



Newsletter - October 2009

## "What is Tantra?"

Because our work is so much based on an eclectic approach....with many tools and exercises taken from both our own experiences, as well as varied approaches in personal growth.....it can easily get overlooked that our main ethos and style is drawn from the intimate and sacred Art of Tantra. Indeed, Tantra offers us a way of deepening our relationship, both to ourselves and to the other, unlike any other practice we know of. It is truly ancient, unique, and wonderful.

People have asked us recently to put a clearer emphasis on Tantra in what we offer and we are more than delighted to do so. I'd like to therefore go back nearly two years and re-visit an article I wrote then to de-mystify Tantra and to say what it means to me. Enjoy!

And if you do enjoy ..... come and do one of our workshops or sessions to discover what *you* can gain from using Tantra to help create and maintain loving relationships.

## What is *Tantra* really?

**Many people ask us:** *"What is Tantra?"* Others say: *"I know what Tantra is - it's having sex in strange positions!"*

**Hmm, that may be true** - though that definition feels more like the Kama Sutra to me. Anyway, I'd like to share (in a simple way, rather than a factually perfect way) what Tantra means for me personally and how I have found it valuable in my relationship.

**To begin with, Tantra is an ancient art** which originated in the East thousands of years ago. The story goes that its origins are based in a rebellion against the Yogi style spiritual tradition of the time, i.e. holy men sitting in caves covered in ashes, in deep meditation for years. This purely ascetic practice definitely left out the physical and sexual side of human nature, which was the point made by the founders of Tantra, a lively and very controversial movement for the times. Hence, its reputation for sexual extremism, which is also its sensationalist aspect. However I would like to bring the focus to its depths and beauty.

**Tantra is not a religion.** It's a philosophy with many and varied interpretations. For sure, it is also an art. For me, it is fundamentally the art of deeply loving from a

sense of wholeness within myself. From this place of wholeness, I can reach out and see my partner as unique and whole also.

**It is about creating a sense of union** that is so special, it feels beyond the everyday. Yet it *is* everyday at the same time. If this sounds a bit contradictory, do keep reading, as my aim is to draw the value of Tantra closer to you and your everyday life.

**One thing I discovered** very early in my journey of bringing Tantra into couples work, is that couples don't have time for it! What I mean is that Tantra, (the kind I learned in my original training 10 years ago), is full of long, complex and sacred rituals that just don't easily find a place in the average couple's life. In between work, the shopping and getting the kids to bed, we are unlikely to spend hours finding different ways of breathing together among a sea of lotus flowers and candles.

**Whoops - this is sounding like I am making fun of the Sacred Art of Tantra, and that's not my intention!** Actually, I have the utmost respect for it. But my belief is we can make much more realistic use of it if we put it into the framework and reality of our lives. I want to show that it can offer you a truly valuable context to profoundly deepen your relationship.

**Let's start with the basic Tantric concept:**

**We are divine beings, each with a feminine and masculine side to us.** Woman is mainly feminine: *yin*, flowing, soft and flexible, with some masculine in the mix. A divine goddess in fact, with the tantric name **Shakti**. Man is mainly masculine: *yang*, going for it, focused, straight down the middle, with some feminine in the mix. A divine god, with the name of **Shiva**.

**The combination of Shakti and Shiva - you and your partner - creates the right balance for your lives together.** You can gain so much from each other's qualities. You can birth a whole new world from your sacred union, which is how (as the story goes) the original Shakti and Shiva created the Tantric movement and the whole universe. (They didn't aim small, those two!)

Wow! Perhaps this may be starting to feel a touch too much? Are you wondering how you can adapt this for your life and your relationship?

**Begin by creating a quiet and undisturbed half hour together.** Despite my earlier comment about overdone rituals, you may like a candle or some incense to make your space feel special. Start by sitting opposite one another on the floor (use backrests if needed). Greet each other with a Namaste (see below) and then do absolutely nothing together! Nothing, that is, except gaze deeply at one another, creating an extraordinarily simple meditation. By looking into your partner's eyes and letting your gaze go relaxed and hazy, you are seeing their true deep divinity. As you gaze, allow yourselves to softly unite with one another. Visualise the two of you as one. Do this for at least 5 minutes - longer if you both want to. Then end the meditation gently with a Namaste.

*(A Namaste is a gesture of honouring and respect, acknowledging the Divine in each of us. It is created by placing the hands in front of your chest - the heart chakra - with the palms pressed together and fingers pointed upward, then making a bow to the other person while staying in eye contact. You can perhaps gently touch*

foreheads. It can either be in silence, or accompanied by gently speaking the word *Namaste* to each other. *Namaste* means "I honour the divine in you as I honour the divine in myself").

**Tenderly melt into a heart-to-heart hug** and stay in this slowed down space you are now in together. You may like to do this divine meditation regularly and see where it takes you afterwards.

**There are other ways of including the aspect of divinity into your everyday relationship,** For example, if you notice you may be judging your partner harshly or blaming them, making it all their fault, try changing it to offering them an appreciation:

*"I loved that you planned and cooked a lovely dinner this evening.  
Thank you, my Shiva!"*

*"I love that you told me you needed some time for yourself yesterday.  
Thank you, my Shakti!"*

***In fact, we recommend you make it a point to offer each other at least one heart-felt appreciation every day. (More than one is OK too.)***

**Another aspect of Tantra is integrating sexuality with heart and spirit.** This may sound vague and not too concrete. But for me, it reminds me that being sexual needs to be part of my life; a way of expressing myself that isn't isolated, but is linked to my emotions and my desire for deep connection.

This context helps me think of my sexuality as a vulnerable (even young) part of me that wants to be brought inside, out of the cold. It wants to be given a place, cared about, talked about and valued as delicate and special. My sexuality takes many forms. Sometimes it wants to be honoured in a gentle way. Other times it wants to be given loving space to express passion and noise!

**Bring your own sexuality fully into your relationship** (for each of you does have your own). Tell each other what your own sexuality needs: its deepest desires, its secret fantasies, what you and your sexuality would really love to happen. Take turns to listen to the story of each other's sexual journey. It has its own character and needs a safe space to be seen and heard.

**The tantric way to make love is by honouring your partner** and their unique sexuality; getting to know just what this part of them needs and wants. Listen well and give one another generosity to be yourselves in love making. Let your hearts speak too. The expression of love and emotion, feelings from the heart, when combined with your sexual union, creates the kind of wholeness that is indeed the Tantric path.

I hope this has been useful for you and offers a starting place and an inspiration perhaps. Our work can take you on this path in many joyous, deep and sacred ways.

Namaste and love,

*Priya*