

The Ayurvedic Clinic

The hospital of Dr. Vijith is like a haven. An oasis. The grounds, gardens and houses are simple, clean, peaceful and beautiful. I have my own room, and my own private bathroom, which is beautifully tiled with a bamboo pattern. The water is cool as well as the fan. There is no AC, which I actually like. There is always a little sweaty residue underneath the cool wind of the fan, but it beats the sharp and unnatural cold of an AC. I also have my own private terras, which is really terrific. I sat an hour in the dark on my first evening, looking out into the garden and the forrest, listening to the oh so familiar sounds of Indian nights: crickets, frogs and occasional sounds that I really can't define.

First consultation

The Ayurvedic physician has little or nothing in common with our concept of a doctor. When I go to see my doctor, I can book a 10 minutes appointment. If I think I need more time, I can book a double appointment. I have a lovely doctor at home. He really listens to me and doesn't say very much. But about half the time is spent on typing all the data into his computer. We rarely get any further than x-rays, blood tests or prescribed drugs.

Not so with the Ayurvedic Acharya. Dr. Vijith and I spend two hourse sitting in the fire pit on my first afternoon. He wanted to know all about me. I was amazed at his skill to pinpoint beliefs I seem to be holding and to discover some very old patterns that I have had since early childhood.

I will be getting two meals a day. Breakfast at 10:00 in the morning and diner at 06:00 in the evening. For lunch I get some fruit. So far it has been lovely sweet and ripe pineapple. At the moment I am the only patient here. I take my meals alone in the dining area. Outside of the treatments there will be a lot of time to spend on my own.

First day

I was given a handout with a cleansing ritual that I am supposed to do in the morning right after waking up. There is an order in which you clean your face, teeth and tongue, eyes and nose and then the rest of the body. It reminded me of my earliest India days in the ashram when I was 14 years old. I was then taught the same method.

Later on Dr. Vijith and I met in the fire pit area where he showed me some breathing exercises that I will be doing every morning. They are done standing up and were quite new to me. They left me feeling amazingly charged with energy flowing throughout my body and mind being focussed and clear.

After that my eyes and nostrils were cleansed with oil by the doctor and an assitant.

We met again in the afternoon to continue our talk. He said that through these conversations he will be able to determine which specific treatments I need.

The first treatment was in the afternoon. For 1,5 hours two women massaged my entire body, back and front with an Ayurvedic powdery mixture. It had a lovely earthy smell. The herbs will help to rid my body of certain toxins and remove blocks. That could very well be the case, but all I knew is that it felt like being in heaven. I have never had a massage like this before. Their hands were strong and soft at the same time and they moved in perfect synchronicity.

Before they started, the women folded their hands, closed their eyes and meditated or prayed. It felt like they were tuning in. No word was spoken during the entire time, except for when they asked me to turn over. It almost felt like a puja. During the last half hour, warm water was continuously poured over my body. It left my skin very soft and smooth.

Pancha Karma, Day 4 and 5

Kapha Time

The time between 06:00 and 10:00 a.m. is called Kapha time in Ayurveda. It is said that if you sleep in between those hours, you will wake up feeling slightly heavy and/or drowsy. You could carry that feeling through part of your day. It is very familiar to me, and I used to chase it away with a cup of coffee. So when you want to feel fully energized (according to Ayurveda) you need to get up before 06:00 am and go to sleep before 10:00 p.m.

Daily Schedule

I get up at 05:15 a.m. and do the whole cleansing sequence. At 06:00 a.m. Dr. Vijith performs an Agni Hotra at the fire pit. Agni Hotra is a fire ceremony that is performed at sunrise. Ghee, herbs and certain types of wood are offered to the fire, while mantras are being chanted. It takes me back in my mind to the days in Baba's ashram. We did lots of fire ceremonies there. I find it a lovely way to start the day. (<http://www.agnihotra.org/content/what-agnihotra>)

After that there is some chai and a consultation with the doctor. There are still more questions to determine what my exact diagnosis is and the course of treatment. So far each morning my eyes, sinuses and mouth are cleansed with oil, followed by the breathing exercises. These are amazing exercises. Six in total and all done standing up. They are actually the warming up of the Indian Martial Arts called Kalari. It is supposed to be the parent to all Martial Arts. They have an incredible energizing effect.

On the 4th and 5th day I get an oil massage. The same procedure as the dry powder massage, only better and more slippery. These massages are all to prepare my body for the beginning of the actual cleansing process. They serve to remove toxins and blockages from my system. If I thought the dry powder massage was good, the oil massages tops it at least tenfold.

Taking very light food only twice a day and nothing else in between is already taking effect. I notice that a certain heaviness has left my body.

Drinking Ghee

This is all in preparation of the ghee drinking. I am told that the ghee drinking is the most important part of the Panchakarma. It will last for a minimum of 3 and maximum of 7 days.

(Found on the internet)

Ghee helps in de-toxifying the body. In the body cleaning treatment known as Panchakarma, which is a long process, a person is made to drink warm ghee as the first step towards cleansing the body. Ghee penetrates the body tissues (known as dhatus in ayurveda), and proceeds to dissolve any toxins (known as ama) that are present in the body tissues, then it allows the body to carry away toxins and the wastes to the intestinal tract and then be expelled from the body.

The ghee drinking days

Drinking is ghee is not a favorite, but the effects are astounding.

In the morning I handed my tobacco Dr. Vijith.

He explained why drinking ghee is actually the most important part of the Panchakarma. He said that the ghee I get to drink is specifically prepared for my needs. It has been cooked with herbs that will aid digestion, help get rid of the smoking addiction, and will help me to lose weight.

You don't just get served a cup of ghee to drink.

In his office, the doctor performs a little ceremony. Camphor, candle and insence are being burned. He says a prayer in Sanskrit and you salute the Ayurveda scripture book. Then he gives you cotton to plug your nostrils and asks you to close your eyes. He can also blindfold you if you wish. This is done, so that you don't see or smell the ghee, which could create a possible aversion.

First Day

My first day was filled with lots of sleep and a continuous headache. It really felt like a detox. I was only supposed to eat when hungry, and that didn't happen until 5 or 6 in the evening. This means I took a long time digesting the ghee. The food was plain rice soup with salt.

In the morning, I noticed that the quality of my sleep was much deeper than before and also more relaxing. The headache was gone and my body felt light.

Second Day

The second day of ghee drinking was similar to the first. Since I got only 25 ml on both

days, it was relatively easy. You can easily down it in one gulp, without tasting the ghee. On this day I had digested fairly quickly and ate my rice soup (plain rice boiled with lots of water) at noon.

Third Day

The third day was the hardest. The dosage had been upped to 55 ml, which you cannot drink in one go. So you actually taste the ghee. Not my favorite! A couple of hours later an intense nausea came up. The doctor said this was good. It is a sign that all the toxins are coming out. The nausea stayed for the rest of the day, all of the night and the next day.

Day after ghee

This morning I learned I don't have to do ghee today. Thank God! I am to take rest and was given an Ayurvedic powder to calm down the nausea and bring back my appetite. Food will be rice soup. But who cares? I am finally losing weight!

Found on the internet:

Ayurvedic treatment goals include eliminating impurities, reducing symptoms, increasing resistance to disease, and reducing worry and increasing harmony in the patient's life. The practitioner uses a variety of methods to achieve these goals:

Eliminating impurities. A process called panchakarma is intended to cleanse the body by eliminating ama. Ama is described as an undigested food that sticks to tissues, interferes with normal functioning of the body, and leads to disease.

Panchakarma focuses on eliminating ama through the digestive tract and the respiratory system. Enemas, massage, medical oils administered in a nasal spray, and other methods may be used.

Resting

In between certain treatments, there is often a day of rest. It may seem unnecessary, but it really isn't. Some of these treatments can be almost traumatic to the whole system, and a day of rest is very necessary. So the day after the ghee drinking was a resting day. With only rice soup for breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 and 11-

Oil massages and steam baths

The doctor suggested another ghee day. He said, *but if you are not up for it we can easily work around it*. The other option being an oil massage and a steam bath. I didn't really mind drinking the ghee, but the latter sounded more appealing. The oil massages are great. It is again, a 4 hands, 1 to 1,5 hour massage. You can tell that every stroke and movement is geared towards draining the body from unwanted toxins. After that you sit in a cabin that slowly fills up with steam. The head sticks out from the top of the cabin so that it remains cool.

Amazing staff

Another word about the massages. I don't think I have ever been massaged in such a reverent and respectful way. The integrity of the doctor and assistant are astounding. No words are spoken, they work in total silence. Sometimes there is a whispered instruction from the doctor to the assistant. I get this massage almost every morning. So far I have not once notice any slacking or cutting corners. Each day the massage is conducted with the utmost care and attention for detail. My feet, toes, fingers, skull, face and everything else.

Ongoing diagnosis and adjustment

It is really remarkable how careful and thorough Dr. Vijith is about the diagnosis and the progress of the cleanse. The treatments, Ayurvedic medication and diet are very personally designed and may change from day to day. During each morning consultation, he will ask specific questions to determine where you are in the process and how we are to go from here.

Solitude

There is a lot of time to spend by yourself and do nothing. At a certain point the doctor suggested I spend a little less time on the iPad. I could see his point. It being the only thing I brought for entertainment, I was reading books on it, drawing on it, doing email and internet on it, skyping on it and the occasional game of cards. Sort of glued to my hands, you could say. He said, 'You can also just do nothing and be with yourself'. So that's what I did. And together with the physical cleanse, the mental and emotional cleanse also took its course. I don't think i have ever spent this much time with myself, doing nothing. it is pure luxury. The food appears at fixed hours, just like the tea. It is taken away when you are done. You hand in your laundry and you get it back cleaned and ironed. I spend my time in the easy chair on my terrace, on my bed underneath the fan, on the front porch, or taking short walks in the garden. And it feels as if time collapses.

Day 12

Vamana - induced vomitting

There is a Yogic Kriya, called Kunjal. It is a way of cleansing the stomach and respiratory system of phlegm and mucus. It consists of drinking luke warm, salted water and sticking your fingers in your throat. When I was preganant and entered the 'acidic' phase, where you have stomach burn throughout the day, my mom used to make me do this every morning. I had no acidity during my pregnancy as a result.

Vamana is slightly different. It consists of drinking a couple of glasses of cows milk, rice water and a specially made Ayurvedic concoction. It has a very interesting taste, a combination of sour, bitter and salty. Not really good, but not really bad either. The drinking of the liquid was actually harder than the vomitting itself. I was handed two green sticks to tickle the back of my throat. I did this a number of times, and everything came out effortlessly. The doctor was helping me by supporting my head and slightly pressing my stomach.

When it was over my body felt cleansed and light. Apparently a lot of toxins are expelled from the body in this way. Stuff that otherwise just keeps sitting there, causing havoc to my digestive system.

Rest of the day was resting, as well as the next day.