

Adding Panchakarma to Nature Cure for health gain

KAYAKALP IN HIMACHAL PRADESH IS AN AYUSH FACILITY THAT NRIS WILL FIND VERY AFFORDABLE.



Kayakalp was founded by former Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Shanta Kumar. He is flanked by Dr Monika Gautam, his son Vikram Sharma (advisor), Dr Ashutosh Guleri (administrator), and Dr Shalini Kaith.

By Parveen Chopra

For detoxification and rejuvenation, I have been frequenting nature cure centers most of my adult life. In the last decade, I have started noticing that many of the prominent ones have incorporated Ayurveda -- panchakarma treatment to be precise given their no-medicines philosophy.

Kayakalp (officially named Himalayan Research Institute for Yoga and Naturopathy) in Himachal Pradesh has become my first preference of late. Besides nature cure and panchakarma, treatment regimen here includes physiotherapy, yoga, and acupuncture. Situated on the outskirts of Palampur, it has a sprawling 9-acre campus, with a capacity to take in 90 patients.

Kayakalp (literally meaning transformation of the body) was envisioned by Shanta Kumar, former Himachal chief minister and Rajya Sabha MP, after he visited the four-decade old Jindal Naturecure Institute near Bangalore.

But the current administrator, Dr Ashutosh Guleri, insists that Kayakalp, started about 15 years ago, is not regimental and 'strict' like Jindal's, where you can be frisked for unwanted items like alcohol and outside food. He expects people investing their time and money to have the awareness and voluntarily follow the Kayakalp protocol and guidelines for health gain. Palampur also has a much better climate and is pollution free compared to Bangalore.

Speaking to The South Asian Times, Ayurveda physician Dr Guleri said that his administrative duties have limited the number of patients he sees but he chips in when his team gets stuck. He said most of their patients stay on average 10 days to get relief from what he calls 'lifestyle disorders', which include obesity, diabetes and hypertension, and lately back problems.

"On the basis of the complaint and diagnosis, a plan of treatment and correcting dietary habits is prescribed," Dr Guleri said. He disfa-

vors drastic measures like fasting, which can slash weight by 3 kg in a week, because all comes to naught when on returning home the body will crave and compensate for lost calories.



Taiwanese Kathy Chan came to Kayakalp to supplement her yoga teaching.

Naturopathy is a traditional healing science that helps the body in getting rid of accumulated toxins and restoring order. Treatments include enema, colon hydrotherapy, hot and cold packs, baths and massage/steam.

Panchakarma is the set of treatments preserved in Kerala and exported to the rest of the country and abroad in recent years. Three of the five modalities which balance the three doshas (vata, pitta and kapha) are Vaman (induced vomiting), Virechan (purgation), Basti (medicated enema). These aim at cleansing through pre- and post- procedures. The other two are Nasya (nasal cleansing), and Rakta-mokshana (bloodletting) which aims to remove stubborn doshas spread all over the body. Upakarma like massage are associated treatments used to bring out the best of healing powers of the body.

Dr Shalini Kaith, who heads the panchakarma section at Kayakalp, clarified that not all five treatments are given to a patient. Rather, specific ones are chosen as needed to treat a certain health issue and depending on which dosha is out of kilter. For example, til (sesame) oil is used in massage for vata dosha; vamana is employed for overly active kapha. In shirodhara, the liquid constantly poured on the forehead can range from warm

oil to cold buttermilk, prescribed depending on the cases ranging from insomnia to stress and anxiety.

Kayakalp mainly attracts people from Punjab, Delhi and Rajasthan, and a small percentage also from foreign countries including the US and UK. I met a couple from Brisbane, Australia, Manpreet Singh, 33, and Joelaine Singh, 32. They sought weight loss through detox and found Kayakalp very affordable, and had added sightseeing to their short stay. Kathy Chan, a yoga teacher from Taiwan, was there to learn more to enhance her practice.

Depending on the accommodation you choose, you can manage at the nonprofit Kayakalp with Rs 4,000 to Rs 8000 a day, treatment and food included. There are discounts for the economically deficient, senior citizens and long-term stay patients. OPD for locals is also available.

About 100 km taxi ride from Pathankot, Kayakalp campus may look like a spa-resort, but the busy daily routine will leave no doubt what you are there for: wake up at 5 am, yoga and cleansing kriyas at 6, breakfast at 8, doctors consultation and nature cure treatment 9-12 noon, lunch by 1 pm, panchakarma treatment 2-4 pm, meditation 5-6, dinner at 6.30, and in-room treatment/doctor visit around 8.30 pm.

A departing patient is given a diet chart and, if needed, suggested a couple of Ayurvedic/herbal medicines.

During Covid, Kayakalp cut its patient intake by half, vaccinated all their staff, who mainly live on campus, and made negative Covid tests mandatory. Dhoop with herbs like guggul was used to kill any virus in the air.



Manpreet Singh and Joelaine Singh from Brisbane, Australia found Kayakalp highly affordable. (Photos: Parveen Chopra)

Tips on weight management

When asked to give easy-to-follow tips for weight management, Dr Shalini Kaith, Ayurveda/panchakarma physician at Kayakalp, said obesity is a lifestyle disorder. The dinacharya (daily routine) she recommends is based on the ebb and flow of tri-dosha and digestive fire. Wake up between 4-6, evacuate the bowels, followed by yoga or any form of physical exercise. 6-10 am is high Kapha period; take breakfast between 8-10, which should be light but sufficient. 10 to 2 in the afternoon is the pitta period. Digestive fire is at its peak at 12 noon. Best to take lunch between 12 and 2, which can be heavy and plentiful. Between 2 to 6 pm is the vata period. Best to take your light dinner around 6-7 pm of soup, salad, etc (non-vegetarian and deserts are a big no-no). After that digestion slows down and the body goes into a resting mode. Wrap up the day with 10-15 minutes of any kind of meditation or japa.

Dr Ashutosh Guleri adds that you need to change your mindset – know that food is not a luxury but a necessity. However tasteful the food is, once it goes past your throat, the body does not care. "So, tame the mind, make gradual, incremental changes in your diet that can be sustained," he concludes.



Dr Shalini Kaith, Ayurveda/panchakarma physician, supervising shirodhara treatment of a patient.