

An Astrological Approach to Maintaining Health

by Madhavi Rathod

The ocean of information from the Vedic sciences is vast, but closely woven together. Just as the physical and mental bodies cannot be considered completely independent of each other, we cannot separate the inter-connected aspects of our lives. Our health is linked to our home lives. Both are part of the karmic pattern indicated in our *janma patrika*, or astrological chart.

The *rishis* (ancient seers) cognized the Vedas, the world's oldest recorded texts: the *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Rg Veda*, and *Athārva Veda*. Then there are the *Upavedas*, which expound on the information found in the Vedas, which includes Ayurveda. Ayurveda springs from the *Athārva Veda*. Then there are the Vedangas – the limbs of the Vedas, and this includes *Jyotisha* or Vedic astrology).

Role of Vaidya

It is widely accepted in India that a *vaidya*, an adept Ayurvedic physician, is knowledgeable of Sanskrit (in which the ancient texts are written), yoga, *jyotisha*, *hastha samudrika shāstra* (palmistry), and *vāstu shastra* (the ancient art of harmonious placement of objects or Vedic architecture). The *vaidya* is also well-versed in some philosophical system of knowledge, such as Vedanta or Shaivism, which enables him/her to impart both medical and philosophical knowledge to the patient and to practice it in his/her own life. A skilled Ayurvedic practitioner uses *nadi pariksha* or pulse diagnosis to assess an individual's health and then recommends dietary changes, prescribes a mixture of herbs specific to the individual's condition, suggests healing yoga poses for the person's doshic imbalance, and counsels the individual based on what their *janma patrika* and palm indicates.

Astrological Patterns

An astrological chart is a road map of a person's *karma* (action). All karma, past, present or future, leaves an imprint and creates an impact. For example, we can take action by going to a yoga studio and engage in regular practices with a qualified instructor and that can lead to good health and increased vitality. Alternately, we can push ourselves into holding asanas beyond our capacity and for extended periods where we exhaust ourselves; these actions may adversely impact our health. Karma is not something of which we are the passive recipient; it is a two-way street.

While astrology can take a lifetime to truly master, people inevitably are curious about “what my chart says” and “how my future looks”. The most common questions that I receive are regarding relationships, career, and finances. Yet, a common tenet in the Vedas is that health is the greatest measure of wealth. Without our health and vitality, it's difficult for people to work productively, maintain inner harmony, and conserve resources effectively. When well-being is not present, then we can exert a lot of time, energy, and finances on the pursuit of our health. This can often distract us from focusing on other arenas of our lives.

Jyotisha Charts

There are indications of health in our astrological chart. The ascendant or first house gives a description of the person's overall vitality and physicality. There are also *bhāvas* or houses that are correlated to health in one's *janma patrika*. The chart describes one's regimens, routines, exercise patterns, chronic health ailments, and acute health issues.

Ayurveda is based on the theory of the five elements. In *jyotisha*, we also classify each sign of the zodiac or *rāshi*, as well the planets or *grahas*, with an associated element. Aries, Leo and Sagittarius are the fire signs; Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are Earth signs or *prithvi tattva rāshis*; Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius are Air signs or *vayu tattva rāshis*; Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces are Water signs or *jala tattva rāshis*. Sun and Mars are Pitta *grahas* or planets; Jupiter is Kapha; Saturn is Vata; the Moon and Venus are both Kapha and Vata; Mercury is tri-doshic. Someone with many *grahas* in water signs may be emotional and sensitive, while someone else with multiple *grahas* in fire signs may be action-oriented and one who takes a great deal of time to articulate their emotions. In *jyotisha*, we run planetary cycles, or *dashās*, from birth to death. Each of us run the same set of *dashās*, but what we run and when depends on where our Moon is placed natively. There are also harmonic or divisional charts that relate to health and vitality. Using these all in combination with an Ayurvedic diagnosis and person's health history can be the guide posts to a healthy life. A *graha* is literally that which grabs hold of you and we can consider ourselves to be grabbed or seized by the *grahas*, especially during their *dashā*.

While there is no substitute for pulse diagnosis in assessing

a person's *prakruti* (constitution) and *vikruti* (present imbalance), 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 (which means that their first house spans from 0° to 30° Leo), and Sun and Mars are in the ascendant, then we would certainly expect the person to be pitta-predominant in their prakruti. The person may be prone to pitta disorders, such as hives, rashes, inflammation, and acid indigestion. We would examine what other grahas are aspecting the ascendant as well as what planetary cycle a person is experiencing.

Health and Jyotisha Remedies

There are the static indications of health in a person's life, shown by the natal placement of the grahas in a chart. Then we also have the dynamic indications, which are an interplay of the planetary cycles that a person runs and the transit of the planets through the twelve bhāvas of the zodiac. For instance, if we are experiencing our Saturn dashā, then we want to see where Saturn is transiting as well as in what rāshi and bhāva it is placed natively in a janma patrika, and what it would indicate for such an individual.

Then, appropriate recommendations could be made for diet, herbs, yoga asanas and astrological remedies. Remedies may take the form of Sanskrit *mantras* (sacred sound). Mantras have healing effects on the organs as well as on the subtle bodies. Because each sound in Sanskrit has a particular vibration, it is crucial that the mantra be pronounced correctly. Incorrectly pronounced syllables or words will produce another outcome. Many sounds in Sanskrit are not part of the English dialect, so it is best to learn from a native speaker whenever possible. Even the word mantra is often mispronounced. It is *man* (as in mundane) *-tra* (as in truck).

Other astrological remedies may include the recommendation of gemstones, as well as when to start and stop wearing them. There may be suggestions of other karmas, such as performing charitable acts, fasting on certain days, the wearing of auspicious colors on a particular day, reading a particular scriptural text, etc.

Remedies are often prescribed for periods when there may be challenging indications found in a chart. There are also times when an astrological chart may be a good time to commence certain health-promoting activities. Health-promoting activities include diet and daily regimens. Both the chart and the lines and shape of the palm indicate dietary preferences. The palm also indicates a person's emotional propensities and

their physical vitality. The Ayurvedic practitioner knows rules of food combining, eating for one's constitution as well as for the season, and how to cook a variety of meals using healing spices.

Just as each herbal mixture for an individual has to be individually prepared after careful consideration of multiple factors, astrological recommendations also require careful consideration and forethought. What is appropriate for an individual with a particular ascendant or Moon placement does not automatically make it appropriate for another individual with a similar dynamic. Just as there is no magic pill in Ayurveda, we cannot expect that just by wearing a certain gemstone, all our problems will be alleviated. There has to be participation on the part of the client in the wearing and care of the gemstone, and following other prescribed measures to resolve the issue.

Refining the Recommendations

In Jyotisha, we look at *kāla*, *desha* and *pātra* for any individual. *Kāla* is time. What phase of the life cycle is an individual in? What is the season? Additionally, what was appropriate 500 years ago may or may not be ideal in modern day, so adjustments may need to be made. *Desha* is place. Where is the individual residing? What can be done for a native Indian is not the same for what is suitable for someone in America. *Pātra* is the vessel, namely, the individual. It's crucial to consider what makes this person unique from others and how to integrate this information into an astrological reading and any recommendations given.

There have been numerous instances when I've had clients who have tried Ayurveda and other healing modalities; they have altered their diet and lifestyle, have a regular spiritual practice, and yet continue to have serious health challenges. It's often a matter of whatever karma they have in relation to their health. Studying the health indications in their chart often provides key insights as to the cause of aggravated doshas as well as time frames for recovery. Then, Ayurvedic remedies can be combined with astrological recommendations, as well as recommendations for pranayama, yoga, and meditation as needed to promote healing.

Constellations and Health

There are twelve *rāshis* (constellations) of the zodiac. Each rāshi as well as each bhāva corresponds to a particular body part. (See jyotish reference chart page 6-7) Aries and the first house represent the head and face. Taurus and the second house represent the throat, Gemini and the third house represent the shoulders and ears...and so the flow of body goes, with Pisces and the twelfth house representing the feet. Unless one has an Aries ascendant, Aries is not the first house, so it requires careful interpretation on the part of a trained astrologer to know which body parts may have health challenges, and at what periods of time.

Aside from the first house (ascendant or rising sign), a trained astrologer also looks at the sixth house in a chart for acute health issues, the eighth house for chronic health issues, and the twelfth house for periods which may require hospitalization or retreat from society. Having planets in or aspecting any of these houses does not in itself indicate that there will be ill health. The inherent strength of each planet and house has to be examined, as do the planetary cycles and transits. Additionally, the divisional or harmonic charts which relate to health must be scrutinized to see when health challenges may occur. 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. Ayurveda is both preventative and curative, so this guidance may be even more beneficial if applied when astrological periods deem that vigilant attention to one's health is necessary.

Gunas, Doshas, and Jyotisha

Ayurveda also places great emphasis on the qualities or gunas that correspond with each dosha. Sun, Saturn, and Mars are dry (rūksha) planets, while Jupiter, Moon, and Venus are wet, and Saturn is windy. If dry planets primarily influence the ascendant, then the person may be prone to dryness; if it is mainly wet planets, 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. The second house represents the mouth, and an astrologer can discern the type of food that an individual eats by examining the second house. Dry planets placed in the second house, as well as dry planets transiting the second house for an extended period of time, will cause hoarseness, sore throats, gas, and even constipation (the result of eating too much dry food); vata will be aggravated accordingly.

Knowledge of what bodily systems are weak or prone to illness can empower us to take better care of our lives with appropriate diet, counseling, and exercise. There are yoga asanas that are specific to each of the doshas as well as to particular organs, which can be used to tone and maintain the body. Each of us may have health challenges that we face in our lifetime, 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.

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¹² de Fouw, Svoboda, *ibid*, 102