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Vaidyagrama - Dec. 2017

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I recently made a trek from New Mexico to the south of India to spend 5 weeks at Vaidyagrama... my first time there. The pre-travel, what-do-I-take issue was looming strong, particularly in regard to my practice as an artist... translation: what materials do i take? paper, canvas, pencils, paint, brushes, what? how much? do i even take anything? what am i going for anyway... health or art? so many questions yielding so many hesitations - life as usual.

Reading the suggestions on the Vaidyagrama website and the value placed on rest and restoration confirmed what I already knew - that the less 'doing baggage' one brought the better. I was somewhat worried in advance that my history of fixation with art making might subtly (or not-so-subtly) lead me away from a direction of restoration and healing. I have always grappled with the aspect of art-making where one can identify so closely with the 'idea' of being an artist that it can sometimes interfere with other practices essential to life. I was edgy about bringing my identity as an artist to a place i was going to heal.

After some back and forth I settled for taking a fraction of the paper I first planned to. I trimmed down to a couple of pencils, a small rubber roller and a tube of block printing ink. In addition i made an agreement with myself - no artwork at all... or at least not to push in that direction if there wasn't a clear impulse to work which felt natural to the panchakarma process. Good deal I thought... at least a workable guideline.

Somewhere during my second week of treatment I started tuning into the incredible range of foliage at Vaidyagrama - certain leaf shapes and their veining stood out and, as always, the more one looks the more one sees. I took a leaf back to my room, applied ink with the rubber roller and pressed it onto a sheet of paper. A beautiful

graphic leaf impression appeared. I liked it... simple and fun and far enough away from what I considered my own artwork that I didn't engage in the concepts of good or bad, success or failure. With no plan other than to follow the delight of that small experience I continued - a little bit each day or not at all. What followed were short, flurried, fun sessions with ink, roller and leaves coupled with no commitment to my own history.... I was in a happy zone. I worked quickly and kept things simple and unplanned. The beauty of it was the spontaneity with which it unfolded - for me it felt completely in sync with my purpose for being at Vaidyagrama.

The take-away was the re-remembering that there is a source for the creation and making of 'things' that is not only guided by the mind. As I worked I always knew what to do even though I had no plan other than to print a leaf but I found my aesthetic impulses trustworthy and free flowing... no dreaded artistic drought. Quite a relief to experience again the ease with which an act of creation can percolate from within one's Self. It all cycled back to a simple and basic experience yielding an unexpected and precious perk. I am thankful for an environment that allowed this to unfold as it did. As well I also congratulate myself for allowing this creative unfolding to be part of the healing process on it's own terms.





