

HEALING, WITHIN AND WITHOUT

BY ROMY ANTONETTE PEÑA

WE live in the age of iPods, laptops and everything instant. People are always rushing to get from one place to another, carrying wireless gadgets to make our lives easier. The only thing that could slow us down is when our body's defenses weaken and we get sick. A quick trip to the doctor and a prescription later, we are back on track.

However, when doctors fail to determine the cause of our sickness and test results come back normal, it's interesting to know that there's a form of medicine dating back to 5,000 years that might help us get the answer.

Ayurveda—from the Sanskrit terms *ayus*, meaning life; and *veda* meaning knowledge or science—is an ancient healing system concerned with holistic well-being—physical, mental, spiritual. It is a lifestyle program that includes learning how to eat, how to exercise and how to take medicine made from natural sources like plants and minerals.

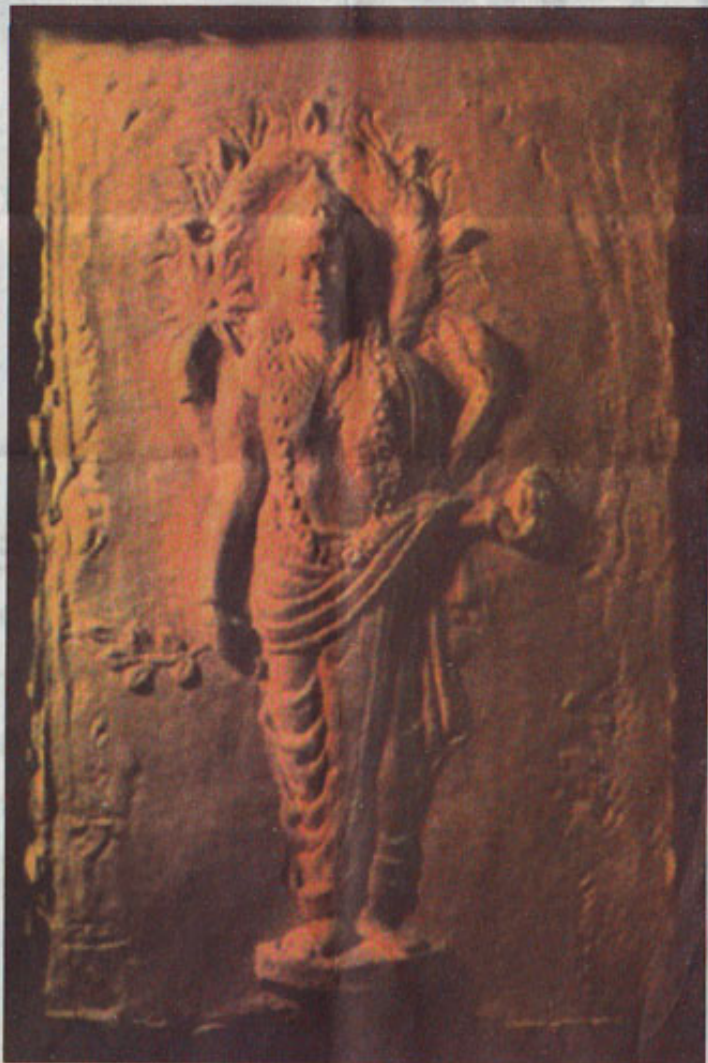
In the Philippines Rev. Fr. Jacob Gnaliam is the only person practicing Ayurveda. Hailing from Kerala, a southern state in India considered to be the center of Ayurveda, Father Gnaliam studied the discipline while in the seminary.

In 1984 Father Gnaliam came to the Philippines to do parish work and pursue higher studies in philosophy and theology. While on a mission in San Pablo, Laguna, he completed an MA degree in Oriental religions and cultures at the University of Santo Tomas.

"At that time I had some medicine for personal use and for my friends, but we couldn't import the medicine yet," Father Gnaliam says. In 2001 he established the Sandhi Ayurveda Clinic in Mandaluyong with the help of the late Rudy de la Rama. Sandhi is a research center and health-care facility that "offers cure for diseases which conventional medicine has not effectively cured," and aims "to provide a health-care program for those who cannot afford other forms of medical treatment due to their high cost."

Ayurveda provides a different approach in diagnosing illnesses and ailments. "The Western approach looks at the symptoms and treats them. The Ayurvedic approach doesn't stop there but looks at the root cause of the symptoms," Father Gnaliam explains.

The Ayurvedic treatment has three



On the whole Ayurveda is an ancient healing system concerned with holistic well-being.

stages: detoxification, healing and rejuvenation. "The first stage is detoxification, because many of the ailments are caused by accumulation of the toxins of the body. The rejuvenation stage helps the person become strong and healthier," he says. These stages also involve various practices, including massage, emetics, oil treatment, steam baths, breathing exercises and yoga.

In the detoxification and healing stages, *sirovasthi*, a head oil therapy, is administered to treat cataract, earache, deafness and ailments of the cranial nerves. There is also the *sirodhara*, or the

Ayurvedic oil drop therapy, involving a pot of oil dripping on your forehead to treat diseases of the head and eyes, sinusitis and insomnia.

The patients are also given medicines as part of the treatment. "All medicines we use here are imported from India. They are cleared by the BFAD. Our medicines are categorized as herbal medicine and not as food supplement."

All from natural sources and mainly composed of different herbs, they are compounded in different proportions to prepare the medicine for a specific ailment. These medicines could be taken along with the medicines prescribed by other doctors and bought in the local drugstore. "Our medicine has no side effects, only side benefits," Father Gnaliam said.

Diseases that are successfully cured by Ayurveda include arthritis, asthma, cataract eye problems, diabetes, dysmenorrhea, high blood, kidney stone, myoma/tumor, menopause and skin allergies. "It is not a lifetime treatment. Even diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, even psoriasis, all these are curable," Father Gnaliam shares.

At present, there are many patients that are being treated at the Panchakarma Center, which opened on April 10, 2007, as part of the Sandhi Ayurveda Clinic. In these fast times, maybe a trip to the Panchakarma Center is just what we need. As Father Gnaliam puts it, "If you want to have a safe treatment, become younger, more beautiful and have a peaceful long life, Ayurveda is the best."

■ The Panchakarma Center and Sandhi Ayurveda Clinic is at 613-B Lee Street, Mandaluyong City. For inquiries: 717-28-24 and (0910) 687-1406



A different approach Ayurveda provides a different approach in diagnosing illnesses and ailments. Here, Father Gnaliam attends to a patient.