

Healing hands at Grego Ayur-Massage in LI

By Parveen Chopra

When last year Ms Gail Douglas went to consult with Ayurveda doctor and therapist Dr Shyla Mathew, who is known to first do a pulse diagnosis with all patients, she jotted down her ailments and symptoms beforehand on a piece of paper. And lo and behold! After feeling her pulse for a minute or so, Dr Shyla named all her health issues down to the T. Blown away, Gail signed up and took about 15 treatment sessions at Grego Ayur-Massage Therapy center on regular intervals.

Speaking to The South Asian Times recently at Grego, where Dr Shyla is the Chief Ayurvedic Consultant, Ms Gail, a Valley Stream resident in her fifties, said that she was cured of many of her issues such as sinusitis, arthritis and dry eye to name a few.

Grego Ayur Massage opened in 2015 in New Hyde Park, NY, and is the only such place in Long Island and Queens which offers authentic treatments of the Kerala School of Ayurveda, such as Abhyanga Massage and Panchakarma. Unlike in north India, where Ayurveda remained medicine based, the Kerala school preserved such treatments, which in the past couple of decades have burst on the medical scene in India and overseas.

Mammottil Mathew, who runs Grego, concedes that the awareness about Ayurveda in America has still not seeped in enough. People who walk in the doors of his center on 2121 Hillside Avenue are still 90% Indian, of both north and south Indian origin. Incidentally, NRIs constitute half the number of people going to Kerala for medical tourism. Clients at Grego mainly come for backache, joints, neck and shoulder pain as well as slipped disc, sinus, migraine and psoriasis. About 10-20 per cent come for general wellness. For weight control, Dr Shyla can also prescribe diet in line with the 3 Doshas – Vata, Pitta or Kapha. Abhyanga Massage remains the main mode that people seek at Grego. It differs, of course, from general massage as it is done with medicated oils, chosen specifically by the therapist for each patient. For that reason, many may find it more expensive than what they will pay elsewhere for massage.

Ayurvedic massage stimulates the lymphatic system. Benefits of regular massage include pain relief, reduction of fatigue, improved immune system and improved longevity.

The Panchakarma, explains Dr Shyla, are for detoxification, purification, and rejuvenation and include treatments such as nasya, vamana, virechana, vasti and svedana. At Grego, they also do the



Dr Shyla Mathew, the Chief Ayurvedic Consultant at Grego, giving massage therapy to Gail Douglas, who has written on Yelp about her experiences at Grego.

picturesque Shirodhara, which you see in posters of many Ayurveda resorts and hospitals, and involves constantly pouring a liquid (could be medicated warm oil or cold buttermilk or Ayurvedic decoctions) on the head or forehead, and is beneficial in reduction of stress and anxi-

ety and nervous disorders.

Dr Shyla, an alumni of Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College in Trissur, armed with a BAMS degree and having long experience of working at the famous Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala in Kerala, personally gives therapy to women. She is registered as Advanced Ayurvedic Practitioner (RAAP) under Association of Ayurvedic Professionals of North America and a Panchakarma Therapist.

Mammottil Mathew, Manager of Grego, explains that they import all their oils and Ayurvedic supplements from Kottakkal. They also have a tie up with Dr Pathrose, BAMS, MD of Parathuvayalil Hospital, near Ernakulam for specialized orthopedic treatments in Kerala. Me and my wife Renu Chopra have already taken 12 massage sessions between us at Grego. Like Gail, Renu is very impressed by the magic touch of Dr Shyla's strong hands. For men like me, the massage therapist at Grego is Mr Prasad Thariyan (he also works for USPS). He was trained as a certified



Mammottil Mathew, who runs Grego, flanked by his therapists, Prasad Thariyan, and Dr Shyla Mathew.

Ayurvedic Therapist by Nagarjuna Ayurveda of Kerala and is good too. He usually sings a Krishna bhajan stanza in Malayalam before starting treatment for auspicious outcome.

What I find good is that hot potli massage (some herbs or horsegram, or other ingredients wrapped in a piece of cloth) is part of the regular massage at Grego. Each massage session lasts more than an hour fol-

lowed by steam bath for another 15-20 minutes. Exiting the spacious Grego premises, you feel as if walking on air. Mathew also talks highly of the benefits of the Infrared sauna for detoxification and overall well-being, an enclosure for which he has created in a separate room.

He tells us that Ayurveda practice is limited in scope in America, where so far it is not recognized as a medical system (except maybe in California). "So we can recommend and prescribe 'supplements'." WHO, of course, accepts Ayurveda as a traditional system of medicine.

When asked about the center's name, Mathew says that it is dedicated to St. Gregorios (1847-1902) of Parumala in Kerala, who was later canonized by Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, and recognized so by the Syrian Orthodox Church. He is also revered for spreading education in Kerala.

For more details contact Mr Mammottil Mathew 516280 6890, 516 784 9500 Or 516 698 4420, gregoyayurveda@gmail.com, or Visit www.gregomassage.com

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