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They will give you a soothing massage, apply packs and scrubs, put wraps on your face and head, ease your tension through reflexology and counsel you on your well-being. They are not doctors or beauticians, but spa therapists, the new messiahs of relaxation in modern life.

With life becoming more and more stressful, spa therapists have the magical touch to help people unwind and de-stress. Reeta Juneja, a specialist in aromatherapy and in the business for the last 25 years, says: "Spas are not restricted to people who are stressful or who want to look good, but it is the answer for people suffering from depression, insomnia, arthritis, back problem and anxiety."

Recognising the benefits of spas, many hotels are offering the facility, besides there are

Healing touch

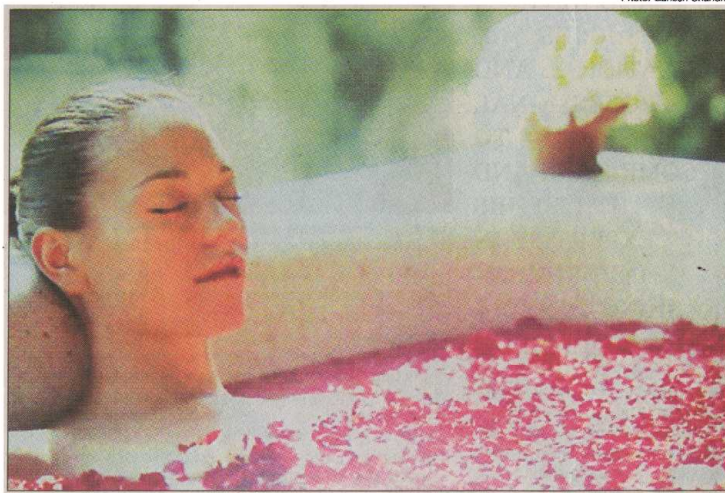
SPAS ARE THE HOT DESTINATIONS WITH AMPLE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, WRITES PRITIKA GHURA

destination spas and many day spas mushrooming across the metros. This growth has generated interest and career options.

"Spas provide excellent job opportunities.

People who have the purchasing power will prefer a spa than a beauty salon as a spa gives them more than what a salon provides," says G S Kochar, director of education, VLCC Institute of Beauty, Health and Management. Agrees Roshni Roy, chief operating officer of Asian Roots, a day spa. "You cannot compare a spa with a local salon. It is exclusive and it is about wellness. It is a sanctuary for customers who leave their tensions the minute they walk in for a therapy at spas. Hence, it is important to have the right look, right ambience and right people," says Roy.

The right people are those who are skilled, have a healing touch as well as knowledge about human anatomy, physiology,



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human anatomy, physiology, pressure points, skin types and health-related issues. Blossom Kocchar, a renowned aroma therapist, says: "To be a successful aroma therapist it is important to know skin, glands and organs of the body and knowledge of essential oils and their effect on the body. Also the effect of the sense of smell." Imagine the consequences if you apply something on a customer and he or she is allergic to it?

CAREER OPTIONS

Ashok Khanna, managing director of Ananda Spa in the Himalayas, says: "Spa as a serious, lucrative career option is a possibility today. Therapists, beauticians, fitness professionals, reflexologists, aromatherapists, spa managers and directors, are a few of the career

options within a spa. Universities and institutions of higher education in the UK run full-time and part-time degree or diploma courses in spa management."

Some of the career options in the spa industry in India are — spa therapist, spa manager, spa consultant, spa trainer, spa product consultant and demonstrator, masseur and manicurist and pedicurist. Their work maybe varied but their aim is the same — customer satisfaction.

"A spa therapist provides various spa skin-care treatments — like aromatic and revitalising facial, make-up, manicures, pedicures, waxing, back cleansing, massage, body wraps, body scrubs and reflexology," adds Khanna. The consultant or the manager advise guests on spa skin and body care programmes. Staff are present to perform skin, nails and body care treatments according to hygiene requirements and physical ailments of the customer. Also, there is staff for marketing, house keeping, managing inventory of stocks, log books and records.

"The spa industry has expanded and

evolved into a sophisticated and well-respected profession with a variety of specialisations," adds G S Kochar. The starting salary is Rs 12,000 to 15,000 per month. It increases with experience and expertise.

TRAINING

Training institutes are few in the country. Also, there is a need to generate awareness that work in a spa is serious business and requires skills and knowledge. "What is lacking in this industry is knowledge, of both consumers and service providers. Many places offer a beauty parlour, a steam bath and a massage and they confuse it for spas. A training programme should equip the student with skills and knowledge on how to prepare spas menu, how to package it, how to counsel, what therapies will suit the person as per his choice, skin types and if he is suffering from any ailment. Hence we encourage students to read a lot and have an exhaustive knowledge on natural products and its effects," adds Juneja.