



Integrating Ayurveda Ayurveda and Jyotish

by Madhavi Rathod

WHILE I WAS STUDYING at the Ayurvedic Institute, I met Hart deFouw, who was teaching Jyotish, or Vedic Astrology. By looking at my astrological chart, he had insights into my health issues at that time. That started me on the path of studying Jyotish. My studies with him have continued to this time. Knowledge of Jyotish has proved to be an invaluable asset in my Ayurvedic practice.

In earlier times in India, an Ayurvedic physician or *vaidyā*, was well-versed in Sanskrit, Yoga, Jyotish, Has-ta Sāmudrika Shāstra (Palmistry), and Vāstu Shāstra (Vedic architecture). Two sciences that are woven inseparably together are Ayurveda and Jyotish. In my preliminary questionnaire for my Ayurvedic clients, I ask for their birth information. That provides me with additional insight into their health profile. As it is often difficult for people to be objective regarding their health patterns, the chart offers an additional perspective.

In Jyotish, we experience planetary cycles, called *dashās*, from birth to death. The Sanskrit word for planet is *grahā*. *Grahā* means “to grasp or to seize.” The planets grab hold of us during their *dashā*, and exert their influence on us according to their nature and placement in a chart. By looking at a client’s *dashā* sequence, I can ascertain what *grahā* is most influencing them at any given time.

THE ROLE OF VEDIC ASTROLOGY

An astrological chart is a road map of a person’s karma, which includes how an individual manages their health and the type of ailments they may experience. There are astrological houses correlated to health. Additionally, supporting charts describe the person’s daily regimens, dietary and exercise patterns, chronic health ailments, acute health issues, propensity for surgeries, and the capacity for recovery.

Ayurveda is based on the theory of the five elements (the *pañchā mahābhūtas*): Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. In Jyotish, we also classify each sign of the

zodiac with an associated element. Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius are the fire signs; Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are Earth signs; Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius are Air signs; Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces are Water signs. We can also categorize the *grahās* according to the *doshas*, as *vāta*, *pitta*, or *kapha*. Sun and Mars are pitta planets; Jupiter is kapha; Saturn is *vāta*; the Moon and Venus are both kapha and *vāta*; Mercury is all three *doshas*. Someone with many *grahās* in water signs may be emotional and sensitive, while someone else with *grahās* in fire signs may be much more action-oriented.

The ascendant or first house of a person’s horoscope gives shape to a person’s physicality and vitality. While there is no substitute for pulse diagnosis in assessing a person’s *prakṛuti* and *vikṛuti*, the nature of an individual’s first house will certainly help define the person’s physical tendencies and Ayurvedic constitution. For example, if a person has a Leo ascendant, and Sun and Mars are in the ascendant, then we would certainly expect the person to have *pitta dosha* predominant in their constitution. The person may be prone to pitta disorders, such as hives, rashes, inflammation, and acid indigestion. We would also utilize other astrological considerations in this analysis.

Each of the twelve signs (Aries to Pisces) and houses (1 to 12) of the zodiac corresponds to a particular bodily region. Aries and the first house represent the head. Taurus and the second house represent the mouth and throat, Gemini and the third house represent the shoulders and ears...and so the flow of the body goes with Pisces and the twelfth house representing the feet. It requires careful interpretation on the part of a trained *jyotishī* to know which body parts may create health challenges, and at what periods of time.

In addition to the signs and houses indicating health issues, there are also the twenty-seven *nakṣatrās* or constellations of the zodiac. These are specific astrological indicators of what body

parts may be prone to illness or injury. Each grahā occupies a nakshatrā.

For example, Saturn is currently in Libra, where it is exalted, or at its strongest point. Saturn is a grahā associated with vāta disorders. Saturn is now transiting a nakshatrā called Svātī. The deity of Svātī is Vayū, the wind god. Svātī is associated with vāta disorders. It rules the intestines and the chest. Knowing of this transit in advance, I advised my clients about being extra mindful of vāta imbalances during this period and gave them remedies with which to pacify *vāta dosha*. For those clients who have a planet in their birth chart placed in Svātī, I emphasize the importance of *dinācharya* and *prānāyāma*.

Ayurveda also places great emphasis on the qualities or *gunas* that correspond with each dosha. Sun, Saturn, and Mars are dry grahās, while Jupiter, Moon, and Venus are wet, and Saturn is windy. If dry grahās primarily influence the ascendant, then the person may be prone to dryness; if it is mainly wet grahās, then the person may have issues with bloating or circulation of fluids within the body. This information can be used in conjunction with the correlations of body parts to each house, to determine which parts of the anatomy may be prone to specific health conditions.

It's very common for clients to inform me that they follow a good diet. Yet, their questionnaire does not always indicate appropriate food choices, but shows how their dietary habits are contributing to greater vikruti. The chart will usually provide support for what they have revealed (or omitted) in their questionnaire.

The second house of a chart represents the mouth, and this is where an astrologer can discern the type of food that an individual eats. Dry planets influencing the second house reveals a preference for dry and raw foods, which can cause hoarseness, sore throats, gas, and even constipation. Vāta will be aggravated accordingly. I can further investigate their dietary

patterns by asking targeted questions to support what the chart and palm are indicating. They may have left out a history of smoking, specific food cravings, or a family history of a certain illness. With this additional information, I am better able to lead the client on the path to wellness. Both the astrological chart and the palm indicate dietary preferences. I advise the client accordingly on food combining, eating for one's constitution as well as for the season, and often teach cooking classes on how to eat for one's current vikruti.

COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES

Both Jyotish and Ayurveda deal with that which is unseen, but they manage to provide the information in complementary manners. Disease may not be apparent to the casual observer, but we can see what is indicated via the tongue, face, nails, pulse, etc. Similarly, a person may seem to be the picture of health, but the chart can indicate where potential physical weaknesses lie, which would otherwise be unknown. In Jyotish, each grahā is also correlated to a *dhātu*. I determine which grahās are most likely to cause health complications and the timing of vikruti associated with a specific dhātu. Then, I make appropriate herbal suggestions to support that dhātu.

Often I meet clients who have tried multiple healing modalities, both holistic and allopathic, with little success. In addition to *ashtavidhā parikshā* (eightfold examination) for these people, I survey their birth chart for supporting information. The chart can sometimes indicate that there has been improper diagnosis of their disease. Or, it may reveal that past treatment has not had the proper focus. It could also show when there will be an upswing in health.

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The longer that I have been working with a client, and the better I understand the causes of their vikruti, then the more their chart provides me with the ability to treat them at a deeper level. I can fine tune their herbal remedies or suggest prānāyāma techniques or *yoga āsanās* to improve their health, by utilizing what their chart indicates. The chart can indicate a successful modality of treatment at a particular period. Using this information in combination with a thorough Ayurvedic assessment and an individual's health history can be the guideposts to a healthier life.

The converse situation also holds true in my practice. Even if the client is just coming for an astrology reading, and not an Ayurvedic consultation, my Ayurvedic training is always with me. I can look at their face and see what organs may be under stress. By studying their physique, speech, bodily movements, etc., I can determine a person's current vikruti. Health is often a primary topic of discussion in my astrology readings. I can make some simple suggestions to the client on how to improve their health, such as the types of foods to avoid or some Ayurvedic remedies that may be beneficial to them.

Some clients treat their health as an afterthought when they come for an astrology reading, because they have been blessed with perfect health so far. If adverse health is indicated in their chart in the future, I advise them on how they can improve their vitality now. When people come for an astrology reading and want to focus the discussion on their finances, relationships, career, or family, I can also discuss how these issues may impact their health.

An astrologer plays a key role in counseling the individual on how to objectively deal with the challenges or opportunities that present themselves. These challenges may include accidents, injuries, or severe mental stress. There are also timings shown by an astrological chart that suggest an opportune time to commence certain health-promoting activities.

Health-promoting activities include diet and daily regimens.

Ideally, if a person is prepared for periods where there may be low vitality, then they can augment this with Ayurvedic herbs and lifestyle regimens specific to their needs. Since Ayurveda is both preventative and curative, this guidance may be even more beneficial when applied to astrological periods indicating the necessity of vigilant attention to one's health.

Another common subject in Jyotish readings is the issue of conception. Couples often experience issues with fertility and have tried Western methods, without success. By making the appropriate astrological calculations, I can determine the likelihood of conception, impediments to conception (if any), and when may be astrologically strong times to conceive. I further augment this by suggesting tonics that support *shukra* and *ārtava dhātu* (male/female reproductive systems).

Knowledge of what bodily systems are weak or prone to illness can empower us to take better care of our lives with appropriate diet, lifestyle counseling, and exercise. Each of us may have health challenges that we face within our lifetimes, but we can use the tools found in the Vedas to be proactive, rather than reactive, in maintaining with our well-being so that we can lead a harmonious life each day. 🌀

About the Author

Madhavi Rathod is a graduate and former employee of the Ayurvedic Institute. She has worked closely with Vasant Lad, MASc. Madhavi has also studied Vedic rituals with Maya Tiwari. Additionally, she continuously studied Vedic Astrology and Palmistry with astrologer Hart deFouw since 1995. Madhavi holds a Master's degree in Finance and Marketing from Loyola University in Chicago. It is Madhavi's goal to support people in achieving their optimal well-being through a holistic plan specifically designed for their circumstances. She may be contacted at home@vedichealing.com