
Merta Ada (by Kathy Alexander.)

HEALING ARTS When I came to Bali in 1979 I was intrigued and fascinated by the Balinese skills with healing arts - massage, herbs, and boreh. The following year, I set up a "Peace and Recharge Holiday Tour" so that others may experience the transformation that had happened to me.

At that time there wasn't Spa in sight and we had to go to Denpasar for our facials and scalp massages. But that is another story and not the one I want to tell now. Since then of course we have all experience how skilled not only the Balinese are in these traditional skills but also the Indonesian people in general. However, I experienced recently a new level of healing arts here; another unique experience, challenging and deep where one needs to apply oneself and work much harder to better oneself.

I went to Bali Usada Meditasi. You may have seen it advertised in the Bali Advertiser-an intensive health meditation course of 7 days, 6 nights with Merta Ada as the teacher, leader, and inspiration.

No smoking, reading, writing or talking for 5 days and 5 nights! As a matter of fact, 5-1/2 days and 5 nights. Surprisingly enough, this was not a problem; in fact, it's incredibly relaxing not to talk for a long period of time. (You can talk with Merta Ada and his staff of counsellors).

So how was it? It was great! It's hard work, very well structured and Merta Ada is an excellent teacher. I think it quite a life changing experience.

Merta Ada is a bit like our very own Thich Nhat Hahn, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk who was set up Plum village in France - the same clarity, simplicity and immediateness of his approach, the same consistent attitudes to simple, mindful living.

Merta Ada, however, is a healer with a remarkable ability to 'see' into a person's being. He has planned this meditation course to help people learn how to heal themselves through concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom to achieve harmony of the mind. Through harmony of the mind, he believes you can check and heal your body and remove negative memories from your subconsciousness. This can become a tool for life.

Merta Ada liaises with more than 30 doctors and records of recoveries using his approach with these professional people are growing.

He teaches his meditation method through radio, television, and regularly at his centre in Sanur and Jakarta as well at Pacung.

We stayed at Pacung Resort Hotel, Baturiti, Tabanan (near Bedugul), a beautiful spot with clean, clear refreshing air, very cold (for me) early mornings and evenings, and beautiful days. We were in a special section of the hotel, accessed by a cable car, lovely well appointed and very comfortable cottages in a tranquil garden with water lily and lotus ponds set in beautiful green. No noise from traffic, no dogs, no mosquitoes, incredibly quiet and restful. This is a perfect venue for this type of programme.

I'd have to say we worked hard. The programme began at 5 a.m. with the first meditation, a break for fruit, and then energy moving activities drawing on Qi Gung and Do-In type activities but most that I had not experience before. Merta Ada draws on traditional Balinese and Chinese medicine and health wisdom as well as his own unique capacity to read people's energy fields. In many of the meditation sessions, he settles everybody down and tells a series of stories. He is a great story teller and while he has everyone falling about laughing with his delicious and charming story telling fashion, he then whips in a couple of sentences which turn these yarns into great teaching points. I was a teacher educator for twenty years - this man is a superb teacher!.

While the group is meditating, two of Merta Ada's staff focus loving kindness energy into the room to keep energy levels calm and peaceful.

Food was plain vegetarian, nutritious, plenty of it, and nothing you'll get madly attached to but again worked out on Chinese theories of healthy balanced eating, I expect! The last meal of the day programme was at 5 p.m. and that was a snack!. I thought "Dear God, how will I ever be able to sleep!" being sure that a large meal at night is totally necessary for my well being. To my surprise, I slept like a baby and my digestive system worked better than usual.

After 5-1/2 days, we began to communicate with people that until now we knew through sitting silently next to them as we ate while gazing at the mountains and volcanoes in a sort of glazed fashion before moving into another session! There is an understanding between us that developed by a sort of osmosis. (You are supposed to only focus on yourself, I should add here.)

Of the 15 people there, a high percentage were people who had returned to experience this programme again. One said,

"It's like body maintenance, tuning upn, and clearing out." Another said "I feel more rested and happy after this course than any other holiday I have ever been on."

My opinion is "It ain't easy, babe, but it is most interesting and fascinating process. "I think it could appeal to many people who are on a holistic, well being path. (This is non religious). I see it as well as a great opportunity for interested people to visit Bali for say a three week holiday and include this as part of their trip. A unique experience.

Kathy Alexander