

REVELATIONS ON THE ROAD

After 3 months abroad in India, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Bali and my fourth month in the U.S. visiting California and Florida, I have been blessed with so many rich experiences, exciting opportunities, and time with inspiring individuals. After 7 one-way tickets, my journey was everything I hoped it would be- rejuvenating, nourishing, and reflective.

Coming back to reality- we often face this dilemma after returning from a fabulous vacation, meaningful retreat, or exploring a new part of the world. After a period of profound transformation, how do we integrate what we have learned into our daily life experience? All of you who have followed my travel blog for the past 4 months know that this truly has been a journey of a lifetime on so many levels and it has been wonderful to have you all along for the ride. There has been much time for reflection and I will share **13** insightful lessons learned during this time. A more accurate title for this blog would be revelations on *all* my modes of transportation which included airplanes, tuk tuk's, bicycles, rickshaws, buses, trains, boats, taxis, subways, motorbikes, or walking on foot. My hope is you will be inspired by these insights as well!

Lessons learned, promises made:

1) **DOING WHAT FEELS GOOD** - Too often our head dictates our heart. We wrestle as our mind tries to logically reason what we “should” do often conflicting with our hearts innermost desires. During my travels when faced with so many choices and decisions to be made constantly (where to eat, where to stay, what to do, who to see), I started to practice asking myself “*what would feel best right now?*” This simple exercise of allowing myself to feel in the moment instead of overthinking my decisions was simply liberating. And when I made a poor choice, I learned to let go and accept that as an important life lesson as well- how to live with my “mistakes”. As we grow in self-awareness, we naturally make better choices. There is wisdom in knowing that with time it becomes more effortless to follow our instincts, go with the flow, embrace the unexpected, and set ourselves free of guilt and obligation, once again learning to choose with our hearts, not our head.

We can bring this type of awareness into our daily lives- eating instinctively what feels good to nourish our bodies, flowing in our yoga routine to the next pose that intuitively feels right, choosing company who nourish us on a deep level, selecting activities to participate in that bring us joy. Whether it's decisions about how we spend our time, our weekends, our careers, our relationships- we need to honor our hearts and not compromise ourself in any way. Honoring ourselves enough to do what feels good is a tribute to cultivating our inner wisdom.

2) **LISTENING TO MYSELF-** Traveling alone is an amazing opportunity to truly sit with oneself without the “distraction” of other people's energies (even those we love). This time alone has taught me so much about listening to myself, paying attention to how I feel, witnessing my thoughts and emotions from a place without judgment. It is such an intimate experience to just have one's own companionship. Although I spent a lot of time on my trip with family, friends, and fellow students, my nourishing time in solitude was invaluable, allowing me to tune in on a much deeper level.

3) **SLOWING DOWN-** The speed of life on this planet has increased tremendously and no one is immune. Most of us agree there is simply never enough time in the day as we rush around trying to constantly multi-task as a necessary mode for our survival. Guilty of often spreading myself too thin, traveling gave me the opportunity to readjust my rhythm and take a step back. I welcomed slowing down, resting, not being dictated by the voice in my head urging me to be productive, do more, not sit still. I could simply observe my conditioned mental pattern and realize *I had a choice* to slow

down. Despite numerous activities or excursions, I found instead of being caught up in “doing”, I embraced the challenge of just “being.” It was an extraordinary gift to experience that- enlightening, radical, and so amazingly simple. Slowing down has shown me how to be more present and appreciative, revealing how my perception of time is really a reflection of my mental state and sense of inner peace.

4) **ENTERING SILENCE**- This state evolves naturally after slowing down. It is inevitable that true peace, surrender, and contentment surface. Silence is the absence of a restless wandering mind that no longer dwells on obligations, commitments, and emotional fluctuation. Silence is a state where one can just be. I think the profoundness of this state scares us. We seek the exact opposite, creating noise and distraction in our life to fill the void. Embracing the luxuriousness of silence within me has truly been one of the most transformational experiences in my trip.

5) **NOURISHMENT**- It is absolutely clear to me that nourishment of our hearts, minds, bodies, souls, and spirits should be our top priority. Nothing else really matters and is just an excuse to keep us from feeling fulfilled. It is when we sacrifice this that we feel drained, out of spirits, chronically fatigued, depressed, burnt out, etc. It is imperative we find out what nourishes us at the deepest level and commit to embracing that in our lives. I know travel has always been a source of nourishment in my life and I have been privileged to travel from an early age. I owe that to my dad’s adventurous spirit (*who has visited 119 countries!*) that was instrumental in us exploring so many parts of the globe. But asking ourselves this question often, “*what will nourish me?*” is imperative.

6) **SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE & DISCOVERY**- It is easy to embrace this idea when we travel and there are new adventures and places to explore, but it is essential we bring this idea into our daily lives, our spiritual practice, our profession, our relationships. It is this spirit that keeps us youthful, makes us embrace the unknown, and melts away our resistance. Discovery is that journey of allowing ourselves to not hold back, to seek and not know what we will find, to feel that magic of possibility when we are on a quest.

7) **MAGIC & MIRACLES** - Entering this realm is only possible when we truly let go, enter the unknown, and open ourselves to divine grace. Magic and miracles are nothing but divine grace unfolding in our lives because we have created the space for it, we have allowed ourselves to experience it. It is truly wondrous when our whole life becomes witnessing this - in our own lives and in the world around us. Ancient countries and cultures like India, Cambodia, Bali have magic oozing out of them- in divine magnificent temples, astounding architecture, statues that look into your soul. But really this experience comes not from the external but in tuning into our heart space. How wondrous to truly live our lives from this place- something for all of us to aspire to.

8) **DIVINE GUIDANCE & TRUST**- So much planning goes into a short vacation let alone one that is several months long. The logistics of accommodations, transportation, coordinating plans, meeting people, it can definitely be overwhelming. I am guilty of being a meticulous planner but I accepted the challenge of letting go and allowing myself to be divinely guided instead. I was pleasantly surprised it was not as difficult as I imagined. It was liberating to allow myself to be led and I found the more I surrendered to this new state, the more ample guidance was all around me. I was led to the people I was supposed to meet, the experiences I needed to have, the places I had to see. I watched in amazement as every part of my journey felt guided. To quote my wise friend Richard who describes this aptly, “*letting go into the divine river a little more each day.*”

Guidance allows us to trust in a deeper cosmic force, a harmony that orchestrates all that we cannot see. During my travels what amazed me is whether it was from a taxi to the airport, an airplane to the next country, or a tuk tuk to the hotel, the next mode of transport was always available. Never

did I experience being “stuck” not knowing how to reach my destination. The next part of the journey always revealed itself. And so it is true with life- if we are open and willing, we can be guided every step of the way if we trust and surrender.

9) **THE INNER QUEST-** I believe every outer voyage is really a reflection of the inner journey which is far more significant and sacred. This inner quest to find meaning, fulfillment, peace, is what our lives are all about. This journey reminded me that all the answers we seek are *always* around us. Nature is the perfect teacher showing us how to change, adapt, let go, enjoy the beauty of who we are. The more we can honor this sacred journey, recognize where we are currently, where it is we want to go, it affirms our life and our purpose. The destination is important, but sometimes we lose sight of where we are going. The most important lesson I have learned is that I am determined to shift my focus and enjoy the ride and not worry about the destination! If our goal is enlightenment, and we are miserable the whole time until we reach it, we have kind of missed the whole point.

10) **CARPE DIEM-** Before I set out on my travels I pondered the usual questions: how would I afford this, could I take this much time off, what about my career, what would people think. Yes it was a risk but I felt no sense of bondage to family, spouse, children, career, paycheck, mortgage, etc. There are so many excuses we use to not do what our heart desires but I could think of no better time in my life to take the plunge. Many asked how I survived financially for so many months and afforded my trip. To dispel any rumors, no I am not a secret millionaire or even remotely close to being wealthy. I am happy to say I did it all on an extremely low budget and not being a shopper helps. It was opportune to have generous family and friends spread across the globe that opened their homes and kitchens to me. I have no words to describe how grateful I am for their generosity. I flew across the globe on frequent flier miles, paying for panchakarma was my only real expense during my 2 months in India, minor expenses during my 2 weeks in Bali, and split all my bills during 10 days in Cambodia with my awesome traveling companion Sonya! If there is truly something we are inspired to do, we can make it happen even on the lowest budget.

11) **CONNECTIONS-** If I have learned anything on this journey it is that the people in our lives matter. Whether they are new or old relationships, I value and cherish these connections and draw so much inspiration from each and every one of you reading this blog. All of you are extraordinary in your own unique ways. True friendships withstand the test of time and distance and are worth making the effort to maintain. It amazes me to watch people walk their path whether it is with fierce determination or uncertainty. Everyone is truly being guided whether they know it or not. I feel so honored to witness what moves and inspires each of you and to be a part of your lives!

12) **CREATING SPACE-** None of my prior revelations would even be possible if I had not created the space for them to happen. True- not all of us can take 3-4 months out of our lives to quit our jobs, leave our families, escape all household responsibilities, and set off on an international adventure. But we *can* create the space in our lives to do this on a small scale- whether it's a weekend getaway or visiting a place we have dreamed of our whole lives. The idea of travel is it takes us away from what is familiar, our ordinary daily grind and responsibilities, into the voyage of discovery. But even if we don't have the luxury of travel because of our schedule, finances, or commitments, we can still create space for transformation to occur. I realized that having unstructured downtime during my day or during a vacation are absolutely necessary for spontaneity to occur, to allow for the unexpected, to invite miracles to happen. By making space for myself, I gave myself permission just to be. Meditation allows us to create a luxurious space within us on a daily basis, but we also need this outside of our practice.

I have to mention Anthony and Alma here, an inspiring couple from California whom I met in India during our yoga studies. After 13 years of marriage, they committed to 1 year of travel visiting so far Spain, Portugal, India, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Such an amazing way to celebrate a

marriage, take time out to rejuvenate, and embrace the spirit of adventure. Whether it's a week or a year- creating the space is critical. Thank you Anthony & Alma for being such great role models!

13) **FLUIDITY**- When we melt away our rigidity, our resistance, our perceptions, and simply just face the truth and beauty of who we are, we come to a place of acceptance. How can we judge ourselves in this state when we are in a place of witnessing and allowing? To experience the blossoming of who we are is such a gift. How often we do not take the time to appreciate this. Can we judge a flower for not blooming soon enough, for not being bright enough, for not being open enough? The flower is simply in it's own process of unfolding- we catch a glimpse of it in just a moment of time, not always aware of the bigger picture. Even in our lives it is only when we look back we see how each experience has led to the next part of our journey and how they all weave together the rich tapestry of who we are. I am grateful for the fluidity I feel in my own being that allows me to surrender to this process of unfolding.

So....despite all my revelations on the road I have not returned enlightened and have to admit I am still a work in progress! All of these insights are lessons we can embrace in our lives but they don't come to fruition by chance but rather out of cultivation. A friend asked me upon my return, "*how has your travel changed or influenced what you want to do next?*" My answer: I realized it is less about *what* I want to do and fundamentally about *who* I want to be. It's changed me from being someone who is rushing, planning, overambitious with goals I want to accomplish in the external world into embracing this luxurious place of silence and surrender within me and having all my actions naturally emanate from that place.

Om Shanti,

Anisha