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# Bali & Beyond

SEPTEMBER - MID OCTOBER 2005  
Volume 7 NO. 08

## FESTIVE ENCLAVE

Nusa Dua Festival,  
Another Art and Culture  
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the Archipelago

## ENTER SPICE WORLD

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ISSN 0216-4590



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*Tension released through a steady head massage*

# Relieve Your Third Eye

Many turn to alternative treatments in the pursuit of that holistic touch. The western world gradually faced towards the east for spiritual and physical health, for mediums of achieving balance between the mind and body based on thousand year old concepts.

Ayurveda, Sanskrit for "science of life", is one major school of alternative medicine based on the principle that disease is caused by an imbalance in the life forces. Ayurveda is the oldest existing system of therapeutic practice and is aimed at spiritual and mental well-being as well as physical health, thus restoring the balance.

With the advent of Ayurvedic treatments, many spas and holistic related establishments nowadays began to rediscover, adopt and apply the ancient techniques for the wide audience that continues to grow all the time.

The search for total relaxation retreats are now rewarded with ease and pay off well.

Prana Spa at The Villas in Seminyak has just introduced a wholly different experience which, at first, may have set skeptics to ponder. How could warmed oil poured on the forehead promote relaxation? Might sound too simple, especially to those who have never even gone through such eastern exoticism. I had the chance to experience the outcome of such a wonderful treat which changed my doubt into great satisfaction.

One of many from the eastern science of life is Shirodhara, an Ayurvedic massage in which warmed medicated oil steadily pours onto one's forehead. This process relieves mental tension and calms the mind.

Upon entering Prana Spa, you could easily be delightfully disorientated as the whole architecture and design propels you into another world. An experience of any treatment starts with a friendly smile and a refreshing drink at the spa reception, just before you are lead to the lockers and changing rooms.

Choosing a combination of the plunge pool, a body massage and the Shirodhara, I first set out for the hot and cold water plunge down the flight of stairs. Centered in the spa's atrium, the plunge pool initialized the first process in controlling blood circulation with a combination of immersing the whole body in warm water then cold, three rotations over 10 minutes.

Warm water is also believed to help open the pores, and in all, preparing the body for better acceptance of the

forthcoming treatments. With a quick look at the floating thermometer in the cold pool, I was aware that it was way below normal body temperature, and then in the hot pool the temperature was just reaching 40 degrees. Going from warm to the cold was stinging, yet back to warm from the chilled was very pleasant and soothing.

After 10 minutes an attendant leads you off through the exotic carpeted and ornamented alleys to a subtly lit treatment room.

Relaxation is immediate with the firm sequence of kneading and stroking with aromatic oils, starting from the legs and moving up to the shoulders. Just before thinking



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Senses surrender to the warmth of pouring oil



Stunning pathways lead to relaxation

this is complete bliss, the pending apparatus overlooking the front of the bed is then filled with warmed oil, and now your total relaxation is to be defined. This receptacle suspended above the head is used to pour the liquid in a pattern across the forehead and the scalp.

The wafting of the heated oil's scent contributes its own part to the overall relaxation. A massage on the scalp accompanies the trickling warmth, gradually soaking your hair to the tips in oil. After awhile, it's all left to the thin streaming of oil down the centre of the forehead, then occasionally from temple to temple. I was easily set off to the land of dreams, all tension washed away along with the warmth of the oil. It was at this point that I had to deem... it is by no mistake an indescribable effect.

Shirodhara, sometimes referred to as the 'massage of the third eye' and the 'heavenly compress', is considered

one of the most powerful Ayurvedic treatments. The dripping of the heated medicated oil mixture set in a regular rhythm has a restorative effect on the senses.

The treatment usually lasts an hour. Sesame or other base oils are blended with imported ingredients from India. It is then heated to a warm yet comfortable temperature and used immediately.

Best experienced after a massage, shirodhara leaves one to his or her peace of mind. And waking from a deep sleep, a cool herbal drink is served to help restore and freshen the consciousness.

Therapeutic benefits of this 'massage' are enhanced blood circulation to the brain, improving memory, nourishing the hair and scalp, and assisting in providing sound sleep and calming the body and mind. The last two are noticeable on first experience. Shirodhara is certainly one of the most effective treatments for reducing stress and nervous tension. Care for a deep sleep and retreat from it all? ■

By Nyoman Ari Gunadi

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