



Ketut Jaya— Balinese Healing Massage-Shaman

Kat Dancer

The unique embodiment of energy and compassion draws me deeper into Thai massage. As my own practice deepened and the energetic connections with my clients developed, I started visiting Thailand to learn from the great teachers still working in the north. I meet many body-workers in my travels and am always open to new experiences of profound healing and compassion. During a trip to Bali, I spoke with a Chinese doctor and acupuncturist, whose expertise indicated that she would have a more informed assessment of a local practitioner's touch than a layman's. As she spoke about Ketut, I felt an instant conviction that I should visit him.

I followed Ketut's directions to find his place—riding my bike down a busy road, I saw a Balinese man at the side of the road in front of a temple-type frontage, a few hand-painted signs behind him. He wore the white turban of the Balinese, a striped brown shirt and classical Balinese sarong. I slowed and he smiled at me, something in the meeting of our eyes told me this was the man I was to see. Pulling up to the curb, lifting my visor and pulling down my face-mask, I stretched out a hand which he shook. "Amazing," I exclaimed. He mounted his bike, which was parked behind him, and I followed him down the narrow stone-cobbled alleyway. We rode between red stone walls interspersed with carved gateways and orna-

ments before turning into a nondescript dirt track bordered on the right by a wall and on the left by tall bushes and plants. Later he introduced me to those plants, all medicinal and used in his treatments.

We parked our bikes on a concrete bridge over a stream and walked into his family compound. A middle-aged Balinese man, squatting on a step, said hello in unaccented English as we passed by. An old Balinese lady and a middle-aged, too-thin European woman juggled a toddler between them. We walked narrow paths between stone and brick structures to a building at the back of the compound. A large, contentedly dusty, black pig lay in the shadow of a sparse bush, softly grunting and hooting in unusually high-pitched tones for such a large animal. Narrow-bodied chickens scratched the dirt and a bamboo cage housed a couple of fluffy white puppies happily tumbling over each other in mock fight.

Slipping off our shoes, we stepped across the stone platform and bristled mat between the heavy carved doors into Ketut's treatment room — into a new world. A series of shelves were filled and topped with random glass containers containing an amalgam of kombucha (a beverage produced by fermenting sweet tea with a culture of yeast and bacteria) in various stages of ageing. Carved wooden lintels topped the windows and doors, a woven bamboo-leaf

This article is a reprint from

Energy magazine™

Sign up for your FREE subscription — www.energymagazineonline.com



ceiling swept up and down at odd angles, and a heavy wooden table almost black with age, most likely teak, stood to my right. The centre of the table was padded with vinyl and covered with batik cotton. An assortment of sticks, bowls and other implements occupied the foot of the table. Barely five feet away, from floor to ceiling, the far corner of the room was filled with crystals, bells, bowls, bottles of oil, herbs, unguents, statues, carvings, swatches of cockerel tail feathers and fat, fat, fat sticks of incense.

Ketut lit incense and made preparations. He laid a towel across the head of the table and in engagingly

swathed in flavours like a lettuce dressed for salad. It was delicious.

Ketut rattled my limbs back and forth, alternating between great sweeping motions and unutterably pertinent pressure on specific points. He used his hands with strong and deft movements to push the muscle and skin in directions that Western or Thai massage rarely do. He interlaced his fingers in mine, lifting my hand behind my back and with the other arm slid deeply down along the inside edge of my shoulder blade, vibrating his whole arm as he did so—a smooth and effective technique. I drifted in

My internal narrator instructed me to let go and accept whatever was coming.

accented, but good English, asked me to take off my dress and lay face-down. I was wearing a shirt and short skirt so I doffed the shirt and lay on the padded table. He took up a bamboo stick thick with black tail-feathers and used this to waft back and forth across my back. He then doused me with oil and vinegar. I realized that this was going to be an exceedingly soggy affair and said I should no doubt take off the skirt, too. I tried to remove my slippery limbs from clothing without transferring too much oil and vinegar to the cloth.

Ahhh... the feeling of those liquids being poured along my limbs and across and down my back in obviously intentional patterns was fabulous. My internal narrator instructed me to let go and accept whatever was coming, so I allowed the sensuous nature of invisible touch to take over and revelled in the experience. As Ketut started to lay hands on my skin and make swift and dramatic sweeps across my back, arms and legs, I was startled by the grainy roughness of his hands. Only much later did I realize it was actually salt that he scattered across me, creating a subtle scrub. The oil smelled of unfamiliar herbs, and the vinegar, it came to me shortly after, was kombucha. I was bathed and

and out of consciousness. Soon he told me to turn over. I lifted one foot feebly and he laughed and said I could stay, returning to work on my shoulders and neck for another minute before it really was time to turn over.

Face up, I observed the sprinkling of salt along the centre-line of my body and limbs, the smoking incense burning in some ancient-looking blackened copper receptacle, the feathering... my eyelids dropped and I retreated into tactile sensations, eschewing visual interference. Oil and kombucha soaked my skin again and the sensations of being scrubbed, rubbed, kneaded and massaged returned. He did something outrageous to the outside edge of my kneecap that made me breath deeply to maintain equilibrium. He then worked on my feet—the reflexology I had been told about with strong similarities to Thai Foot Reflexology—using a rounded stick. It is bloody painful. I breathed through it, listening to that internal narrator advising me that love is sometimes painful. I knew what was going on, recognizing the techniques and points and also that it does not last long. My feet were humming.



Soon I was humming, too—first deep and fast breathing, then chanting, invoking healing, bringing in the power of nature and the self. I saw fire beyond my eyelids and another recognition struck me—he was moving flames back and forth above me, an incense stick that soon let go of its flame and released its scent instead. I felt things being placed upon my body, upon my forehead. Soon I slid again, travelled far, finally returned. Ketut brought me back to opening my eyes and I spent several minutes returning to my body. There were flowers and herbs scattered all across my torso and arms. It took a while to come to a state of movement and when finally I sat up, he worked more on my shoulders, neck and head, then ended the session by offering me a small cup of... herb-infused whisky. “I don’t drink alcohol,” I told him. He explained it is aged and infused with an assortment of special herbs he puts together, a medicine. It warmed its way through my body and then I was led through the narrow pathways to a small shower with herbal soap where I washed off all the solutions he had used.

We sat together with tall glasses of his kombucha, easing into this new part of the day, talking softly, discovering each other’s teachings and practices, allowing my body to acknowledge the array of energy, both

physical and spiritual, with which it had just been infused. Before I left, he gave me directions on how to return to Ubud on quiet roads, stopping at a vegetarian restaurant. I made my way there through the rice fields, slightly dazed, appreciating the carved stone buildings and statues I saw along the way. I found the restaurant, walked in and was gently amazed—a self-serve place. You leave money in a jar on the table with an option to donate and pin up free meal vouchers for others who have no money and are hungry. It is a serene place. I ate a small plate of tasty and simple food, left a donation and a voucher for someone else and took a bowl home to my partner. Lovely. . .

The afterglow of this session continues to resonate through me months later. Some of the energy we shared subtly infused my way of thinking. There is an aspect of Ketut’s work that connects—should we allow it—on a fundamental level, inspiring self-assessment and study, a gentler handling of self. On a physical level, the work he did relieved some chronic pain for a considerable time, but the overall sense of well-being continues to shimmer each time I recall this adventure. €

If you are fortunate enough to go to Bali, you can contact Ketut at +62 878 624 919 27 or ketutjaya1967@gmail.com.



Author Kat Dancer can be found at www.Kat-Dancer.com