

The Massage Binge

I took off on my hols to Sri Lanka (SL). If you love to travel and haven't had the pleasure then I would highly recommend it. It's a beautiful, calm country which was a joy to travel around. I could take up the entire newsletter chatting about SL's highlights, but I'd like to share with you a little of my massage binge!

Like many therapists I rarely make the time to have that well needed massage and in SL made up for lost time! It was a great opportunity for me to experience Aruveydic massage for the first time. Aruveydic massage is the staple massage in SL and available in abundance from the most modest of medical practices to the high-end hotels. I won't go into details about the philosophy and rationale behind Aruveydic massage as I'm sure many of you know about, if not qualified in, this area.

My most enjoyable session was with a young Indian guy called Kieran who had been poached from his spa work in Kerala, India and was now living and working at the Eco retreat.

The 'therapy rooms' were set out side which really made that extra WOW factor for me, one for massage and one for the Aruveydic oil treatments. But to top it off was the carefully thought through design. It completed this totally sensory moment.

The tall grasses surrounding the 'room' giving you your privacy, stood in a shallow bed of water. As the sun set and the light began to dim, the breeze rustled through the grasses in harmony with the trees. You could hear the tiny frogs chatting, then the gentle 'plop' as they flopped into the water from their lotus leaf. I was away with fairies, or should I say frogs.

The massage was great too. I was sat on a chair facing out towards trees. Kieran softly sung a buddhist prayer before pouring the warm, soft oil onto the crown of my head and beginning a terrific head and shoulder massage. I loved one particular move whereby he started at the mastoid process with his thumb, slid distally to levator scapula following it to its insertion at the superior angle of the scapula, where normally I would stop, but he continued the move, maintaining a great pressure, down the medial border of the scapula before trailing off. This fluid movement felt so nice.

Then it was time for me to lie down on the couch for my fullbody treatment. Kieran used just one stroke which was similar to effleurage but crossed with milking. I can only describe it as a gliding push which was performed towards the feet. It felt really good and Kieran had a great therapist's touch. He also used some static pressures on my lumbar spine, which really hit the spot.

I was massaged in prone then supine, including my face which, for me, is always heaven! Still with my eyes closed, my dreamy-ness was pleasantly interrupted by Kieran placing cool, smooth stones onto my chakras. After the massage I learnt that the stones are taken from a bowl of water which added to the delicious sensation.

Sadly my time was up. I finally managed to drag myself off the table in that lovely massage stupor, with all the calmness and tranquillity of the world. Usually at this point I would have had the pleasure of a steam in a great Sarcophagus-like steam bed, but unfortunately they were having problems with it so my treatment had to end there. Instead Keiran and I exchanged massage experiences. He was asking me what it was like and how it worked for a massage therapist in the UK which wasn't dissimilar to his own experiences in India. He'd originally been working with an Aruveydic doctor who would refer the client, or in this instance patient, to Kieran.



The doctor would give instruction as to how the massage should be performed, with what strength and how often. He would be treating perhaps 2 or 3 patients a day, which he loved.

Kieran then decided to try his hand in the Spa business, which he informed me, is big business in India and part of a huge growth-market, however, he wasn't enjoying working in the spa at all. The spas are run like clock work and are in the business of making money, not treating the client. He would have 1 hour in which he would have to prepare the client for massage, perform the treatment I'd just experienced, including the steam, and then get them out again. Relaxing? Beneficial? I don't think so! His account was certainly reminiscent of a couple of accounts I'd heard from UK therapists working in UK spas.

For now Kieran is happy to be in SL and I was happy he was there too! However, he was uncertain about the length of time he would stay because tourism is quite badly effected by SL's ethnic conflict. Kieran said they can be without clients anything from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. This is such a shame because SL's potential as a tourist destination is enormous. We began to talk about treatments and I asked him if he ever had the chance to receive massage and how did he look after himself as a therapist. He received massage when he was training others as he was always their body, but when I asked him if he self-treated he smiled, but I'm not sure if this was with mild amusement at my question or if he just thought I was barking mad!

He did say his hands ached sometimes and so would put them in a bowl of water for a while. His arms too sometimes gave him trouble. I suggested that to relieve the tension in his forearms he could use an object that would allow him to roll his forearms across it and therefore self massage. He looked a little bemused so I went on to explain what a foot roller was!

The final crack for Kieran was when I asked if he'd considered replacing his thumb work on the pressure points with some sort of tool, perhaps a small wooden ball. I think he would have liked reassurance that I didn't come from the moon!

It was great to chat gain another perspective. I learnt a lot from Kieran about Aruveydic massage and medicine and I hope he'll try my self-treat tips. If I had been travelling alone, I would have definitely taken a few days out and exchanged more tips and techniques with him but alas, it was time to move on.

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