

## “Romantic Ayurveda”

### Perceptions of Health and Medicine in Germany in the Context of Ayurveda and Romantic Medicine<sup>1</sup>

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#### Introduction

The soothing pictures of treatments appear; alluring and attractive images of healthy aesthetic bodies; with fresh oil and naturally grown herbs; with oil being poured rhythmically onto the forehead of a person, lying in the midst of green natural landscapes. The ways in which Ayurveda presents itself in Germany have the attributes of pure, green and capable of bringing the body close to the essence of nature. Through the internet, guidebooks and neat product placements, Ayurveda has become a “Bestseller auf dem Wellnessmarkt” in Germany (DIE ZEIT 2001). Ayurveda is a medical system from India that has a history of more than 2000 years (WUJASTYK & SMITH 2008). When further exploring the situation of Ayurveda in Germany, catchphrases repeatedly draw one’s attention and are used by practitioners, patients and the media: Ayurveda; Kur<sup>2</sup> and Nature! The perception and practice of Ayurveda fits into a sentiment that is present on the health market. The way Ayurveda is practiced in Germany fits into the institution Kur (NARAINDAS 2011) that goes back to the Romantic Movement. Also, the inclusion of herbal medicine into the current health system in Germany can be seen as a legacy of German romanticism (PAYER 1988). Therapeutic practices such as herbal medicine, water and pure air have been incorporated into mainstream medicine (MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985). Several examples show how the present situation on the health sector is still strongly influenced by developments originating in the Romantic Movement. Thus, the contemporary situation can only be understood within the context of medical history. An historical overview will be the basic construct of this paper, followed by own ethnographic research on contemporary Ayurveda practices. The examples of Ayurveda given aim to show how they fit into patterns of thinking that were developed during the Romantic Movement.

#### Historical development of medicine in the era of romanticism and the contemporary sentiments in the health sector in Germany

The special role of scientific medicine in Germany can only be understood in the context of the developments in Romantic Medicine (LABISCH 2000). Several characteristics are attributed to Romanticism: aesthetic, emotional, dynamic, imaginative, medieval, mysterious or exotic (PORTERFIELD 1968). The inherent concept of “somebody is romantic,” or a “romantic action,” fires the imagination. When tracing the history of the word romantic, its later meanings stands for the intangible that is fired through the imagination, connected to enchantment and the contemplation of the past (LOHFF 1990).

The era of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and humanistic movement that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and touched most European countries (PAYER 1988). In English literature the term “Romantic Movement” is used instead of Romanticism. The word underlines that it was a movement that continuously changed its appearance (LOHFF 1990). Therefore, the term Romantic Movement will be used in this work. The influence of the Romantic Movement did not only involve the humanities, but also the natural sciences, and especially medicine. Because the influence on medicine was so strong, the term Romantic Medicine was coined. Nevertheless, the term should not suggest that it was a homogenous body, but was a movement full of diversity and contradictions (ROTHSCHUH 1978). It must be emphasized that the Romantic Movement influenced all of Europe, but only in Germany was the influence on medicine so important (ENGELHARDT 2007, GARRISON 1931, LEIBBRAND 1956, RISSE 1976, ROTHSCHUH 1978). Thus, when talking of Romantic Medicine, the regional focus is Germany and the chronological

peak was reached between 1795 until 1825 (ROTHSCHUH 1978).

The Romantic Movement developed as a counter movement to the preceding period of Enlightenment, during which rationality gave birth to a new way of scientific thought that divides the unity of nature and the supernatural. For the Romanticists, rationality was the culprit for the disenchantment of the world and, as a consequence, also for nature (TREPL 2012). Magic and enchantment were banished from nature and replaced by a world that was distinguished by the attributes cold, senseless and soulless (RADMANN 2009). But for the Romanticists, there was still hope because a bond between the human and nature existed that could connect the thoughts of the human with the soul of nature due to the inner affinity of the human with nature (ROTHSCHUH 1978).

Despite of all triumphs of the natural sciences of that time, no matter how accurate natural science was, for the German Romanticists it was not capable of proving the essence of the actual driving force of life in nature (RADMANN 2009). The lack of firm theoretical principals had resulted in a state of crisis in the field of medicine, as existing principals were being challenged by new discoveries in chemistry, physics and biology (RISSE 1976). This was the breeding ground that resulted in the birth of a new field of philosophy, *Naturphilosophie*. The father of this philosophy and composer of its doctrines was Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775–1854), a physician and philosopher who would become the leading figure in the development of medical philosophy and a guide to many physicians of that time (ROTHSCHUH 1978). He was influenced by conversations with the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) that made him realize the philosophical importance of nature (JAHN 1994). Goethe was positive about the effects that natural philosophy had on science.

For him it was an instrument that allowed the depths of the human being and nature to be grasped. As he was one of the most influential poets in Germany, he is often connected to the scientific orientation of the Romantic Movement and labelled “[...] a researcher close to the romantic orientation” (MARETZKI 1987: 1063). The aim of natural philosophy was to bring back the entity of nature that is formed through a soul that interconnects all units in nature. Risse writes that “Ac-

cording to Schelling, man had once been one with nature but had set himself apart from the world by mental reflection” (RISSE 1976: 77). Thus, a relationship of all beings exists within nature, lying in the presupposition of mind, regardless whether human or non-human (DE ALMEIDA 1991). The whole world is animated and alive and connected through a path that moves from nature to mind and vice versa, revealing a state of harmony between nature and mind within a holistic frame. Always the entity has to be taken into account to form one overall picture from all the individual fragments. The human rationality is a limited instrument that captures only half of nature’s essence. For the creation of holistic picture, faith, feelings, dreams and fantasy have to be taken into consideration (ENGELHARDT 2007).

Knowledge was thus a combined picture of various components but was not an era of mysterious prophetic speculation that was completely caught in bafflement. The Romanticists “[...] had a profound respect for nature, but this had nothing to do with religious worship” (POGGI & BOSSI 1994: xv). The strict separation of human and nature, scientist and study object, observer of nature and the observed, lacks all fundamental understanding. The harmony of the romantic worldview arises through the unity of *Geist* and matter (RADMAN 2009). The German *Geist* is a concept for which, according to PAYER (1988), no adequate translation exists. It can be referred to as “[...] a conscious cultural and national emphasis in which physicians participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (SCHNABEL 1965, MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985: 384). *Geist* is also a component of the *Geisteswissenschaft*, (the German humanities) that always have to be taken into consideration when analyzing medicine in Germany because of the interrelationship that exists between the humanities and medicine (MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985). The holistic picture could only arise through the combination of humanities and natural sciences because “Philosophy without natural science is empty, natural science without philosophy is blind” (SCHNABEL 1965: 175). Medicine for the Romantic doctors could not be reduced to simply the healing of disease. “Within medicine faith and science, philosophy and theology, life and art shall reassemble themselves” (ENGELHARDT 2007: 511).

The “Romantic Doctor” would speak of her/his

profession to be “Heilkunst” rather than of “Arzneiwissenschaft” (RISSE 1976). Heilkunst is the art of healing that underlines that the doctor or medicinal person is not merely a healer but also an artist. This emphasizes the sentiment in favor of philosophy. Romanticists have an antipathy towards “systems” and strive for the union of science and art (ENGELHARDT 2007). “Arzneiwissenschaft” on the other hand is more closely connected to science. The boundaries between medicine, philosophy and art were blurred during the Romantic Movement and physicians gathered in the artistic and humanistic circles and considered themselves artists (LEIBBRAND 1937). Thus, for supporters of natural philosophy, medicine was neither strictly science nor art, although the connection to the latter was preferred. If a definition of medicine of that time was to be done, then the romantic physicians would have preferred the assignment to philosophy rather than science. The aim was that fundamental findings in medicine were not made through experimentation but through philosophical contemplation (HEISCHKEL 1952). The preference for philosophy and the tendencies towards religious mysticism, intuitive knowledge and ecology, were traits that characterized Romantic Medicine overall and led to one of its fundamental principles: “only nature can heal.”

While French and British medicine turned into a matter-of-fact observation-based medicine, German medicine as a whole “[...] was completely under the spell of the romantic natural philosophy. [...], German doctors indulged in extensive speculations about the nature of life and disease [...]” (ACKERKNECHT 1955: 142)<sup>3</sup>. For historians and the subsequent representatives of medicine, Romantic Medicine was considered inferior in comparison to the medicinal practices in other countries. Many attempts of the Romantic Movement were seen as mere speculations or bafflement that cannot be brought into harmony with modern medicine (TSOUYOPOULOS 1982). Consequently, Germany turned into the “nidus of Romantic Medicine” (GALDSTONE 1954: 346). Trust was put into the healing power of nature rather than in drugs (or pharmacology) (SCHNABEL 1954). Hence diet, fresh air, massage, exercise and balneotherapy were employed for medical treatment (GALDSTONE 1945). The basis of all these therapeutic modalities is the healing power of nature. Medicine

and the representatives of medicine such as the physicians are (only) able to assist nature in the healing process (ENGELHARDT 2007). Activities in nature were treatment (of ailments/illness) on the one hand and the feeling of being part of nature by indulging in outdoor activities like walking through fields and forests, hiking and relish in nature's beauty were, in the romantic period, enjoyment and treatment for Germans (MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985).

Today, methods that propagate the use of “holistic medicine” are known under the umbrella term “holistic health movement” that seized the market in the early 1970s. This movement is closely connected to the New Age movement and consists of various schools and practices that are nowadays often labelled as “complementary health” (PUTTICK 2008: 246). The holistic health movement is based on ancient medical systems from all over the world. Lay alternative practitioners, psychic healers, naturopathic practitioners or acupuncturists who include different aspects of humanistic and psychosomatic medicine, folk medicine, herbalism or massage and yoga are included within the holistic health movement. It was the outgrowth of the counter-movement that had started in the 1960s and was associated with the slogan “back to nature” and disenchantment with mainstream culture (BAER 2008).

The holistic movement developed particularly in the Anglophone countries (BAER 2008). For Baer “[...] the medical pluralism is alive and well here” (BAER 2008: 233). Medical pluralism is considered as a diversity of health therapies that exist on one market but all of these holistic therapies in the United States developed “[...] in direct opposition to biomedical orthodoxy [...]” (REDDY 2002: 98). This means that the so-called holistic treatments are placed outside the medical mainstream. This concept was transferred to Europe and consequently also to Germany. But in Germany, naturopathic medicine is well established and maintains remarkable vigor on the fringes of German mainstream medicine (MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985). Biomedicine has emerged as the most dominant player in the health market, but other approaches to healing have stood their ground then and are going strong today. For Germans the feeling of merging with nature still provides a sense of well-being (*ibid.*). In the United States, holism

is considered as a countermovement against the hegemony of biomedicine, while in Germany the development of holism took place within the medical mainstream (*ibid.*).

### The ideas of the Kur and nature

“The Kur is the German institution which most distinctly reflects therapeutic pluralism and the continuation of naturopathic healing principles in medicine” (MARETZKI & SEIDLER 1985: 407). The above quote refers to the institution Kur as a unique example of “institutionalized pluralism” that has been integrated into the formal health care system in Germany (MARETZKI 1987). The term Kur circumscribes a therapeutic process containing different factors that have a characteristic profile. Natural remedies are an important component fostering the positive effects that are created by the surrounding such as the sea, the countryside and the environment. The change of locality aims at developing a health programme that is specific, individual, active and lifelong, comprising both health promotion and curative treatment (Deutscher Tourismusverband e.V. and Deutscher Heilbäderverband e. V. 2005).

The Kur emerged in Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and put great emphasis on water as a therapeutic medium through bathing and hydrotherapy. The healing power ascribed to water was fostered by physicians who were oriented towards Romantic Medicine (HEISCHKEL 1952). Thus, the location of the Kur would be located either close to a spring or in a climatically favorable region such as the mountain or the seaside. According to MARETZKI (1987), Kuren became an almost purely German phenomenon, which no other population but indulged in so excessively. During the stay at a Kur resort, the patient would undergo several different types of natural treatment such as baths, hydrotherapy, exercise and massage and relish the beauty of the natural environment. The importance of the concept in Germany can also be seen in literature. For example, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann used the Kur as setting for novels (*ibid.*). The novel *Der Zauberberg*, by Thomas Mann, is considered one of the most influential works of 20th century German literature and is located in the picturesque mountain landscape of Davos at a Kur resort. The

protagonist, Hans Castorp, spends several years, encountering people with different backgrounds that confront him with politics, love, philosophy and death while undergoing a Kur. The Kur resort was turned into a metaphor for the mental state of Europe at that time.

For mainstream medicine which is dominated by allopathic medicine, which is under the influence of the Anglo-American medical system, the Kur has been denied its medical effectiveness. In the United States the Kur is commonly equated to wellness or lifestyle treatments or to extended beauty farm stays (FALKENBACH 2005). The healing aspect is not recognized and thus Kur is regarded as a commodity that serves the individual pleasure and has to be paid for out-of-pocket. For the German health market, it is important to not simply reduce the Kur to rehabilitation, nor label it as wellness, but recognize the unique role it played in Germany (MARETZKI 1987). The Kur incorporates characteristics that are also used in Ayurveda in the way it is practiced in Germany (NARAINDAS 2011).

### The history of Ayurveda in Germany and the contemporary situation

Whenever one engages with understanding Ayurveda on an academic level, catchwords such as “New Age movement,” “holistic health movement,” “holistic medicine” and “environmentalism” are, almost inevitably, encountered. Ayurveda refers to South Asian medical teachings that are codified in medical texts and can be traced back to 600 B. C. (REDDY 2002). With the appearance of the New Age movement, it became somewhat more complicated. The reason might be that New Age is a mixture of various ideologies that are often connected to religious and spiritual movements (KEMP 2004). Ayurveda and New Age practices helped to establish Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s<sup>4</sup> Ayurveda. This form of Ayurveda “[...] represents the first adaption of Ayurveda intended for the Western public, and it has contributed to the shape, representations, and practices of the different groups that eventually became engaged with Ayurveda” (JEANNOTAT 2008: 303). Maharishi Ayurveda was introduced into Europe and the United States at the end of the 1970’s and then further established itself during the 1980s (*ibid.*).

With the establishment of its own Ayurveda brand as well as the establishment of various clinics all over Europe and in the United States, a whole Maharishi network was established.

Nowadays the Ayurveda that exists has dissociated itself from Maharishi or his followers. One of the reasons was that the whole movement and Transcendental Meditation had sectarian traits and the commercial interests became too prominent (JEANNOTAT 2008). In addition, one would argue that their influences helped Ayurveda enter Germany but never became as important as in the United States. There were also independent developments of Ayurveda that were not connected to the powerful Maharishi movement and evolved mainly in the 1990s. One example is the Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum in Birstein that is connected to the Rosenberg Academy of Ayurveda and was founded in 1993 by Kerstin and Mark Rosenberg (ROSENBERG 2012).

One of the most popular treatment modalities within Ayurveda in the West is the purification treatment Panchakarma (ZIMMERMANN 1992). *Panca* means five and *Karma* is the therapy or action used (PATIL 2012). The five elements are listed below, as they are explained in a basic educational textbook for German practitioners of Ayurveda (DESHPANADE 2003).

*Vamana* is the therapeutic induced vomiting

*Virecana* is the therapeutic purging

*Basti* consists of enema administered through oil or water

*Nasya* is the ingestion of medicines through the nose

*Raktamoksa* refers to bloodletting

These five therapy elements are applied onto a body concept that is made up of a network of channels. These channels take up the toxins that have to be discharged from the body (ZIMMERMANN 1992).

Panchakarma cleans the body of the substance *Ama* and restores the balance of the body (OTTEN 1996). *Ama* gathers in the body when the digestion is malfunctioning and, according to Otten, is best translated with the term ‘indigestible substance’. When too much food is consumed or eaten at the wrong time of the day, or when different negative emotions worry a person, it results in the production of the substance *Ama*. It is a simplified version of how Panchakarma works, as the aim is not

a thorough understanding of the underlying concepts but to get a feeling of how the treatment is considered in the German context.

### The meeting point of Ayurveda, Kur and Romantic Medicine—The Kur neologism

In the following personal experience that was encountered at the Ayurveda Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum in Birstein will be outlined:

Prior to my journey to the Kur resort in Birstein, a newsletter from the “Ayurveda Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum” has reached me and invites me to spend time in Birstein because: “The cold time of the year is perfect for an Ayurveda-Kur.” Instead of indulging in Christmas cookies, baked apples and other treats, I am invited to spend Christmas with a detoxification regimen, organic nutrition and moderate exercise during their offer “*Weihnachtskur*.” If this is not enough, I can experience the full regimen of the “Panchakarma-Reinigungs-Intensivkur.” With other package offers, I start my journey to visit their open information day. Relying on public transport, I realize, the bus which is supposed to bring me to Birstein has just left. Consternation grows when I see the sign telling me that the next bus is scheduled in three hours. Unaware that the center was this secluded, as it is not only supposed to be a Kur resort, but also one of the biggest training centers for Ayurveda in Germany. As I am already close by, I take a taxi and my pulse slowly rises while the taximeter happily goes up and the taxi driver even happier babbles on about how deserted this area is and hence how perfect the location of the Kur center is. I agree about the attribute deserted, as we have long passed the bigger villages and there are now only farm houses lining the road. After 27 Euros of tension, as I don’t know how much further it will go up, we reach the Kur center. It is a picturesque timbered house that suddenly appears out of nowhere. The house is thoroughly renovated to modern standards but its historical charm has been preserved. Throughout the house, little antiques from India decorate the rooms. Candles illuminate the rooms, transmitting a feeling of warmth. A garden that is overgrown just to the right extent encircles a lake and invites one to take a stroll. For lunch I have an appointment with Doctor D, a medical doctor and trained Ayurveda physician who introduces me to the Panchakarma-Kur and the way it is practiced in Germany while we en-



joy an organic lentil soup! (Personal experience at the Ayurveda Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum in Birstein).

The description shows the repeated encounter with the word Kur, such as Weihnachtskur, Ayurveda-Kur, Panchakarma-Reinigungs-Intensivkur or Panchakarma-Kur. In addition, without exception, all of the interviewees whether HeilpraktikerInnen, medical doctors or patients continuously spoke of Panchakarma-Kur or Ayurveda-Kur, when referring to the treatment in Ayurveda. Hence in Germany the common denominator when referring to the treatment of Panchakarma is Kur or Panchakarma-Kur (OTTEN 1996). The term Kur in Germany refers to a long tradition of treatment modalities that the public is familiar with (MARETZKI 1987). Thus, the use of the word Kur also stresses the fact that the treatment is not merely wellness but has a medical value. For the patient, after getting acquainted with the treatment modalities of Panchakarma, they resemble that of a Kur. This results in expectations of a treatment that follows certain patterns and is located in areas that grant positive effects to the environment (OTTEN 1996). The location of the Ayurveda Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum in Birstein may be a remote area, but in the context of the location for a Kur resort, it is appropriate and desirable.

### **The lingering of romantic thoughts through Ayurveda—Ayurveda's Nature**

Another hallmark of contemporary Ayurveda in Germany that stresses the fact that “Ayurveda is a naturalistic healing system [...]” as can be seen in the above description (TRAWICK 1992: 140). The whole surroundings of the clinic transmit a feeling of nature through the designed ambience, the wooden furniture, the room decoration and the location. This fact of a connection with nature, is not only transmitted through the treatment itself, but is a prominent trait in the whole appearance of Ayurveda. A picture is created that has the attributes “green,” “organic” and “close to the environment and nature.” Ayurveda serves as an instrument that can help in bringing back the unity with nature. The treatments offered in Ayurveda are accomplished through an “[...] integration with the environment [...]” and “[...] offer an alternative to

the harshness of biomedicine” (ZIMMERMANN 1992: 209).

Although the main aim of Zimmermann is to show how Ayurveda has transformed from written traditions, he also outlines attributes that fit into romantic medicine. He states that “this modern version of Ayurveda appeals to an ideal shared by environmentalists in which the soft, the gentle, the harmless, the cool, the refreshing, and the natural are qualities rooted in the soil, in the cycle of the seasons [...]” (*ibid.*). The way Ayurveda is presented and promoted to the public and the way therapists talk about it, consequently outlines the tie with nature that can be formed when engaging with Ayurveda. The favor for nature and natural surroundings is also mirrored in the following description by Person N who stayed at a secluded Kur treatment resort for three weeks.

I think it is good that there is nothing surrounding this Kur resort because this way I can really concentrate on myself. Everything here is so quiet and secluded. I don't get overtaken by my daily routine. The nature here helps me to calm my body and *Geist* and makes my body receptive to the treatments. I am more inwardly focused in these natural surroundings. (Person N)

The healing power of nature forms the fundamentals of the therapy in Romantic Medicine “(vis medicatrix naturae),” of which physician and medicine are only the executing hands (ENGELHARDT 2007: 509). In connection with Ayurveda, there also repeatedly arises the attribute of organic nutrition arises. The Ayurveda Gesundheits- und Kurzentrum in Birstein advertises that their kitchen only works with organic products. This connection with nature that was so important for the Romantic Doctors is as much a fundamental principal in the Ayurveda encountered in Germany.

### **The Geist of Romantic Medicine**

Romanticists strive for the union of science and art (ENGELHARDT 2007). The diagnostic process in Ayurveda is described to be an important component of the “[...] art of healing” (CHOPRA 2003: 97). This brings Ayurveda Romantic Medicine into a close connection regarding the perception of their practice. The diagnostic and therapy pro-

cess of Ayurveda does not rely on technical devices or pharmacology, but the examiner relies on his five senses, the instruments of perception, to reach a conclusion (CHOPRA 2003). This is just like the idea of Romantic Medicine which was to put trust into the healing power of nature rather than pharmacology (SCHNABEL 1954). The critique of technical devices often points to the facts that they don't capture the whole picture but are merely a fragment. Ayurveda is considered as a tool for the whole body that reaches everything the body and the *Geist*. Person N describes in this context how she perceives Ayurveda:

Ayurveda is something that touches body, soul and *Geist*. When I go to a classical concert for example, I feel that a whole process is started. Modern music today is touching on an emotional level; the simple melody makes a person happy or sad. But a classical philharmonic concert like Mozart or Bach is more complex, it is not simply working on the emotions. I feel elated because it touches the *Geist*. I feel Ayurveda can be described in a similar way. It is definitely not something merely for the body but also touches the *Geist*. (Person N)

The omnipresent concept of *Geist* recurs again and Person N relates it to nature, art and culture. Just like classical music, Ayurveda is regarded as a tool that touches the *Geist*. As mentioned in a previous chapter it is impossible to adequately define *Geist* but medically it can be considered to be something that connects to nature and “[...] while Americans see the body as mechanical, Germans see health and the body as going hand in hand with *Geist* and nature” (PAYER 1988: 77). This concept forms a bridge from the essence of Ayurveda to the bottom of the thoughts of the Romantic Movement. In the romantic worldview, a picture is formed that unites the *Geist* and the surrounding matter (RADMANN 2009). But to connect to nature, a balance has to be restored and to find this balance, between the human and nature, was the final goal for the Romanticists (LABISCH 2000). The Panchakarma-Kur becomes a medium that helps to connect with nature because it offers ways to bring back the harmony. A person can connect to nature through detoxification of the body from *Ama*. *Ama* is mainly produced when the digestion is malfunctioning and is more or less similar to toxins. It also arises through different factors such as wrong nutrition, unhealthy lifestyle or wrong

stress handling resulting in the occurrence of disease (RAI 2003). In German it is equalized to the word *Stoffwechselschlacken* (RAI 2003). The removal is not a process that can be explained in a physiological way but the word has a metaphorical meaning. However, there is no precise translation for the word *Stoffwechselschlacken* or *Schlacken* that adequately reflects the meaning. The medical doctor and Ayurveda physician, Doctor Birstein describes in this context:

*Schlacken* or *Ama* cannot be explained from a modern biomedical point of view. The waste products that the body produces have distinct names, but *Schlacken* or *Ama* are not produced through explainable metabolic processes. They may be produced by negative thoughts that occur in your mind or a wrong lifestyle or stress. That is why you need a Panchakarma-Kur as a treatment that removes them from your body and bring back the harmony. (Doctor Birstein)

For patients, *Ama* and *Schlacken* are products that are bad for the body, that gather in the body and that have to be eliminated from the body. Person N describes her understanding of *Schlacken* and her reasons for undergoing a Kur as follows:

I feel that *Schlacken* gather in my pores due to stress, wrong lifestyle, too much alcohol and wrong nutrition. But by undergoing a Panchakarma-Kur I can eliminate them. The exercise and heat treatment and treatments with oil, help me to sweat them all out and then the oil removes the rest. The nutrition is also important. It has to be organically grown and you have to adhere to your nutrition plan so you can really clean yourself from the inside. (Person N)

For the prevention of *Ama* it is important to follow the concept of discipline in the daily routine as well as adjust the routine to the season (RAI 2003: 59). The scheme of balance and polarity that “[...] German scientists developed explanations of the world based on the interplay between positive and negative, attractive and repulsive, centripetal and centrifugal, expansile and contractile, oxidative and reductive, inner and outer, female and male” (PAYER 1988: 75). Henceforth the aim of this therapeutic concept was the restoration of balance.

Harmony for the romantic doctors was not achieved through rational contemplation (ENGELHARDT 2007). In a similar manner the balance in Ayurveda can only be found through the contem-

plation of the whole body that forms an entity between body, soul and *Geist*.

## Conclusion

Ayurveda is used in a way that fits into the romantic German ideas of health and medicine thus forming “Romantic Ayurveda” with its attributes natural, herbal, non-invasive and organic. Payer describes the connection with nature in Germany as “[...] another legacy of romanticism to German medicine is the healing powers accorded to nature [...]” (PAYER 1988: 96). Also, the Kur that was developed during the Romantic Movement and, therefore, holds many traits that developed during that time as a treatment that goes hand in hand with nature. In connection to Ayurveda, the Panchakarma-Kur is used like the traditional concept of the Kur and promoted as a tool of harmony. The basic ideas of health, medicine, the body and nature, as well as the attitude towards alternative therapies, suit the concept of *Geist* and the ideas about nature, and are still present in the public discourse (PAYER 1988).

The notion of natural healing is not a return, but a continuation of a therapeutic pluralism that has long been integrated into the German health landscape. The current sentiment of an integrated pluralism in the way it represents itself in Germany, can only be understood through the Romantic Movement and the influence this movement had on medicine and conception of health with the consequence of the emergence of Romantic Medicine. The expansive implications this movement had on the development of medicine in Germany at that time and it has stood its ground until the present. Hence in Germany the relationship between humanities and medicine is more entangled compared to other countries. The institution of the Kur started during the Romantic Movement that may be abolished on a reimbursement level but is still alive in the public discourse. The use of Ayurveda fits into this well-known concept that Kur. At the same time it has several traits that make the lingering influence of Romantic Medicine visible through Ayurveda thus creating “Romantic Ayurveda.”

## Notes

**1** This work was shortened and modified from a Master thesis within the “Master of Arts Health and Society in South Asia” (MAHASSA), a two-year degree, focusing on Medical Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the Heidelberg University.

**2** *Kuren* can be translated with the English term cure, spa or “treatment at a health resort.” It is a treatment complex that was characteristic for the German health market. Today the term is not used officially anymore and is replaced by the term rehabilitation (NARAINDAS 2011). In the general population the term still exists and it will be used throughout this work to underline its standing within the German health system.

**3** “Im Ganzen gesehen stand die deutsche Medizin [...] ganz unter dem Zauber der romantischen Naturphilosophie. [...], ergingen sich die deutschen Ärzte in ausgedehnten Spekulationen über das Wesen von Leben und Krankheit [...]” (ACKERKNECHT 1955: 142).

**4** Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was born in India between 1911 and 1920. After taking a degree in Physics he had spiritual teachers who inspired him to develop a meditation technique that he labelled Transcendental Meditation (TM). He developed and adapted this technique that was meant to lead to rejuvenation and stress reduction to meet the market of his Western audience in the late 1950s. He particularly gained fame for being the guru of the Beatles, Mia Farrow and Jane Fonda (KNOTT 2008). Later he promoted MAV—Maharishi Ayur—Ved as “the holistic approach to life” and is frequently associated with the Flower Power- and New Age movement (JEAN-NOTAT 2008).

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