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## Bali Usada Testimonial by Crystal Tan

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Peace and Happiness needs to be found from within and not always from external environment.

I guess I can say that life is not going to be the same again after going for 7 day 6 nights Tapa Brata. It is so clear to me now that Tapa Brata is so essential to life, The learnings from it, I truly believe is as important as how a child needs to learn how to read and write. In fact, if it were up to me it should be introduced to all school curriculums.

Let me tell you a bit of my life background. I'm 29 years old, and my husband Bjorn and I were working in the advertising industry for seven years when we decided that what were not on the right path. The job was life-draining. It was hard work and stressful during the day, sometimes the challenges were so impossible, deadlines so tight that we used to say "I'm losing the will to live" quite regularly to each other in the office. The salary was good though, and the parties were abundant. So our lives were basically work work work, then drink party party. On the weekends, we had no energy left for anything and usually slept through it or watched mindless TV just to "rest" our minds and body. Life was essentially just flashing right by us. We were depressed and spiritually sick, knew we had to get out before our bodies give in too sooner or later.

So we quit our jobs and with our savings went travelling around the UK (we were working in London at that time so it was convenient) through WWOOF – Willing Workers on Organic Farms where we went to 10 different little organic farms around the country to help in exchange for food and lodging. The experience was indeed very healing to our souls. Working with plants, the earth, the outdoors filled our hearts with life. But then, we had to go back to Singapore and face life in the city again.

Singapore, as you may know, is a thriving dynamic city, as much as I love it and call it home, it is very competitive, intense and filled with modern technology, skyscrapers, crowds rather than peace and nature. Soon, my husband and I became unpeaceful again. We constantly got agitated over the littlest things and we were constantly distracted by tv, internet, people that we weren't mindful about things. I became extremely forgetful, and most of all, we were confused about what to do in life. It was then, we met new friends who urged us to try meditation. They both meditate regularly and we could see that even though we all shared the same self-sufficiency/organic food ideals, they both seemed a lot more calmer, more peaceful and more accepting of life, even in Singapore.

So Bjorn and I travelled to Bali and chanced upon a positive news feature on Bali Usada. We decided to sign up for it, not knowing what to expect, especially since we've never done any meditation at all before.

What we got from the 7 days 6 nights Tapa Brata (Usada 1) was incredible. We were all not allowed to talk, read or write for the next 5 days. As a result of this "quietness", I was able to get my "harmonious mind" by Day 2 afternoon after a few sessions of constant mind drifting and aching back. My body felt light, my spirits and senses heightened. In beautiful garden of Saranam Eco Resorts, it was as if I was seeing nature for the first time. Every leaf, caterpillar, bird, flower was more beautiful and filled me with so much happiness and bliss. I was much more in the present than I have ever been in my life. It's so sad that for most people in everyday life, this beauty passes us by because we are never in the present, always somewhere else.

In the following days, there were sessions where I was distracted and filled with pain in my legs or back, but there were sessions where I felt calm and bliss which was wonderful. It was "Anicca" – the state of constant change, where everything is impermanent – what Pak Merta Ada was teaching us the whole time. Further to the meditation sessions, the day was interspersed with lovely talks given by Pak Merta. He shared with us many many stories, some of his patients and students, plenty from the teachings of Buddha, Islam, Christianity and especially Balinese Folk stories. They were beautiful stories and some moved me to tears.

What really impressed me about meditation and tapa brata is that the learnings are all essentially logic and science. We were healing our bodies and memories, not by some supernatural way, but merely with the power of our own mind and how its connected throughout our body. This was not magic, it was science.

The climax of this experience for me was on Day 7 when we went to visit Forest Island, Bali Usada's future centre. A really special place where the energy from the earth is very powerful. It was there, Pak Merta told us the story of how only very few times in his life, he's asked for something from the universe and it came true and that while

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we meditate there, it is ok to ask for something. At this point, I had been obsessed for the past few days about this family problem that have been on for almost 8 years now. It is not resolved and it brings me pain to think of it. During our "love and kindness" meditation sessions in the past few days, I sent love tediously to my aunt who I know needs help and also refuses to speak to my mother for the last 8 years. My mother pined for her, but my aunt was not moved. But I came to terms with it on Day 5 as I had to accept the "Anicca" in this matter. But at Forest Island, I knew it was my chance to ask for it once more. Right after the session, I received an sms from my mother that my aunt had reached out and sent her a text. I could not believe it. I could not believe it. For 8 years, my aunt had not communicated with my mother despite my mother constantly asking for her. But that very day, on Day 7, it happened. This was amazing. Of course, I burst into tears as I was so completely emotional and ecstatic because it was what I wished for.

Pak Merta said to me "congratulations" and was happy for me. My fellow students showered me with hugs and shared my happiness with me. Although we had spent 5 days in silence and only 1.5 days communicating and speaking with each other, we had unconsciously created a strong bond amongst ourselves. I think simply by being in the same room, meditating day in day out together, our energies merged and we all "felt" each other more than we thought we would.

As an atheist, I used to believe that life is just filled with random things happening to random people. But since Tapa Brata, it seems like everything was falling into place in my life. Even if it was just little things during the day. Possibly, it was that my outlook changed and if I remembered that everything was "Anicca", I'm facing life positively anyway, that's why everything seems fine!

In our lives, we are all really seeking for one thing at the end of the day. And it's to find that inner peace inside ourselves. So if you keep putting off the things that you know will equip you to face life in a more happy and peaceful way, you are just putting off life as a whole. So do yourself a favour, take one week off and sign up for Bali Usada 1 right away!