

Nkwazi

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IF YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR GREATEST ASSET THEN TAKE CHARGE

Words by Sarah Ramnath, Images courtesy of Kerala Ayurvedic Centre and Shutterstock



You are guaranteed to walk out feeling refreshed, revitalised and rejuvenated. Suddenly you'll have a spring in your step! You know the days - when you're dragging your feet, a feeling of tiredness washes over you for no apparent reason - can barely keep your body upright, those days when you feel you just cannot take another step. Well, you know those days, everyone has them! You seize the moment and take charge! That is just what I needed, when I visited Kerala Ayurvedic Centre (KAC) in Durban,

South Africa and bounced back to life. It was a new me walking out.

Ayurvedic medicine (Ayurveda for short) is one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems. The word Ayurveda is derived from a Sanskrit word, 'ayur' which means life, and 'veda', science or knowledge. In that sense Ayurveda can be understood to be the science of life. Ayurvedic medicine is more accurately described as the Indian science of medicine which was developed in India and believed to be dating back to more than 5,000 years ago.

It is strongly believed that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance in mind, body and spirit. Any imbalance of these three could lead to illness. If your mind, body and spirit are in harmony, then you are in good health.

When you walk through the door of wellness, heavenly scented oils permeate the air. You do know that smells and aromas can automatically change your mood, as I was now beginning to feel relaxed even before the treatment started.

What do you do when you find yourself in a funk, feeling lethargic and like you've lost that pep in your step? Sarah visited the Kerala Ayurvedic Centre (pictured below) in Durban for a few treatments rooted in the ancient Indian practice of Ayurveda.



You are spoilt for choice with the different treatment options, whether it is for any specific health concerns, or even a 'feel good spa treatment.' Walking down the passageway with my therapist, I peeked and noticed that the rooms were all tastefully designed.

I first had the neck and shoulder massage which was incredibly relaxing. This relieves tension, improves blood circulation, eases and relieves headaches, improves your mood and basically gives you an instant energy boost – and that I can vouch for! Juliette, my therapist was a sweet, gentle lady with strong healing hands.

My mind was already set on the Shirodhara treatment and I wanted to experience it first-hand. Shirodhara, comes from Sanskrit words which means 'shiro' (head) and 'dhara' (to flow). Here you lie on your back, face up, with your head tilted back a bit. A copper pot on a stand with a blended concoction of herbal oils, milk and buttermilk is poured at intervals over your forehead, followed by a full head massage. I did it purely for relaxation and a balancing treatment. Feeling warm and fuzzy, I just wanted to curl up and sleep, and I would have, had I been in my own home. The duration of this treatment is 45 minutes. It is said to be highly effective for ailments such as insomnia, high blood pressure and stress. It also aids in releasing your happy

hormones (endorphins).

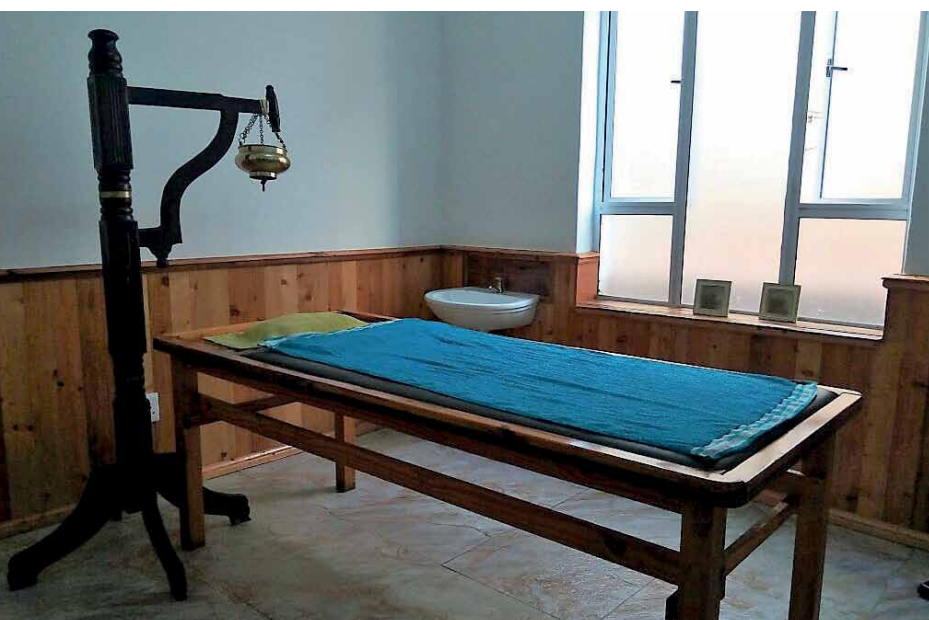
The KAC, which opened its doors in 2008, is a warm and friendly family-owned establishment run by husband and wife team, Bindu and Derrick Pillay. Bindu hails from Kerala in India. She holds a bachelor's degree in alternate medicine. Being a registered practitioner in India, she spends her time between the centres in India and South Africa. South African-born Derrick Pillay, a former diplomat and struggle activist, is also actively involved in the smooth daily running of the centre. KAC is proud to have treated over 25,000 patients with positive results during the past 11 years. Presently undergoing massive refurbishment at KAC with plans to providing accommodation to patients travelling from afar, who might require treatment for consecutive days. A resident doctor in Ayurveda is in attendance at KAC at all times.

There are a range of treatments at most other practitioners and in general Ayurveda. I am going to touch on just a few other unusual ones offered here at KAC:

Shirovasti – This is an oil treatment whereby a cap is fitted on your head, into which warm oil is poured. The oil is then removed after a specified time. This treatment is considered to be effective for facial paralysis, dryness of the mouth, nasal congestion and headaches.

Njavarakizhi or a much easier word to pronounce kizhi – Here njavara (a type of rice) is cooked in milk with a few herbs, and tied in a muslin cloth called boluses or pouches. These boluses are pressed gently all over your body whilst still warm. This is believed to be beneficial to patients suffering from rheumatism, high blood pressure and cholesterol. Also great for people with low energy levels due to the effects of aging.

Kativasthi – the word 'kati' (lower back or waist), and 'vasti' (containing or retaining something.) Here the patient is made to lie on their tummy on the massage bed. Soft pliable dough is prepared using gram flour or whole wheat flour and water shaped into a ring, then placed over the sacral area of the spine. A herbal decoction or lukewarm oil is slowly poured into the ring allowing for absorption into the skin and after about 30 to 40 minutes, the ring is removed and





the oils remaining are used to massage the affected area. It is an Ayurvedic lumbosacral rejuvenation and it is claimed the treatment brings relief for backache, osteoporosis, sciatica and spinal disorders.

Brahmi, a therapeutic herb rich in antioxidants also known as *Bacopa Monnieri* is highly revered as a memory enhancer. Commonly used by students to retain information and stimulate the brain, rejuvenate the mind and improve concentration. Brahmi is believed to be an excellent therapy for sufferers diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD.) Ayurvedic medicine promotes the use of certain herbal compounds, special diets and unique health practices. Aside from dairy milk, only plant-based treatments are widely used - extracted from herbs, flowers, fruits, vegetables, seeds, leaves and barks of trees. Some are ground to a paste or blended with oils, milk or any other natural liquid form.



A trained Ayurvedic practitioner will not only inquire or examine areas of disorder, but all aspects of your life. The practitioner will evaluate your personal and/or your family medical history, your profession in certain cases, diet, exercise routines, your emotional state of mind (mental health). A thorough assessment process helps in identifying key symptoms and potential causes of imbalance to determine the best and the most suitable treatment. Ayurveda places emphasis on prevention mostly, not just a cure – coupled with lifestyle changes and a positive attitude.

In Ayurveda the practitioner not only diagnoses a disorder, but tailor-makes a separate and unique treatment for each and every individual. Treatments are geared towards improving quality of life and to maximising longevity by eating right and exercising regularly.

There are many different treatments ranging from general rejuvenation and wellbeing to treating of obesity, diabetes and boosting blood circulation. There is a specialised treatment for every possible ailment.

Healing the root cause of the illness and not merely treating the symptoms, is what makes Ayurveda unique.

