

Certificate in Integrative Palliative Care – 3
Dr. Geeta Joshi
Dr. Piyush Gupta
Dr. Col. Yashavant Joshi
International Institute of Distance Learning
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Week-07
Lecture 55: Introduction to Aromatherapy

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Introduction to Aromatherapy

Dr. Abhijit Dam, MD, FCCP, FPM, MSc. Pall Med., PhD.

Namaskar, my name is Dr. Abhijit Dam and I am the president of the National Association of Palliative Care for Ayush and Integrative Medicine and today we will be talking about aromatherapy, okay. So let us begin by an introduction to the essentials of aromatherapy.

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What is Aromatherapy?

- Aromatherapy uses pure essential oils to balance the body's equilibrium and to improve mental and physical health.
- Aromatherapy involves more than fragrance. Plant essential oils have therapeutic powers in addition to beneficial fragrance, and all are antiseptic in different degrees.
- The natural healing art of aromatherapy is an excellent way to promote optimum health and vitality.
- Aromatherapy can reduce stress, improve sleep and give you more energy

So aromatherapy is a type of therapy used in complementary and alternative medicine practices which uses pure essential oils to balance the body's equilibrium and to improve mental and physical health. So basically aromatherapy is a type of therapy which addresses holistic medicine. It addresses the body as a whole.

Aromatherapy involves more than just fragrance. So this is a misconception that aromatherapy just means fragrance but it is not so. Plant essential oils have therapeutic powers in addition to beneficial fragrance and all are antiseptic in different degrees. So being antiseptic naturally they would inhibit the growth of pathological microorganisms and definitely it would contribute to disease prevention also.

The natural healing art of aromatherapy is an excellent way to promote optimal health and vitality and aromatherapy can reduce stress improve sleep and give you more energy.

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Definition of Aromatherapy?

- A therapy that uses aroma in the form of essential oils to help in improving the Quality of Life.
- Aromatherapy conveys the concept of healing with aromatic substances. - *Robert Tisserand*
- Aromatherapy is a caring, hands-on therapy which seeks to induce relaxation, to increase energy, to reduce the effects of stress and to restore lost balance to mind, body and soul.- *Robert Tisserand*

So, coming now to the definition of aromatherapy a therapy that uses aroma in the form of essential oils to help in improving the quality of life. So, as I said before, here we are talking about the quality of life, we are not talking about just the physical health, because when you talk about holism, when you talk about holistic medicine, you not only address the body, you address the body, the mind and the spirit. So, the physical part, the psychological part, the social part and most importantly the spiritual part as well. So, aromatherapy as Robert Tisserand had defined aromatherapy conveys the concept of healing with aromatic substances.

So, aromatic substances can be found in plants in the form of essential oils. Aromatherapy is a carrying hands-on therapy. So, if you just think that okay, just by putting in a few aromas and you let the patient sniff it, that is a therapy that is not complete definition of aromatherapy. So, it is a carrying hands-on therapy which seeks to induce relaxation, to increase energy, to reduce the effects of stress and to restore lost balance to the mind, body and soul. So, again the concept of holistic medicine coming in.

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History of Aromatherapy - Egyptians

- Originated more than 6000 years back in ? Egypt
- Egyptians used a method known as *infusion* to extract the oils from aromatic plants
- Incense was probably one of the earliest ways of using aromatics.
- Frankincense was burned at sun rise as an offering to the Sun God
- Ra and myrrh was offered to the moon.
- The Egyptians used aromatics at embalming
- The Egyptians used to be massaged with fragrant oils after bathing

Now let us talk a little bit about the history of aromatherapy, right. So aromatherapy is a therapy which is not exactly very new. It is an ancient sort of therapy and let us start with the Egyptian civilization. So people say that it originated more than 6000 years back, probably in Egypt. Although if you look up our own system of medicine in India, that is Ayurveda, that is almost, you know, equally old or maybe even older.

And, aromatherapy has been used in our own system of medicine that is in Ayurveda. We will talk about it later. Now, coming back to the Egyptians, Egyptians used a method known as infusion. So, infusion was a method to extract the oils from aromatic plants. They extracted the oils from aromatic plants and then they used it for aromatherapy.

Incense, those incense sticks which you light daily, that is also a type of aromatherapy. So, incense was probably one of the earliest ways of using aromatics. Frankincense was burned at sunrise as an offering to the sun god. Ra and Myrrh was offered to the moon. So, there were spiritual and religious collocations in aromatherapy as well.

The Egyptians used aromatics at embalming dead bodies. They used to preserve their dead bodies. So, they used to embalm their dead bodies using aromatic substances. Egyptians used to be massaged with fragmented oils after bathing.

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The Greeks & Aromatherapy

- The Greeks continued the use of aromatic oils and used them medicinally and cosmetically.
- *Pedanius Dioscorides*, a Greek physician, the father of *pharmacognosy* & author of *De Materia Medica* wrote a book about herbal medicine. Many of the remedies he mentions are still in use today in Aromatherapy.

Now coming to the Greeks, the Greeks continued the use of aromatic oils and used them medicinally and cosmetically.

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The Romans & Aromatherapy

- The Romans took much of their medical knowledge from the Greeks and improved the ability of aromatics
- Rome becoming the *bathing capital* of the world. After bathing they would be oiled and massaged.
- Romans started to import new aromatic products from East India and Arabia



Now coming to the Romans. This picture is that of a Roman bath. The Romans used to have large public baths where the Romans used to go and take you know a very refreshing bath.

So the Romans took much of their medical knowledge from the Greeks and improved the ability of aromatics. Rome became the bathing capital of the world. Actually it became the bathing capital. After bathing they would be oiled and massaged. Romans started to import new aromatic products from East India and Arabia.

So, again you see actually India was one of the pioneers in aromatherapy as well.

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Aromatherapy & the Arabs

- Avicenna (Ibn Sina)
- First used the process known as *distillation* to distil essence of rose
- The Arabs also discovered how to distil alcohol around the same time making it possible to produce perfumes without a heavy oily base.

Now, coming to the Arabs, Ibn Sina also known as Avicenna, he was the first to use the process known as distillation to distill the essence of rose. So, distillation again was a very ancient technique. The Arabs also discovered how to distill alcohol around the same time making it possible to produce perfumes without a heavy oily base. Earlier before alcohol was discovered perfumes were made with a very heavy oily base and it was not very pleasant, the skin used to become very oily and all, but with an alcohol base that things became very much easier.

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So, this out here is a picture about how essential oils are made using the process of distillation. This is still distillation which is being used out here. So, here you see this is the aromatic substances, the aromatic plants and then these aromatic plants, the leaves or here this is lavender in all probability, the flowers and then they are taken and put in this beaker and they are boiled along with water. And once the aromatic plants are boiled along with water the essential oils are released from the different parts of the plant and the steam along with the essential oil they rise out here. After rising they come down and then they are cooled out here and once they are cooled they are cooled in this container, right and so the oil rises on top.

And is now extracted, here the oil is extracted and this water also, water is collected out here like you use rose water, rose water is used, so this rose water also contains a lot of fragments, so the water is also used and of course the essential oils definitely come to use.

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The Chinese & Aromatherapy

- The Chinese used aromatic herbs and burned aromatic woods and incense to show respect to God.
- Shennong-Shi
 - Shennong has been thought to have taught the ancient Chinese not only their practices of agriculture but also the use of herbal medicine.
 - Herbal book is the oldest surviving medical book in China



Now coming to the Chinese, the Chinese used aromatic herbs and burnt aromatic woods and incense to show respect to God. And among the many Chinese Shennong-Shi, Shennong-Shi was very powerful and Shenong has been thought to have taught the ancient Chinese not only their practices of agriculture but also the use of herbal medicine. Herbal book, the book which Shennong-Shi had written is one of the oldest surviving medical books in China.

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Indian civilisation & Aromatherapy

- Ayurveda: based on concept of *panchamahabhuta*
 - Combination of these 5 elements results in 3 *doshas*
 - *Doshas* contribute to specific physiological, mental & emotional characteristics of an individual
 - Use of specific EO that complement an individual to restore balance of *doshas* & restoring equilibrium

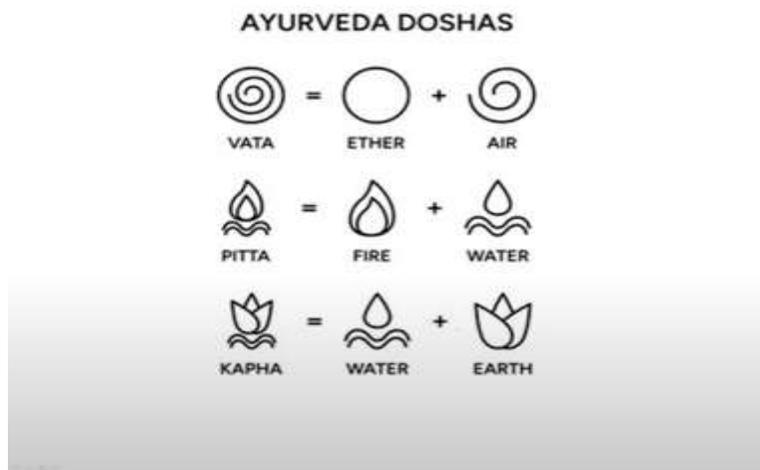
Now finally coming back to our own civilization.

Ayurveda is a very ancient technique of healing which is based on the concept of Panchmahabhut. Panchmahabhut means all of us are basically made of five basic elements that is space, air, fire, water and earth. So, these are the five elements and in various permutations and combinations of these five elements, the whole body is made of these five elements and combination of these five elements can result in three types of doshas, which is also called three dosha, that is these dosha can be vata, pith and kapha. These doshas contribute to specific physiological, mental and emotional characteristics of an individual. So, some people will have more of vata dosha, some will have more of pitta dosha, some will have more of kapha dosha.

So, depending on what dosha is present. So, how do you find out which type of dosha? This is by nadi prediction. The ayurvedic physicians used to check the nadis that is the pulse. So, the pulse was checked and based on the checking of the pulse, they used to find out which type of dosha was predominant. And then they used to use, use of specific essential oils that complement an individual to restore the balance of doshas because they, the whole idea was that disease results from a imbalance of the doshas.

So, essential oils used to complement an individual to restore the balance of doshas and restoring equilibrium. So, this was the whole concept.

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So, as I was talking about the doshas. So, vata dosha is basically made of that is space and air. Pitta dosha is made of fire and water and kapha dosha is basically a combination of water and earth.

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Panchakarma & Aromatherapy

- The Panchakarma uses herbal oils for massaging for correcting the *dosha* equilibrium
- Panchakarma therapy
 - Based on approach that diseases occur due to disturbance in balance of *doshas*, *vatta*, *pitta*, *kapha*
 - *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya*, *Basti*, *Raktamokshana*

Now coming to Panchakarma, Panchakarma is one of the types of therapy. The Panchakarma therapy is based on approach that the disease occurs due to disturbance in balance of doshas, that is Vata, Pitta and Kapha. So, in Panchakarma therapy you use this therapy to help restore the doshas, restore the equilibrium. By Panchakarma, by panch it basically means five, five types of therapies are used. The first is Vamana then virechana, nasya, basti and raktamokshana, right.

So, these type of therapies were there and they are used extensively in Ayurveda. The Panchakarma uses herbal oils for massaging for correcting the dosha equilibrium.

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Doshas & Aromatherapy

- *Vata dosha*
 - Feel anxious & fearful
 - Benefit from warming & calming oils
 - Sweet orange, ylang ylang, frankincense
- *Pitta dosha*
 - Headaches, heartburns, inflammation, fiery emotions
 - Benefit from floral & woody oils with cooling effect
 - Jasmine, lavender, sandalwood
- *Kapha dosha*
 - Feelings of heaviness & lethargy
 - Invigorating & stimulating EO to be used
 - Eucalyptus, peppermint, basil, lemongrass

Now, coming to specific dosha, suppose you have vata dosha. These people are usually, they usually are anxious and more fearful and they would benefit from warming and calming oils like say sweet orange, ylang-ylang, frankincense. These are also used for depression, especially sweet orange and ylang-ylang.

Those with pitta dosha usually present with headaches, heartburns, inflammation, fiery emotions and they would benefit from floral and woody oils with a cooling effect like jasmine, lavender, sandalwood. Those with kapha dosha, they usually present with feelings of heaviness and lethargy. They would benefit from invigorating and stimulating essential oils like eucalyptus, peppermint, basil, lemongrass, etcetera.

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Aromatherapie

- Coined by a French chemist Rene Maurice Gattefosse in 1928
 - Gattefosse whose family owned a perfumery business, while working in the laboratory one day burned his hand badly. He plunged the injured hand into a container of lavender essential oil and was amazed at how quickly the burn healed without blistering.
 - Jean Valnet, discovered Gattefosse's research and began experimenting with essential oils during the World War II.



So, the term aromatherapy in modern medicine was coined by in the modern times rather was coined by a French chemist Rene Maurice Gattefosse in 1928. Now Gattefosse family owned a perfumery business while working in the laboratory one day he burnt his hand.

So, he was looking how to get relief and he plunged his injured hand into a container of lavender essential oil and was amazed at how quickly the burn healed without blistering. So, that got him thinking that perhaps essential oils have a healing effect as well and that is how he started off with the term aromatherapy. And it was during those times, Jean Valnet who was a doctor, he discovered Gattefosse's research and began experimenting with essential oils during the World War II and he went ahead to write a book on aromatherapy as well. Thank you.