

EAT, PRAY, LOVE: AN ENCOUNTER WITH KETUT LIYER IN BALI

During our spring vacation to Bali, I had the opportunity to meet with Ketut Liyer, a 9th generation healer in Bali, who was an inspiration for Elizabeth Gilbert's novel Eat Pray Love.

Bali is a beautiful tropical island located in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago. The Balinese people are dedicated to beauty, art, music, worship and the growing of rice. The religion of Bali is Hindu. The entire rest of the Indonesian islands are Muslim. In the sixteenth century, the existing Hindu royalty of Java, along with their craftsmen and priests, escaped the violent Islamic uprising and fled to Bali. So everyone in Bali is descend from a king, priest or an artist. Some of the world's most beautiful art is produced in Bali. Colorful paintings and amazing sculptures are seen everywhere. Gorgeous, fine jewelry is produced in Bali and sold throughout the world.

Worship is a major part of Balinese life. Religious ceremonies are of extreme importance. Life is a constant offering of flowers and food at temples and at home and workplace shrines. Rituals must be performed five times a day or more. A typical Balinese woman spends one-third of her waking hours in ceremony preparation, participation, or cleanup. Beauty and color are revered and flowers are seen everywhere.

Our yoga tour was led by Jim Cramer of Bali Advisor, who has lived and studied in Bali for many years and speaks the language. With his knowledge we were able to see a very personal side of Bali and participate in their sacred ways in many special settings. Helen McGhee led us in daily yoga sessions that improved our body awareness as well.

Before my trip to Bali, I read Elizabeth Gilbert's Eat Pray Love, a humorous account of finding herself after a bad divorce by spending a year in Italy, India and Bali. Eat represents her four months in Italy, filling her void with food and pleasure while learning Italian. Pray is the four months spent at an Ashram in India in meditation and worship. Love is her four months finding peace and love in Bali.

Her journey is inspired by Ketut Liyer, who she meets two years earlier during a journalism trip to Bali regarding yoga vacations commissioned by a magazine. At the time of their meeting, she is a basket case, in constant worry, crying and not sleeping due to her divorce. Ketut gives her a drawing of a human figure with four legs and wild foliage of flowers and ferns in place of the head and with a smiling face drawn over the heart. He tells her she needs to be grounded like the four legs and use her heart instead of continually living in her head. Ketut is an exceptional artist and often uses his artistic abilities to make healing drawings. Upon departing he tells her she will return to Bali and study with him.

When she returned to Bali two years later, she had become centered after her meditative experiences in India. Ketut has difficulties recognizing her since she had transformed from worry and sorrow to joy and happiness. She spends the next four months assisting him, learning about his amazing healing ways. Their days were filled with local people bring small offerings for his treatments. He treated both physical and emotional ailments with herbs, drawings and advice.

Ketut Liyer was the name his grandfather gave him, meaning Bright Light. I first met Ketut Liyer with a Yoga tour group of 15 people in Ubud, Bali. He has an impressive aura of calm, peaceful friendliness. Gilbert describes him as Yoda, the wise Jedi in Star Wars. Ketut is an ancient, tiny, warm man, smiling with two remaining upper

front teeth. The rest of his teeth are broken at the gum line. He showed our group some of his healing sketches and ancient ledgers filled with tiny Balinese Sanskrit, writing of healing knowledge that had been passed down through generations. He described his life path from renowned artist to healer. He had rebelled against his 9 generations of healing duty and became an artist, much to his father and grandfather's disappointment. But around age 30, Ketut had a terrible accidental burn of his painting arm, and the doctors wanted to amputate. During a dream that night, his grandfather came to him and told him to rub certain herbs on his arm. He did as his dream told and was able to save his arm with full function. From that day, he dedicated his life to healing others.

I was in awe of his guru-like calm presence, but was bothered by his poor dental appearance and health. I arranged a private meeting with him a few days later with an interpreter. In her book, Gilbert relates that Ketut's only regret in life is his poor dental condition and that he is afraid to have his teeth fixed. I was intrigued to meet this dental compromised healer. The healer in me wanted to see if I could help him. My goal was to find out what was keeping him from dental treatment. I guess dental fear is worldwide.

Next week I will describe my intimate meeting with Ketut Liyer.

Enjoy Life and Keep Smiling!

George Malkemus has had a Family and Cosmetic Dental Practice in Rohnert Park for over 23 years at 2 Padre Parkway, Suite 200. Call 585-8595, or email info@malkemusdds.com. Visit Dr. Malkemus' Web site at <http://www.malkemusdds.com> for past articles.

EAT PRAY LOVE: AN ENCOUNTER WITH KETUT LIYER IN BALI

Last week I described my trip to Ubud, Bali, where I met Ketut Liyer, a 9th generation healer. Elizabeth Gilbert described Ketut Liyer, whose name means "bright light", in her novel Eat Pray Love. Through his help, she was able to become centered and happy. Ketut has a guru-like calm, warm presence. However, he has only two remaining upper front teeth. The rest of his teeth are broken at the gumline. He regrets his poor dental health, but was afraid to go to the dentist. The healer in me wanted to see if I could help him. My goal was to find out what was keeping him from dental treatment. So I arranged a private meeting with him using an interpreter. The description of our intimate meeting follows.

I brought an offering of flowers and small amount of money, wearing a respectful traditional Balinese sarong. We bowed cordially. Ketut had me sit intimately close to him on the ground in front of an altar, knee-to-knee and face-to-face. I began by asking about his dental condition. He was initially taken a back; surprised that I was interested in his dental ailment. Up to that point, people had always come seeking his help and healing powers only. I explained that in my culture I was a healer of the mouth and that his dental condition concerned me. I asked if he was in pain. He replied only rarely and that he controls the pain with a paste of herbs when necessary. However, his chewing ability was limited and he eats soft foods consisting mostly of rice once a day.

Next I inquired about his fear of dental treatment. What concerns were keeping him from seeking care? His concerns were three fold. First he was concerned about the

cost. He said he has many financial responsibilities, including presently putting his granddaughter through medical school. I often hear cost as an obstacle to dental treatment. Sometimes it is an actual financial condition that prevents seeking treatment. But often times, I find that cost is an excuse that is hiding a deeper reason, usually fear.

Next he stated that he wanted to keep his remaining teeth. He was concerned that a dentist would want to pull all his remaining teeth. This is likely considering his teeth's poor visual condition. This second worry leads to his third concern, which was underlining the first two. He was worried about his medical condition related to the risk of having extractions. He thought he might have complication with surgery, because he might have diabetes. I asked when he last had a medical physical and he stated that he has never had one. I explained that before any dental treatment, he should have a medical check-up. And that even if he has diabetes, as long as it is under control, there should be no complications with dental treatment, even extractions.

Even after our discussion, he still seemed unconvinced and unlikely to seek dental treatment; he wanted to move on to studying me. I tried one last attempt to emphasize the importance of dental health. I explained that in western medicine, it had been shown that infections in the mouth could spread throughout the body through the blood stream and cause other ailments like heart disease and diabetes. I explained that his diabetes could improve if he got his mouth in good health. Ketut said that he would consider what I had explained to him.

We then changed gears and he did an examination of me. In his presences, I could feel a powerful joyous energy. Ketut studied my eyes, nose, jaw and shape of my head. He saw wisdom, positive energy and calmness. He notices the dimple in my chin, like Kurt Douglas, and said I had the power to attract many women. I joked that is why I grew a beard, so I would only have one lady in my life, my loving wife Mary Alice. He laughed and said that I showed much wisdom.

Ketut then read my palm. Everything was very positive. I would live a long, happy life. The happy life is definitely true; I am very blessed. He predicted that I had two sons, which is also true, Sam and Don. Ketut then had me turn around and studied my back. He saw the image of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and creativity. He described in detail her calming wisdom.

In closing, Ketut offered me a beautiful framed picture of Saraswati that he had drawn and blessed. In his drawing, Saraswati is depicted with four arms. Her left rear hand holds a white lotus, representing purity and knowledge. The lotus flower is revered in Hinduism since it grows in the three essential elements, roots in the ground, stock in water and flower in the air. Saraswati's right rear hand holds a rosary signifying spiritual concentration, meditation and contemplation. The Goddess is shown holding a flute in her left front hand, denoting creativity and conveying the tuning of the mind in order to live in harmony. Her left front hand holds a scroll representing the importance of learning and knowledge. I presently have Ketut Liyer's picture of Saraswati hanging in my kitchen. I use her gaze for moments of calming and remembering my meeting with him.

Upon parting, Ketut said he would get a medical exam and then wanted me to fix his teeth, due to my positive healing energy. He asked, "How long are you staying in Bali?" I told him that I was leaving the next day and that he should come to Rohnert Park, California. Traveling to America seemed out of the question; he had never left

Ubud. He was obliged to stay due to his dedicated duty to heal his daily patients. And besides as he stated to Elizabeth Gilbert in her book, “Don’t have enough teeth to travel on airplane.” So I recommended he seek treatment from Doctor Gigi, the Balinese name for dentist. I am hoping to follow up on his progress and have yet to hear anything.

Enjoy Life and Keep Smiling!

George Malkemus has had a Family and Cosmetic Dental Practice in Rohnert Park for over 23 years at 2 Padre Parkway, Suite 200. Call 585-8595, or email info@malkemusdds.com. Visit Dr. Malkemus’ Web site at <http://www.malkemusdds.com> for past articles.