



ROYAL Temptation

With its exotic rituals and a Mughal hamam, Kaya Kalp spells regal luxury. **BY PALLAVI PASRICHA**

IT HAS been an eventful year for Kaya Kalp—The Royal Spa—at ITC Mughal, Agra. Since its inception last year it has won many awards and international recognitions including *Tatler's* Best City Spa award 2008. Eager to experience why it has invoked such accolades so early on its existence, I leave on a balmy summer morning for Agra.

I arrived at its tall entrance door after walking down a long bridge surrounded by landscaped gardens. The moment I entered this red and white world, with the scent of lemongrass wafting in the air, my jangled city nerves began tingling with anticipation of being totally indulged and soothed. I realise the spa is not called 'royal' without a reason. It could have been a palace in the Mughal era with its massive wooden doors, mirror work, fountains, gardens and bold impressions of pomegranate on the terrazzo floor.

Remember when you were a baby and mommy did all things for you?

Well at ITC Mughal in Agra, Kaya Kalp takes over that role. At least that is what I felt when I entered the Royal Mughal Hamam. Having no idea of what was in store, I was led to a marble room where I was asked to lie down on a warm marble slab. Soon I was drenched with hot and cold water, bathed, soaped, scrubbed, and massaged by my therapist King from Chiang Mai. I have to agree that being in a room full of steam for 100 minutes was no child's play, but when I came out, my skin felt baby soft.

I could not help notice the rose petals strewn everywhere in this vast spa that spreads across 99,000 sq ft. I even found them on the tray in which I was served green tea with an unusual accompaniment, *aam papad*. It a tangy twist to this otherwise healthy drink.

Taking inspiration from the Mughal fruit, which is the theme of the spa, I chose to go for the Exotic Pomegranate Journey. In the spa suite called Ruby, my therapist



started with a traditional foot bath, dipping my feet in a bowl of water. An exotic exfoliation ritual with pomegranate and sugar body scrub was followed by a shower in an open air enclosure. It felt a bit weird, but then I thought, when does one ever get a chance to bathe under the sky with sunrays touching your skin.

That was not the end of my rendezvous with water. What followed was a 20-minute heavenly spell of relaxation when I sipped freshly squeezed pomegranate juice and nibbled fresh fruits lying in a bathtub sprinkled with a few drops pomegranate body lotion, fruit essence and rose petals.

Aah, this was sinful. I felt utterly spoilt and indulged, but there was more to come. I stepped out of the bath tub only to be taken for the Kaya Kalp signature massage—a combination of aromatherapy, Swedish and Thai massage. The sweet aroma of lime and ginger oil that was kneaded into my body revived me completely and extracted every ounce of remaining fatigue.

Now that should have been enough, but I gave into the temptation of going in for the recently introduced hot stone massage. It was a bit too hot to handle in this sizzling weather. The softness of palms and fingers gave way to warm stones that massaged every part of my body with therapeutic oil. Strangely enough, heat can do wonderful things to relax tired city bones. Indeed, a visit to this spa is a complete healing journey. For details call (0562) 402 1700 or visit www.itcwelcomgroup.in

