

BLOG
© Jaisri M. Lambert
RETURN TO VAIDYAGRAMA 2017

December 4, 2017

Wow! During my first treatment of 'utvartana' or massage therapy using powdered herbs selected and blended for my personal health needs, by entering into the general circulation via the skin, I could feel my 'real' body under the over-accumulated adipose, which had built up gradually and post-menopausally, preparing to re-emerge.

This is my third year in a row coming to south central India for expert, classical panchakarma, the ancient cleansing and rejuvenation science of Ayurveda. Ayurveda has blessed my life by answering prayers for self-healing, and has so far in the last 35 years, provided me understanding, livelihood, purpose and community. Now that I'm officially 70, health is looking more and more important to me.

The pilgrimage itself has its own challenges – 14 hr. flight, gathering finances all year, leaving my home and responsibilities in the hands of others, and staying with my inner commitment to complete three back-to-back cycles each December. Though many options exist for panchakarma, I feel the physicians here are so trustworthy and accurate. This intentional environment of community living is truly 'sans pareil' in my life so far.

December 5, 2017

Only my second day of treatment, and already my consciousness is settling. Most of our group has arrived with 2 more expected next week. Today's satsang (question and answer period for patients) was in part a discussion of putting one's health first, in which case there's plenty of time to devote but if our health isn't a priority, indeed we find no time to invest.

Cleansing and detoxification is a tiring process. Rest is considered a medicine in its own right, according to Ayurveda, though somehow our culture vilifies rest. How to find the middle path for right living, both for health and livelihood? Meditation helps, I find, to try to continually observe my mind and consciousness towards remembering truth.

Since last year's visit, there are so many additions and improvements to keep pace with the growth and development of this unique, intentional, green, sustainable healing community. More staff, improved systems, expansion plans, temple enhancements, etc., all contribute to the patient success rate.

December 6, 2017

Today began with early morning homa (sunrise fire ceremony) to Sri Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, bringing me an energy of faith over worry. My cells notice the difference and my consciousness is more accepting of divinity, more trusting that all is ultimately OK.

Today's treatment was again sublime and again confirmed in me that Ayurveda is so needed in Canada to alleviate suffering that cannot be met by the existing medical system. Ayurveda is truly a complete and humane health care system; she is surely no

'alternative', but rather a complement, the very mother of western medicine and all other systems, but study is required before realizing this simple fact of history.

Truly, our daily routine is our life. Here, the minute observation of every moment's changing mind/body relationship is required, to report to the doctors on our psycho-biological changes from the medicines, treatments, diet, environment and interactions. The program brings the 'moment-to-moment awareness' Dr. Lad has talked about for years.

December 7, 2017

As the daily treatments go on for each patient, so the daily satsang goes on for the patient community. Today's satsang or question and answer session delved into the topics of desire, duty and health. Health as a pre-requisite to duty (dharma) can only be achieved by one's own decisions, based in self-perception.

A distinction was made by Dr. Ramkumar between Self (atman) and Ego (ahankar). Ahankar is required for immunity, maintaining order and dispelling disorder. It involves change, though the Self is never-changing. Desire may be the root of suffering or the root of surrendering to the divine will, depending on the mind's choices.

My team of 4 doctors is truly an amazing care structure, in my life experience. Each and every small change in my psycho-biology is noted, with action taken to adjust my program accordingly at every step of the cleansing and rejuvenation process.

The physicians know well that they are the keepers of this precious ancient knowledge, and are committed for life to protecting and maintaining classical Ayurveda. Leaders here talk about 'authentic Ayurveda', which they feel is a contrast to 'modernized' Ayurveda, adapted to become more allopathic-like.

The botanical garden that is the grounds of this approximately 3-acre compound has grown thick and lush, even since last year. Medicinal plants are labelled and each week, one of the doctors leads an 'Herb Walk' to help us better understand the role of plants in health and healing. Vaidyagrama's eco-system is created as an exercise in holistic living, for current and future generations.

December 9, 2017

After the initial 3 days of 'utvartana' (dry, moistened herbal massage) treatment, now I've been switched to the Dhanyamla Dharam, or pouring of medicated decoction throughout the body for clearing toxins from the deeper channels. It's such a luxurious, deep-acting treatment, bringing a feeling of inner contentment and peace.

Saturday night is International Night at Vaidyagrama, a chance to 'party' during an otherwise austere program of pulling in the senses and pranas. 'Party' means grouping together to eat, sing, share and stay up until almost 9pm! It's a wonderful cultural coming together from people from all over India and around the world.

December 22, 2017

My internet has been down, which explains such a gap between entries.

Birdlife here is truly phenomenal, as they have increased in variety and number with the growth of the botanical garden. The garden has become denser throughout Vaidyagrama's development these last 10 years or so. I'm often hearing a bird I call the 'Sweetie Bird' because its mantra is "sweet, sweet, sweet", going on chanting, with a lovely lilt at the end of each syllable.

A very sweet crèche has been constructed with India-style flashing lights and straw, around a beautiful barn-like structure. All the predictable figures are in the nativity scene except the baby Jesus, whose effigy will be placed on Christmas, I understand.

Treatments are progressing amazingly with participants coming to understand by direct experience and by inference (a valid means of conclusion according to Ayurveda philosophy), our chronic digestive and metabolic symptoms.

Medical scriptures of Ayurveda are often dedicated to 'Lord Agni', the god of fire, who is responsible for all transformations including food into you and experience into wisdom. One of the actions of Fire is to destroy ignorance (and other toxins) through its hot, spreading and sharp (discriminating) properties. Agni is the energy or intelligence that maintains doshic order, so no disorder occurs.

Fire becomes personified in the individual's digestive/metabolic process of heating, churning and assimilating the food while clearly discriminating what is nutrient and what is waste. Fire mediates balance between Vata and Kapha functions, so symptoms can only arise in the body/mind if fire is either inadequate (most common), slow (also common) or excessive.

December 23, 2017

Have you ever imagined a patient-centred health facility and ended up in an administration-centred one? At Vaidyagrama, this 'healing village' is entirely focussed on patient care. Can you imagine a team of 4 physicians tending to you each and every day and night, knowing your file inside-out? Can you picture their support staff ALL being dedicated to your best interest and best quality of experience? It does exist!

Every Saturday evening, this community gathers for a group dinner, as we are mostly by ourselves otherwise. Not isolated, but attentive to our own healing process, which often goes so deeply into our connective tissue and unconscious mind. So, Saturday evening is for levity, song, storytelling and discovery of those from other countries. Here I've met others from Madagascar, Pakistan, Australia, Europe, China, Russia, Austria and many other countries, all seeking healing for life. This evening our Canadian contingent is planning to sing a couple of Christmas carols in English. Will let you know.

Hey, it turned out to be great fun to share our voices, spirit and gratitudes with the patients and staff from India and abroad. Other highlights of the evening included a group rendition of John Lennon's one-world anthem, 'Imagine', a drumming performance with 2 local therapists from Kerala and devotional songs from various parts and traditions of India and elsewhere. A fitting celebration for the season.

December 24, 2017

Our group is now just past the half-way mark of our stay here, and already remarkable changes are unfolding in each individual. Cleansing is a medical art and science; to undergo the classical Ayurveda processes, it's best to be under qualified care, I feel. Has your doctor ever prayed over the medicine you're about to swallow, to dedicate to the healing process for your long-term best interest, giving thanks to Nature who has provided everything? Standard practice at Vaidyagrama

This process of restoring the central digestive fire (agni) of the stomach is a path subject to many types of error. Only truly expert guidance of Ayurveda is appropriate, I feel, for solving long-standing conditions. To understand clearly and act skillfully is rare, in my experience. Our group feels so very fortunate to be here.

December 25, 2017

"Happy Christmas" were the first words I heard this morning, then saw the golden envelope slipped under my door, with a sparkling, loving Christmas card inside. My neighbour arrived with a gift of incense.

This is the time for gifting to others for honouring the Prince of Peace and considering how to increase peacefulness in this world. The Path of Love is neither new nor old, created nor destroyed, known nor unknown. It is the Life itself, do you agree?

This is the time of well-wishing to others for their health, happiness and prosperity. The 'wishes' or longings in my heart are for these very experiences for all humanity. As toxins are eliminated from these bodily channels, this heart and mind can more easily know that there's only Now, only One Humanity and only One World. Let's take care together.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!