

Shake It Like Shakira

APPLE MANDY discovers a rewarding meditation in Bali, the essence of which is simple—shake it off.



SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

According to experts, this meditation type “forms a body of knowledge, which aims to help people harness their spiritual powers and discover the existence of their own divinity.”

“**E**lectric, electric,” said Ratu Bagus as he lightly placed his fingers at my lower spine. With my feet kept firmly on the ground and my eyes glued on Ratu Bagus’ supersized portrait, my body vibrated and shook freely looking like as if I was receiving an electric shock. Embracing the Balinese guru’s energy, I let myself go and fell to the ground. Slowly, I picked myself up and I shook again to the blaring house music, with the intention of finding my true self and getting to know my soul.

The idea of “shaking” meditation may sound unusual to others while some may find it intimidating. At Ratu Bagus’ Ashram, located near the east coast of Bali about one and half hours north of Denpasar, shaking is practiced thrice every day—7 am, 1 pm, and 7 pm, each session lasting for two hours. Participants gather and

chant a Hindu universal prayer before everyone starts shaking. As one practices longer, various emotions are released. Some shed tears and wail loudly, while others chuckle and laugh heartily. There are some who even shout angrily on the top of their lungs, such as Cecille, a 32-year-old French girl. She had

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a brain tumor and the shaking allowed her to scream and cry because of the anger she’s been bottling.

Fear is the first thing that greeted me from hearing the sounds surrounding me, but I eventually understood why certain emotions had to come out. I came to recognize myself and connect with my center again.

Ratu Bagus (meaning “good king”), 63, encourages his students to do shaking every day even after they leave the ashram. With long hair tied up in a bun and always wearing a white robe, he carries an aura that is full of optimism, contentment, and happiness. Among the locals, he is known as a healer of various illnesses and chronic diseases. One of his believers is my driver Ketut, who has been shaking for 10 years now. “Ratu helped me revive my health when smoking and drinking took a toll on me,” he says. Among the Westerners, Ratu is believed to help transform sadness into happiness and bring comfort to laugh.

Shaking sessions were ended with a short talk from Ratu spoken in his native language and translated by Suri, the ashram’s caretaker. This was followed by a healthy vegetarian meal, served buffet style. In between practices, one will be assigned to do a chore—washing dishes, sweeping the floor, or gardening. In a week’s journey, I experienced a profound spiritual healing. I felt light, healthy, and happy, and the most important part was that I learned how to let go. *Om Swasti Astu!* ■

GET STARTED

A shaking meditation retreat at Ratu Bagus costs US\$65 and up (per person, per day) and includes accommodations, meals, and all training sessions. The ashram suggests a minimum of 5 days’ stay for beginners. www.ratubagus.com