

Mr. Lothar Pirc, Founder and President, Maharishi AyurVeda Health Centre Bad Ems**Mr. Lothar Pirc****Founder and President, Maharishi
AyurVeda Health Centre Bad Ems**

Mr. Lothar Pirc is an international proponent of Ayurveda and holistic health. Mr. Pirc is the founder and president of the award-winning Maharishi AyurVeda Health Centre Bad Ems, Germany. Over the last 35 years, Mr. Pirc has introduced the health benefits of the natural, time-tested approaches of Maharishi AyurVeda to thousands of people worldwide. He has spoken to many groups of physicians, national health organisations, and government and business leaders in Europe, Russia, India, Japan, the Middle East, Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Nepal and the US. Mr. Pirc is a certified teacher of the Transcendental Meditation Programme and has been active in its international programmes for world peace for over 40 years.

In 2006, Mr. Pirc received a gold medal „For Honour and Good“ for his „excellent contribution for the revival and blossoming of peace, for greatness of mind and altruistic magnanimity“ at the Moscow Academy of Sciences, from the Russian charitable organisation „Patrons of the Century“. Mr. Pirc was presented the Global Hakim Ajmal Khan Award 2007 for Organisational and Social Vedic Services by the Chief Minister of the State of Delhi, India, for his work in the research, application, and expansion of Ayurveda around the world.

In 2010, he founded Pirc Clinic Consulting offering comprehensive services to assist in the development and management of Maharishi AyurVeda Health Centres around the world. In 2012 Lothar Pirc founded the Stiftung zur Förderung des vedischen Kulturerbes. In 2020, Mr. Pirc was elected board member of the German National Ayurveda Association, ADAVED.

Interview**1) What services and products do Maharishi Ayurveda offer?**

First of all, I would like to mention that I am very grateful and happy to have come into contact with the wonderful knowledge of Ayurveda - the oldest healthcare system of the world, recognised by WHO. Ayurveda has proven to be successful in the areas of prevention, rejuvenation and cure. Credit goes to the great Vedic tradition and India, the land of the Veda, and my master Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who has revived this knowledge comprehensively with some of the greatest Vaidyas and family traditions of India. He connected Vedic knowledge to modern science, inspired scientific research to validate its benefits and brought it to the western world. Maharishi also revived consciousness-based approaches like the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique for the direct experience of inner unbounded consciousness.

Our primary services in Bad Ems are Panchakarma treatments. These Ayurvedic cleansing treatments use a wide variety of methods to remove metabolic waste products, undigested food components and environmental toxins. In our Maharishi AyurVeda Health Centre in Bad Ems, we have treated around 30,000 people with Panchakarma in the last 29 years. We have seen amazing results in rejuvenation and also in the treatment of long-standing chronic diseases. Our Centre, with around 90 staff members, has received many national and international awards and honours.

In collaboration with Maharishi Vedic University, The Netherlands, Maharishi AyurVeda offers many training courses for health consultants and the following courses for laypeople:

- Introduction to Maharishi Ayurveda
- Good health through prevention
- Diet, digestion and nutrition
- Maharishi self pulse reading
- Maharishi yoga asanas

In collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ayurveda, the oldest and largest Ayurveda doctors association outside India, founded in 1983, several hundreds of doctors have been trained.

In terms of products I can say the following:

Maharishi AyurVeda is considered the pioneer of Ayurveda in Europe since 1987, providing the largest range of proprietary and classical Ayurvedic food supplements, certified natural cosmetics, and beverages. In addition, it assists and supports various organisations in Europe with product knowledge and education in the area of Ayurveda for practicing doctors and health practitioners.

2) Was there any impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the Ayurveda sector?

During the first lock-down, we had to close our operation. But after two months, since we received the hospital status, we received permission to continue the work. However, due to the restrictions such as social distancing and hygiene regulations, we could not operate at full scale. In addition, many of our international guests were not able to get visas for Germany. On the other hand, we have gained new clients who used to go to India for Panchakarma. They were very satisfied with our authentic treatments and services. We have been running at about 60% capacity. In the meantime, we had a few patients with long-term Covid symptoms who received our treatments, which included Panchakarma, herbal food supplements and dietary recommendations. They had inspiring positive results

As far as products are concerned, Maharishi AyurVeda experienced a significant increase in consumption of preparations known and trusted in Ayurveda for immunity-boosting effects and upper respiratory strengthening. A general positive trend towards maintaining healthier lifestyle products was distinctly visible for long-standing and a trusted brand like Maharishi AyurVeda in this sector.

3) What has your experience been with promoting Ayurveda in Germany?

Maharishi AyurVeda is the pioneer in Europe. The first Maharishi AyurVeda Health Centre started in 1986, and the Centre in Bad Ems was founded in 1992. We have been instrumental for tremendous press activities. More than 1,200 journalists visited the Health Centre in Bad Ems, receiving sample treatments and diagnoses, which resulted in more than 1,000 positive press reports and hundreds of TV reports. However, in the last years our clients came mainly by word of mouth. Also, in the first years of our activities, many medical journals featured preliminary scientific research articles on Maharishi AyurVeda.

Over the last 40 years, we have substantially contributed that Ayurveda became a household word in Germany. Most people in Germany are familiar with the name Ayurveda and think it is something good. However, the general public's appreciation is not reflected in the policies by the government and the health insurances. Here we see a significant need for collaboration to get Ayurveda recognised and integrated as an integral part of the health care system. Along with other Ayurveda schools, clinics, and product companies, we founded a German umbrella organisation called ADAVED. ADAVED <https://ayurveda-dachverband.de/en/> aims for the promotion, dissemination, integration and recognition as a comprehensive health and medical system in Germany. But to undertake this task, the funds for doing so are still restricted.

While consumer attitude towards trying medicinal products from the complementary/alternative health sector such as Ayurveda has been steadily gaining ground, regulatory restrictions limit the usage of the products to the detrimental effect not only in the growth of the Ayurveda industry but also restricting consumers access to some of the best researched ayurvedic preparations meant for chronic ailments according to the ancient knowledge of Ayurveda. Making any health claims on Ayurveda remains a stumbling block.

Visible promotion of Ayurveda by the Government of India as a medical system in the larger public interest within Europe would be highly beneficial along with close cooperation with the industry in understanding the regulatory challenges and finding ways to bring Ayurveda into the mainstream health system.

4) What are the potential areas for the Indo-German collaboration in the Ayurveda sector?

Based on my observation of thousands of patients over the past 30 years, I firmly believe the knowledge of Ayurveda will not only make an enormous contribution to improving public health but also to reducing healthcare costs. It could start with simple Ayurvedic nutrition rules in schools up to the integration of Ayurveda in the training of health professions. Therefore every effort to spread this knowledge is worthwhile.

My proposal is:

1. Develop a marketing strategy for Indian Missions around the world, for lobbying work, organise press activities and conferences for health professionals, Government people and health insurances, and support our active people.
(China started investing in the promotion and research of TCM 50 years ago. As a result, in Germany, 18,000 MDS are practicing Chinese medicine. Only a few hundred practice Ayurveda.)
2. Review existing research and propagate it. Funding for new evidence-based research in Germany and Europe at renowned Universities to document the role of Ayurveda in reducing chronic diseases and healthcare costs.
3. Legalise the practice of Ayurveda by upgrading and standardising Vaidya training for working in the West. Create training courses recognised in the West.
4. Ensure that only safe and properly tested products according to western quality standards are exported from India to ensure that they are free from heavy metals, pesticides, herbicides or other harmful ingredients.
5. To provide first-hand export data of Ayurvedic herbs to the German authorities by the Indian Government would be one of the many immediate steps within the regulatory environment.
6. Recognition of Ayurveda education and prestigious educational institutes in Germany and EU with background experience and knowledge base.