

**Dear Friends,**

Hope this finds you well wherever you are in the world!

I have just spent an inspiring 5 weeks in Byron Bay, Australia taking part in an ISHTA yoga teacher training with my teacher Rachel Zinman.

Here I reconnected with yoga teacher friends, and met new teacher trainees, all of who had a lot to share and learn from.

For 5 days a week, we met for 10 or so hours each day, practicing asana, pranayama and meditation and learning more about anatomy and yoga philosophy.

The ISHTA community continues to grow and flourish!

After 5 months back in Australia, I am about to cross the seas again and venture back to Europe.

Basing myself in Barcelona, Spain- I will be teaching classes there and occasionally in London.

For those who I met in classes in London over the last couple of years, I hope our paths cross again at some point.

Stay in touch.

All the best,

Raphaella

## **MY MORNING MEDITATION: (experience)**

As I come to my mat for morning meditation, distractions are abound.

The rattling of the passenger and freight trains that shake the entire house, neighbours mowing their lawns, ticking it from the morning chore list.

The loud thump of cement pipes being laid in the excavated earth in the building site next door- all of this on a supposedly quiet, suburban cul-de-sac street in Sydney's northern suburbs bushland.

I sit listening to these sounds and feel far from Byron Bay, where a week ago part of an ISHTA yoga teacher training, the loudest sounds heard were the crows outside the studio, the stamp of flamenco feet in a nearby yurt, or our own voices chanting or shouting in our free dance sessions.

Then as I listen more carefully, behind these gross, loud intrusions, uncovered is a choir of birds chirping happily. Picturing them perching on the branches or flying from tree to tree, I settle more into a comfortable seat.

I notice my mind less disturbed as I take my awareness away from the louder sounds to the subtler sounds, my breath gently moves in and out of my nose.

Then like a rose bud blooming, its petals unfolding before me, my energy expands, my mind opens, I sit and receive.

Each time I come to meditate, I never know what to expect and what experiences will be found.

Today amongst the harshness of what I first found irritating sounds, I discovered a new layer of melodies.

Combined together they created a blend sweet enough to incorporate into my meditation.

It wasn't a matter of ignoring what I didn't want around me, it was the act of accepting and inviting these sounds in that enhanced my experience leaving me thankful and hyperaware.

Now drinking my post practice cup of tea, I remind myself that no matter how big or small my insights are from my practice or what obstacles I face to practice in the first place, I need to keep bringing this acceptance and stillness into my everyday.

**YOUR PRACTICE:** If you would like to try, I invite you to take a few minutes out from your day, in a comfortable sitting position and just listen to the sounds around you. Hear the layers of sound and notice how they make you feel. If you feel distracted, notice what is distracting you and see if you can sit and accept.