

## the nodes of the moon

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### the soul's arrow

What are the “Nodes” of the Moon? To astronomers, they are imaginary points of intersection in space, where the Moon's path around the Earth crosses the Earth's path around the Sun. To ancient Hindu astrologers, the Nodes are demons: Rahu and Ketu, a beast which the god Vishnu severed after it drank the gods' forbidden elixir of immortality. Contemporary Western astrologers read the Moon's Nodes as clues to your psychological nature, with the North Node depicting an area of development (often of untapped potentials), and the South Node an area of stagnation. I like to call the Nodes "the soul's arrow" -- for to me they give a powerful description of your soul's desired direction this lifetime. What did you most come here to do? That's what the Moon's Nodes will tell you!

Given these are the *Moon's* Nodes, they may draw you into some deeply emotional territories. Working with them often means facing some of your toughest issues. Your Nodes being in the signs of **Aries** and **Libra** raise the emotional assignments of balancing Self and Other. Who should come first? This placement asks: How can you harmonize self-will and the need for freedom with your needs for relationship? This pair of nodes encourages the discovery of a balanced energy exchange, neither giving nor withholding nor expecting too much; also seeing through your projections (of yourself and others) to what's really there.

Your Nodes falling across the **Fourth** and **Tenth** houses make the following important themes: harmonizing your child-self with your adult-self; this means learning to value both of them. You have a special sensitivity to issues of dependency and taking charge, and may initially lean towards one or the other. You are here to balance both the feminine and patriarchal (or structuring) values. You are here to give and receive nurture – as well as take responsibility and claim your authority.

I like the "karmic" perspective on the Nodes, which suggests that the South Node describes past life karma, your psychic history, and the North Node your current life dream, what your soul most wants to develop this lifetime. They summarize what conditions you came from, and where you'd like to be heading. To my way of thinking, the soul isn't into repetition. If you were Shakespeare in a past lifetime, you're probably not meant to win Pulitzers for your plays this time around. The soul is attracted to the earth plane because the hard surfaces of earth reality are the ingredients for development -- and what your soul is trying to develop is a new wholeness by way of balance. What you didn't get last time, you'll work on this

lifetime. At the North Node you are developing experience at something entirely new. And even though you might approach this experience with some trepidation, there's a kind of fairy dust associated with it. You're often blessed with success in that direction.

### **aries north node in the fourth house**

With the **Aries North Node**, a deep potential for single-minded focus and the courage of determination lie inside of you -- you're here to marshal that energy towards some deeply personal and meaningful goal. You're meant to lead without looking back! But the people in your life may be a powerful distraction ("What do they want me to do?" "Who do they think I am?"). After many lifetimes of dependence on others, this life is meant for developing greater independence, for learning what you think, what you want, for finding out who you truly are. Your greatest joys will come when you can shift from seeing yourself through others' eyes into a true appreciation for your individuality. Let yourself lead a little, strike out on your own. You will find a special kind of courage and creativity inside just waiting to be expressed. And because of your innate sensitivity to others, this expression will likely be free from the selfishness and egotism that independent and single-minded individuals sometimes wield.

With a **Fourth House North Node**, the inner world of emotional sensitivity is the treasure map this lifetime. Exploring the reality of this world will bring your soul its desired development. The more you honor and learn to nurture your own and others' emotional needs, the greater growth and ultimate wealth you will enjoy. Initially, however, this may not seem like an easy or natural path. There's often a kind of emotional self-neglect masquerading as hardiness with this Node. Self-preservation as a child may have meant denying your neediness; you may even discover a certain amount of pride inside over your ability to deny pain or go it alone. You may not want to deal with issues around family, but entering into your roots and working with the imagery of ancestral healing can open new spiritual doors. To take a quick inventory on how far you've developed this Node, ask yourself how easily (or how often and how creatively) you nurture yourself. Take a look at your home. Do you give it time and attention? Does it reflect your spirit? And how much of your daily time do you spend with your loved ones? Connections with female energy, ethnic traditions, or children may be also important keys to your unfoldment.

These astrological keys may trigger recognition of one or more dreams you've long wanted to achieve but have been afraid to commit your all to. How does it feel to do something entirely new? Something you have no experience with, have built up no confidence level in? It's a little uncomfortable, isn't it? Even if it's something you're excited about doing, there's a real temptation to run away. And so it is with

the North Node, though it's something we're pointing towards, we may spend our lives wishing for it, but actively avoiding it, and thus staying the comfort zone of the South Node.

And that's the other side of the coin. How comfortable is the familiar? Even a bad experience is compelling if it's familiar. The trouble you know is often safer than the trouble you don't know, right? Which is why many people stay in bad relationships rather than risk the unknown of moving on. I bring up bad relationships because the South Node sometimes has the character of a bad relationship, something that limits our development, hinders us in some way. Even though the South Node represents talents we've mastered and achieved, it also carries fears and belief systems that hold us back. And part of the soul's intent is to clear their sticky hold.

### **libra south node in the tenth house**

Barbara Streisand may have sung "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world," but she wasn't singing the story of the **Libra South Node**! You've been there already, done that -- so much so that you may not always be seeing your relationships with a clear and rational eye! Your early experiences this lifetime may have over-emphasized the value of leaning on others, asking their advice, keeping a cooperative and harmonious profile as a way of being accepted. Shadow traits of a Libra South Node are a perpetual indecisiveness or sense of victimization ("It's always somebody else's fault!"), and a difficulty in being alone. What you may not realize is that in abdicating the energy expression of your individuality, you may actually be draining energy from those around you! Study the balance of energy given and received in your relationships. Ironically, the more independent and decisive you let yourself become, the more energized those around you may feel in your presence. Once you get the boundaries clear, your ability to listen and share with others can be quite a gift.

The **Tenth House South Node** is the Node of the self-sufficient achiever. You have the gift for making things happen in the real world. Such an approach is certainly rewarded in this culture -- but inwardly, you may find that no matter how hard you work or push yourself, the outer rewards may keep coming up empty. You're not afraid of taking on responsibilities, but you might get caught sometimes having taken on too much, winding up lonely and resentful of your burdens. You have to wonder why you feel so driven. From an early age, you may have been motivated by a strong need to be respected and appreciated as a hard-working individual. Perhaps outer circumstances meant your very survival, materially or emotionally, depended on pushing yourself. Who can prove it -- but some say early life experiences merely repeat your past life ones -- they become the perfect petrie dish for old habits to grow in. Was there a series of lives where you were obsessed with outer achievements? Eventually, like the old horse returning to its stable, was

occupying the leadership chair all you knew how to do? Consider that you've been up there, done that, earned the gold watch and bronze plaque. Think now of going for other, perhaps more challenging achievements, inward ones, like mastering the sensitive contours of the human heart. How easy is it for you to feel vulnerable, or to be around others who are? Remember, humans are not success machines. Some of the greatest gifts can come in very innocent and fallible packages. If you slowed down, allowed yourself to make mistakes, learned more how to enjoy life; if you took better care of yourself and others, what might have to change within you? Perhaps you've already begun.

***Your natal Neptune is conjunct the South Node. While a highly intuitive, creative, and spiritual placement, it has its drawbacks. You might be carrying strong memories of a life when you were a martyr or victim; thus, it may be your habit this lifetime to feel always like the victim, no matter what the actual circumstances are. Retreating into fantasy may be another reflex; it's a common Neptune coping pattern, but it can't do much to change real life circumstances.***

The behavior of any planet that is conjunct the South Node may be particularly instinctive and ingrained. Using the past life model, it's as though this planet were lifted straight out of the previous lifetime -- meaning its habits are strong, but the logic of its behaviors may not always be apparent from this life's conditioning. Given this long experience, you likely express some exceptional talents from this planet. But it can also be an emotional blind spot, with hidden attitudes and assumptions that are challenging to consciously change, The South Node can sometimes act as an energy drain -- meaning this is where you may instinctively send your energy. For good or ill, this planet could be in the driver's seat much of the time. Make sure it's driving you where you want to go!

### **the dilemma in the nodes: balancing the polarity**

I like the way astrologer Lawrence Hillman characterized the North and South Nodes: It's like when you register for life, you decide you're going to get a Ph.D. in math (North Node), but you somehow neglect to enroll in any math classes; instead you keep taking classes in dance, poetry, music and art (South Node). What the chart can do, is show you where your math class is. That's what the Nodes can help you to do -- find the right road. If you are ever afflicted with feelings of meaninglessness, or wonder what your life is for, pointing yourself towards your North Node, doing some North Node activity, can often put you back on track.

I've put a lot of emphasis on cleaning the limitations of the South Node and braving the challenge of the North. But ultimately both are important. So it's not just that you move entirely out of the South into a clean expression of the North -- it's the polarity that gets activated, so expect the keywords from both signs to surface in

your nodal dilemma. Ultimately the nodal process means more than just moving from one pole to the other -- it's a suggestion that the energies need to be re-balanced in some way. Many of your greatest qualities are wrapped up in the South Node, as perspectives and talents mastered in previous lifetimes of experience. Your South Node qualities are woven powerfully into your nature, and when you come full circle, you can understand -- and use -- its gifts in a new light.

### **when your nodes return**

Approximately every eighteen years the transiting nodes return to their natal position in your chart. At the halfway points, approximately every nine years, they are in the reverse alignment to their positions at your birth. These node "returns" and "reverse returns" can mark significant turning points. The choices you make at these times may be especially relevant to the nodal axis in your chart -- and can indicate how comfortable (or *uncomfortable*) you are with its challenges. Below are the dates for your first four Node Returns, beginning at ages 18 and 19 (the reverse returns are listed in parentheses). During these years, a decision point might appear where it seems, as in that famous Robert Frost poem, two roads diverge in the wood. What was (or will be) your choice?

<p><b><i>(January, 1959)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>May, 1968</i></b></p> <p><b><i>(July, 1977)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>December, 1986</i></b></p> <p><b><i>(February, 1996)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>July, 2005</i></b></p> <p><b><i>(December, 2014)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>January, 2024</i></b></p>
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Think back over your life and the paths you've taken at these and other temporal crossroads; give special attention to those activities drawing from either North or South Node talents. Recalling the more significant choice points, list your decisions in two columns: North Node choices and South Node ones. Analyze the consequences of each direction with a detached frame of mind. What decisions worked best for you? Which ones didn't? How can you use this information to plan a better course to your future? If you can endure the initial difficulties of pursuing the North Node dream, you'll generally find that the way opens up for you. Divine assistance will come. Perhaps not in the exact way you imagined it, but it will come.

After you've made your two lists of North and South experiences, draw a circle around them both. This is a visible mandala of your soul at work in this lifetime!

## **a north node/south node story**

*Moving to the North Node is something we do over a lifetime. We make incremental progress, spending as much time dismantling the old ideas as we do building the new. You take a step in the new direction, the old voices and fears get provoked, then you step back and try to attend to those voices, and then you take a step forward again. But you can't do this journey unless you first commit to loving the frightened self, both young and ancient, inside your Moon.*

*Being successfully in business for myself as an astrologer is something my Fifth House Capricorn North Node wants me to do. That first summer I officially declared myself an astrologer, I went to an astrology conference and brought with me hundreds of fliers for a new report I'd developed on "Astrology and the Inner Child." I had put over a year and a half's worth of research into the report, and I thought there might be a lot of interest in it, since I hadn't seen any thing like it before and inner child issues were currently a hot topic. I was excited about the prospect of getting business from the conference. But, you know, it wasn't until the last day of the conference that I fully realized and faced that I had kept my fliers in the trunk of my car the whole time! There was even a table in the bookshop set up just for fliers, and I had walked by it dozens of times and didn't once think of adding my fliers to it! Curious, isn't it.*

*It wasn't until the drive home that it came together for me: my Eleventh House South Node was scared to death, convinced that if "they" found out what I was doing, they'd brand me as a fraud, and run me out of the astrological community on a rail. To me, having a high profile (i.e., putting fliers on a table!) would get me burned at the stake!*

*So that was the first step -- identifying the South Node fear in my behavior. Not shaming it, just naming it. Next I had to consider whether my fear was realistic or not. Logically, it didn't seem like my actions would draw such persecution, but my fear would not be calmed with mere rationality. A month later I went to another conference and knew that my challenge this time was in putting my fliers out. And of course, the universe raised the bar and made it a little more difficult, since this time there was no conveniently placed table for that purpose. Yet I had to try. So, hot and sweaty, I put a dozen fliers on a corner table in the lounge. I watched from a distance as some people came up and looked at them, even carried a few away. I took no joy from this; my heart was pounding all the time. Yet the second most important thing I did besides putting my fliers out was to love myself through the ordeal. I said "What a good girl you are, how scary this is for you, but I'm so proud of you, and look, nobody is yelling at you, maybe you don't have to be so afraid." The conference lasted three days, and each day I got bolder and better, putting out more and more fliers each time. Though I'll confess that at each plenary session when anyone said "I have an announcement," I fully expected them to say "We've noticed some fliers for someone named Dana Gerhardt and we want you to know the conference does not approve of or endorse her work, and if we catch who's been putting out those fliers, we'll kick that person out of the conference!"*

*Even at the time I could laugh at myself; but, nonetheless, my fear was real. Gradually I risked more and more visibility, and true to the North Node's power, I've been blessed with much positive feedback and success for my work. My South Node fears haven't disappeared, but they've lessened as I get stronger and more experienced at working through them. Which may be just how it goes for you. So name the fears, be a loving, gentle parent as you guide yourself through them, and start acting on your North Node dream.*