



Uncovering Barriers to Success with Vedic Astrology

By Juliana Swanson

As a Vedic Astrology Coach™ (VAC™) certified through the American College of Vedic Astrology (ACVA), I work via a hybrid model that combines the assistive, co-active practice of life coaching with the behavioral assessment and forecasting abilities of Vedic astrology. Analysis of the astrological birth chart performed in tandem with a life coaching evaluation reveals individual aptitudes, skills, values, motivations, and behaviors. This knowledge provides a useful guide to understanding individual life purpose and how to best fulfill one's natural ability, envision new possibilities, and identify the best choices for action.

Vedic Astrology Coaching uses the premise that much of one's fate is negotiable, meaning that we have the free will to make empowered choices as to how to navigate various karmic influences. In my work, I seek to realistically measure those areas of belief, attitude, and conduct that limit an individual's ability to reach success. The latter term (success) may be

generally defined as the peace of mind and gratification that come from achieving one's potential according to swadharma, the life path that evolves in accordance with one's true nature.

My overall assessment as a Vedic Astrology Coach involves detecting, analyzing, and interpreting the most appropriate life path as well as the particular obstacles that inhibit creative flow and impede the accomplishment of one's desires, intentions, and goals. These obstacles or blocks tend to revolve around any of the following:

- *Chronic or acute mental health challenges (such as anxiety, depression, addiction, etc.)*
- *Procrastination*
- *Disorganization*
- *Inconstant motivation*
- *Lack of will power*
- *Erratic focus*
- *Impractical ideals*
- *Poor self-esteem*
- *Low self-confidence*
- *Persistent negative attitudes (such as anger, victimization, or pessimism)*

To help pinpoint the significant barriers to success as seen in a horoscope, we must do a thorough analysis of the grahas (planets); rashis (signs); nakshatras (lunar signs); bhavas (houses); bhava lords or adhipatis (house rulers); yogas (combinations) and drishtis (aspects) between grahas

and grahas, and grahas and rashis); elements (tattvas); and the three principles (gunas) which tie into the rashi modalities (chara-cardinal/rajas; sthira-fixed/tamas; and dwishwabhaba-dual or mutable/sattva).

A good place to begin is with the navagrahas, the nine planets of Jyotish:

- *Budha (Mercury): When strong and favorable, it helps to run everyday affairs productively, efficiently, and joyfully. When weak and afflicted, it becomes difficult to skillfully apply one's talents and abilities, to communicate clearly and manage the details of life, and to live in alignment with one's swadharma and interests.*
- *Kuja or Mangala (Mars): When strong and favorable, Kuja helps to overcome all kinds of daily challenges with sound good sense and exactitude. When Kuja is weak and afflicted, it is challenging to resolve problems, exert one's will, and be consistently focused and motivated; and there may be a good deal of inner agitation and a sense of being continually thwarted in one's efforts. Generally, Ketu acts like Kuja, so you can apply this same information to Ketu, as well.*
- *Surya or Ravi (the Sun): When strong and favorable, it helps one to remain committed to one's goals. When this steadfast commitment is lost due to weakened vitality, poor physical health, or low self-confidence associated with a weak or afflicted Surya, then one can falter, lose direction, and procrastinate.*
- *Chandra or Soma (the Moon): It needs to be strong and favorable in order to adjust to changing circumstances and to function efficiently and to manage resources and practical affairs. With a weak and afflicted Chandra, one can be overwrought by stress, depression, and alienation. It is difficult to feel peace of mind, to imagine a positive future, to adapt to the challenges of everyday life, and to have one's needs met.*

- *Guru or Brihaspati (Jupiter): It needs to be strong and favorable in order to cultivate patience, to have hope and optimism about the future, and to have proper discernment and ability to integrate one's inner reality with societal structures. When it is weak or afflicted, one can feel a sense of bad luck or loss of fortune; the brain may suffer some chemical imbalance (Guru rules the brain); and one may struggle to assimilate information and to learn through conflict.*
- *Shukra (Venus): It needs to be strong and favorable in order to have mutually productive relationships and to be able to make healthy choices in life. When Shukra is weak and unfavorable, one can suffer a lack of peace, feel victimized, and feel generally unfulfilled.*
- *Shani (Saturn): It needs to be strong and favorable in order to stay grounded, centered, realistic, and to have the stamina and focus to work toward one's goals, and the confidence to meet life's challenges. When weak and unfavorable, it points to poor endurance, reduced organizational focus, and a lack of consistency that would otherwise help to meet one's goals. Generally, Rahu acts like Shani, so this information can be applied to Rahu, as well.*

We also need to look at how the grahas influence each other and how the grahas influence and are influenced by the rashis, nakshatras, bhavas, and adhipatis. This is a vast and complex topic, but here are some basic examples:

- *When Kuja (or Ketu) and Shani mutually aspect each other, especially if in unfriendly rashis and bhavas, the individual may set his or her standards too high, or may be too tense and over-controlling, perfectionistic, fearful, or frustrated about how much (or low little) is*

being accomplished, or about how well it is being accomplished, which can lead to an inability to flow with ease and grace.

- *If the third house (or the third house ruler) is weak or afflicted, one may struggle to remain motivated and exert one's will in a balanced way.*
- *When Kanya rashi (Virgo) is afflicted by malefic or weak planets, then one may be easily overcome by "analysis paralysis."*
- *If Dhanus rashi (Sagittarius) is afflicted, one may be pessimistic or may struggle with a lack of true purpose. In fact, I find that major afflictions to any of the dwishwabhava rashis (Mithuna/Gemini, Kanya/Virgo, Meena/Pisces, and Dhanus/Sagittarius) can reflect "high-strung" or restless tendencies that contribute toward inconstant actions and results.*
- *If Bharani nakshatra is prominent but afflicted, one may be very restless or prone to emotional extremes and conflicting desires that interfere with the accomplishment of one's goals.*
- *If Mula nakshatra is prominent and afflicted, arrogance, egotism, lust, and anger can be strong barriers to success.*
- *Purva Ashadha nakshatra if prominent and afflicted may suffer from hubris and egoism that tend to block success. The nature can tend to be over-expansive, unreasonable, uncooperative, or obstinate.*
- *Purva Bhadrapada nakshatra when prominent and afflicted suggests one with a good deal of fear that arises in stressful situations, and also, a wavering and insecure mind.*

To examine psychological health in the astrological birth chart, we should first examine the first and fourth bhavas and lords in the rashi chakra (2/3 influence) and the Chandra (Moon) lagna chart (1/3 influence). The navamsa chart is used to corroborate what is in the rashi and Chandra lagna

charts. Next, examine Chandra and Budha, signifiers for the mind. If several of these are weak or afflicted by such factors as ownership of malefic houses 3, 6, and 11; placement in dusthana bhavas; combustion; sandhi/gandanta/mrita or bala avastha; poor dignity in various vargas; papakartari yoga; association with or influence by malefics Rahu, Kuja, Ketu and Shani; and/or dispositorship by a poorly placed malefic, then there may be indications for some mental imbalance. Afflictions to the fifth house and its lord should also be analyzed as these represent the realm of the mind (intelligence), logic, and wisdom.

Countless yogas (combinations of grahas) exist which may represent barriers to success. Some are dasa dependent and some are not, meaning some will activate in the dasas of the associated planets and some are always in place, but that is a topic beyond the scope of this article. Just for a few examples of these yogas:

- *Sakata Yoga: Chandra in the 6th, 8th, or 12th house from Guru can represent an erratic life and obstruction to the free flow of fortune. There are exceptions including exalted Chandra; Chandra in Guru's rashis; Kuja aspecting Chandra; Chandra being full or conjoined Rahu; Guru being stronger than Chandra according to shadbala; or Chandra in a kendra from the lagna.*
- *Nabhasa Akriti Hala Yoga: All grahas in bhavas 2, 6, and 10; or 3, 7, and 11; or 4, 8, and 12: the native may be frequently agitated or out of touch with reality.*

- *Gola Yoga (one of the seven Sankhya Yogas): All grahas in one house: inconsistent thoughts or behaviors. This is similar to the stellium of western astrology, when three or more planets are clumped together in one sign. It can indicate an intense area of focus that may be imbalanced or karmically "knotted up."*
- *Yuga Yoga (one of the seven Sankhya Yogas): All grahas in three houses: the individual tends to be isolated and indolent.*
- *Papa Kartari Yoga to the lagna, Chandra, or the fifth house (malefics hemming from the adjoining bhavas); or malefics in the first bhava (Ashuba Yoga): may represent feeling under constant pressure, enmity, or inner struggle that can block success.*
- *Dala Sarpa Yoga in which all malefics are in three kendras and there are no benefics in kendras. One born with this yoga may suffer a lot of inner and outer misery and will depend upon others for his or her subsistence. Some texts say that Chandra should not be included in this yoga.*
- *Shrapit Yoga occurs when Rahu and Saturn are conjoined. This combination is said to be a "curse" which reflects many inner and outer impediments.*
- *Kala Sarpa Yoga when all the grahas lie on one side of the zodiac between the lunar nodes is said to represent a "curse" in which certain intense and fated events are inevitable, and which may reflect many extreme highs and lows in life, and sometimes, an extravagant or obsessive-compulsive tendency.*
- *According to Mahadeva's Jataka Tatva, there are several yogas for mental imbalance in the birth chart, which must be interpreted carefully with synthesis and understanding, including: 1) Guru in the first bhava with Kuja in the seventh, or vice versa; 2) Shani in the first bhava with Kuja in either the fifth, seventh or ninth; 3) Shani in the*

twelfth bhava associated with waning Chandra; 4) Shani in the first bhava, with Surya in the twelfth, and Kuja or Chandra in a trikona house; 5) the association of Shani and the second lord with Surya and/or Kuja; 6) Mandi (Gulika) in the fifth or seventh bhava afflicted by a malefic graha; 7) and, Rahu conjoined Chandra in the first bhava while malefics are in trikona houses, known as Pisacha Grasta Yoga, which means "Overtaken by Spirits," and in modern terms may signify phobic disorders. The classical texts say that Chandra's conjunction with Shani or Rahu is always undesirable, as it indicates a native who is mentally unsound. However, I have not found this to be true in all cases. Sometimes if Chandra is conjoined Rahu and has an "awake" dispositor, or in the case of a Shakti Yoga, or if there are other overriding significations and aspects to counterbalance these associations, they can reflect very positive spiritual or material results.

We also can look at the balance of the elements and modalities to see how effectively one is managing his or her life force. To do this, I look at a particular weighted scoring system that calculates the placements of the planets in the sidereal signs. The analysis goes as follows:

- *When the earth element (prithvi tattva) is weakly represented, the native may not be well-attuned to material reality and may struggle to survive. If the earth element attunement is too high, one can be lethargic, devoid of creative energy, or may feel persistently "stuck."*
- *When the fixed (sthira) modality is weakly represented, while at the same time the mutable modality is too high, the native may be overly "sensitive," perfectionistic, or experience some difficulty remaining focused on one thing for long, and there may be difficulty completing what is started.*

- *When the cardinal (chara) energy is very weak, the native may be challenged when it comes to setting anything into motion, and ineffective obsessive-compulsive attitudes and behaviors can also be the result. If the cardinal modality is too high and there is not enough fixed energy, one may frequently start something new but will not finish.*
 - *If the air element (vayu tattva) is over-emphasized, especially if the other elements are weakly represented, the individual may be a dreamer who becomes lost in ideas and thoughts that never are fulfilled (especially if earth energy is weak). If the air element is weakly represented, the nervous system can be quite sensitive and the native may suffer anxieties or alienation that block the ability to set goals and stay focused, organized, and on track with them.*
 - *If the water element (jala tattva) is weakly represented, the native may be very "shut down" energetically, emotionally, and creatively, which blocks the ability to nurture oneself and remain organized, focused, and "in the flow." If the water element is too high, the native can tend to get bogged down or overwhelmed by emotions and feelings that block his or her ability to set goals, let alone fulfill them.*
 - *Too little of the fire element (agni tattva) can translate into low energy and a lack of confidence, which makes it difficult to set creative goals or manifest them. The individual may experience devastating ups and downs in life. He or she may have many ideas but may never realize them, especially if there is too much of the air energy. This is known as "false fire," a condition that is very exhausting and ineffectual. On the other hand, too much of the fire energy results in burn-out.*
- The above matters can also be seen through the lens of Ayurveda, as*

the doshas are comprised of the elements, while the gunas are reflected in the modalities.

If there is a significant problem blocking flow and manifestation, we should see it appearing in the astrological birth chart in at least three significant placements. These blocks may be "set off" in the progressions (dashas, transits, and return charts), which are very important to identify and analyze. Once we pinpoint the source of the problem, we will know more clearly which astrological remedies to employ to help overcome barriers to success and help facilitate a more productive and fulfilling life.