



Cedar Tree Coaching

KAMBO

Just over a year ago my siblings and I suffered a double family bereavement. Around the same time I was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer - all of which explains why this blog has gone quiet for some time. I didn't much care for that word 'advanced', as it left me feeling that something had stolen up on me at my most vulnerable and gained some yards at my expense. Nor could I take in much else of what the urologist was telling me. My wife had come with me to the hospital, anticipating just this. Shock is not conducive to understanding, and my available processing capacity was already low. But there was something about the certainty of his view and the non-empathic delivery of it that conveyed the sense of a net closing around me. I wasn't even allowed the indulgence of staying in my own trance for a few days, where I could entertain other imaginary, happier possibilities. As a result I felt resentful of what seemed like an assault from the medical rulebook – a dark cloud summoned up to blot out the more hopeful, life-giving, integrated ways many of us try and live by. Since our physiology is so manifestly intertwined with our emotional and psychological states it seemed cruel that the one chosen to pass on such bleak news either did not share or was not trained to be aware of this fundamental perspective. But anger has its uses. So I went to work.

Not in an office sense, of course, but I looked at how I could get myself a foothold, cling to the rockface, stop being blown about in the gale, and haul my way up to a place where I at least had a broader and more hopeful view than the one I had been sent home from hospital with. I felt an acute need to get active, to make decisions which could give me back some sense of influence on whatever was 'advancing' within. But more than that I felt the need to reach out, for the first time in my life, and ask for help from within my circle of friends, family and colleagues. I am extraordinarily grateful for all those special people who helped me in the areas of psychotherapy, nutrition and diet, shopping, remote healing, companionship, walks with neighbours on Tooting Common, those who prayed for me every single day for months, friends who shared their own recovery stories, or who introduced me to options that I didn't know I had while also helping me understand the nature of my illness from a medical point of view.

Amazonian Frog secretions will probably not be at the top of anyone's list of complementary remedies when it comes to cancer. But that wasn't the purpose of my signing up for a set of 6 treatments. I was looking to exchange the western medical container, which I was experiencing as unsafe or non-resonant, for something I could trust. It helped that I had known shamans Davina MacKail and Nizami Elé for many years, so I had a strong intuitive sense that, even though I was stepping into the unknown with this healing modality, they would take very good care of me (as they had done so for many others) in their ritual space down in the Garden of England. Being held in this way was a significant first step – even though sitting down was uncomfortable for the first two sessions because of my sore left pelvic area.

A year on from the eye of the storm I have returned to Kambo this month, so this blog post is written with the perspective gleaned from 7 sessions. The first thing to be said is how remarkably different they have all been. Yet the welcome, starting with the pick-up from the station, is the same as ever.



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The Friday clinics are popular so there are always others to share the experience with along with butternut squash or cauliflower soup downstairs an hour or two later. But we begin with the ritual opening of space, the prayers spoken and then sung to Dr Kambo of the Amazon and copious wafting of sage. As someone who, in psychotherapy training, used to ground himself through the stories of others, I find the openness with which the individual diagnostic dialogue is conducted in the room both touching and affirming. We are all present as souls in bodies, with differing needs which are acknowledged openly rather than whispered or kept shamefully hidden. After this each client is given a treatment plan which involves a certain number of ‘points’ being agreed upon and the sites at which, according to the chakra and meridian system, these are to be marked on the body. These points are created by little burns from an incense stick and the frog secretions are then pasted onto them with a small hunting knife, then tidied up with a cloth. You are asked to drink a couple of litres of water and then await the onset of the Fire Phase.

As a western person, I am familiar with the detached observer part of me which likes to stand to the side – sometimes positioning himself on higher ground – in order to critically evaluate the unfamiliar. In this instance – my very first session – I found myself rapidly out-observed by an unseen force which sped through me from my abdomen and raced up to my head where it set up camp, rifling through the folders and files and hard drive that constitute my brain. But this was not a chaotic ransacking of my inner domains but a relentless, forensic search for the individual hallmarks of my consciousness. Who is this person? What are his mindsets, beliefs, convictions, patterns of being? How is he integrated? What is the quality of his consciousness? In other words, where is he at? What are his needs? How can we work with him? While all this is happening the Fire Phase is in full swing. My head is hotter than I have ever known it and blood is pumping at a furious pace, audibly thumping through my temples. There is so much going on and it’s so utterly riveting there’s no way I can faint, as the guy opposite me has just done. As he is gently revived, all of a sudden the force withdraws as rapidly as it stole in, my head returns to its normal temperature and I am left to contemplate the enormity of what has just happened.

Kambo is seen by its adherents as a spirit. Having had quite a wide range of experiences of ‘non-ordinary consciousness’ over the years, I can safely say I’ve never had anything like that! The sense of being thoroughly ‘checked out’ felt very definitely like there was something or someone in there, going to work on me. At the same time I did not feel invaded or threatened by this. The energy had felt deeply conscious, extremely focussed on finding whatever it was looking for, and seemed to have only my best interests at heart – a sort of wise, collaborative presence, but with no time to waste. So why should it not be a spirit? Of course in the western world we have for the past few centuries become conditioned to be highly sceptical towards the existence of spirits, and equally hostile to the idea that Nature is alive or at some level conscious. But in the everyday language of the humble pub the link to that world persists. Gin, rum, vodka and whisky are all described as ‘spirits’. This is not an accident. In other older cultures than our own, alcohol and indeed tobacco and cannabis are understood to be – and related to as – actual spirits. By imbibing whisky one is embarking on a relationship with that



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particular spirit, which brings challenges as well as a temporarily reordered consciousness. Native American society was infamously targeted by the English settlers and their weapon of choice was a bottle. Alcohol, which previously had been confined to ritualised occasions, was suddenly available at large; the spirit was let loose from its sacred container. Community fell apart. We could try remembering this next time we reach for that gin and tonic at the end of the working day. But in our culture we have determinedly split off from connecting to that other spirit within. In thrall to the 'brand', we miss the lower-lying context. One definition of an *oversight* is we see what we think 'matters' – the material level – while our gaze is misdirected upwards, entirely missing what lies beneath.

But back to the Kambo. That first time, despite the huge experience, I had been nervous and rather too much in my head. The second time I was physically too wobbly to have more than a basic treatment. But just being in that sacred container was what I needed. I let go, overcome by all the unexpressed grief, fear, anger of the past few weeks. I have rarely let myself be that vulnerable. But I was held. Being able to be present in that way allowed me to welcome in the Kambo. Later at home that evening I could feel the areas of bone pain were being worked over again, jangling every 2-3 minutes. It was strange and perturbing to be in more and different pain now than earlier. What could that signify? But within a month all the pain had gone.

I reflected on what is known of Kambo, that it is composed of 139 peptides and has the remarkable ability to pass through the cell wall, like a sort of shape-shifting secret agent. Kambo is a so-called bioactive substance, detoxifying as it goes and refreshing beleaguered cells with its conveyor belt of information-packed peptides. It does not give you a psycho-active experience, as plant medicines will tend to do, but at the psychophysical level there is much going on. This was the level that I was hoping to engage with the frog at. I knew I had stuff to release so the psychophysical act of purging had never seemed more attractive to me!

It is also said that when you are ready for Kambo it will call you. This was certainly true for me. Just before my elder son's 23rd birthday I was rummaging around for the card I had bought for him a couple of months earlier, and to my delight found it featured a cheeky but resplendent frog. Also a friend had come round for lunch and Scrabble in January, bringing with him the unlikely present of a frog candle. Both these little synchronicities occurred shortly before my first treatment. So when I stepped across the Kambo threshold the very first time on 16 February, it already felt so right to be there.

All of this matters because in the days and weeks following a serious health diagnosis there is a great need to find a safe space in which one can do clear thinking, in which one can actually hear one's inner voices, whether timid and fearful, pained or resolute. The good news about prostate cancer once it's spread to the bones is you (almost always) have time. Talk of 'catching it early' or whipping out the gland is redundant! So I felt better able to use that time, push back on the biopsies and hospital timetables, until I was in touch with what was recognisably my inner core. This would enable me to get right behind every decision I made about my health.



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Kambo requires a little bit of courage and endurance, just enough to take one to a place of creative discomfort, of fear of unfamiliar feelings and hidden processes. Questions arise: Why am I here? Why am I putting myself through this? But, quite honestly, if we are not asking ourselves these questions every month then are we really living? To distract the mind and immerse us in the ceremony Nizami sings songs from the forest, or turns his frog rattle, encouraging us to keep with the breathing protocol while, as the Water Phase sets in, extending some tissues and another glass of water to facilitate the next purge.

So to this week's 7th session, after a 9 month break. The last time I had been in the room I had found myself purging, not through either end, but in a series of uncontrollable, spasmic movements through my pelvic region – the colonial capital of my illness. The room, with its altar full of forest beings, talismans and trinkets spread out on the floorboards, seemed just the same but the person I was on the inside felt significantly different. And here I was returning, having spent 4 of the past 7 months away in Tuscany. There at a tiny clinic I had been privileged to receive a beautifully conceived form of PEMF therapy, in which one is encircled in sequences of low EM frequencies, which correspond with those found on Planet Earth at locations known to deliver the highest human life expectancy. Surely the frog would not know any of this! And yet, after an unusually slow-burning start to my session, the last 15 minutes involved what I can only describe as a deeply soothing vibrational therapy in which my skeletal system was given a vigorous yet gentle massage. It was as if I was being given a welcome back present of PEMF – Kambo style!

I smile as I write these words, and shake my head. It is early days and scans show my illness has not advanced further since my second Kambo treatment in March of last year. It's even backed off a bit. Though I cannot state with any certainty which of the various natural approaches can take the credit for this, what I can say from my brief but intense experience with Kambo is that something enters in, connects at a visceral, personal level, communicates, directs healing energies in a focussed way and in so doing liberates the healing power of the imagination. And that is a rare gift to anyone in need.

For those wishing to enquire further visit www.kambo.world or contact nizami@kambo.world

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