

ABSTRACT

The masters of destiny. The Nadi astrologer and the therapeutic dimension of astrological healing in today's Tamil Nadu

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Studies concerning the practice of the *jyotish* have, regrettably, never interested Western scholars. Work on this topic is indeed rare. Although astrological consultation represents a very important part of the medical and psychiatric traditions of India, it remains insufficiently explored. This is the reason why I intend to study the contemporary practice of *nadi jyotish* in Tamil Nadu, through several months of field investigation. I shall concentrate on the *Nadi* tradition of astrology as practised in Tamil Nadu by the Valluvars. This research aims at studying the Valluvar cast and its tradition of *nadi* astrology, as well as describing and analysing the therapeutic role of the Valluvar astrologers in contemporary Tamil society. Thus I intend to analyse the role of astrological consultations in the therapeutic process, as well as to evaluate the place of the astrologers in the local therapeutic network, both traditional (Siddha doctors, Ayurvedic doctors, gemologists, alchemists, mantravadis and kodangis) and biomedical (biomedical doctors, psychiatrists). Finally, it would be interesting to study the relationship of astrology to cosmological concepts as well as other fundamental traits of the Hindu philosophical and religious tradition, such as the notions of destiny, free will, karma and rebirth. This project on the practice of the *nadi jyotish* today will allow a better understanding of the traditional therapeutic systems of contemporary India as well as of the belief systems to which they pertain.