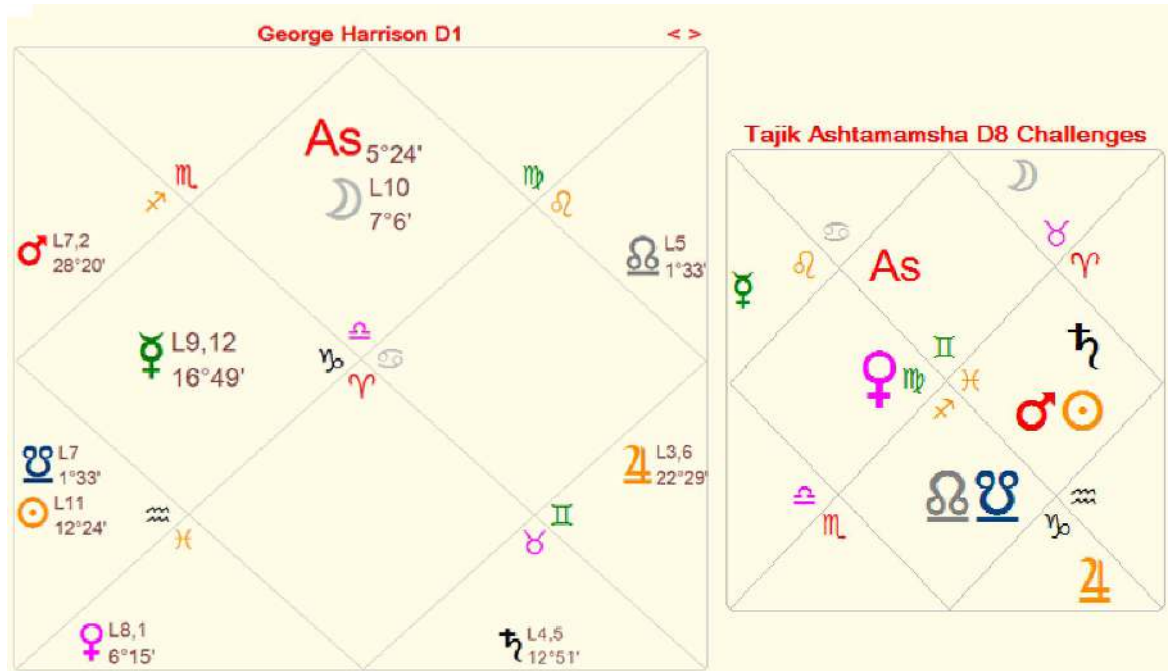


He has all three natural benefics, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter, in the First House. Mercury has Dig Bala and Jupiter has both Dig Bala and is in its own sign, and Venus is in her own Navamsha, so all three planets have strength. These planets also form a Raja Yoga (L1 + L10) and a Dhana Yoga (L1 + L11) supporting both professional and financial successes. All of these make the Ascendant very strong. (Both Jupiter and Mercury are also temporal benefics.)

Meanwhile, Saturn initially looks quite strong (exalted in the birth chart) but it's debilitated in the Navamsha and so does not have as much impact as one might initially expect, upon the planets it aspects. Note: in this paragraph, I assessed the primary positive and negative impacts on the person (as represented by their Ascendant and Ascendant Lord).

And adding greatness to the whole chart is a truly extraordinary Mars, who is not only in its own sign in the 5th house in the birth chart, but also in its own sign in 7 divisional charts including in the Navamsha (which gives it Vargottama strength)! This degree of strength is almost unheard of and gives him incredible initiative, intelligence, endurance, creativity, and presence.

George Harrison



George Harrison was considered the quiet and sweet Beatle, and natural benefics influencing his Ascendant: the soft Moon in the First House aspected by a strong (retrograde) Jupiter, bear out both his kindness and his spirituality.

However, his life had major upsets, including being overshadowed by Paul and John, his first wife leaving him for his best friend, being stabbed by a knife-wielding attacker, and later developing cancer and dying at the young age of 58.

While Jupiter aspecting his Ascendant made him a very good man, its lordship of the 3rd and 6th houses (accidents, illnesses and enemies) made Jupiter a temporal malefic of the first order. This is compounded by Mars aspecting both Jupiter and more seriously Venus (the First Lord) as a double Maraka (owner of both the 2nd and 7th), definitely a factor in shortening his lifespan.

(Note that George Harrison had a [passion combination](#) due to the Mars aspect on his exalted Venus, resulting in infidelities that motivated his first wife to leave him.)

I included the 8th harmonic chart (Ashtamamsha) which is the chart for death, because at first glance, it seems puzzling that the attack and onset of his disease and death would occur during Mercury, until we see Mercury in the 3rd house (one of the two houses of endings, along with the 8th) in the divisional chart indicating death.

The art of astrology is in being able to see the whole person in a chart. The methods outlined in this article are a start to developing this skill. May your understanding of the stars flourish!