

MEDITATION

MAGAZINE

winter 2019-2020

FEATURING

Eric Adams, Jesse Israel,
Shinge Roshi, Trevor Hall,
Melini Jesudason, and
The Iceman, Wim Hof →

SEASONALLY

AFFECTIVE?

*Enjoy the cold
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with our special
winter meditations
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EXPLORE

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& meditations
in Bali, India,
& the Nepali
Himalayas!



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table of CONTENTS

INTERVIEWS

- 16. Trevor Hall
- 26. Wim Hof
- 40. Eric Adams
- 48. Jesse Israel & The Big Quiet
- 94. Shinge Roshi

TUTORIALS

- 4. Mantra: Be Here Now
- 6. From n00b to (zen) master
- 8. The Seven Chakras
- 95. Rinzai Zen Koans

ARTICLES

- 10. Nyepi: Bali's Meditative Day
- 34. Featured Yogini: Melini
- 56. From India To Everest

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namaste!

And welcome to the first nationally published issue of Meditation Magazine!

We are grateful, proud and excited to have the opportunity to present to you this work of our hands, hearts, minds, and spirits. We hope it is both funkadelic & enlightening, entertaining & informative.

We've scoured the globe for the world's foremost experts on meditation & enlightenment, and interviewed them on location, on video. Many of those videos can be found on our website, meditationmag.com. We've also included some simple meditation tutorials in the pages of this Meditation Magazine.

We hope we can be helpful in your quest for health, love, happiness and enlightenment, here on this ball of earth and sea and sky, spinning through space, circling the sun, in this vast and mysterious unknowable Universe.



Please recycle this magazine
by gifting it to a friend!

MONTHLY MANTRA: BE HERE NOW.

In 1963, Harvard psychologists Richard Alpert and Timothy Leary were fired from Harvard University for researching the effects of LSD and psilocybin. Leary went on to become one of the great pioneers of the psychedelic movement. Alpert, on the other hand, went on a journey into the heart of the Himalayas.

In northern India, Richard Alpert met an american hippie named Bhagavan Dass, and Indian guru Neem Karoli Baba (Maharaj-ji). By the time Alpert returned to the United States, he had a new name - Ram Dass - and a new mantra:

Be here now.

Being here now is about living in the present moment.

The past is gone. The future is in your imagination. The present moment, on the other hand, is alive.

Here are now -- this place and time -- is the only point in the space-time continuum where you can directly experience and interact with the Universe, Existence, yourself and your loved ones.

Whenever you find yourself getting sucked into thoughts about the past or the future, just remember:

Be here now.



BE
HERE
NOW

MEDITATION BOARD

Whether you're a n00b or a zen master, these meditation tips and techniques can help you deepen your practice and reach profound states of consciousness.

Meditation For Beginners

One of the simplest meditations you can practice is called "mindfulness of breathing." It was invented thousands of years ago by the Buddha, Siddhartha Guatama.

All you have to do is observe the sensations of your body as it breathes.

Notice your body breathing, right here, right now.

Your body is inhaling and exhaling naturally, right now, in this moment. You don't need to change anything. You don't need to control your breathing. Just observe the sensations in your nostrils and your torso as the air flows in and out.

Close your eyes, and observe for ten to fifteen minutes.

Intermediate Meditation: Samadhi

By watching your breath, you become more aware of the wandering mind. Every time the mind wanders, you notice the wandering, and bring it back to the breath. Through this pocess, you become more aware of your mind's tendency to wander, your attention becomes sharper, and you gain the ability to remain concentrated in a single experience.

The next step is to deepen that concentration, to a point where the mind stops wandering, and rests comfortably in the breath. This state of deep concentration, which the ancient Buddhists called "**samadhi**," is restful for the brain, blissfully pleasurable, and gives rise to the experience of Oneness.

Focus more intently on the the breathing, so that the mind does not wander.

Stay in the flow for 20-30 minutes.

Advanced Meditations

As you sit in the bliss of Samadhi, you will begin to encounter some profoundly "spiritual" states that can be hard to describe in words. You will experience, firsthand, the basic Oneness of the Universe. You will experience states of joy, satisfaction, and equanimity that you'd never known you could access before. You can access all of these through the Intermediate Samadhi meditation.

But if you **actively** try to "get to" these experiences, they will not arise. They arise when you **stop trying** to get anywhere, and fully inhabit the here & now.

Therefore, one of the most difficult, advanced meditation techniques requires you to actually stop "trying to meditate" and literally just sit and do nothing. Shikantaza - literally translated as "just sitting" - is a form of meditation that was popular in the ancient Japanese school of Soto Zen. Try it now, for 30min.

Don't try to meditate. Don't try to **do** anything.

Just... sit.

FOR MORE TUTORIALS



meditationmag.com/tutorials

THE SEVEN CHAKRAS

Woo, science, or something else entirely?

If you're hoping to find glowing balls of colored light in your next MRI scan, you might be disappointed. But if you know where to look (hint: try closing your eyes), the chakras can be felt, experienced, understood, and even healed.

Rather than thinking of chakras as physical body parts, think of them more as the mind-body energy centers. Starting to sound woo-woo? Let's bring it down to earth with some concrete examples. Fill in the blanks with the corresponding body parts:

- I can **imagine** it in my _____.
- The **words** are caught in my _____.
- I **love** you from the bottom of my _____.

While modern skeptics like to think of everything as either "woo-woo" or "science," chakras transcend this type of categorization. They are a framework for awakening to the bodily manifestations of seven powerful aspects of the human experience. By meditating on the chakras, you can become more aware of the bodily sensations of those experiences, relax places where you're "blocking" or "resisting," and let the energy of life flow unobstructed, naturally and powerfully, through your body.

Photo by Asmiana



guided chakra video

Sahasrara: the crown chakra
Spirituality & connection with the Universe.

Agnir: the third-eye chakra
Awareness, thoughts, ideas & imagination.

Vishudhi: the throat chakra
Communication & honesty

Anahata: the heart chakra
Love, empathy and compassion

Manipura: the solar plexus chakra
Power & wisdom

Swadishtana: the sacral chakra
Sexuality & sensuality

Muladhara: the root chakra
Survival

NYEPI

Bali's Day of Silence



A terrifying Ogoh Ogoh towers over a crowd of revelers in Ubud, Bali. Balinese youths spend months building these demons, from papier mache and other materials, in clubs and schools. On Nyepi (new year's) eve, the lights go out on the island, and the Ogoh Ogoh come out to play. The demons are paraded through the streets, cheered, jeered, broken, and eventually burned in communal bonfires.

After a cathartic night of confronting, fighting, and burning their demons, the Balinese spend the next day in silent meditation.

Noise and lights are strictly prohibited.

Everyone (aside from the "Nyepi Police") is expected to stay home and meditate.

Even walking in the street can land you in "Nyepi jail."

BALINESE HINDUISM

Hinduism is the world's third largest religion, with over 1.15 billion followers. Founded over three thousand years ago on the Indian subcontinent, Hindu cultures and traditions have spread through dozens of countries

archipelago of Indonesia on the boats of sea-faring merchants from southern India. Indonesian royal families adopted the Hindu spiritual traditions, which soon spread throughout the archipelago, merging in fascinating ways with the region's indigenous animist religions.

NYEPI

According to legend, the silent day of Nyepi is intended to ward off evil spirits. Hearing no noise, the spirits assume that Bali is devoid of life, and leave the island in peace. It may seem like an ancient myth, but it has profound spiritual meaning.



Photo: Aditya Agarwal



around the world. Naturally, a great deal of cultural variation has evolved in these far-flung pockets of Hindu civilization.

Around two thousand years ago, in the first century CE, Hinduism came to the tropical

Through this process of cultural diffusion, some of the world's most exotic and unique Hindu traditions have evolved on Indonesia's remote and relatively isolated island of Bali. Of these traditions, Nyepi is among the most fascinating & beautiful.

In the abject darkness of Nyepi eve, the Balinese confront their most terrifying demons. As the Ogoh-Ogoh "dance," participants literally laugh and play in the face of terror. After burning their demons in a communal bonfire, the catharsis concludes with a full day of silent meditation.



BALI

The Last Hindu Island in Indonesia

For most of the common era, Indonesia was one of the largest Hindu civilizations in the world. But in the fifteenth century, Muslim invaders conquered most of Indonesia, and the archipelago fell to the Islamic Empire.

Of Indonesia's 16,000+ islands, only Bali has retained its Hindu heritage to this day.

Ubud, Bali:
A massive Ogoh Ogoh
demon breathes green
laser-fire through a cloud
of purple smoke, on Nyepi
Eve, 2018.

While the holiday of Nyepi goes back thousands of years, the tradition of building Ogoh Ogoh has only evolved over the past few decades.

School children and adults all get in on the festivities, building Ogoh Ogoh demons with their schools, friends, business associates and community groups.

Originally made of papier-mache, modern Ogoh Ogoh incorporate animatronics, lasers, colored lights and smoke machines.



Photo by Kevin Ellerton

interviewing TREVOR HALL

by Jovanna Benavente

It was a cold and dreary evening in Williamsburg, when we arrived at the Warsaw Theater to interview Trevor Hall.

I was there as the social media manager for Meditation Magazine – to take photos, post Instagram stories, and help coordinate the recording of the interview. But beneath the surface, my inner fangirl was brimming with anxiety and excitement. Trevor has been my musical hero, my role model, my spirit guide, since I was fourteen years old.

There's a common bit of wisdom that goes something like "never meet your heroes, for they are sure to disappoint you." This was the fear that was gnawing at my diaphragm for weeks before the interview. But as soon as we stepped into the green room at the Warsaw, to the warm smiles and southern hospitality of Trevor's mom and dad (who had come to see the show); as soon as Trevor sauntered in from the hallway, cracking jokes with the humble vibe and easy smile of a long-loved friend, I knew that everything would be OK.

Trevor's not just another egocentric musician, trying to get rich and look cool and be a rockstar. He hasn't followed the standard trajectory for a celebrity of his renown; his path has been fundamentally different. Trevor has risen, miraculously, through humility, rather than ego; through spirit, rather than ambition; through love, rather than aggression. I listened, enthralled, as he began to tell his story.

Leaving his childhood home of South Carolina at the tender age of sixteen, Trevor moved to California to pursue his passion for music. It was there, in the dorm room of his friend and musical partner Sam Marcus, that young Trevor first glimpsed a photo of his guru, Neem Karoli Baba.

Seeing that photo, Trevor explained, was the moment that set in motion the journey that has brought him to where he is today.

"In India they say: 'A moment with the Beloved and the river changes its course,'" Trevor reminisced, as we sat looking out at the dwindling twilight of Brooklyn. "That [the moment of seeing the photo of Maharaj-ji] was kind of the moment where my river changed course.

"I fell in love with this Being, and I had no idea why. It was just an internal connection. And when you love someone, naturally, you want to love what they love and you want to know everything about them, you know?"

"So because he was from India, this Saint, I wanted to know about India. And because he chanted Ram, I wanted to know, what is this Ram? Everything he loved I wanted to love, and it was pretty much there that my path started; based on my love for this being."

It was just a few years later that Trevor made his first pilgrimage to India and immersed himself in an unfamiliar culture, that somehow felt more familiar, more like home, than anywhere else in the world.

Along his spiritual journey through India and Nepal, on his musical tours around the globe, Trevor has produced beautiful, deeply spiritual music that has reached millions of fans around the world. And that's the music he still plays today. It's the music he played on the stage after our interview, to a packed (and highly enthusiastic) hall at the Warsaw Theater.

I've been listening to Trevor Hall's music religiously for more than a decade; his melodies and poetry have carried me through my darkest days. I consider myself graced by God to have had his influence in my life as I was becoming my own person, working through my personal traumas as a young adult.

I remember the moment when I first heard his music. I was fourteen years old. My brother had connected his iPod to the car stereo, and Trevor's "Lime Tree" began to play. There was something in his voice that I recognized instantly in myself. A deep melancholy, a longing for something I couldn't quite name. As I started to listen to more of his music and found my way to some of his concerts, I realized on

an intuitive level that Trevor was doing the internal, spiritual work that I knew I needed to do. He was living his life in a way that resonated deeply with my own heart. I wanted to honor my Spirit and my calling in life, the way I saw Trevor honor his with his music.

Trevor's presence on stage is something special, something very different from any other musician I've seen. I remember seeing him walk out barefoot at The Culture Room in Fort Lauderdale when I was fifteen. I had a sprained foot, and I stood there with my crutches in awe. His stage is his place of worship, and when you get to witness this channel of music that he shares with the Divine, you just feel humbled to be there. I've seen him in concert nine times in ten years, and that feeling is what always brings me back.

When we walked up to the Warsaw on that dreary evening in March, I had honestly been afraid. A part of me didn't want to see what was "under the blanket," in fear that it was all an illusion. But Trevor was the epitome of grace. Honest about his shortcomings and his challenges as a human being, while beaming with love for God. Gentle in nature with the wisdom of someone far older, while maintaining his childlike curiosity and zest for life.

I feel so much gratitude, to not only have had the opportunity to sit down and get to know Trevor a little better, but to have had the Universe place him in my life when it did. I'm not sure what kind of human being I would have turned out to be without his influence, without the example he set for me.

Whether I'm listening to his music on the subway or live in concert — his music, his channel to God always brings me back to eternal, unconditional love.



Do you remember
When you looked in the water
And saw your reflection
The embers
They drew out a map
And they showed you direction
Your sender
Is far in the east
Where your heart is at peace
When you enter

**My love it's just a reminder
Find your center
My love it's just a reminder
Find your center
My love it's just a reminder
My love it's just a reminder
Find your center**

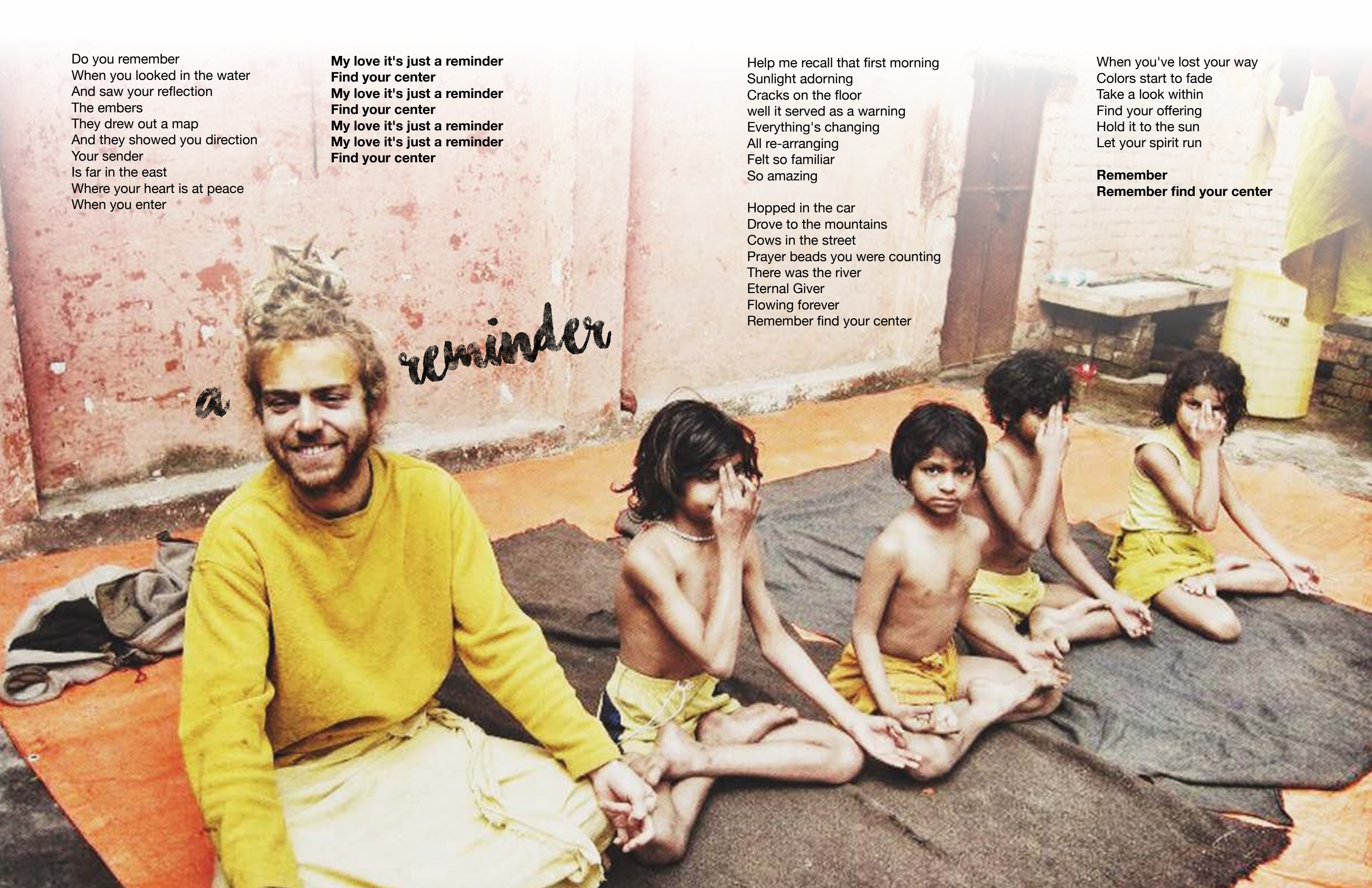
Help me recall that first morning
Sunlight adorning
Cracks on the floor
well it served as a warning
Everything's changing
All re-arranging
Felt so familiar
So amazing

Hopped in the car
Drove to the mountains
Cows in the street
Prayer beads you were counting
There was the river
Eternal Giver
Flowing forever
Remember find your center

When you've lost your way
Colors start to fade
Take a look within
Find your offering
Hold it to the sun
Let your spirit run

**Remember
Remember find your center**

a reminder



Spillin' out like water
Like the mountain gave a daughter
Surrender never felt so good
I grew it strong like a sacred wood
And now the roots are running deeper
All illusion getting weaker
You see, the wisdom
it don't come from reading
It comes from believing

**What I know, is that I don't know
And now I dance and I sing and I live full
I give it all to the call of the unknown
Aho**

**What I say is that I don't say
And now I rest no stress in the Holy Name
All fears and my tears give it all away
I play, like a child of the earth**

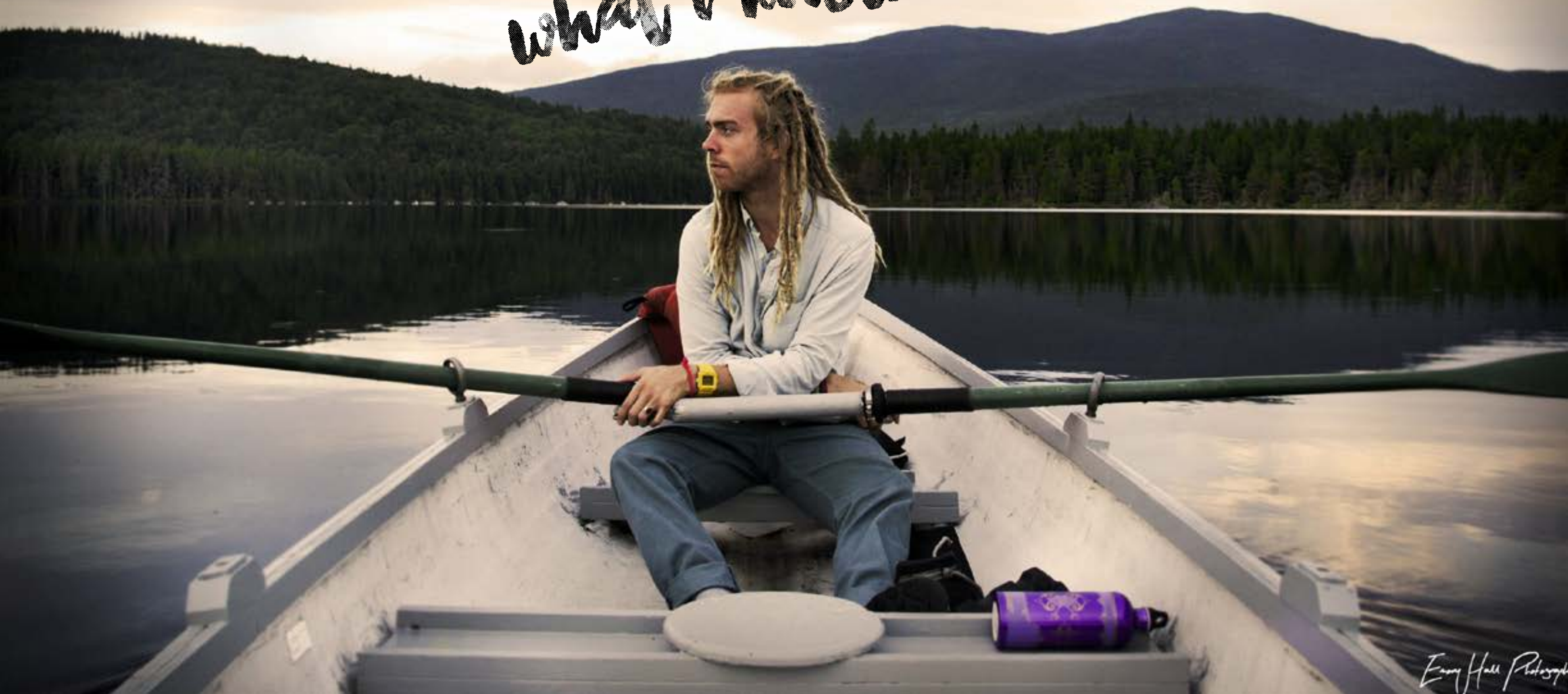
Steady in the vision
Oh child now we living
I lay it down with a joy unbounded
I let my maker string and sound it
And all the colors well they enter
There's no need for defender
You see the answer I am no more seeking
Only love I'm keeping

**What I know, is that I don't know
And now I dance and I sing and I live full
I give it all to the call of the unknown
Aho**

**What I say, is that I don't say
And now I rest no stress in the Holy Name
All fears and my tears give it all away
I play, like a child of the earth**

I give it all to my love, my love, my love, my
love, my love, my love

what i know



Erin Hall Photography

Not one to shy away from expressing love, gratitude and vulnerability, Trevor pulls his father onto the stage and incorporates him into the band during his performance at The Warsaw.



a WINTER meditation

As a kid, I loved the winter. I played in the snow, had snowball fights, built snowmen and sled down the snow drifts in the back yard. But as I grew into an adult, I lost my enthusiasm for the freezin' season. It became a dull, dreary, dismal trudge through darkness, depression and doom.

Somewhere along the way I picked up the words "seasonal affective disorder" and sewed them into my winter coat, as a label for what was "wrong" with me. I wove them so tightly into my ego that I became a nomadic hippie and spent eight winters (in a row) backpacking through tropical countries, just to escape that dreadful demotivation.

But then, a couple of years ago, I found a YouTube video from an eccentric Dutch meditation guru named Wim Hof. Maybe "meditation guru" is the wrong way to describe him. Wim is sometimes referred to as "The Ice Man." He is known for spending time in frozen lakes and climbing Everest wearing only shorts, boots and crampons.

In the past few decades, Wim has attracted something of a cult following. Multiple independent scientific studies have confirmed that his meditative breathing technique can, in fact, work for normal humans, bringing a host of mental & physical health benefits (aside from, you know, gaining superhuman cold-resistance powers).

The Wim Hof breathing method is similar to the ancient Hindu pranayama meditations, which have been used in various forms for millennia. Wim has a uniquely modern, secular, minimalistic style that makes these techniques relatable to a lot of people. Basically: huge deep inhales, quick sharp exhales, and "retentions" (holding the breath in or out) between the breathing cycles.

You can find more information and video tutorials for Wim Hof's breathing techniques at wimhofmethod.com, or just scan the QR code below.



After learning the Wim Hof technique, I was excited to face my fears and dive back into the cold of NYC. I spent my first winter here in Manhattan last year, and it was amazing. The darkness was no longer daunting; it was deep and delightful. The cold was no longer painful - it was an invigorating challenge, a dare from the Universe to go outside and brave the elements. The darkness is introspective and meditative, and somehow it feels like it brings people together, huddled up against the cosmos, under the infinite expanse of stars.

Today, the shortening days and the dropping temperatures bring a smile to my face. I'm ready. I'm excited to greet this winter with love, and with the enthusiasm of a starry-eyed child.

Wim Hof plays guitar while sitting in his shorts, in "full lotus" meditation posture, on a glacier in Iceland. He is known the world over for using meditative breathing methods to endure extreme conditions, and accomplishing feats that were previously considered impossible.

Scientists initially theorized that Wim was an anomaly, but he has proven, repeatedly, in laboratory environments, that any human trained in his meditative breathing methods can accomplish the same feats.

In our interview with The Ice Man in late 2019, Wim asserted that: "Everybody is able to do this, only they have to awaken toward it. And with that [awakening] comes a deeper understanding, a deeper control, by human will, [of the entire] body. That means mind over matter, psychology over physiology."

WIM HOF: THE ICE MAN



Meditation Magazine: Is your technique based on a certain type of meditation, or did it just come naturally to you?

Wim Hof: I actually learned [the breathing] not from books, but from the first time I went into the cold water. You know what you do when you go into cold water? **Takes huge gasp of air to demonstrate.** You breathe deep. I learned to cultivate that, therefrom. The cold is my teacher, I tell you. I wanted to work on the neurology of my brain, the seat of my mind. Only the books didn't tell how to do it. And if you look at the old sutras of Patanjali -- it's of 1200 years ago -- if you talk about pranayam yoga, and all the vajus from the nanjaya, devadata, krikara, apana, prana, udana, all those vajus, how to control that, to get into the susuna via the ida and the pengala, the control left and right into the central way up to the brain ... the Kundalini comes up and then you get into the Sahasrara ... I know all that! But it didn't get to me. It only got to me when I began to go into the cold water. That really woke up this deep connection without words, knowing "This is it." And from then I began, for twenty five years to practice on my own.

MM: So, having learned these techniques before you really learned it from nature, do you think it influenced the way it developed?

WH: When I was a young kid, I took on the flow of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi from the east. It was in those times, the Hippie movement was on, and flower power, and of course Yoga. But Yoga was completely misunderstood, and it was too vague. But I liked it! I liked it, I liked it a lot. I've always been looking for how to expand my perception, my neurology, my consciousness, and to feel alive, a searcher for the soul. I always have been there. And on the way, of course, I've been reading all the books possible. And when I was seventeen, I was done with read-

ing, and still didn't get it. So in the end, you need to really practice, and simply do it on a daily basis. Not from faraway books and faraway philosophies. The wisdom is right here, right now, in the moment. Learn to control your mind and you control the Universe. Emotion will take over. It's like being in love. When you are in love, you don't think, you are in pure bliss! You fly! To feel, to experience. That's spirituality. Love for life. Unconditionally. I couldn't read that in the books or anywhere, and all these so-called gurus talking on television or in books; it's too far away, and too vague. I really wanted to experience. So, the cold. You learn there in that very stressful environment to find peace within. And with that, you learn to tackle stress.

MM: You once said, "I do not only endure the cold. I love the cold." What is it about the cold that you love?

WH: Know that I love the summer, know that I love the heat, know that I love sunshine and tropical weather and all of those things. I love it! But when the winter comes, I love the cold. Every morning in the winter, I swim in the swimming pool. In the summer, I don't swim as much. In the winter, I'm in the water every single day, and I love it! Why? Because when I go in, everything is gone and it's about just *being*; just being aware of the ultimate results of great meditation: *just to be there*. No thought, just feeling. Feeling strong, feeling that the vascular system is completely on. That my mind is still within a very stressful environment. Coming to be one with the stressor, you elevate your experience to great levels and it's very blissful. Every morning it happens again because every morning it is new.

To hear the full interview, visit meditationmag.com/wim-hof





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Featured Yogini:
MELINI JESUDASON

 @meliniseri

Ranked #8 on Elle's list of "The Best Yogis On Instagram,"

Melini Jesudason might appear at first as a typical instayogi; traveling the world, taking awe-inspiring yoga photos, and trying to monetize her instagram following. But a deeper look reveals the brains behind the beauty.

Beneath the stunning photos are equally inspiring captions, imparting deep and heartfelt wisdom, rather than the cliché, cheesy platitudes we've come to expect on instagram.

Born in Tokyo and raised between New York, Sydney, and Singapore, Melini graduated from the prestigious Wharton School. She started her professional life as a financier, but yearned for a more spiritually fulfilling career. When she left finance to become a yoga teacher, Melini found that people tended to assume she was less intelligent than she was.

Perhaps Melini's choice to forgo the money and respect of her worldly career, in order to follow her dreams and pursue a more spiritual path, says more about her than any photo or caption ever could. You have our respect, Melini! These pages are for you.



Everything exists in this moment.
Let go of the past. The future can
be anything that you will it to be.
~ Melini Jesudason



We are here to love one another
and support each other and
spread light in this world.
~ Melini Jesudason

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Eric Adams at United Way
Headquarters in Manhattan.
Photo by Zheng Yang.



ERIC ADAMS

**BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT • 2021 NYC MAYORAL
CANDIDATE • VEGAN • MEDITATION ADVOCATE**

Meatless Mondays are now a thing in NYC's public schools and hospitals, thanks to Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams.

It's a huge win for the animal rights movement. The NYC public school system alone serves nearly a million meals per day. This single initiative will save the lives of millions of animals, improve the health of millions of humans, and drastically reduce our species' impact on the environment.

"Cutting back on meat a little will improve New Yorkers' health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," NYC Mayor de Blasio said at a news conference. "We're expanding Meatless Mondays to all public schools to keep our lunch and planet green for generations to come."

Unsurprisingly, angry meat eaters have been blasting de Blasio for taking away

(some of) their chicken nuggets. In his opinion piece for Fox News, Todd Starnes makes some salient points. These two pearls of wisdom stand out in particular:

"[De Blasio] says the only way to save the planet from an environmental calamity is to force school children to eat twigs and berries...

"Meatless Mondays is a national propaganda campaign that purports to promote healthy and environmentally friendly meal options. Goodbye hot dogs, hello bean curd. Instead of delicious cheeseburgers and pepperoni pizza, the children will have to scarf down roasted chickpea tagine and something called kid-friendly kale salad."

-- Fox News Contributor Todd Starnes

Despite the flawless logic in Starnes' remarks, we at Meditation Magazine are excited about this development, as are many of our fellow New Yorkers. And most of the major media outlets seem cautiously optimistic, if not outright supportive of the program.

But the one major thing that all of the media outlets get wrong, is giving de Blasio all the credit for this historic initiative. In fact, it was a lesser known member of the NYC government who spearheaded the Meatless Mondays campaign: Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams.

Adams rose through the ranks of the Brooklyn police department, eventually becoming Captain. He served as a New York State Senator, and eventually became the Borough President of Brooklyn. But during that time, Eric developed symptoms of late-stage diabetes. Doctors told him he would go blind, and lose some of his fingers and toes. When his eyesight started to go, he decided he needed to start making a change, so he googled "how to reverse diabetes." He found the research on plant-based diets, and immediately took the leap. He switched from eating animals to eating plants, "cold turkey."

Eric's symptoms vanished within weeks, and he has been a passionate advocate for plant-based diets ever since. Eric helped his mother reverse her diabetes symptoms by switching to plant based cooking as well.

In the years since, Eric has been discovering the deeper spiritual benefits of a plant-based lifestyle, and living in line with the empathy and compassion he has always felt toward the conscious beings around him. Unsurprisingly, he is also an advocate of meditation, and has launched programs in East Brooklyn schools to introduce NYC's youth to mindfulness.

Meatless Mondays in NYC schools has not arisen as the political maneuver of a "blue" mayor aiming to appease a liberal-leaning voter base. Rather, it has manifested through the intentions of a deeply wise, compassionate and altruistic human being, who is working to make the world a better place. And that, that kind of effective altruism, is a beautiful thing to behold.

We caught up with BP Adams at the United Way Headquarters in NYC, to talk about Meatless Mondays, Effective Altruism, compassion, meditation, and what he hopes to do for NYC if he wins the mayoral election. Scan the QR code below to watch the full interview!



McCaRen

Hotel & PoOL

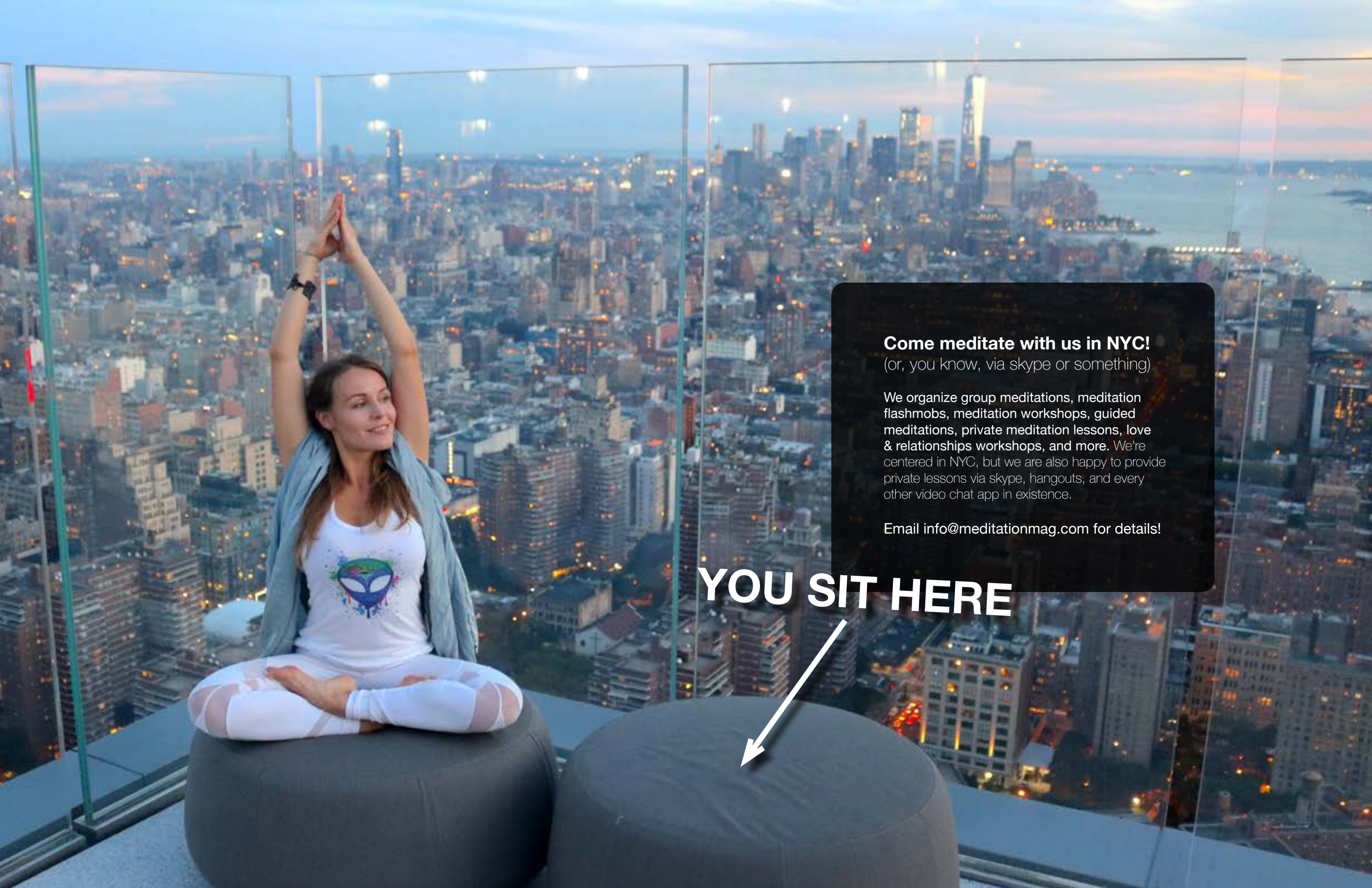
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"MEDITATION HAS SHOWN
ME THE IMPORTANCE OF
COMPASSION, AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF KNOW-
ING THAT ALL BEINGS
MATTER."

BROOKLYN BOROUGH
PRESIDENT ERIC ADAMS





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(or, you know, via skype or something)

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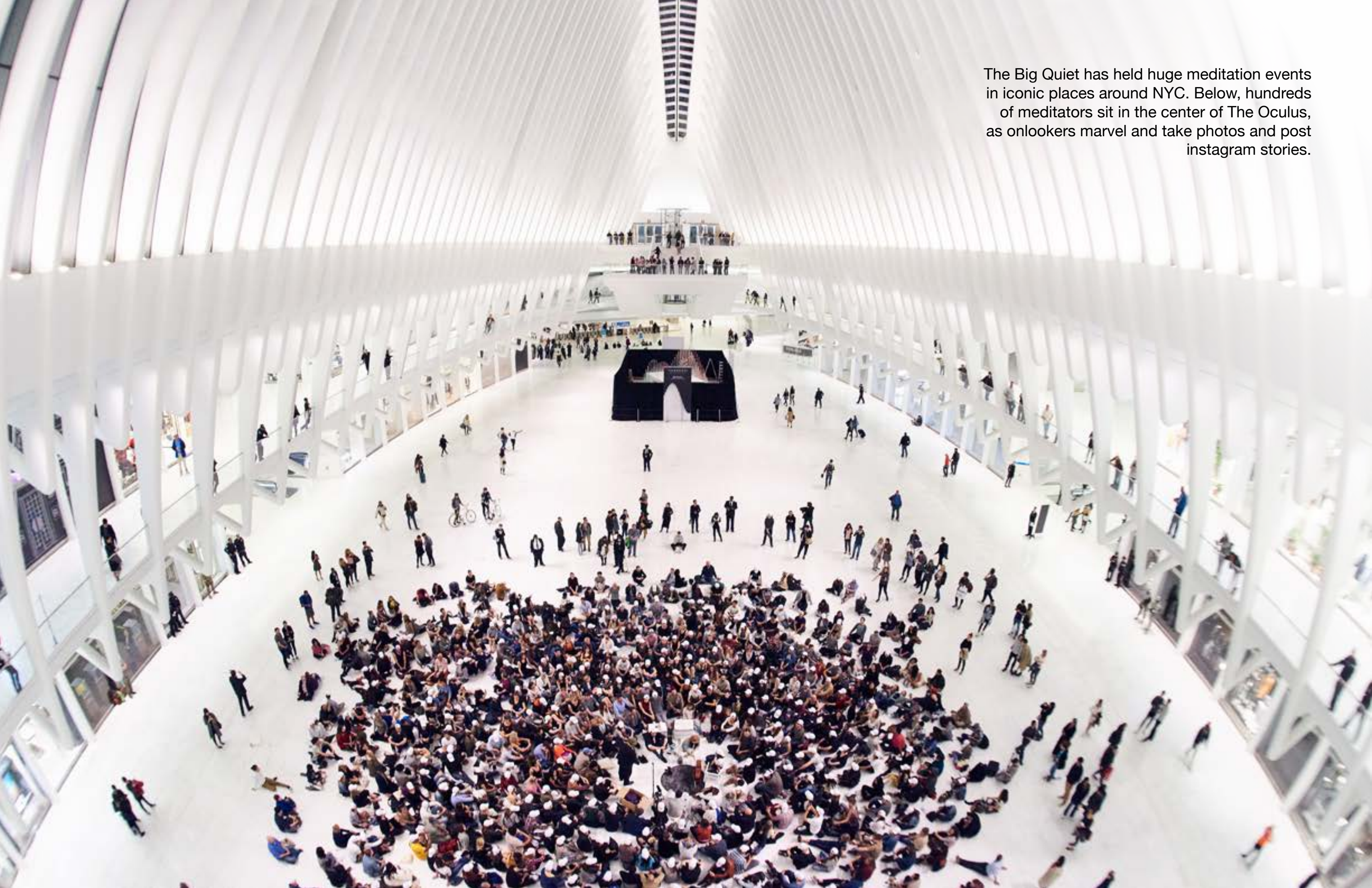
YOU SIT HERE



THE BIG QUIET



The Big Quiet has held huge meditation events in iconic places around NYC. Below, hundreds of meditators sit in the center of The Oculus, as onlookers marvel and take photos and post instagram stories.





THE BIG QUIET

10:00
24
TISSOT

Hundreds of Big Quiet participants meditate beneath the jumbotron at Madison Square Garden.

BUDLIGHT

BUDLIGHT

Jesse Israel, the founder of Medi-Club and The Big Quiet, started his career in the music industry.

In college, Jesse formed a dorm room record label, and helped launch successful bands like MGMT. But the stress of that path began to get to him, and Jesse began experiencing anxiety & panic attacks. Those struggles led Jesse to discover meditation, which took his career in an entirely new direction. Now, Jesse organizes huge meditation events, in iconic locations like Central Park, Madison Square Garden, the top of the World Trade Center, and under the blue whale at the Museum of Natural History.

After meeting Jesse at a Medi-Club event, we caught up at The Brass Factory, a coworking space in Williamsburg, to film an interview.

MEDMAG: What was the main reason for choosing these iconic locations [for The Big Quiet meditations]?

JESSE ISRAEL: It originally started with just looking for large spaces where people could gather, and wanting to do that in spaces that were culturally relevant. Such an important part of what we do is work toward meeting people at the level that they're at. So if people are brand new to meditation or well-being practices, we like to introduce this stuff in a way that welcomes them and allows them to feel inclusive. And doing it in awesome places where you go for music or for art or for transportation or whatever it may be, has proven to be a really great way to sort of blend culture into the experience. And it just so happens that taking that approach is great for marketing. It's been a really interesting way to create attention for meditation and to get people to learn about the big quiet.

MM: What was the first meditation style that you start with in college, when you were having the anxiety and panic attacks?

Jl: I think that, as a man, and within my group of peers and the way I was raised, there wasn't much space to talk about mental health. So it was it was very much a personal journey, and I went to Google. And the first place I learned to meditate was Shambhala. I did one of the intro courses there and I really enjoyed it. And then after 8 months of practicing that regularly, I learned Vedic meditation from a teacher named Light Watkins. And Vedic meditation is what I've been practicing since.



To watch the entire interview, check out the video at meditationmag.com/interviews/jesse-israel



SPIRIT QUEST

from *INDIA* to **EVEREST**

Photos by Kevin Ellerton & Jovanna Benavente

Jovanna Benavente stops at the Takshindu Pass to take in the view of the massive Khumbu range of the Himalayas. Everest stands tall, confronting the clouds on the left.

An ancient rope bridge swings between two mountains on the trail from Jorsalle to Namche Bazaar in Eastern Nepal. Colorful Tibetan flags sway gently in the breeze. Hundreds of feet below, the glacial waters of the Dudh Kosi River shine turquoise, glinting white in the bright Himalayan sun.

Far below our lofty perch, in the great chasm between our feet and the river, another bridge hangs calmly, eighty or ninety feet above the water. Through the zoom of my Canon I can see the tiny shapes of backpackers walking across. Some peer up at us, standing at the mouth of the second bridge, high above their heads.

We'd crossed the lower bridge that morning. Jovanna had not enjoyed the experience, and is even less enthused about the insanely high bridge we now approach. But we've come too far to turn back now.

"Nobody wrote about this in the trekking blogs. They should really tell you about these crazy bridges. This is not cool."

I chuckle behind her and keep vlogging as she hurries across, terrified that another group of Nepali boys will come and shake the bridge, or another group of yaks will lumber across and threaten to snap the ropes with their thundering mass of hooves and fur. As the planks creak beneath my boots, my stomach rises into my throat. I stop chuckling and pull the camera back from outside the ropes. It is a long way down.

The two scariest rope bridges between Jorsalle and Namche Bazaar hang hundreds of feet above the Dudh Kosi river in Eastern Nepal.

We're on our way to Namche Bazaar, the largest town in the Khumbu region, just six days south of Everest Base Camp.

For most western adventurers who find themselves in the area, the Mountain Capital of the Sherpas is little more than a place to rest for a day or two on their way to EBC. But those are the tourists. They fly into Lukla, a few days hike from Namche Bazaar, and spend a week or two exploring the Everest region before returning to the soul numbing routines of their corporate jobs. But Jovanna and I have been traveling overland for almost four months to get to this point, and we're looking forward to Namche Bazaar as one of the high points of our journey.

The Indian subcontinent had been the natural choice. There was no debate about it - it was an uncontested, unanimous decision. The Himalayas had been calling me for years, and Jovanna felt a strong attraction to Indian Hinduism.

We'd been working for eight months in New York after returning from our adventures in Southeast Asia, and were once again growing weary of domestic life. The 2016 election was the straw that broke the hippie's backpack. We upgraded our camera gear, secured our visas, and hopped on a flight to Trivandrum: the southernmost airport in India.

Our plan was simple. We'd traverse the Indian subcontinent overland, from the southern tip of India to the base of the Great Mountain: Everest. We had no other plans, other than to have adventures, interview gurus, be one with the Universe, and enjoy the fuck out of every moment.

And thankfully, things had pretty much been going according to plan.

We landed in Trivandrum and traveled up the west coast of India. We danced with Shiva at Amma's ashram, swam in the Arabian Sea off the tropical coast of Goa, rode a thirty-hour sleeper train to Delhi, saw fire ceremonies on the Ganges, got attacked by monkeys in Rishikesh, crossed into western Nepal by rickshaw, rowed across Fewa Lake in luxurious Pokhara, bought our mountaineering gear in Kathmandu's hot, dusty, chaotic alleyways, and took a jeep out to the small town of Pattale to begin our hike toward Everest.

We've been hiking since Pattale, living with sherpa families in remote wooden tea houses along the way.

My Samsung Galaxy says we've hiked over a hundred miles through the Himalayan foothills to get to this rope bridge. We've traveled nearly four months on our quest for Everest, and we're not about to stop now.

four months earlier...



four months earlier...

AMMA'S ASHRAM

Kevin interviews Brahmachari Shubamrita at Amma's Ashram in Amritapuri, on the coast of the Arabian Sea. Full interview video is available as part of the Spirit Quest series on meditationmag.com.

After landing in Trivandrum in the southern tip of India, we were thrilled to discover that Amma's Ashram was just a few hours north along India's west coast, in a small fishing village called Amritapuri. This news decided the direction for our journey toward Nepal. We would travel up along the subtropical Arabian coast.

The ride from Trivandrum to Amritapuri was not fun. Swerving, honking, jerking - India is one of the most densely populated places in the world, and the chaos of its roads is legendary. The vibe in southern India is hot and aggressive, but Amma's Ashram is an oasis of peace & love amidst the madness. Even

passing through the gates is a religious experience; it feels like passing through the gates of Heaven.

The energy of the ashram is palpable. Everywhere you look, beautiful smiling faces. Westerners and Indians singing and dancing, music floating through the air from the meditation halls, delicious smells wafting from the vegan cafes, thousands of devotees living in peace, love, and harmony with each other and with the environment.

The weeks we spent at Amma's ashram were some of the most transformative of my life. My heart opened in ways that I didn't know were possible. But eventually we had to move on.

*"We are not only
a drop in the ocean
but also the ocean
in a drop."*

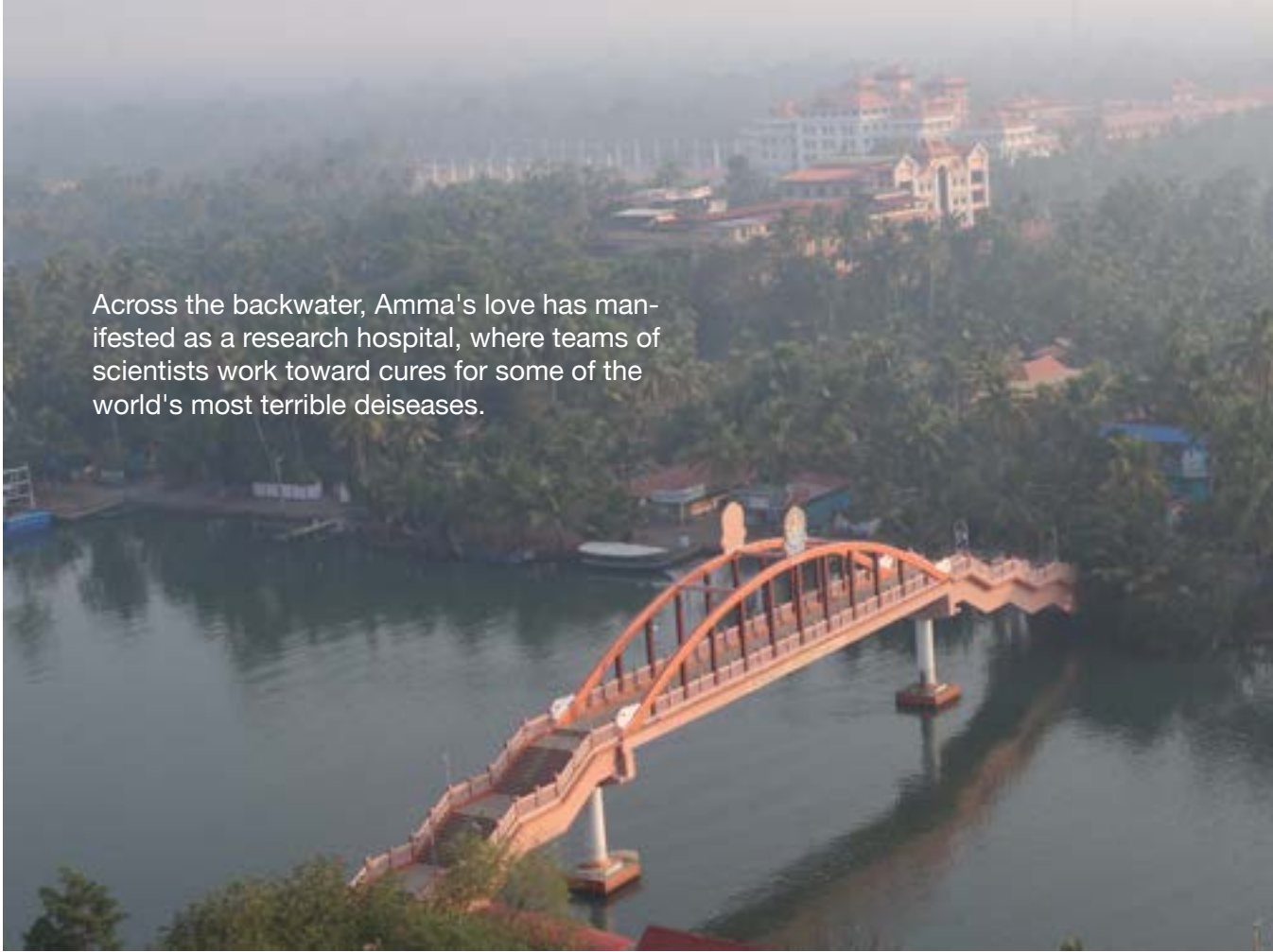
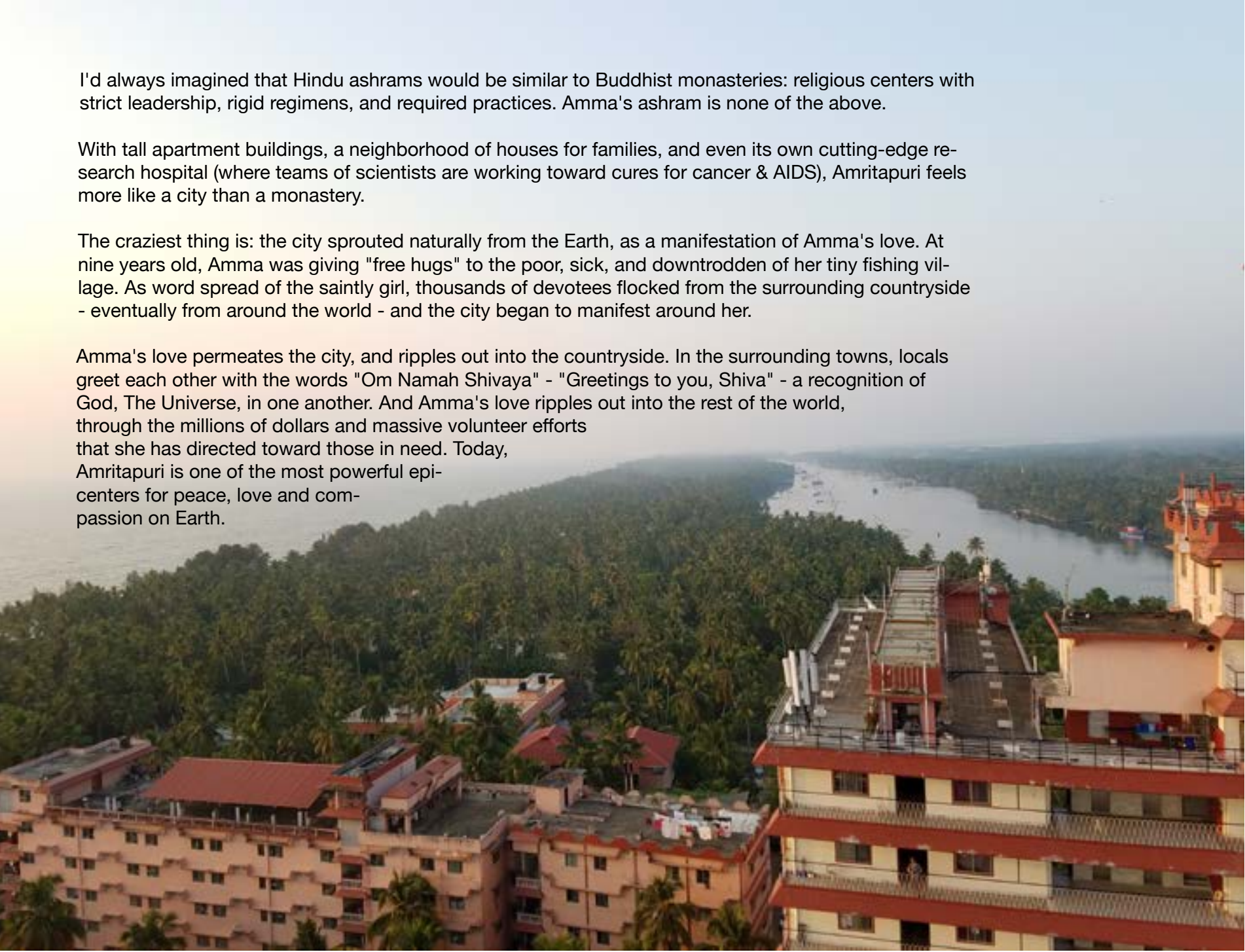


I'd always imagined that Hindu ashrams would be similar to Buddhist monasteries: religious centers with strict leadership, rigid regimens, and required practices. Amma's ashram is none of the above.

With tall apartment buildings, a neighborhood of houses for families, and even its own cutting-edge re- search hospital (where teams of scientists are working toward cures for cancer & AIDS), Amritapuri feels more like a city than a monastery.

The craziest thing is: the city sprouted naturally from the Earth, as a manifestation of Amma's love. At nine years old, Amma was giving "free hugs" to the poor, sick, and downtrodden of her tiny fishing vil- lage. As word spread of the saintly girl, thousands of devotees flocked from the surrounding countryside - eventually from around the world - and the city began to manifest around her.

Amma's love permeates the city, and ripples out into the countryside. In the surrounding towns, locals greet each other with the words "Om Namah Shivaya" - "Greetings to you, Shiva" - a recognition of God, The Universe, in one another. And Amma's love ripples out into the rest of the world, through the millions of dollars and massive volunteer efforts that she has directed toward those in need. Today, Amritapuri is one of the most powerful epi- centers for peace, love and com- passion on Earth.



Across the backwater, Amma's love has man- ifested as a research hospital, where teams of scientists work toward cures for some of the world's most terrible deiseases.



Colorful old fishing boats still ply Kerala's backwaters, drifting past Amritapuri, remind- ing ashram residents of the region's past.



Ganga Aarti participants wave flaming torches over the Ganges River during a fire ceremony in Rishikesh, India. Ganga Aarti festivals are held in various towns along the Ganga. In Sanskrit, Aarti means "to dispel the darkness."



A monkey takes a snack break on Ram Jula, Rishikesh.



Rishikesh is filled with cows and babas. At left, a cow smiles contentedly in front of colorful crates. At right, Kevin interviews Bansi Baba on the banks of the Ganges.



A lizard surveys his tiny kingdom in Bardia, western Nepal.



Western Nepal is wild country, filled with **rhinos**, **tigers**, **elephants**, **lizards**, and lots and lots and lots of **weeds**.

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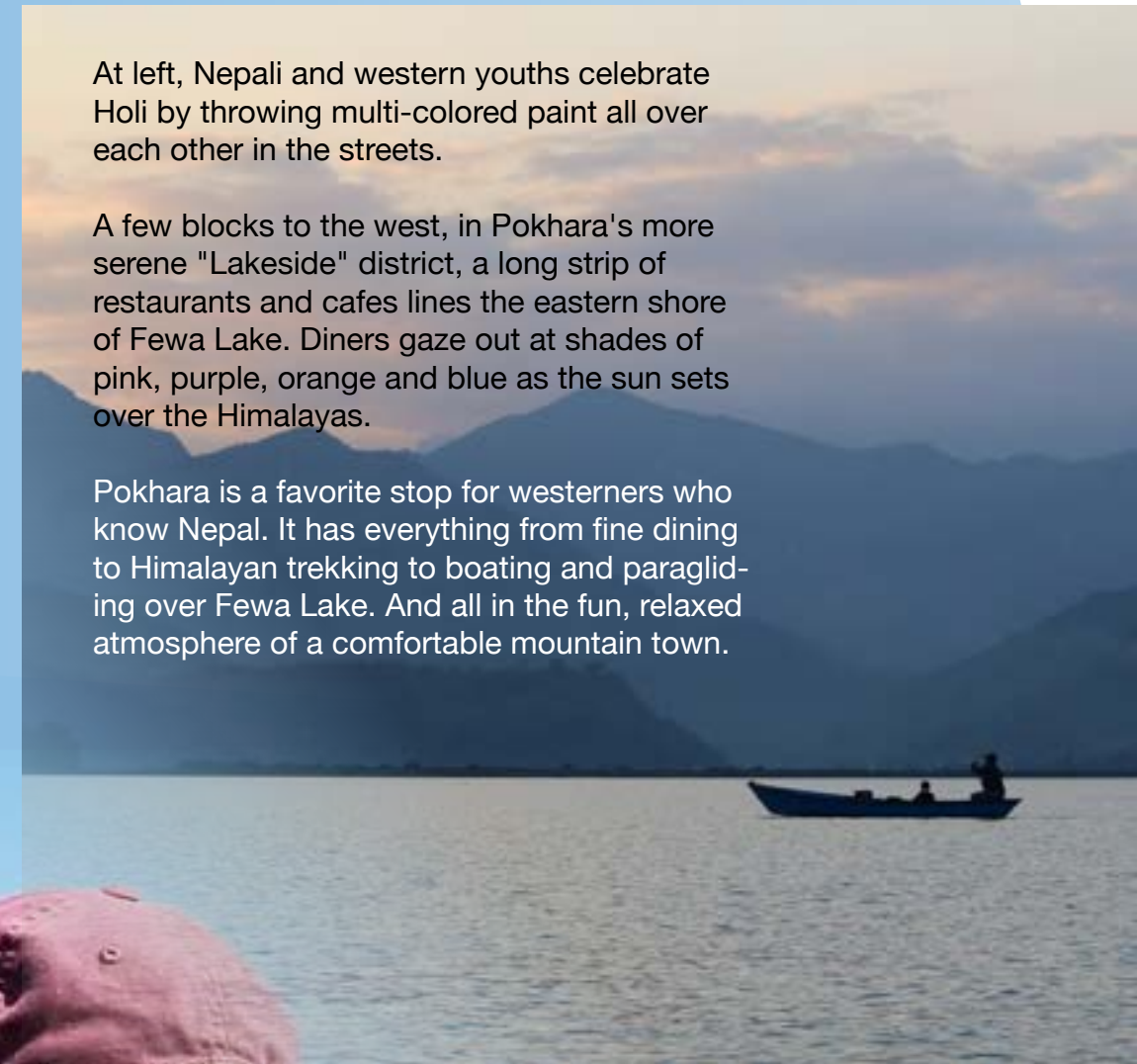
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At left, Nepali and western youths celebrate Holi by throwing multi-colored paint all over each other in the streets.

A few blocks to the west, in Pokhara's more serene "Lakeside" district, a long strip of restaurants and cafes lines the eastern shore of Fewa Lake. Diners gaze out at shades of pink, purple, orange and blue as the sun sets over the Himalayas.

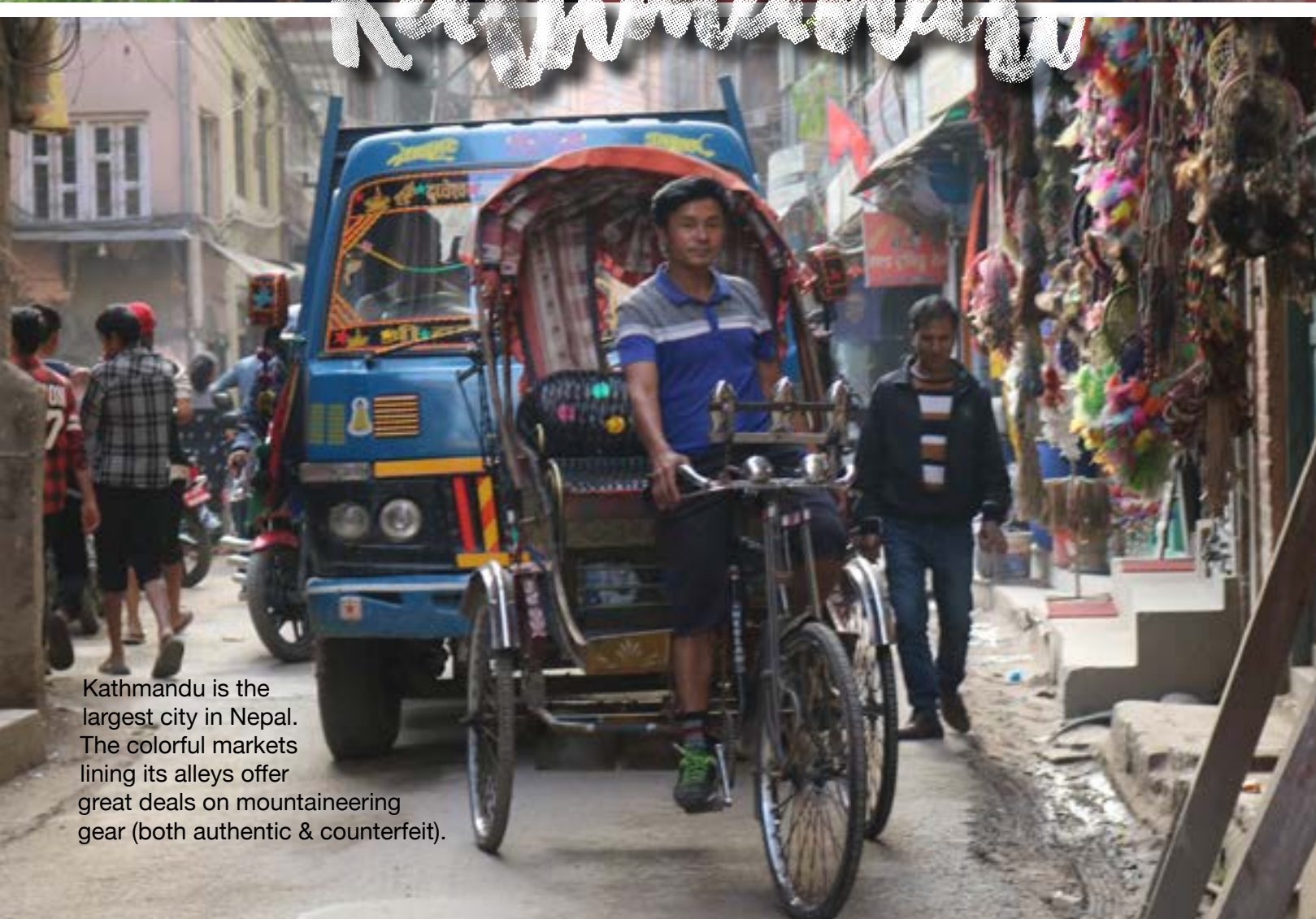
Pokhara is a favorite stop for westerners who know Nepal. It has everything from fine dining to Himalayan trekking to boating and paragliding over Fewa Lake. And all in the fun, relaxed atmosphere of a comfortable mountain town.





Ancient Buddhist temples and stupas form islands of calm in the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu.

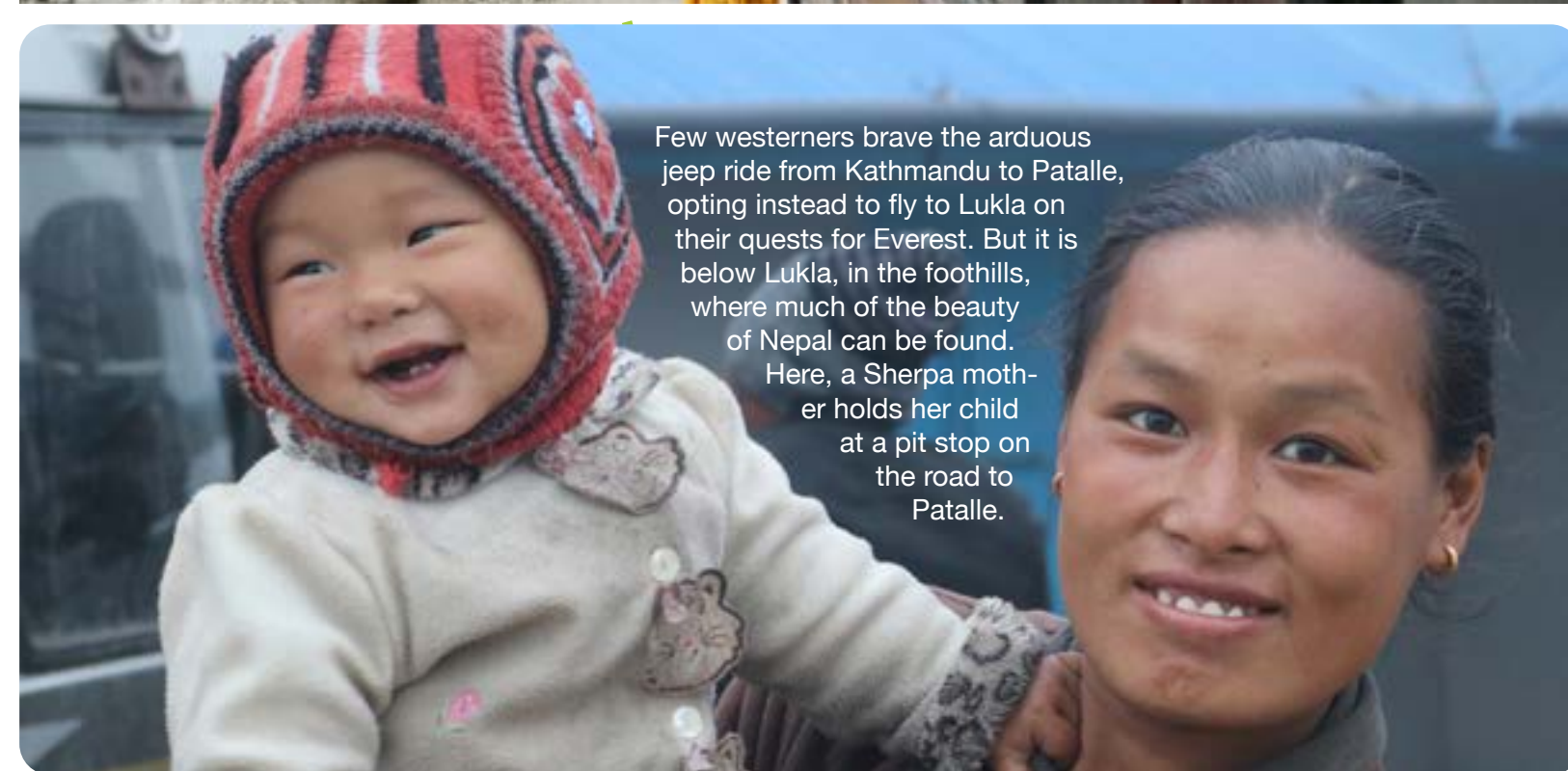
kathmandu



Kathmandu is the largest city in Nepal. The colorful markets lining its alleys offer great deals on mountaineering gear (both authentic & counterfeit).



Jeeps trudge from Kathmandu to Patalle, along muddy riverbeds and steep cliffsides.



Few westerners brave the arduous jeep ride from Kathmandu to Patalle, opting instead to fly to Lukla on their quests for Everest. But it is below Lukla, in the foothills, where much of the beauty of Nepal can be found. Here, a Sherpa mother holds her child at a pit stop on the road to Patalle.



patalle

A traditional wood-burning hearth heats tea and daal baht (lentils and rice) in a sherpa tea house in Patalle.

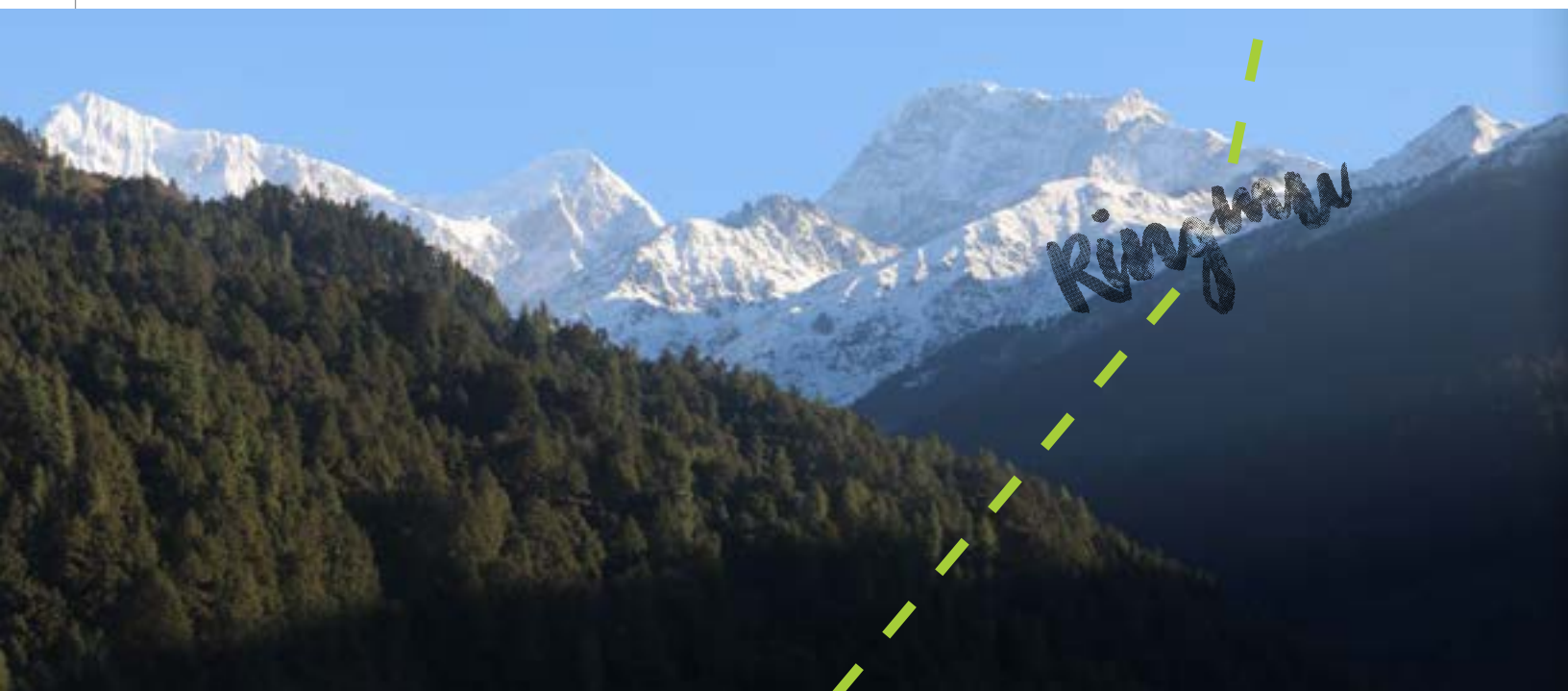
Himalayan Foothills: Patalle to Ringmu

One of the biggest things that tourists miss by flying from Kathmandu to Lukla is the beautiful Sherpa culture that still exists (for now) in the Himalayan foothills.

Above Lukla, everything (and everyone) is westernized and commercialized by comparison, catering to the hordes of tourists on their three week holidays and their quests for social media glory. In the towns above Lukla, there is a feeling that everything is about money & EBC. But here in the foothills, westerners still pique the curiosity of staring children, and Sherpa families still maintain their sense of presence, joy, and love for all beings.

From top: Lakpa Sherpa wears a big smile despite the foggy weather in Patalle. Curious Sherpa children people-watch as a couple of westerners wander through their town. Helicopters take off from the air strip at Phaplu.

Below: The view from Ringmu is spectacular after a nocturnal snowfall.



Ringmu, Nepal: A sherpa woman smiles as her grandson bounces in the doorway in his plastic chair, mesmerised by the western backpackers sharing the cabin for the night.





Himalayan Foothills: Takshindu to Karikola

After hopping off the Jeep in Paltalle (end of the road!) we trekked through dozens of tiny towns: Phaplu, Ringmu, Takshindu, Nunthala, Karikola, Bupsa, Chaurikarka, Jorsalle, and some that are so small that they don't have names. We ate and slept in Sherpa family tea-houses, old wooden guesthouses, and the occasional "motel." For dinner it was always dal baht: bland lentils and rice. Few towns had western comforts like mashed potatoes and veggie burgers, so walking into Kharikola was an unexpected treat. A town of several hundred people, with cobblestone roads, a pharmacy and a monastery, we stayed for a few days to indulge our taste buds and rest our weary legs.



Opposite page, from top: Jovanna crosses the Takshindu pass. Donkey trains force trekkers to flatten against the cliffsides. The blue rooftops of Nunthala can be seen from the trail above.

This page, counterclockwise from top: Nunthala's only street is lined with guesthouses. A Sherpa baby works hard breaking cobblestones as her mom looks on. Jovanna hikes into Karikola, spread out on the broad mountainside. A lone donkey trots through central Karikola. The gateway to Karikola's monastery is painted in bright shades of red, yellow, green and blue.





Tibetan monks seem pretty serious, until you make silly faces at them.



These monks-in-training are learning the ancient meditative traditions of their Tibetan Buddhist ancestors - here amongst the high peaks of Kharikola, Nepal.

Chinese forces violently suppressed Tibetan culture and religion when they invaded Tibet in the 1950s. The Dalai Lama, along with thousands of Tibetan monks, fled south into India and Nepal.



Today, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, scattered through the Nepali Himalayas, bring bright splashes of red, blue, green and gold to the icy peaks of the Khumbu region. Kharikola's monastery stands above the town, a beacon of hope and a reminder of the tragic history of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama still lives in exile. But for the young Tibetans monks of Kharikola Monastery, Nepal is the only home they've ever known.



High Himalayas: Bupsa to Jorsalle

The road from Karikhola climbs northward from the foothills of Solu to the high peaks of Khumbu (Everest province).

After climbing through the tiny hamlet of Bupsa on an adjacent mountaintop (top left), the road winds back down into valleys and cliffsides, over bridges and streams, through towns with populations of no more than a hundred each. The hospitality of the Sherpas was always a great comfort. Every guesthouse and restaurant we stopped out had the warmth of a real family home.

As we tried to pass through one of the small homesteads between Bupsa and Jorsalle, we got stuck behind a herd of donkeys who wouldn't move out of our way. Thirsty in the blazing sun, we tried gently pushing the donkeys, to no avail. After a few minutes, a little Sherpa boy (right) came to our rescue, throwing small rocks at the donkeys until they moved out of our way. When we tried to thank him, he bashfully retreated into his proud mama's arms, his cheeks significantly rosier than they had been before.

Along the trail, signs point upward toward Mount Thamserku (opposite, top).



KHUMBU

Above Jorsalle, the road follows the Dudh Khosi River toward its source in the Himalayan glaciers. Food & supplies that reach this region are hauled up on the backs of yaks (below), and get more expensive as you climb higher in the mountains.

We cross the two terrifying rope bridges swinging high above the Dudh Kosi river (yes, the ones from the beginning of this article!), as views of Everest peek through the trees. After months of traveling across Indian and Nepal, after weeks of hiking through tiny Sherpa villages, we finally arrive in the Mountain Capital: Namche Bazaar.

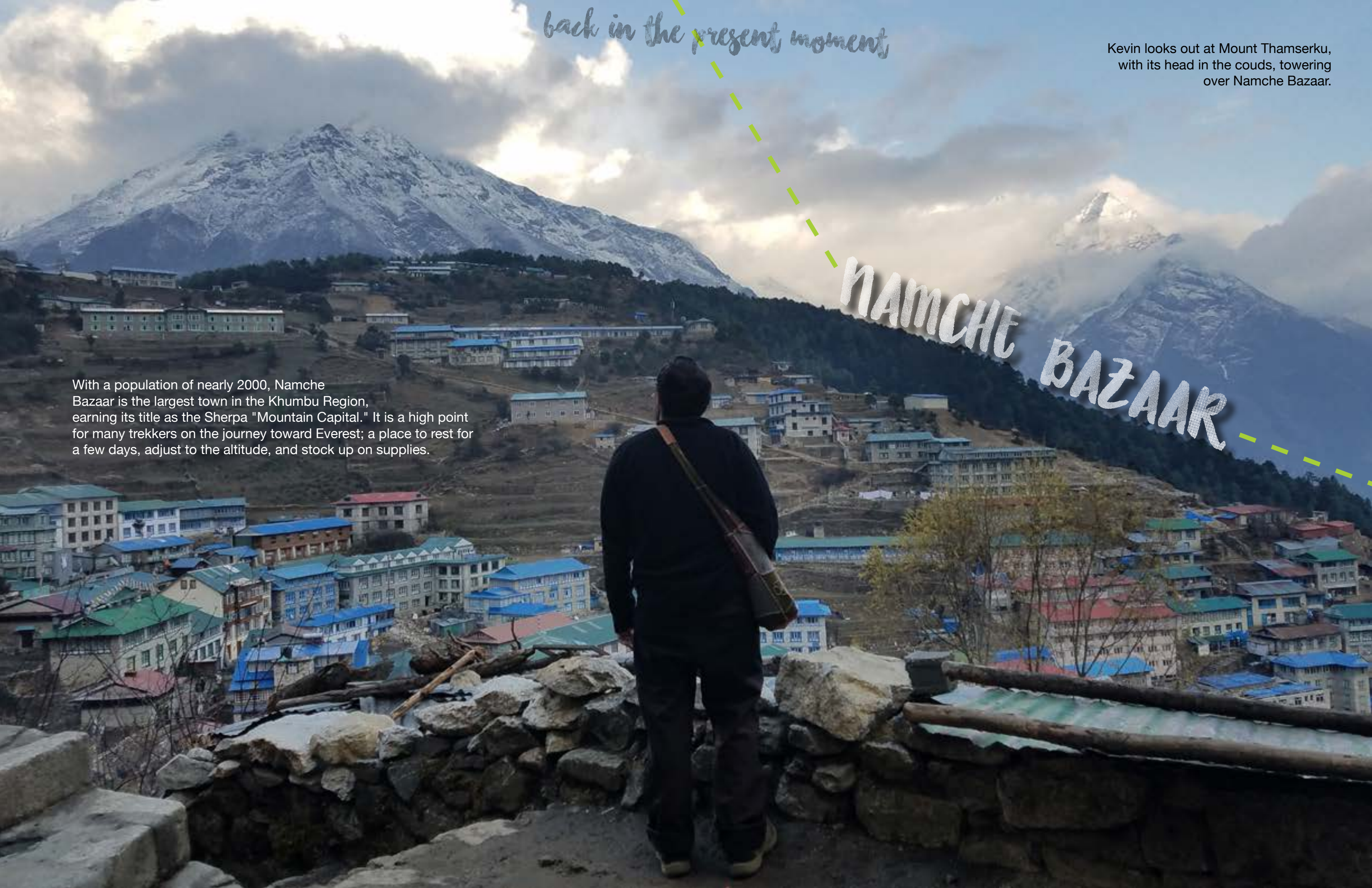


back in the present moment

Kevin looks out at Mount Thamserku,
with its head in the clouds, towering
over Namche Bazaar.

With a population of nearly 2000, Namche Bazaar is the largest town in the Khumbu Region, earning its title as the Sherpa "Mountain Capital." It is a high point for many trekkers on the journey toward Everest; a place to rest for a few days, adjust to the altitude, and stock up on supplies.

NAMCHE
BAZAAR





NEIGH-BORHOOD MARKET

The markets of Namche Bazaar are a welcome dose of the modern world after weeks of trekking through the wilderness.

Here you can find locals and tourists shopping for supplies, from local hand-made Nepali fabrics to knockoffs of western mountaineering brands like The North Face, Marmot, Patagonia and Jansport.

The view from Namche Bazaar is spectacular. Looking east (background photo), the looming cliffsides of Thameserku (21,729 ft) tower above the town. Looking north (inset), you can see all the way to Everest. Looking west (next page) Kongde Ri (20,299 ft) holds a striking pose.



of Cafes, Cyclones, Blizzards, and Altitude Sickness

Having finally arrived in Namche Bazaar, we set up camp at the Khumbu Lodge in the center of town. A taste of luxury after weeks of tiny tea-house beds, our suite has a king bed, a heated blanket, hot shower, carpeting, chairs and a table, and an epic view of Kongde Ri from our window (below)! The oldest family-run hotel in Namche, Khumbu Lodge is stone-and-brick; much more stable than wooden tea houses. It feels like a good place to weather a storm.

Our western-comfort minds go into overdrive, as we excitedly explore Namche's bakeries, restaurants and bars (bottom). We'd planned to stay for a day or two, but we could get used to this...

It was our second night in Namche Bazaar when the symptoms began.

I wake up gasping for air in the middle of the night. I try not to wake Jovanna, but no matter how deep my breath, I can't get enough oxygen. For a moment I imagine what it would feel like to drown in fresh clean air, sitting in the peaceful quiet of my king-sized bed. I think of my family back in New York. Having heard the stories of healthy young hikers dying from altitude sickness up here, I feel the terror of oblivion as I fall back to sleep.

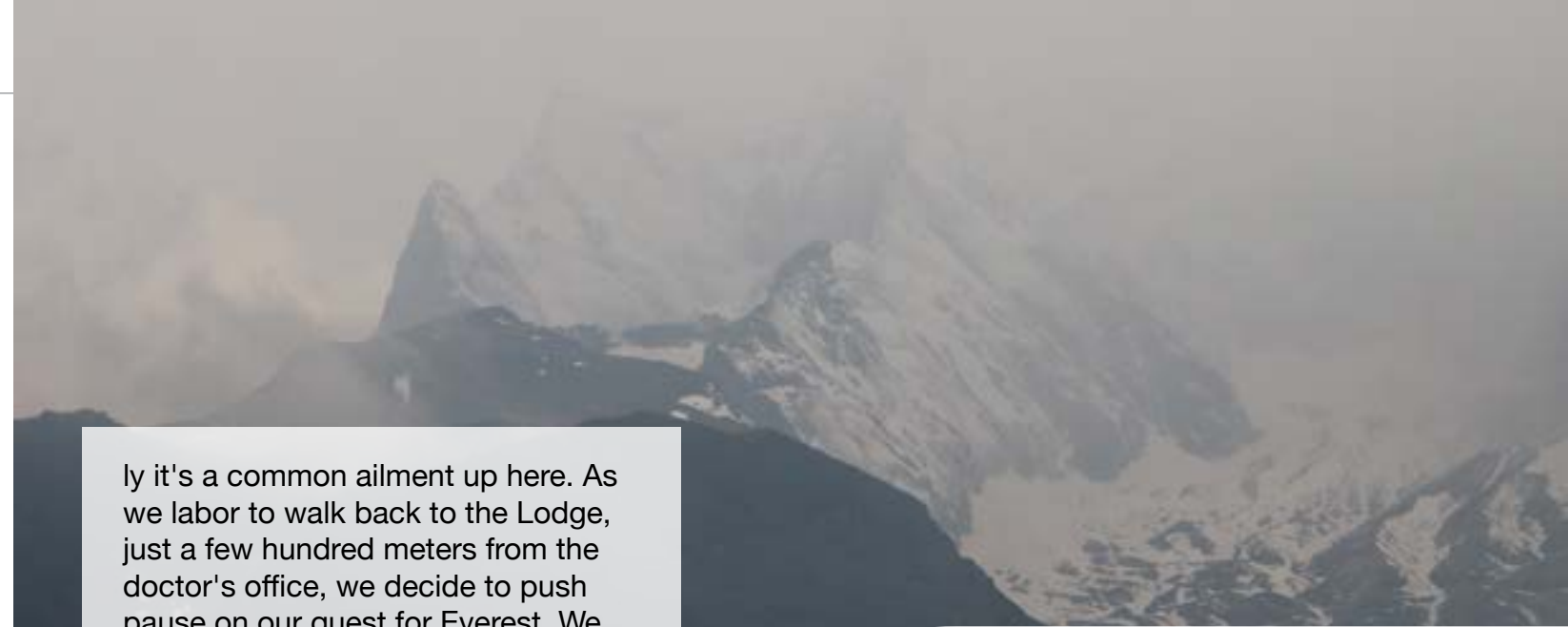
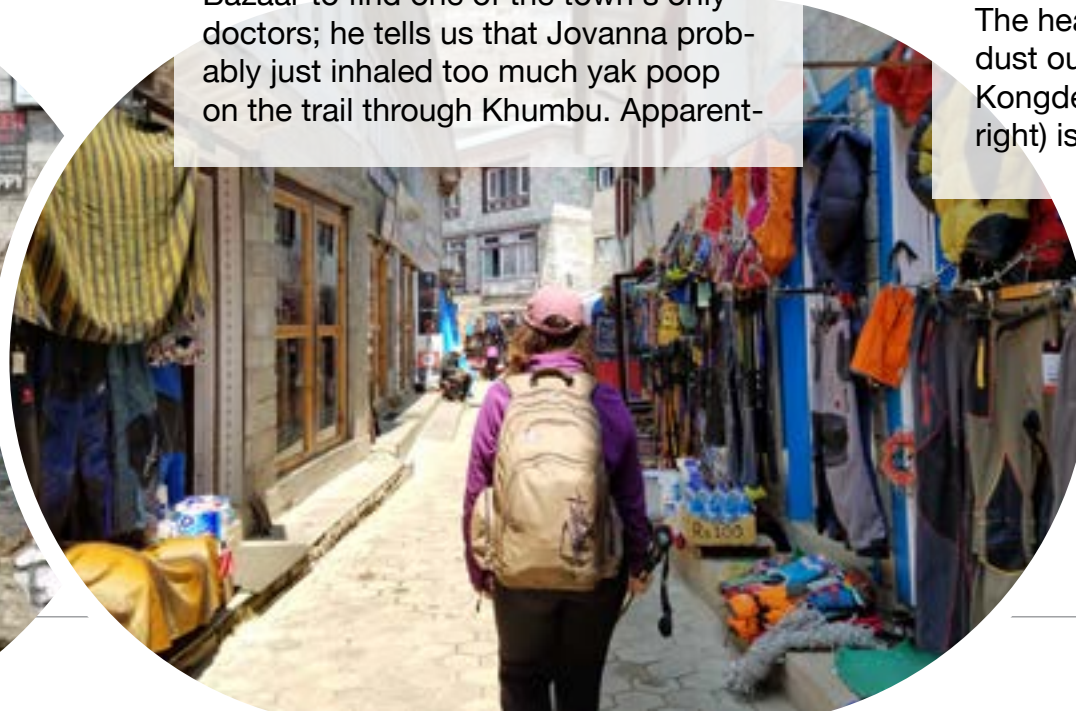
I'm not the only one with respiratory issues; Jovanna has been coughing up black stuff for days. We drag our exhausted bodies around Namche Bazaar to find one of the town's only doctors; he tells us that Jovanna probably just inhaled too much yak poop on the trail through Khumbu. Apparent-

ly it's a common ailment up here. As we labor to walk back to the Lodge, just a few hundred meters from the doctor's office, we decide to push pause on our quest for Everest. We need a few more days to rest and recover here in Namche Bazaar.

That was when the blizzard began. A cyclone in Burma is affecting all the weather in the region, and is throwing some fierce weather our way. From our bed in the Khumbu Lodge, we watch the storms engulfing Kongde Ri outside our window (right, top and center). We snuggle under our heated blanket, wearing our thermals and our knockoff North Face synthetic down jackets, but still, the cold permeates our bodies to chill our bones.

The blizzard ends a few days later, but we haven't fully recovered yet. The heavy snow has cleared the dust out of the air, and the view of Kongde Ri from our window (bottom right) is clearer than we've ever seen

it since we'd arrived in Namche Bazaar nearly a week before. We decide to take our chances and begin the next phase of our journey toward Everest: the hike toward Tengboche, the highest Buddhist monastery in the world!





Ama Dablam

Everest

Nuptse

The Highest Monastery in the World

At 12,664 feet, Tengboche is the highest monastery in the world.

The trail from Namche (top left) winds around mountainsides, with views of Nuptse (25,791 feet), Everest (29,029 feet), and Ama Dablam (22,349 feet) peeking out around every turn. We arrive in Tengboche at dusk. Dark puffy clouds float around the monastery, resting in the mountains (center left, bottom left). I've mostly recovered from my own altitude sickness, but now Jovanna is beginning to show acute symptoms. She can barely walk, and has a hard time breathing as we fall asleep.

By the time we wake up, Jovanna's face is white and her head is splitting. She can barely sit up in the bed. A monk advises helicopter rescue to Kathmandu, and offers to make the call.

I look toward Everest in disbelief. We've come too far to turn back now. We've traveled overland from the southern tip of India. Everest is only a few days hike from here...

There's a caravan of sherpas with yaks and donkeys heading north today (below); I had been hoping to join them. I could leave Jovanna at the monastery to recover, or put her in a helicopter and continue on my own... but looking at her exhausted face, I know she needs me to be with her now.

There's a war going on between my ego and my heart. Do I continue on my quest toward Everest, or accompany Jovanna back to Kathmandu?

Watch our youtube documentary **Spirit Quest: From India To Everest** to find out!



At right, a caravan of sherpas, yaks, and donkeys heads north from Tengboche, toward Ama Dablam, Nuptse, and Everest. Scan the QR code to see what happens!



Shinge
Roshi

As part of our Paths Up The Mountain tour (interviewing gurus around the world about the meaning of life), we spoke with Shinge Roshi about Zen & Enlightenment. Shinge was the first American woman to be ordained as a Zen Master in the Japanese Rinzai Zen lineage. She is now serving as the abbot of Dai Bosatsu monastery in New York's Catskill Mountains.

Meditation Magazine: What is Zen in 3 words?

Shinge Roshi: Reality for dummies :-)

MM: What is Enlightenment?

SR: You can't ask for a description of Enlightenment! It's something to be experienced! You're talking about something that cannot be put into words. It's very difficult once you start getting concepts around it, then you're stepping away from, and trying to categorize,

From top: Shinge Roshi talks Zen Buddhism with Kevin and Jovanna at Dai Bosatsu. A huge bell stands on a ridge above the zendo; it is rung several times per day to indicate meditation times. Clouds roll over the forested hills of Beecher Lake. A family of deer graze in a courtyard at Dai Bosatsu monastery.

something that is impossible to understand that way.

There are many many many ways of describing it; the problem is we get stuck by the ways of describing it. So, something for example happens unexpectedly -- you hear a sound, you see something -- and all the sudden, everything falls away. Body, mind... you're just *beyond*. Beyond words. Beyond form. Just, the whole of it. Just, radiantly, presence. But all those words are just in the way.

MM: Can normal people experience enlightenment?

SR: We're the only ones who can have that experience! The Buddha was just an ordinary human being. And he taught based on his Awakening: this is our Birthright! Sentient beings are fundamentally Buddha, as the Sutra says. So why not wake up to that, instead of being pushed around or dragged around by the ring in your nose, by everyone else's expectations and your own brainwashing: why not open up to things as they are?

To watch the full interview, with beautiful footage of the Dai Bosatsu monastery on Beecher Lake in the Catskills, scan this QR code to check out the video on our YouTube channel.



JAPANESE BUDDHISM RINZAI ZEN

There are two major schools of Japanese Zen: Soto and Rinzai.

While both are focused heavily on sitting meditation and constant mindfulness in daily life, Rinzai is known for its penchant for koans. After all, what is the sound of one hand clapping?

3 MORE KOANS

What was your original face before you were born?

What is the color of the wind?

When the many are reduced to one, to what is the one reduced?

Ekaterina Ket, nomadic sound
healer & meditation teach-
er, sits on the rooftop of The
Eugene in midtown Manhattan.
Full interview video available on
meditationmag.com.
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zaar available now in the
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