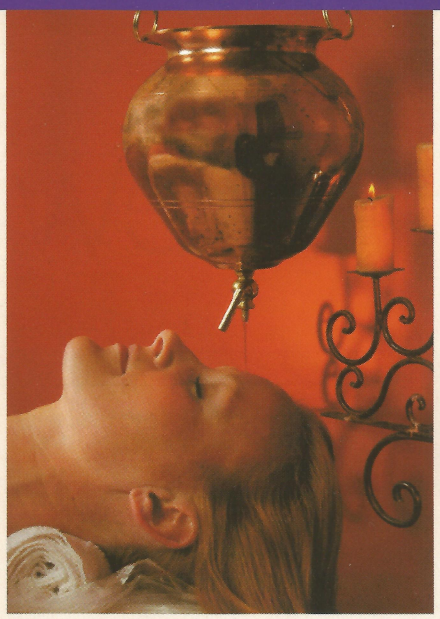

Shirodhara

What is Shirodhara?
Shirodhara is an ancient Ayurvedic healing practice that has been performed in India for over 2,000 years. It involves warmed sesame oil - sometimes with an infusion of herbs - being gently poured onto the forehead for an extended period of time.

Shirodhara is traditionally used to calm and restore the nerves, harmonize vata constitutions (vata disorders involve movement such as arthritis and heart disease), release stored emotions and purify the mind. In Ayurvedic Medicine, it is considered an important tool in the pursuit of higher states of consciousness. However, shirodhara can be used just as effectively to help clients who have fatigue, anxiety, insomnia, headaches or stress.

What are the benefits of shirodhara?
Many people will notice the following benefits after shirodhara:

- a reduction in stress, anxiety and negative/excessive thinking
- a calming of the emotions and feeling of 'centredness'
- improved sleep/reduction in insomnia (sometimes accompanied by vivid dreaming)
- a temporary blissful state.

Many people also experience profound levels of insight and emotional healing after shirodhara. In essence, it calms the body, mind, and spirit.

What happens in a shirodhara massage?
Clients remain clothed throughout the treatment, preferably wearing a t-shirt or

The treatment usually starts with an Ayurvedic Head Massage, for which the client sits on a chair. This massage is different to an Indian Head Massage, which is more commonly practised in the UK. An Ayurvedic Head Massage places more emphasis on three marma points: the Shankar, Brahmi and Medulla. Working on these particular points has a deeply relaxing effect on the client. Sometimes Brahmi oil is used for the Head Massage, as it has a particularly relaxing effect and helps to ease stress, headaches and insomnia.

Shiro means "head" and *dhara* means "the dripping of oil like a thread"

Having massaged the 3 marma points for about ten minutes, the client is then asked to move to the treatment table, lying face up. The table is usually made of fibreglass or wood, which is designed to drain oil away via two holes - at the head and at the rear end of the table. A continuous flow of warm herbal oil is then poured on the 'third eye' (situated on the forehead) in a systemic and purposeful manner. The oil is warmed using a candle and an oil warmer. Microwaves and similar appliances are not used as the energy of the electrical waves affects the energy of the oils being used.

For a relaxing massage, a light sesame oil is often used as a base oil. Other oils may then be added, depending on the client's individual needs. If he or she is suffering from pain, such as osteoarthritis, then 20%

complaint is blocked sinuses, then Kapooradi oil may be used instead.

Clients often ask: "Will I smell after the treatment?" The answer is "Yes!" The oils used have a distinct purpose and the natural properties of most herbal oils are such that they have their own unique smell. This can be overcome in different ways, e.g. by using 80-90% light sesame oil and only 10-20% of the other oils, or suggesting that the client has a shower or bath soon after returning home.

To minimise the likelihood of the client catching a cold when going outside after a warm oil shirodhara massage, some dry powder called Kottamcukkadi Choornam is applied on the top of the forehead.

Aftercare advice
It is highly recommended that the client rests for a few hours after shirodhara, in order to appreciate the calming effect that this treatment has on the mind. Many clients have commented that they experience new levels of yoga, prayer, or meditation after shirodhara, or that they remained in a blissful state of peace and harmony for up to five days after their massage.

Shirodhara is easy to learn and master, and offers clients a different and unique holistic experience.

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