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Reinventing authentic Panchakarma Ayurveda, Dr Prem in an open chat with Dr. Renuka Yadav, the founder of Anvi Ayurvedic School, Goa

By Dr Prem Jagyasi and Team (C) / January 8, 2021



In the era of wellness commodification, [Anvi Ayurvedic School](#) in Goa led by Dr. Renuka Yadav is on a great mission. A mission to spread the knowledge and awareness of Ayurveda making people realize its value instead of getting swayed by the glitz and glamor of commercialized Ayurveda masked by wellness.

Dr. Renuka Yadav, a qualified BMS with specialization in Panchakarma has been into this practice for more than 20 years working in different parts of the country and abroad. Anvi Ayurvedic School, the only licensed Ayurvedic institute in Goa was conceptualised in 2008. Her aim is to preach Ayurveda as a knowledge not as a product which unfortunately has turned into a craze today. The essence of Ayurvedic knowledge and philosophy is missing somewhere.



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A serene wellness getaway Anvi Ayurvedic School offers you everything that one can expect in a wellness-focussed vacation. Located amid lush nature, it is a multipurpose centre that caters to health and wellness needs of guests, trains students for accredited certifications and also provides resource supply to different wellness resorts and centres.

Dr Prem, a recognized medical and wellness consultant and wellness enthusiast joined in a conversation with Dr Renuka Yadav to bring out interesting details of the Panchakarma philosophy and Shirodhara. These two treatments are topping the popularity chart of wellness treatments making India as one of the leading Ayurvedic wellness destinations in the world.

The discussion touched important terms of ancient texts and how it is in sync with modern health and wellness philosophy. It was an ecstatic feeling to take Shirodhara under the guidance of Dr Renuka who ensured the best guest experience all throughout.

Dr Prem: How would like to present the vision of Anvi Ayurvedic School?

Dr. Renuka Yadav: I have been promoting the value of this ancient medicine Ayurveda as credible science not based on fictitious practices. Unfortunately, this essence has faded a lot in passage of time. Very few are aware of both preventative and curative potential of Ayurveda, and the need for preventative measures is so important today. Anvi Ayurvedic wants to bring forth the authentic information and knowledge of Ayurveda through proper training. Without proper education, one would not be able to realise the value of Ayurveda.

After years of experience in Ayurveda practice, I have seen damage once done to your health could be reversed with difficulty. I feel if only people could be in sync with the nature, they are less likely to fall ill. Staying healthy is a far better option than suffering from sickness and then acting on it. This is another main reason that made me set up this institute and centre.

Dr Prem: What kind of response are you getting? Is it encouraging? Are people benefitting from your institute?

We have a lot of people who are interested in holistic way of living. We have many yoga students in our centre. We see good number of enrolments in courses like lifestyle management, nutrition, Panchakarma Therapy. Enrolled participants have their own area of interests. Many of them are westerners and they take a lot of interest in holistic lifestyle.

Here we are not just training students in Ayurvedic medicine but also creating strained and skilled workforce for the spa industry. The way wellness-related activities are demanded in various hotels and resorts in Goa, there is a need for trained therapists and coaches.

Dr Prem: Exactly. Wellness is going mainstream right now. Most of the resorts will need skilled and licensed therapists. The good thing is that you also provide resources and train people in using them.

Yes. Basically, we provide end-to-end solutions to set up a wellness centre. We can provide them pure, organic and chemical-free resources for various treatments, sanitization and other washing and cleaning activities. Even in washing utensils, we offer chemical-free solutions. We create various facials, baths, body scrubs and the like by blending oils. If somebody nurtures the passion to provide absolute natural environment to their guests, we can help them through with authentic Ayurvedic solutions.

Dr Prem: Please let me know something about 'Shirodhara' which I would be experiencing in a while. I have a very good understanding of Ayurveda, Panchakarma and Shirodhara. But you are an expert in this field. Please briefly tell us about the purpose of Shirodhara. In what diseases does it help cure? What is the actual philosophy of Panchakarma?

What you will be experiencing right now is a part of 'Snehan' in Ayurveda, which means to oleate the body. You will be given an 'Abhyanga' which is oleating or massaging the body with oils and also 'Marma Abhyanga' where we will work on specific marmic points.

Dr Prem: What are the 'Marmic' points?

Well, these are vital points of the body holding the Prana energy. You can compare these as the trigger points according to the modern understanding. This will be followed by steam all over your body excluding the neck. This traditional Ayurveda treatment is done in a steam box where you will be in a sitting position with the whole body covered barring the neck and head. According to Ayurveda, your head should not be exposed to the heat.

After this, you will be given the Shirodhara treatment where 'Shiro' means head and 'Dhara' meaning the flow of oil. A thin stream of oil will be poured on your forehead for around 30-45 minutes. Personally, I see it as a great way of passive meditation where you are not putting in any effort but slowly sinking into a state of 'trance'. It is just like a wellness therapy or spa treatment done in a single sitting.

We apply Shirodhara to treat any type of 'Vaata Vikar' or 'Shirashool' where there is absolutely Vaata but no upasthambha or blockage. This happens when people are very much stressed out or emaciated or suffering from chronic disorders, headaches and mental diseases that we call as 'Unmadana Apasmara'. It could be also applied for epilepsy.

Dr Prem: Is Shirodhara also good for people going through day-to-day stress?

Yes. It is effective for people going through day-to-day stress. I have also applied this in rehabilitation programs for deaddiction from alcohol and substance abuse. In Ayurveda texts, drinking alcohol or 'madyapan' creates restlessness or 'unmada' which can be pacified by Shirodhara.

Dr. Prem: Just for my reader's knowledge what would be the average cost of Shirodhara in Goa, Kerala, Delhi or other parts of India?

In case you do not go to luxurious facilities, a single Shirodhara session in any decent and authentic centre would cost 3500 INR, which is reasonable I feel. This is because you will need the full body abhyanga. But if you go for repeated sittings for 7 or 14 days, we can recycle the oil for you. You need to keep in mind that the oil used on one person cannot be used on the other. In that case, the package cost can go down by 20-25% based on how much oil a person consumes. A person with long hair will trap more oil and the cost will vary.

Dr Prem: Usually, how many months of Shirodhara sessions do you suggest for a person without any illness or chronic condition but just as a preventive step? And how many sessions a year do a person may need in general?

As an experienced practitioner, I would suggest a patient or person who is aware of wellness ideally take all the sittings of Shirodhara together. If they do not have that time, once in fifteen days is good enough.

Dr Prem: Do you mean minimum three such sessions are needed?

Yes. If a person can afford time, I would suggest three continuous sessions. People in corporate sectors who have weekends off can take this once in fifteen days.

Dr Prem: My next question is regarding Panchakarma in which you are an expert. Please explain it briefly, what it is about? What you do? We will be focusing a lot on Shirodhara today.

The secret of healthy life lies in balanced energies, healthy tissues, clean channels and a peaceful mind. These are the basic 'Sutras' or 'Mantras'. If we compare our body with a machine, we will find our body too undergoes wear and tear like a machine and blockages disrupt the normal life functions.

I would like to discuss about two basic modalities on which Panchakarma treatment is done. These are known as 'Shaman' and 'Shodhana'. Shaman is about pacifying the energies with medications and locally applied treatments. But if Doshas are highly aggravated that cannot be pacified, these need to be cleaned by a modality called 'Shodhana'. It implies forceful flushing off aggravated toxins (Doshas) and blockages from the body. Since this cleansing is done through five routes, it is called "Panchakarma".

Dr Prem: Very interesting!

Yes. For example, if there is aggravation of 'Kapha', the nearest route for cleaning will be mouth, and the process is known as 'Vaman Chikitsa'. If it involves small intestine, we call it 'Pittaprakop' and the treatment modality will be purgation or 'Virechan'. If it is in large intestine caused by the aggravation of 'Vata', the cleaning is done by enemas or 'Vasti'. If it is in any area of the head, then we apply 'Nasya', as the text says Nasa, the nasal passage is the route to cleansing. If the Dosha is in blood, we do 'bloodletting' also known as Rakta Mokshana. This we do either by blood letting from the veins or with leeches, cupping and other methods.

There has to be some preparations before Panchakarma. We do Snehapan and Purvakaram. After Panchakarma, there are also few procedures to be followed. The entire Panchakarma should be seriously followed through successive steps. In India, unfortunately, people do not think of servicing their bodies unless they fall ill and run to doctors.

Dr Prem: Now, Panchakarma can be used for two purposes. One is preventive and the other curative. When you remove the Doshas from the body, Panchakarma becomes curative. Through Shaman, you can subside the Doshas and relax the body.

Absolutely!

Dr Prem: So how many sessions do you recommend for the prevention of certain conditions or does it vary case to case?

Our Shashtra or ancient texts say if you are eating the right kind of food and your mind is calm and tranquil, you are likely to be in good health. It is not that you cannot deviate or indulge in other delicacies but you need to be aware of what you are taking in. But I insist, if you wish to do annual Panchakarma, you should do Vasti Chikitsa. Most of the diseases that we find today are related to Vaat Prakop. Even if you do Vasti Chikitsa which takes 8 days of actual Vasti. Before that you need 5 days of Poorvakaram and after that 5 days of Paschatkaram which means 18-20 days of the entire program. If somebody can take out 20 days annually, this would be great for their health and wellness.

The right season for Vasti Chikitsa is the 'Prag ritu', the junction of summer and rainy season when there is a natural aggravation of Vaat dosh. If you prefer some other time of the year, that is also good enough. Everybody needs to make sure that their intestines are clean because most of the diseases are sourced from that. It is the root of all metabolic diseases like diabetes, hypertension and hormonal imbalances that we see nowadays. These are all known as 'Aamjanya vyadhi'. If you can digest this 'Aam' and clean your intestine that is the food digestion is proper and taken out of the body, I do not find any reason that can make you fall ill.

Dr Prem: This is indeed great to know. Let me again put you the same question, what would be the average Panchakarma cost in India without commercializing or glamorizing it but the authentic form of treatment?

See, if you consider the whole package, only the treatment that you need to be in the centre for is the Vasti Chikitsa. The rest can be done at home. On an average, ideally it should not cost you more than 22-25,000 INR in a decent genuine centre.

Dr Prem: Thank you very much for such an insightful conversation. Learnt so many things, and believe it will help my readers too.

Dr. Renuka Yadav: The pleasure is mine as well. Thank you.

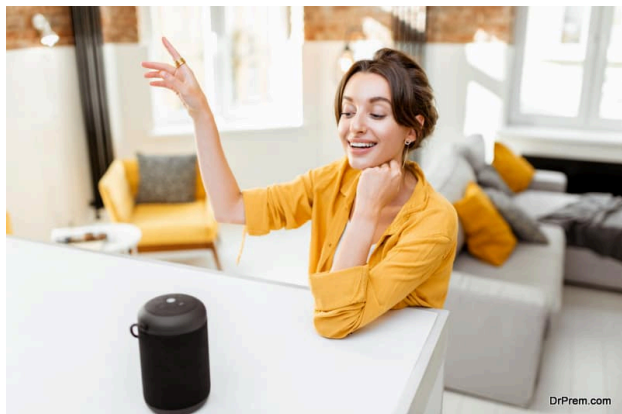
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