

Nov. 24, 2022

A day in VAIDYAGRAMA, Ayurveda Healing Village

Healing in Paradise

I would like to give you a sense of what it's like to be in Vaidyagrama.

I am sitting on a wonderful patio, just outside my apartment. I am looking out at another building containing apartments for other people who are here for treatment. The entire compound is quite lush. There are several residential buildings, both for staff and for people here for treatment. In between all these buildings, there is a lush forest. The forest contains a variety of saplings from midsize to fairly large trees. All are medicinal.

Each morning begins with an incredible symphony of tropical birds. This afternoon there is a wonderful chanting taking place somewhere...distant, soft and calming. I haven't heard that before. And there are always melodic birds singing throughout the day. Occasionally you hear one of the cows on the adjacent farm, they sound pretty happy.

This facility opened in 2008. Before then, it was barren land. It was more than barren, it was toxic. The wonderful man whom I met in Costa Rica, Dr. Ramkumar Kutty, had a vision of creating a healing space. That space would not only house patients and staff, but it would also be a setting where as much as possible of the food and medicinal herbs that are to be used in the treatment of patients was grown on site.

As he told me, they utilized ash from burned ceremonial dried cow dung, a known detoxifying substance, to detoxify the land. The buildings are all made of red clay bricks, tiles, roofing tiles etc. It's all from this site.

A quick word about the staff, from the doctors to the clinicians, to the cooks and housekeeping staff. Everybody is amazingly gracious, and happy. When you pass someone on the walkway, they smile at you and put their right hand over their heart.

When we arrived in a taxi from the local airport nine days ago. We came into the reception area, where they had us sit and served some wonderful tea. After a few forms, we were escorted to our apartment. One of the younger, junior doctors came in, conducted an intake consultation, history and exam, and outlined how our treatment would go, as well as introduced us to all the facilities, and common scheduled events.

We were given three days to accommodate, where we were just fed delicious meals, and given time to rest from our travels. There is a delicious sweet herbal tea at seven in the morning, a delicious breakfast at eight, and another herbal drink a bit before lunch. Lunch is served at noon. There's another delicious herbal drink and fruit snack at about 3 PM. Dinner is served at five. I was thinking we would be getting more of a mono diet, it's quite varied. It's vegetarian, with several different rice and wheat dishes, some soups and mung bean or mung dal dishes; some simple but delicious vegetable dishes. New to me is moringa, which is an okra-like tree fruit that as much as you try, you cannot digest the skin, but the inner portion is delicious and very high in iron. There are some delicious coconut soups.

Every Wednesday at noon there is a banquet served in their library. I just came back from that today, it was delicious. There was rice with curry, a tiny couscous patty with chutney. Some delicious little sweet treats, two soups and some delicious tea. After the banquet, several people got up and sang, some devotional songs, some Beatles songs. It was quite the talent show.

Each day has a special little ceremony. One last week was when a cow was blessed. It was quite fun, at the end everybody got a wonderful sweet treat. Yesterday was a cooking class where they made a very sweet pancake-like patty. We got to sample it at the end.

At 6:15 AM and 6:15 PM, there are devotional ceremonies; prayers are sung in Sanskrit; and everyone is blessed at the end of each. In the blessing you receive a little bit of holy water, some Tulsi leaves, and your forehead is adorned with two different types of paste.

The schedule has lots of open times when you are encouraged to just be contemplative, quiet, and rest and soak in the wonderfully warm, balmy climate. They even have carts towed on the passways between the buildings, that are burning some kind of pungent concoction that keeps the bugs away. Today a wonderful breeze is blowing, so there are virtually no bugs at all.

On the first day of treatment, we were given an herbal warm water treatment. First, you sit and then lie on a wooden table while clinicians pour this wonderful quite warm water herbal preparation over you, made from the bark of 4 different members of the Fica family (which may include the banyan tree.) This aims to open up all of the microchannels in your arms, legs and torso that have become clogged over time. The warmth also opens up the pores in your skin. So toxins are released either through perspiration or recycled through your liver into your gut to be recycled from there.

There's kind of a ceremonial beauty in which the clinicians perform this hot water treatment. After, you take a quite wonderful standing bath/shower.

Later in the day, they are providing us with some musculoskeletal treatments. One is a light tapping/'pounding' of the neck, shoulders and lower back with heated Louganis-like sponges. My friend didn't like that, and instead, they put warm oil in a hot water bottle on his lower back.

After a few days, at the end of the warm water treatment, you're given a 'Basti' a gentle herbal enema. That's to encourage cleansing of the lower colon. Not something I've done much of at all; but after having it done now three times, it's not unpleasant at all.

Throughout each day, there are periods to ask questions about this process to the doctors in the library. Three or four times now, Dr. Ramkumar has been at those sessions, answering questions, and moderating lively discussions. He's a pretty amazing human being. Very funny, and very wise in a common sense way.

The foundation of Ayurveda is very much like the foundation of chiropractic - help the body become as strong as possible, so it can do its self-healing. All living things are inherently self-healing, or they wouldn't even be alive. Ayurveda focuses on healing through the digestive system. That however can include mental, spiritual as well as physical aspects. It basically focuses on the energetic and physical strength of each person, and how to restore any loss of either, and then let the body take over.

Our treatments will change within the next few days, as they utilize more ways to cleanse and help us heal.

Blessings and Smiles,
J.G., Chiropractor