

# AROMA THERAPY

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Out of man's five sensory organs, the one regarding which we have the least knowledge of its functioning is said to be the nose. When we mention the nose most of us think of its shape, size and its secretions etc. Other than when stimulated by a pleasant or unpleasant smell or by the aroma of tasty food, we generally do not pay much attention to the nose. However according to current research in biological science the olfactory power of the nose is the focal point of a special therapeutic system.

The sense of smell performs an important function in the existence of all living beings. Animals that have evolved only up to a certain level, have special olfactory organs. It assists them in many functions such as finding food, recognizing other members of the species, finding routes, finding the lodging place, escaping from the enemy etc. Although the olfactory organ is useful

to many animals which are lower than man in evolution, it appears that man himself pays little attention to it. The main reason for this is man's ability to be guided by intelligence and sight rather than by smell.

The Olfactory tissue in our noses which senses a smell is about 2.5 metres in area. In one square metre of this tissue there are about 40,000 olfactory cells. Each of these cells have a fine hair protruding from it. The olfactory tissue and the hair is constantly covered with a layer of liquid. Essential or aromatic components, atoms or molecules float in the air. These enter the nose while breathing and come into contact with the olfactory tissue and hair. The stimulation which takes place is transmitted to the nerve centres along the olfactory nerve in the form of signals. The interpretation of these signals is known as a smell.

Although this action is explained in such simple terms it is a very complex process which has still not been properly understood. It has been discovered that the shape of the olfactory nerve ends and the shape of essential molecules fit and an action similar to the way in which a door lock is unlocked when the correct key is applied, takes place.

It has also been observed that when the shape of an essential molecule which gives a particular smell is changed even slightly, its scent undergoes change.

According to available research data our ability to sense a smell is 10,000 times more than the ability to sense the taste of a food. It is possible to identify nearly 400 different scents. Scents or smells have been divided into six main categories. These can be called fruity, flowery, ..... spicy, burnt, and offensive or bad odours.

In this paper we make an effort to focus attention on research now being carried out on a particular therapeutic system which is based on the use of these different scents and odours. Empirically it is known that it is not possible to associate with a person who has a smell which is offensive. Current research has been able to prove this fact. It has been shown that an infant can recognize its mother from amongst a thousand mothers. An infant's olfactory organ has the ability to recognize the smell of its mother's milk.

Certain smells have the ability to maintain alertness in people engaged in various activities. It has been shown that certain smells are able to keep vehicle drivers awake on long journeys. Some smells tend to make people quarrel while some other smells help to calm mind. Research is now being done to find out whether perfumes can reduce aggressiveness in a person. It has been proved beyond doubt that smells can change the mental state of individuals.

Middle aged people, both men and women are often in despondent moods, with either the spouse having died or loved ones having left them. The American Institute of Perfumes, is conducting special researches in this area. Unlike in Asian countries in European countries middle aged parents receive scant affection from their off-springs.

As mentioned earlier, research into the types of smells which are able to control the mental state of a person have yielded a large amount of important data. Meditation helps to calm the mind. It has been found that certain perfumes too are able to bring tranquillity to the mind. The



use of perfumes for healing is known as "aroma therapy". Positive results have been obtained through the inhalation of essential oils scented with different scents, as therapy for different illnesses.

The ability of perfumes not only to calm the mind but also to stimulate feelings and gradually awaken the senses was realized in ancient times. It has been proved beyond doubt that perfumes will help to arouse the feelings of ones lover or husband. Emperors used to pay attention to the woman who attracted him most out of hundreds of harem women. Perhaps for the same reason, even the 'Arabian Nights' mentions that in Arabia perfumes were given an important place. History has it that even Queen Sheba of Egypt bathed in a tub of water filled with rose petals before meeting her husband.

Aroma therapy starts with the inhalation of a suitable aromatic oil. Thereafter different kinds of oil according to the illness concerned are softly massaged into the body.

Aroma therapy is specially designed to bring a person to a specific mental state. It has been determined through tests that a specific aromatic oil is capable of producing a particular mental state. The smell of geranium, honey suckle, and pine resin, provide a certain amount of mental rest. Camphor, cardamom, lavender and eucalyptus smells, it has been shown are stimulating. Certain other scents have aphrodisiac properties as well as stimulating qualities. Cardamom, Cinnamon sandalwood, and Jasmine scents are among these.

Modern methods of analysis and computers have given a boost to

aromatic therapy. We mentioned earlier that there is a connection between the shape of the atom or molecule and the scent. Changing the structure of the atom and observing on a screen how it comes into contact with the nerve end, and the chemist's enacting it in the laboratory, and the training of persons to inhale the molecules constructed in this way and to determine the stimulation caused by it can be called a chain reaction. On one hand this is a technology, on the other it is an art. It is more appropriately called an artistic technology.

With the advancement of the technology, the sensibility of smells has intensified. Therefore when manufacturing a delicate refined perfume, over a hundred different raw materials are mixed together. The primary scent of each raw material combine to produce an attractive perfume. What takes place is not dissimilar to the creation of an attractive picture by a skilful artist by combining a large numbers of colour pigments.

Cosmetics have already been accepted as part of daily life. Ordinary colognes, perfumes, cosmetic powders, shaving lotions, fragrant soaps, antiperspirants, deodorants, Air freshers, Air sprays, and thousands of other products can be mentioned.

It is clear that a prescription for a decoction comprising hundreds of medicinal components makes a complex compound. Similarly a multicoloured drawing creates a pleasing picture. A scent which has hundreds of chemicals takes a slightly different form. If a colour does not match it can be removed. However even a single trace of a wrong scent which gets mixed into

a perfume cannot be removed. The mixture has to be discarded and a new formulation has to be prepared. The skill of a clever perfume maker lies in his ability to combine the exact number of traces of a specific chemical required to produce a specific smell.

Cosmetics have been identified as an essential item of daily life. The

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power in perfumes to change human feelings is mostly exploited by businessman. The use of perfumes which are attractive to customers in business places has today become a fine art. Some perfumes are released into the air with the help of computers. One objective of this is to make the customer remain longer within the business premises. Not only the perfuming of business premises but perfuming of

ordinary households, offices, hospitals, market places, restaurants and even prisons is among the services undertaken by one technical firm in Japan.

Perfumes can tempt a person not only to look twice at an attractive woman wearing them but even to follow her. Today on television there are plenty of advertisements which are based on this phenomenon. Today the scenting of not only the body but of textiles invitations, love letters and other utility items has become an art.

Colour contributes to the creation of a natural environment in a movie scene. Scenting it would add to this quality. Unfortunately, a scent cannot be changed within a second the way colour can be changed. Therefore adding scent when screening a film still remains problem.

Many houses have a room in which gadgets producing music one likes can be enjoyed. In the same way that one can step into such a chamber and reach mental tranquillity, it is possible to attain mental serenity by entering a scented chamber, according to present day aroma therapists.

It is now clear that these therapeutic systems allow everyone to select the preferred scent and use it to change ones own health or behavioral patterns.

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