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MAGAZINE

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RECONNECT • RESTORE • RENEW

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Rola Tassabehji

Yoga & Menopause

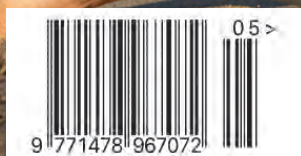
BALANCING PITTA

Power of PILGRIMAGE

HIP-OPENING

YOGA

Living Namaste



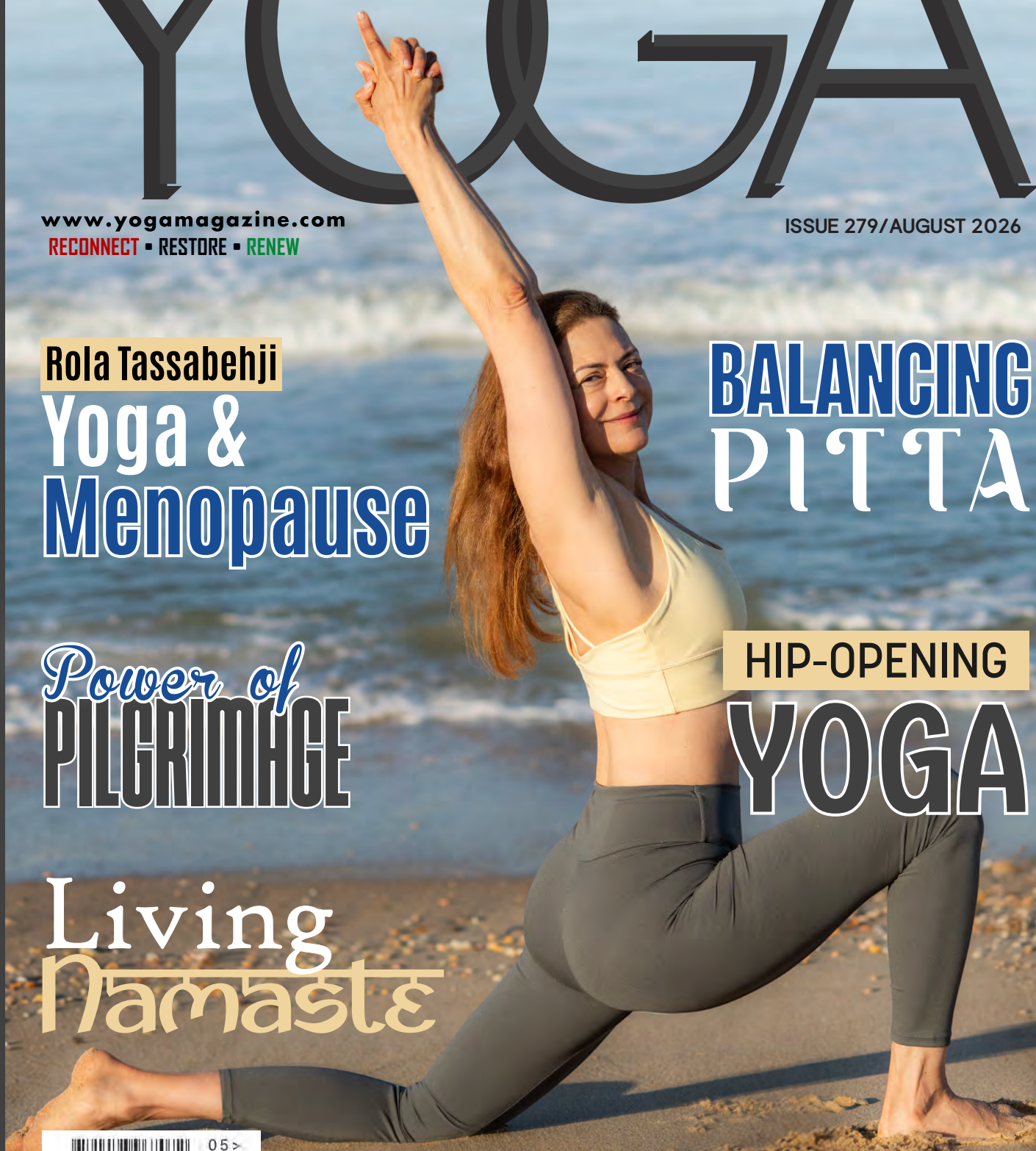
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On the cover

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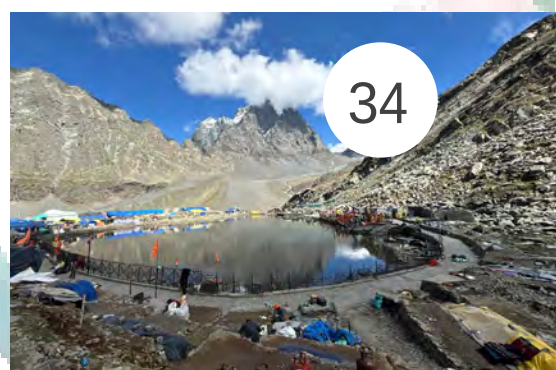
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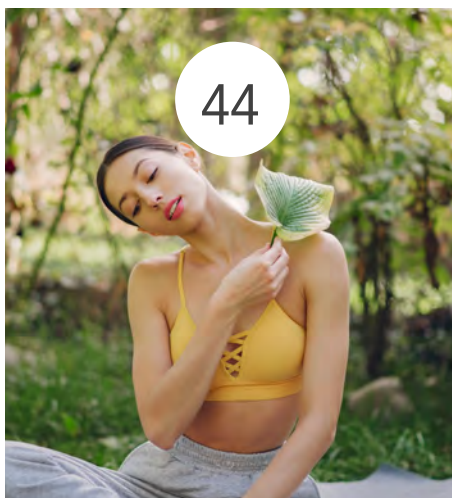
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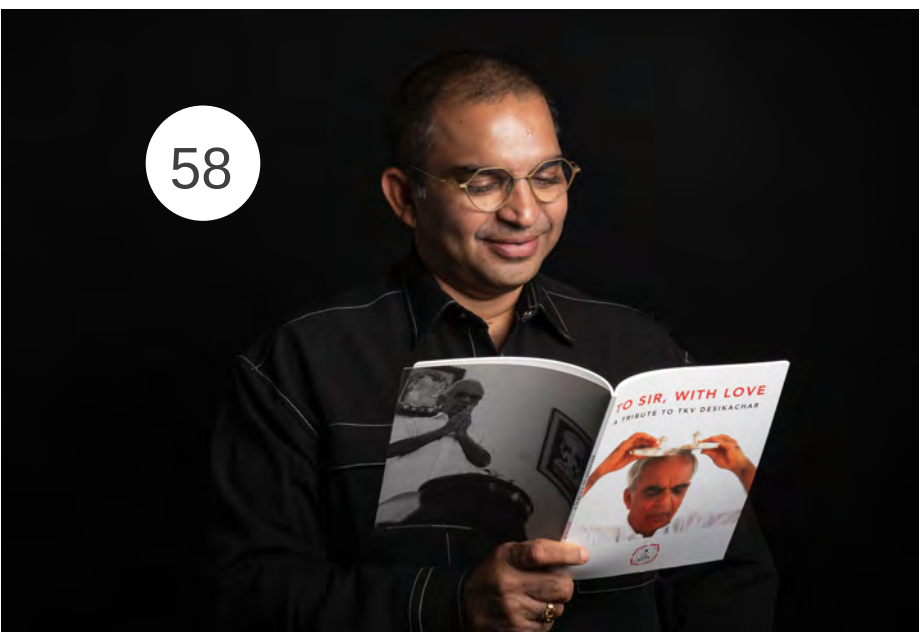
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The ADRIATIC MEETS THE HIMALAYAS

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On a stretch of Croatian coastline, a Tibetan musician, an Italian meditation guide, a British yoga teacher, and a local retreat founder, showed that freedom sounds the same in any language.

Author: Nick Rice

Photography: Layla Radan & Ceri Beddard

No one is permitted to stay overnight on Lokrum. The island sits just off Dubrovnik's Old Town, close enough to see the ramparts from its shore, and yet it keeps its own rules. Everyone, (including Sir David Beckham on the day of our visit) and all park staff, is required to leave before dark.

The strict law is not only to preserve its natural ecosystem, but also to honour local legend surrounding the ban. Folklore maintains that when Benedictine monks were forced off the island by Napoleon in the 19th century, they cast a curse on anyone who sought to claim Lokrum for their own personal pleasure.

It was here, one still morning, that another nourishing day unfolded on the Himalayan Energy & Wisdom Retreat hosted by Wild Orange in Dubrovnik. Wild peacocks wandered amongst our group as we moved through the Five Tibetan Rites, the ancient sequence of movements said to restore vitality to those who practise it

“What a mystical place,” recalls Valentina Mango, the retreat’s coordinator and a long-time student of Tibetan meditation. “Learning about the legends surrounding the island, then practising the Rites with wild peacocks around us, created an unforgettable atmosphere. It felt magical, almost timeless.” It was, for her, the retreat distilled into a single scene: “a beautiful meeting of nature, history, movement, and inner exploration.”

That meeting of cultures—a Mediterranean city built on trade and liberty and a spiritual tradition born four thousand miles away in the mountains of Tibet—was the whole premise of the retreat. The idea began, as good ideas often do, seemingly by accident. Valentina, searching for a retreat partner, came across Wild Orange Dubrovnik Retreat Centre and its founder, Layla Radan. “Our core values resonate with Valentina



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and Bone’s,” Layla says, referring to Valentina’s husband, the award-winning Tibetan musician Bone Lhamokyap.

“It’s about celebrating differences and discovering common grounds through shared experiences.”

What she wanted to offer guests was not a yoga holiday with a cultural garnish, but something closer to equal footing—Dubrovnik’s history of introspection and connection meeting the Himalayas’ centuries of accumulated wisdom about mindfulness and inner peace. Tibetan philosophy and Dalmatian history, sitting side by side.

Searching for a single word to evoke the retreat experience, Layla alights upon *libertas*—the motto and enduring symbol of the Republic of Dubrovnik. “True freedom comes from embracing our connection to our ancestors,

collective creativity, and nature,” Layla continues. In Dubrovnik, that freedom has always been shaped by the sea—something she light-heartedly calls ‘Blue Therapy,’ “not as a practice or a concept, but as something lived and felt,” as it is quietly present in the way locals move through their days in tune with the water around them.



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The Sound of Tibet, by the Sea

For the star guest Bone, who grew up on the Tibetan Plateau where there is no sea to speak of, being surrounded by water was a new experience and partway through the week, he found himself wading into the Adriatic for the first time.

“I was quite nervous,” he confides, “but you reassured me that if anything happened, you would save me,” he says with his broad smile, remembering his first attempts at swimming. What stayed with him afterwards wasn’t the swim itself, but the feeling underneath it: “being surrounded by people who genuinely cared for me. That experience touched my heart deeply.”

It’s a fitting story for a musician whose work is built on translating

overwhelming natural experience into sound. “The first time I jumped into the deep sea, I felt an immense and truthful power of nature,” he explains. “That feeling became part of my music.” Across the week, his performances included mountain songs, ancient mantras, and the calls of eagles from the Tibetan Plateau played on his own hand-carved whistles.

“The eagle, in particular, is a powerful symbol of freedom,” Bone says. “These whistle sounds evoke the living environment where Tibetan culture was born.” Interestingly, he doesn’t separate music from meditation. “When I play music, I am meditating. When I meditate, I am creating music, even in silence.” By the end of the retreat, Bone found something he hadn’t expected in a city so far from home: a strange familiarity. “I found the people to be warm, welcoming, humble, and deeply connected to their homeland. Qualities that reminded

me of Tibetans,” he says. “When I left Dubrovnik, I felt emotional, because it felt like I was leaving a piece of my heart behind.”

Wild Thyme and Ancient Stones

Some of that connection to homeland came from the ground itself. Guests spent two afternoons with the fantastic local guide Ivana on her Whisper Walks trails around Dubrovnik. Ivana’s knowledge of the region’s wild plant life turned an ordinary hike into something closer to a lesson in resilience. Ivana pointed out the hardy Mediterranean herbs that cling to limestone and thrive in salt wind, such as rosemary, sage, wild thyme, and introduced the group to an old Slavic tradition largely unknown outside the region: a face bath made from local flowers, once used by women along this coast for generations.





There was something quietly instructive in learning, on a coastal trail, how little these plants ask for and how much they endure—an idea that sat naturally alongside everything guests were absorbing about Himalayan resilience.

The Five Tibetans

Alongside the music, the walks, and the cultural discoveries, one practice was repeated every day of the retreat: the Five Tibetans, taught each morning by Yoga teacher Ceri Beddard (@flowwithceri). Ceri told me how she watched the group's energy shift in real time. "People arrived a little guarded, a little in their heads, but by the middle of the week there was this palpable settling into presence."

Ceri says, "The Five Tibetans gave us a beautiful thread back to Himalayan monastic tradition, a practice designed to move energy and restore vitality, much like the ancient trade routes once carried ideas and rituals between distant cultures."



As the repetitions increased day by day, so did something less visible—a willingness to sit with discomfort rather than resist it. “That’s often where the real shift happens,” Ceri explains, “not in the physical gain, but in what it teaches you about staying present when things get hard.”

Dubrovnik has its own history of being a crossroads, a place where East met West, so for Ceri, “there was something quietly fitting about practising rites born in Tibet while overlooking the Adriatic.” She’s careful to draw the line precisely: “It wasn’t about recreating Tibet in Croatia. It was about honouring that same universal impulse: using the body to access something larger than ourselves, wherever you happen to be standing.”

Parallels Across Distance

Valentina articulated clearly why none of the experiences ever felt forced. Hiking in the hills above Dubrovnik, she noticed signs of Christian pilgrimage, small shrines and old religious markers along the paths. “It immediately reminded me of hiking on the Tibetan Plateau,” she says, “where you encounter prayer flags, mani stones, pilgrims, and Buddhist sacred sites.” The spiritual traditions were entirely different. The impulse behind them, she felt, was not. “The landscape itself carries faith, history, and devotion,” she says. “Nature plays an important role in both cultures, creating a deep bond between people and the land they call home.”



Take Another Little Piece of My Heart

By the retreat’s last evening, the distance between a mountain kingdom with no sea and a walled city surrounded by one had all but merged. What remained was something closer to kinship.

Layla’s word keeps returning because it seems to hold everything else: *libertas*. Not freedom as escape, but freedom as connection—to the sea, to the mountains, to each other, to whoever came before.

Bone puts it more personally, standing at the edge of a coastline he’d never imagined swimming in a year earlier, in a country he’d never planned to love. He left, he says, with a piece of his heart behind him in Dubrovnik. Judging by everyone else’s account of that week, he wasn’t alone.



Nick Rice is a seasoned editor and writer based in Spain. His assignments cover a wide range of topics, from travel reports to inspirational interviews. Passionate about Yoga, meditation, and personal growth, he often explores these practices in his work.