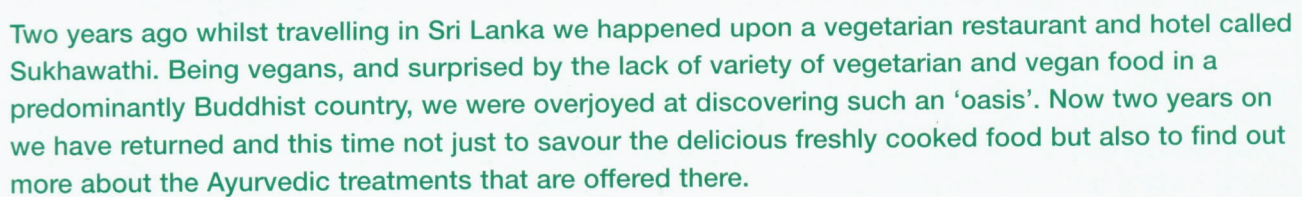
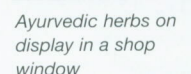


By Scooby Gill & Phil Chapman



It is Good Friday when we return for a second time during our four-week visit to Sri Lanka. Kasanjith has already fed a group of twelve Buddhist monks in an Alms offering. He offers our two Muslim taxi drivers free food before they return on their six-hour journey and then we too are offered a generous portion of rice and curries.

After an early morning Yoga practice there is nothing





better than to enjoy a good wholesome breakfast. Our personal favourite was Herbal Porridge (80p). Made with rice flour, kurakkan flour (a Sri Lankan grain), coconut milk and Ayurvedic herbs, and topped with tropical fruits, treacle (and curds for the non-vegans). The recipe is meant to build physical strength and is therefore popular with manual workers in Sri Lanka (along with surfers and yogis!). This is best enjoyed with a pot of Yogi Tea (small pot 30p), again freshly prepared and quite unlike the packaged T-bag variety available at home. This special recipe is 'Ayurvedically' good for just about anything including colds and fevers but we found it particularly favourable to our taste buds and state of mind! Other teas on offer included Polpala (small pot 30p), which is beneficial for the kidneys, and Bellimal (small pot 30p), which is made from wood apple flowers and helps the digestive system. Other breakfasts included Muesli with fresh fruits, curds, rice flakes and coconut (80p) or the more traditional Sri Lankan breakfast of String Hoppers and Curry (60p).

Sukhawathi is very understanding of other dietary requirements particularly that of vegans. They make their own tofu, okara and soya milk and are always happy to replace the cheese in a dish for a generous covering of tasty tofu, amongst many other adaptations that they skilfully conjure up without complaint.

Turning to the Ayurvedic treatment at Sukhawathi: the treatment rooms are set back from the main building, hidden away under lush tropical vegetation. There are two main rooms, one of which doubles as a consultation room, and a secluded area overlooking the kitchen garden where herbal baths are taken. All the treatment tables are handmade to the specific needs of each therapy. Only fully qualified Ayurvedic doctors and therapists such as Bobuwala Don Todor, who has also worked extensively in Europe as well as the nearby Government run Ayurvedic Hospital, are employed at Sukhawathi and Kasanjith goes to great lengths to ensure this. As with the food, Kasanjith is truly concerned more with quality than with making a 'quick rupee' when it comes to the service he provides. Many other establishments in Sri Lanka, especially around the tourist areas, have either 'sprung up' or adopted an Ayurvedic sideline as a means of making more money, but sadly often their authenticity is questionable, so too the qualifications of the practitioners.

It would almost seem that the safest approach when contemplating such treatments is to dismiss those practitioners/establishments that go to great lengths to gain your custom. The 'touts' of the business are undoubtedly more interested in your money than your welfare. A truly committed practitioner, just as with many Yoga teachers, will await those who require treatment to come to them. Sukhawathi is one such place and the treatments are kept quite 'low key'. The clinic is only opened and a qualified therapist or doctor brought in, when a client has expressed an interest, but this can be



growing herbs in the garden

arranged with only one days notice.

As most people who follow a healthy diet and/or practice Yoga will know, prevention is better than cure and this is the basis of Ayurvedic medicine. This consists of three aspects: internal, external and surgical. At the Sukhawathi clinic the internal aspect is predominantly administered by means of herbs used in cooking, along with the purifying effect of the fresh, wholesome vegetarian diet. Surgery is not practised at the clinic but several external therapies are, including the popular oleation, sweating and fat therapies.

Although you may make the assumption that the fat therapy is a treatment for weight loss, it actually refers to the application of fat or oil to the skin. The fat therapy specifically used at Sukhawathi, called *Samvahana*, consists of a one hour full body massage using a process of 'shampooing' the body and hand massage which makes the body comfortable, removes fatigue and is soothing to the blood, skin and muscles. Apart from being very refreshing and soporific it is also said to be very effective in cases of gout.

There are four different sweating (*Sweda*) therapies used at the clinic. All begin with the application of oil on the body and a mild massage, each being designed to remove impurities.

*Avagaha Sweda* involves the patient taking a lukewarm or warm bath. The water has been prepared with various herbs which are beneficial for the specific ailment being treated. The herbal bath may last for 15 minutes or until the patient perspires sufficiently but the whole process, including the initial mild massage, lasts for 45 minutes.

*Parisheka Sweda* sweating therapy again requires the patient to have been anointed with oil and given a mild massage but instead of being followed by a herbal bath, a herbal shower is used to induce a sweat. Lukewarm water, infused with appropriate herbs, is poured over the body from above and the complete treatment lasts 45 minutes.

*Pinda Sweda* begins with an oleation, or anointment of oil, but this time the mild massage is given with the help of a Bolus (a piece of cloth approx 18" x 18" which is tied in such a way that the upper part can be held easily in the hand) containing a cooked concoction of grains, herbs, etc which are appropriate for the specific ailment. The Bolus is regularly re-dipped into the warmed liquid left from the preparation of the Pinda. This treatment lasts for 45 minutes.

*Vaspa Sweda* is the treatment that uses perhaps the scariest looking of the home-made tables/contraptions as it involves the patient laying within a 'coffin' shaped boxed compartment on a latticed surface under which pots of 'herbal brews' steam away to induce a purifying sweat. Only the head remains outside the box. Phil had images of being locked into the 'steaming coffin', recalling scenes from a James Bond film, but after a wonderfully relaxing massage he was willing to try it and was very surprised at how very pleasant the experience was. This particular treatment lasts for 30 minutes and



helps arthritis, paralysis and skin complaints.

Errhine therapy, or *Nasya Karma*, involves inhaling beneficial substances through the nose. It is said to be very effective in the treatment of migraine, sinusitis, earache, tinnitus and even snake venom! The 30-minute treatment begins with a head oleation. The nasal inhalation is then administered. The substances inhaled can vary from a powder, paste or liquid made from roots, bark, flower or leaf, to an oil or vapour. At Sukhawathi they only use oil. After being inhaled through the nose, it is expelled through the mouth so a gargling of hot water is administered before the rest of the head and face are finally washed.

As mentioned earlier, the basis of Ayurvedic medicine is that of prevention of disease and the purifying of the body. Many people at the clinic come for a 'body service', as Kasanjith puts it, rather than for the treatment of a specific ailment. For this reason Sukhawathi have created a 7-day 'Ayurveda for Healthy Living' course, which incorporates all of the therapies described above at the cost of approximately £80. However, the therapies are available separately for between £6 - £16 each. None of the treatments are administered without first having a consultation to discuss your specific needs and general health. The consultation lasts for 30 - 60 minutes at a cost of £7.

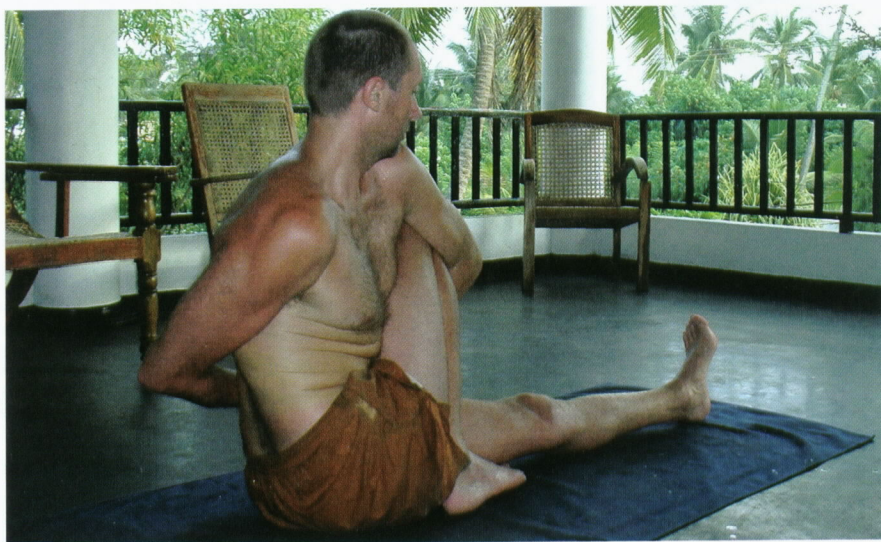
What has become clear, while investigating the Ayurvedic treatments at Sukhawathi, is that we have only just 'scratched the surface' of understanding this vast 'Science of Life'. It seems that an Ayurvedic doctor requires the same, if not a greater amount of knowledge and training than that of a contemporary medical doctor. Perhaps this is a product of a health system that has extended over many thousands of years. Sadly, our medical industry has for so long forgotten the importance of diet, exercise and healthy living in deference to the money making pharmaceutical cures of today.

With prevention in mind, it is no surprise to see Yoga featuring in Ayurvedic medicine and this is something that is now being explored at Sukhawathi which would make an excellent venue for a Yoga holiday or retreat.

There is a large space downstairs that is ideal for larger classes and there are other spaces and balconies suitable for smaller groups or individual practice, all with plenty of headroom and a light, airy feel. It may also be possible to practise outside on a wooden staged area, shaded from the sun by woven palm leaves handmade in the traditional way. The eleven rooms available (ranging in price from about £10 - £14 per night including breakfast) offer a variety of quality on-site accommodation, and there is no shortage of other accommodation locally, from

high-end hotel complexes to the most basic of budget travellers' rooms.

For students in search of a teacher, Kasanjith can arrange a well-respected Sri Lankan teacher to take classes or head Yoga retreats at Sukhawathi. Mr Deva Ratnakara is the chief patron and chief teacher at Sadaham Mithuru Samuluwa, The Society of Friends of the Dhamma, Sri Lanka; a society of Buddhist studies. He is also the founder of The White Lotus Ashram Yoga and Meditation Institute. Deva is one of Sri Lanka's foremost meditation teachers and his teachings are widely considered to be the most practical interpretations of the ancient system of Yoga and meditation available today. He offers a mindful approach, with highly effective simplified Yoga postures and traditional meditation techniques.



Sadly we left Sri Lanka and bid farewell to Kasanjith, Sujeewa, their son Mahasen and all the hard working, but ever smiling employees at Sukhawathi. . . until the next time we return. In the meantime we were armed with recipes for Yogi Tea, the encouragement to make tofu, okara and soya milk, bigger bellies but toned yogic muscles, more wisdom of Ayurveda and most of all the wonderful memories and friendships forged with such generous and like-minded people. Our hopes and dreams remain with them and we hope in the future to report back on Sukhawathi and their intended project for a smallholding in Kandy run on permaculture lines. In the meantime, we wish them all the success that they so obviously deserve.

To contact Kasanjith at Sukhawathi, you may write to: Kasanjith Wickramaarachchi Sukhawathi Vegetarian Restaurant, Ayurvedic Clinic & Accommodation, Galle Road, Thiranagama, Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, Tel: +94-74-383062 or e-mail: [sukhawathi@wow.lk](mailto:sukhawathi@wow.lk).

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