

## CYCLES IN OUR LIFE: THE LUNAR CYCLE PARTS 1-6

By Michael Erlewine ([Michael@Erlewine.net](mailto:Michael@Erlewine.net))

### THE FULL MOON, PART 1

February 7, 2012

Observing the lunar cycle goes back thousands of years and concepts like “Full Moon Madness” and the like have been around for as long. Yet this is a topic that is not taught in schools and is only even obliquely referenced by the media.

For me it was always a no-brainer to grasp that our lives are all wrapped up in these huge bodies like the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon. When science is speculating about the wing flap of a butterfly in Brazil having an effect (chaos theory) in Greenland, what about these great rhythms of life like the solunar cycle? They must do something with us.

Astrology both East and West follow the lunar cycle. While here in the West we generally divide the lunar month into four quarters, countries like Tibet and India speak in terms of thirty phases – much more detail. The Asians are really into this cycle and have much to teach us here in the West.

The moment of the Full Moon marks the exact alignment of the Sun, Earth, and Moon, in that order. The Earth is between the Sun and Moon, and the Moon is outside Earth (toward the outer planets) rather than inside toward the Sun, Mercury, and Venus. I could go on discussing the technical details of the solunar cycle for pages, but instead let's just look at what we can expect at the full of the Moon psychologically and experientially, since that is what most of you are looking for.

I wrote a whole (free) e-book on the Moon for anyone who craves real detail. It is called “Mother Moon: The Astrology of the Lights,” and it is available here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/download/MotherMoon.pdf>

If the solunar cycle is so powerful, why is not everybody aware of it? Good question.

The solunar cycle is part of the rhythms of life and obviously they are taken for granted by most people and we are not aware of them. They are too obvious. We are them. And these rhythms are not about to flag us down unless they manifest as earthquakes, tsunamis, and what not. We are too distracted by busyness. If we want to become aware of the Moon, we have to get with the rhythms and not vice versa. It is like a dance. If we move along with the Sun/Moon cycle, awareness of them grows. We get with it. If we have no rhythm, we can't dance.

My point is that first you have to read about these rhythms enough to be able to begin observing them in life around you. But an intellectual grasp is not enough, anymore than reading about dancing is the same as dancing. You have to dance. And here that means learning to move and sway ‘with’ these natural cycles. Get in the flow.

Today is the Full Moon and I already have run out of blog room. I will say just a few words about the Full Moon and then, if you feel you would like me to write some blogs on how to use the solunar cycle I will consider doing that.

The Full Moon marks a changing point in the month, a time when whatever we have been working on, whatever effort we have put out has reached its mark for this month's cycle. No point in pushing onward with effort. Just let things coast and see what was done.

And this is, of course, at a very deep level and not always easy to see. In fact, it usually takes some days, like the continent of Atlantis rising from the sea, before we can feel even the outlines of what happened during the waxing Moon cycle. This is subtle stuff and we are loaded with the noise of something, for example, like caffeine, so forget about sensing something subtle. That idea.

In other words, it takes time (and sensitivity) to understand what we have just experienced, much less to put it into words and share it with others.

I wrote yesterday about the meaning of this particular Full Moon, so some of you might like to review that. If you want more on this topic, let me know please.

## CYCLES IN OUR LIFE: THE LUNAR CYCLE, PART 2

### THE SUN-MOON CYCLE

February 8, 2012

Tuning into the Sun-Moon cycle has added something important to my life. For one, the Sun and Moon cycles are regular and stable. You can count on them, literally. They repeat themselves and, in the case of the solunar cycle, the whole cycle repeats every month, which means you have plenty of opportunity to get to know it. By definition, it is already a part of us; We have always known it, but perhaps have not been aware of it.

In my own life I often tend to forget what is really important. It is easy for me to get carried away by a fascinating project or train of thought, get lost in it, and wake up much later (days or weeks!) wondering what happened. How did I get so far off track?

And sometimes I just fall into times that are no fun at all. They kind of wake me up a bit. I have learned at these harder times in the month to just stop what I am doing, take a break, and check what part of the lunar cycle we are in. More often than not I find that I am at one of the points in the cycle where I am pushing one way and the cycle is going another. Once I understand this, I am more patient and stop swimming against the current, relax, and go with the flow.

If I pay attention to the Moon phase I am in, it usually explains a lot to me, and I can get with the program and back into the rhythm of things. Checking where in the monthly lunar cycle I am has saved me, many a day.

Unfortunately, I tend to use astrology more when I get into troubled waters than when things are going well. If things are good, I usually just sail along and get away with what I can. However, when I wander off track (which is often), lunar astrology is a great guide to help me get back in line with my own rhythms. I too often get out of synch.

In other words: I don't use astrology as a preventive technique as much as I should and would like to. I talk the good talk, but sometimes forget to walk the good walk. I get lost in the moment and wake up in a mess of one kind or another that I have made. Thank goodness I wake up at all!

If you feel you are interested in becoming more aware of these lunar rhythms, take a moment to understand the cycles all around us. I wish I could sit down with each of you and explain the concept that everything we see, everything we experience, is cyclic. It is all cycles. If something does not repeat and continuously restate itself, it is soon gone from our memory. Another way to say this is that there is no such thing as a straight line to the future. All lines eventually curve and return to make a circle or cycle. Trust me in this please and start to do some research on your own.

Let me summarize: Everything in life ‘is’ (exists) only by repeating and re-positing itself, endlessly -- persisting. It is just like, in banking, when we want to get a return for our investment. If an investment has no return, we get nothing back – no return. That is what the phrase “the point of no return” is all about.

To begin with, we can pay attention to the cycles in our life, like the cycle of our heart beating, the cycle of our lungs breathing, the return of the Sun to dawn every day, and on and on and on. Observe and consider these cycles. I will say it once again:

Everything ‘IS’ only by returning (giving returns), restating, and continuing to be, at least everything that we can be aware of. To exist is to persist or endure. Everything is living energy.

This blog is still prologue to learning about the lunar cycle, so I am sure I will lose some of you. In the next blog I will present a very important concept that comes to us from the Tibet and India, that of “lunar gaps” and how to take advantage of them. I hope you can stay tuned and feel free to ask questions.

### CYCLES IN OUR LIFE: LUNAR CYCLE PART 3 LUNAR GAPS February 9, 2012

Let's move on to the subject of “gaps.” The concept of lunar gaps comes to us from the extensive study of the lunar cycle in Asia, particularly in Tibet and India. It is not a western concept as far as I have been able to determine and it is very powerful. Here is how it works, but first, some background will help:

The Buddhists tend to see us as caught up in the distractions and bewilderment of cyclic existence. Sound familiar? Cycles are what we are talking about here, so note that. They call this cyclic-confusion we are in “Samsara.” I like to pronounce that Sanskrit word as “Some Sorrow,” with the accent on the first word in that phrase. Samsara is the total result of our endless cyclic karmic existence, and so on.

However, this unceasing life of distraction that we tend to lead is not air-tight. Thank goodness for that! It leaks, and these leaks are called “gaps.” In other words, there are gaps or time-outs available to us in our deer-in-the-headlights life of fascination with distraction and the solunar cycle is no exception. Gaps are opportunities that are available in the rhythm of the solunar cycle to remember, wake-up, and to be more aware.

This is why, until rather recently, workers in Tibet did not have Saturdays and Sundays off in their monthly calendar, but instead, certain days of the month were set aside for what they call days of “observation,” days to just observe one’s mindstream for the moment. How’s that for an idea whose time has come?

New and Full Moon days are an example of ‘gap’ days, and there are others. This is a very useful piece of information: that on some days of the month it is worth setting aside at least a small block of time to just sit quietly and look at our own mindstream. How we do that is another question, one that we will address later in this series.

And the point here is that the endless life cycles we are in are not seamless, but rather can be articulated to our advantage if and when we become aware of them rather than sleep on in our usual rush of busyness.

But these gaps (opportunities) are not about to run out and flag us down. We have to take the time to observe them and take time to learn to be more aware in general. There is no free lunch. Think of the lunar cycle as an example of cosmic breathing. From time to time we need to take a deep cosmic breath and we do this by breathing along with the Sun and Moon. It is about rhythm.

This is, of course, why all those Buddhist monks and nuns meditate, to become more aware. In fact, the word “Buddha” in Sanskrit simply means “awareness” or the “one who is aware,” and nothing more. I try to explain to folks that Buddhism is not a religion in the ordinary sense, but just a method to become aware. Buddhists have no “God,” which is shocking to many, but not if you understand what it means. All this says is that Buddhist meditation is about awareness and nothing else. You can be a Christian and still practice Tibetan-style meditation, and so on. I will spare you the rant, but please let’s stop calling Buddhism a religion in the theistic sense. It is a method or path to awareness, which is what the word “dharma” means – the path Buddha pointed out to become aware. That’s it.

The Buddhists have very carefully (for thousands of years) studied the monthly lunar cycle and figured out where all the “gaps” or chinks in time are. In fact, they divide the Sun-Moon cycle into 30 lunar days, each of which is good for something or other. And lunar days are not simply our solar calendar days, but rather are ‘lunar’ days. A lunar day is simply the time it takes for the Sun and Moon to move another 12 degrees apart or closer to one another. They are close in length to calendar days but don’t coincide. A lunar day can start at any time in the day or night. I publish a free calendar of monthly lunar days here on one of our sites:

<http://astrologyland.com/>

[Right side of page, Moontime, press the small red dharma wheel]

In summary, there are natural gaps or windows in the monthly Moon cycle that are useful, very useful. In fact, each of the thirty lunar days of the month is useful for one thing or another. There are some days when healing is auspicious, others when fasting and purification are furthered, and on and on. However, we need to learn where those lunar gaps are each month. We will look at those tomorrow.

#### CYCLES IN OUR LIFE:LUNAR CYCLE PART 4 LUNAR GAPS February 10, 2012

All cycles, including the monthly cycle of the Sun and Moon, have a similar structure. You can see the structure clearly in the cycle of your breath or the heartbeat. We breathe in, pause, breathe out, and pause... and then again. There is a movement from the most inward part of the

cycle to its greatest expansiveness and then back down again. Our chest heaves, in and out. Once you understand how the solunar cycle is constructed you will understand how all cycles work including other synodic cycles, like those of the planets to one another.

The New Moon represents the point in the cycle of most inwardness and the Full Moon the point of the most outwardness or expansiveness. And there is a flow from inward outward and back again, just like breathing. The movement goes from inward at the New Moon and expands through the first and second quarters of the Moon until it reaches the moment of the Full Moon. At that point the movement ceases to expand and begins to deflate or contract all the way through the third and fourth lunar quarters, until the next New Moon point is reached. And again. That is the movement a cycle, just like a heartbeat of breathing.

Obvious thoughts might include: just as we are not in a party mood when we are at our most inward, we are probably rubbing the cycle-flow the wrong way if we plan a wedding reception for the day of the New Moon. Got it? New Moon is not 'party time'.

And the converse is also true. The time to party and to be all out and social is traditionally around the Full Moon. And the same goes for effort and direction. The time to make an effort and really put out and build something, etc. is after the New Moon and before the Full Moon, in particular during the Moon's second quarter.

After the Full Moon, things begin to withdraw and collapse. Therefore, pushing whatever we are doing beyond the Full Moon is probably not wise, as we are pushing against a natural rhythm that is much stronger than we are. So after the Full Moon, it is best not to push. Instead, we ride and coast as far as we can with whatever effort we made thus far in those first two weeks. The third and fourth lunar quarters are not times to sow, but rather times to reap, to take it all in, and to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Traditionally, after the Full Moon is a good time to take (be receptive) and not give, to reap and not sow, respond and not aggress. You get the idea. We should go with the flow of the natural rhythms. What I am pointing out here is very general. Remember, this is a brief introduction and I have only pointed out two of the changing-points or gaps, the New Moon and the Full Moon. The Tibetans divide the lunar cycle into thirty sections, so consider that. Plus an intellectual understanding of all this is what you are getting here. Actual sensitivity to and awareness of the solunar cycles is something entirely different. It is not something to 'think', but something to feel and experience, moving with the solunar rhythms. Please don't confuse the two.

I don't want to get too esoteric or too 'spiritual' here but the Tibetans are very clear about aligning our own energies with the cosmos, the great rhythms that already are. We learn to work with the rhythms rather than against them. These sacred centers (Sun and Moon) and energies are said to line up (to be aligned) best at the New and the Full of the Moon, especially if there is an eclipse. The New and Full Moon times are prime examples of important lunar gaps during which we might want to set aside some time to observe. We might ask: just what the heck is it that we are observing?

Superficially we are observing our mindstream, our stream of consciousness, how our mind feels and is on that day. In these times of monthly alignment it is written that a certain clarity can be experienced, perhaps some deeper insight into who we are and the true nature of the mind. You will never know if you don't look and, to see, you have to look and observe. Thinking about it is just your ante in. We must immerse ourselves in experiencing these cycles to know them.

As it is now in our society, we never look. There are no provisions or teachings that tell us that we should look at our mind, much less how to properly do that. There is absolutely zero time set aside on our calendars for looking into the nature of our mind by society at present. Sure, some of us who meditate know about lunar gaps, but knowing they exist and learning how to use them, much less actually using them are different things. We will continue, if you wish.

## CYCLES IN OUR LIFE: LUNAR CYCLE PART 5

### LUNAR GAPS

February 11, 2012

The general idea as to how best to make use of the monthly lunation cycle goes as follows: The two main “gaps” or events in the lunar cycle are the moments of the New and Full Moon. Although the exact times are moments or instants in time, the whole area of time surrounding the New and Full Moons is charged or active, both before and after the moment. Please keep that in mind. These are not stopwatch events, but great rhythmic sea changes that we can become aware of, move along with, and learn to use.

These two gaps are the major variations in polarity, with the New Moon being the most inward and private of gaps and the Full Moon being the most outward and social gap. We will get back to these in a moment.

What follows now is very, very abstract, nothing more than the general concept. And it is a long way from understanding the verbal concept presented here to actually experiencing and living the concept in the physical rhythms of life. And the whole point of these blogs is to share enough about how the lunar cycle works so that you don't fight against its tides and, instead, gradually learn to work with and use these great forces. I have pointed out these two major events in the monthly, lunar cycle. Now let's talk a bit about the flow or movement of the cycle itself.

It is important to understand that the entire waxing half of the lunar cycle, which are the two weeks from the New Moon to the moment of the Full Moon, are one huge surge for pushing outward and getting things done. This is a time for expansiveness and outreach, building and growing things.

Tradition has it that at the New Moon point, when the Moon is exactly aligned between Earth and the Sun, some kind of vibrational tone or impulse is emitted and received that stirs or sounds deep within our mind – a seed. This seed becomes the theme or flavor for the coming monthly cycle of thirty days that begins at the moment of New Moon.

And this seed impulse instilled or implanted at the New Moon incubates and grows during the waxing two-weeks of the Moon cycle until it reaches its maximum at the moment of the Full Moon. It is during these two weeks that the seed impulse or idea first takes on form in our mind as a concept (an idea we want to pursue) and then begins to actually come out and manifest in the physical world. In other words, born in the mind, the impulse first takes shape conceptually, and that concept can come to some kind of manifestation during the waxing lunar phase.

Of course, this is where we come in. If we fight against the tides of the solunar rhythms, very little will be accomplished other than tiring ourselves out. However, if we, instead, work with the monthly rhythms, much can be accomplished.

It is easy to describe these forces abstractly in words as I am doing here, but much more

difficult to actually observe them operating in the world around us. We don't observe the solunar forces like we observe the waves on a beach. These are inner tides that are so much a part of us our lives that we are no longer aware of them, if we ever were. And although they roll on around us without being perceived, we can become sensitive to them, we can get in synch. It does not happen automatically.

You don't see these solunar tidal changes with your mind; you feel them with your psyche and your body. It is like that old adage "Make hay while the Sun shines." There is a time for work and a time for rest. We already know that. And there is also a time to start things and a time to end things, a time to make an effort and a time to leave off, a time to plan things out, and a time to work things out, and so on.

The only way I know to experience this is to begin to work 'with' these forces, to move in the same direction in some form of a cosmic dance. And it indeed resembles learning to dance. For most of us this probably involves some amount of imitation, "monkey-see, monkey-do," making some effort to dance along with the rhythms of life. Yet, just as we can learn a new dance, so can we, with a little practice, get into the swing of the solunar cycles and actually use them. Plus, it is a great blessing just to be working with rather than against the forces that be, and way less physically and mentally tiring.

I believe attention span is wavering, so I will try to abridge this and wrap it up tomorrow.  
— with Ardis Wait Renkoski.

## CYCLES IN OUR LIFE: LUNAR CYCLE PART 6 CONCLUSION LUNAR GAPS February 12, 2012

Let me recap a bit as I am sure some of you are tiring from such a long series. This stuff is detailed and I am going on in perhaps too much detail, but then this is not that easy to describe, much less to learn experientially. Today will be my last blog on this topic, but there is a whole free e-book for those of you who are not yet saturated. The link is included at the end of this section.

When interest here flags, I tend to close out the series, but let me sketch out what I would cover if I got long winded:

First, I would explain the second half of the lunar cycle. While the first half is all about conceiving a project and making it happen, the two weeks after the Full Moon are about taking the cycle apart or, we could say, helping it fail successfully. If the waxing moon cycle (first two weeks) is about sowing, then the waning (last two weeks) is about reaping. You remember: "We reap just what we sow" sort of thing. In the waxing half we give, and in the waning half we take.

Think of the Full Moon as the heart of an experience you are physically immersed in, immersed to the degree of feeling more than thinking, immersed to the degree of getting dunked and losing control (and perhaps consciousness) of whatever you were pushing at. So in the days after the Full Moon, it takes a little time for us to come out of the experience and to have thoughts about it, and even longer to find words for it, much less express it to others. That is what the Third Quarter of the Moon is all about.

In the Fourth Quarter, there is definitely the sense of withdrawal from the Full Moon experience

including the ability to objectify it, to see clearly what happened then. Not only can we see it clearly, but we begin to separate out from the experience the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, what we can take away, and what we must prune out, forget about for now, and discard.

From the Fourth Quarter, before the next New Moon, the experience of the Full Moon continues to decline, leaving whatever results we have been able to gather from the Full Moon experience itself. Our take away constitutes the seed essence of what we have been able to gather from the whole month so far, be it a little or a lot. This becomes part of the tone that sounds at the coming New Moon, and so on, lunar cycle after cycle. Of course I would go into this in much more detail.

At this point the conversation would split into two parts, a look at the 30-day Tibetan/Hindu lunar cycle and what that is all about, and a different look at the same cycle as seen through western astrology, which would break the cycle into 16 different aspect zones.

In the Tibetan portion, we would look at where the main gaps are in the Sun/Moon cycle, which, as with the New and Full Moon, includes days and times in the month for healing, others for purification, others for feasting, and so on. I have written about the difficult three days before the New Moon here a number of times. But you get the idea.

In the western portion, I would walk you through the sixteen major aspects used by astrologers in which the lunar cycle can be examined, each of them appropriate or good for one thing or another. And these aspects include what are called "Mirror Aspects," which means waxing aspects have a different interpretation from waning aspects. In other words the First Quarter of the Moon (90-degree aspect) brings a very different interpretation from that of the Fourth Quarter of the Moon, and so on.

As you can see, this would take time and quite a few other blogs. It may just be easier for those of you with a lasting interest to read about this in these two free e-books.

"Mother Moon: Astrology of the 'Lights'"

And

"Astrology's Mirror: Full-Phase Aspects"

Both found here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/index.asp?orig>

Thank you for listening.  
— with Ardis Wait Renkoski.