

## **Given over to absolute pleasure**

**By Ruth Ostrow**

"GET into your feminine essence, baby. Feel it flowing through your body..." How is it that a gorgeous black male with a lilting southern Tennessee drawl is standing above me, on a midweek working day, while I lie on his massage table about to go very deeply into my sacred female essence?

It's a long story. His name is Shantam Nityama and he is a legend in these parts.

It all started a year ago. Nityama was visiting Byron Bay from his home in California to do a Tantric workshop for couples.

Within a few days of that workshop he had become a Tantric superstar. Women who had done the workshop were said to be spontaneously orgasming all over the place. A friend who is a masseur said clients who had come to him for therapeutic work were "shuddering" and "levitating" off the table.

A woman I knew who had done the course said she couldn't stop vibrating with energy pulsing through her. "I was never orgasmic before, now I can't stop," she said, while her husband, who had accompanied her to the workshop, was nodding furiously in delight.

Apparently Nityama -- who is a reiki master and chi gung energy worker -- created this by putting his hands on pressure points around the body, on the neck, the head, the shoulders, along various energy meridians, in front of partners who then learned techniques for ultimate pleasure. As he points out, it is as much what you don't touch as what you do when dealing with the subtleties of female arousal.

To put things in perspective, around here Tantra is the new "relationships counselling". Drained by day-to-day mundane existence and looking for something to spice up their marriages, couples are turning in droves to such respected masters as partners Oceana and Icarus, who live here, but also the plethora of travelling practitioners passing through.

Courses in Tantra generally teach Taoist breathing techniques, how to channel energy, non-ejaculatory orgasms for men, hour-long full-body orgasms for women.

Tantra is based in the Eastern philosophy of alchemy and transformation. The point of pleasure is not just to enjoy one's body at a base level but to transform that pleasure into a deep reverence for the divine. It is using pleasure as a pathway to worship and the sacred body as a conduit between heaven and earth. As Nityama says: "It amazes me that orthodox religion denies the body as part of spirituality. You can't become a butterfly before you have lived as a caterpillar."

The other deep benefit of Tantra I witnessed during my years as a sex and relationships writer is that many partnerships have been saved or helped by such classes, as couples learn a gentler, more nourishing form of union that embraces subtle energies and honours the Shakti and Shiva (goddess and god) coming together in holy union during love-making.

It may be unorthodox in the West, but with half of all marriages ending in divorce and the other half riddled with stories of betrayal and unhappiness, it's necessary to explore other ways to cope with the atrophy of long-term relationships.

Nityama, who comes to Australia this time each year, works on the principle that in order to experience bliss, the energy meridians throughout the body have to be cleared first. So here I am having a private session, waiting to have my blockages unblocked.

Before I go in, I chat to a man in his car waiting for his wife. Was he threatened knowing Nityama was working on his wife? Oh no. "She can learn about her own body then come home and teach me." A man in the waiting room had recently done the workshop with his girlfriend. He said things had never been better between them. "Of course it's threatening watching someone else pleasure your partner. But what we learned is awesome," he said.

I am waiting to have something very sacred pressed. But Nityama is pressing my left eye instead. Then he is pressing my right shoulder bone. A little odd, but Lordy Lord it sure feels good. It's a subtle rush, as if each cell in my body is making love with another.

Nityama explains that female energy channels often have tension knots in them the way we have knots in our necks. One pathway to female pleasure is to hold certain pressure points firmly then to release, letting energy and new blood flow through. "We don't need to rub our bodies so hard we desensitise them to real pleasure," he says, as he begins showing me things about my body I never knew before.

He says that men and women need to use their throats -- "to sing that sacred song" -- and cry out in an act of surrendering, opening up breathing passages that enable energy to move through the opened meridians and to transmit a powerful rush.

As he plays my meridians like an exquisite musician, I am singing. I am dancing. And as I get in touch with my deepest feminine essence I am thinking: "There are some days when I just love my job".

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