

Tantra

Reclaiming my yoni with the guru of Chalk Farm

As her friends buzzed with talk of a Tantric healer, our writer paid £95 to join the growing army of women spending money on sex

Naomi Wolf

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Naomi Wolf visiting Mike Lousada at his home cum massage parlour (pic Stuart Conway)

I was intrigued. I kept hearing anecdotes from female friends about how they had found new heights of ecstasy — and sexual self-possession — in the practice of Tantra. Friends would return from Tantric sex workshops glowing and smiling knowingly. Mike Lousada, they all said, was the man. I decided I had to see him.

When I called to find out more, he explained that his mission was to empower women sexually, and to heal those who had been erotically traumatised. He works with the yoni — which is the Hindi term for a woman’s “sacred space”. He explained that his client base included women from all backgrounds and of all ages.

Wow, I thought: this was a lot more explicit than the vague “workshop” and nebulous “massage” I had expected.

I explained that since I was in a relationship I would not be open to the actual yoni work, and he soothingly assured me that he would respect my boundaries.

I considered those boundaries after the conversation too; the truth is that, even if I had not been in a relationship, some part of me simply does not see sexuality as something that should be appropriated by market forces. The fact that I was going to see a male sex worker/yoniguru also wreaked havoc with my judgmental feminist reflexes about the sex trade and its morality.

As a feminist, I have given a great deal of thought to the question of whether women can be truly free and not exploited as prostitutes. Though I have spoken to countless feminist sex workers and advocates for prostitutes who insist that they happily choose their line of work and that it is not demeaning, I have never been fully persuaded.

The evidence is too strong that a majority of women in prostitution end up there as a result of drug addiction or childhood sexual abuse. There is also the economic pressure that makes sex work often the “best” option for a woman with no options.

And, logical reasons aside, perhaps as a legacy of my Jewish heritage, I have an innate sense of the sacredness of the human body that has led me to react against the trade in organs, or babies, or eggs, or gestation — even if all concerned say that they are acting freely and willingly. Some things just should not be subject to market forces. For me sex is one of them.

Yet somehow Michael seemed to upend all that careful reasoning of so many years standing. He did not seem to be anyone’s victim; an educated white man, he claims to be motivated by the desire to heal women sexually — so with what intellectual cudgel could I still beat his decision to enter an aspect of his sexuality into a market economy? The very fact of his existence, a man who was paid to bring women sexual pleasure and heal them, brought my views about prostitution to an intellectual standstill.

Then there were the glowing testimonials from clients, on his website: “Thank you for holding me so skilfully in my vulnerability” — Ms D; “After seeing you, I hear my heartbeat, I feel so alive — a real woman ... Thank you” — Ms S; “Thanks, Mike. I feel grace and courage, feminine, protected, clarity, focused ... a serene smile on my face” — Ms P.

These were deeply emotional commentaries — not the lurid ratings of satisfied customers of XXX sex traffic.

Did he consider himself a sex worker, I asked. “I suppose you could say I am a prostitute,” he replied calmly, adding that he worked fully clothed or in a sarong or unclothed, as the client wished, and that the client could be dressed or undressed as she preferred. Images flashed through my head. I couldn’t quite believe I was about to encounter my first yoni empowerer/male sex worker catering to women. Reader, I made an appointment.

When I told friends and colleagues what I was intending to do, their reactions were fascinating. I’m usually quite cool about sex, but I felt anxious. However, not a single female friend expressed horror or aversion — they were either totally captivated, or else annoyed that they couldn’t be there too. One, a happily married mother of two, kept emailing me: “Well? Have you gone yet? What was it like???”

Similar emails flooded in from other friends, married and single. We were not maturely considering this notion; we were not enlightened or politically correct; rather, we were all

regressing, with the feminine equivalent of a locker-room vibe flying back and forth among ourselves electronically.

Michael is a pioneer in a growing field. As women become more financially independent and flex their muscles in the global economy, more of them are choosing to use that wealth to procure the fulfilment of their desires. Sales of vibrators and other sexual aids are proving remarkably recession-proof (this market is worth £10 billion globally) and the rise of shops such as Coco de Mer and Myla, which cater to a sophisticated female clientele, show this sector is buoyant.

I wasn't sure if he was a cad, a predator, or just a poseur: but in fact he met my gaze I had to admit: I trusted his motivations. A government study of 2,400 adults indicates that one British woman in a hundred admits having visited a sex worker — the actual number is likely to be higher. And increasing numbers of western women are travelling to west Africa and the Caribbean seeking sexual solace from local gigolos; 60% of female tourists to Negril in Jamaica had had sex with a local involving some kind of economic exchange. Prostitution is no longer a malecustomer, female-worker zone.

Leora Lightwoman, another Tantric teacher, of Diamond Light Tantra, admits that “practitioners such as Michael offer this opportunity to those who are not in a couple, or whose partners are not Tantrically inclined, to receive a delicious, sacred, sexual and emotional offering”.

She adds: “The difference between a Tantric massage and an erotic massage can be nebulous, even to those in the field.” So “Tantric practitioner” can be a convenient and new euphemism for a form of sex trade aimed at women — but really just like the “escorts” or “masseuses” who advertise to men. The more interesting question to me was: what would women choose if they were the customers — if they could choose anything? Would a personal male sex worker cater to one's every whim? Would there be rose oil and pampering?

Michael's “studio” is a charming renovated cottage near Chalk Farm in north London. Opening the door, a handsome, fit, golden-skinned, curly-haired man, he alarmingly immediately offered me a hug. Tantra must do wonders for the system, since he was 43 but looked a decade younger. I nervously sat on the floor, as indicated, and looked around: we were in a warm sitting room with piles of red and orange pillows, candles and incense around us.

Before we began the session, Mike explained that many of his clients had been sexually abused as girls and the after-effects ranged from a deep rage against men that manifested sexually, to an inability to feel deeply or to be orgasmic; sex with him — he used manipulation for the most part — helped them, he claimed, heal their rage and depression. And so my lesson in Tantra 101 practice began. Michael had me sit before him on a cushion and engage in breathing exercises. We were facing one another, inches apart, both in the lotus position.

He guided me on a visualisation: he had me visualise each chakra (a kind of nerve channel), from my head to my “root chakra”, which in Tantra is the sex centre: “Feel your root chakra extend into the earth ... feel it growing strong ... your yoni is extending roots into the earth ... now the roots are splitting rock.” I burst out laughing. The photographer snapped away.

“Nervous?” he asked. “That's okay.”

“No,” I said, barely able to contain myself. “It’s just funny.”

But somehow the thought of a mighty earth-splitting yoni was ... not unpleasant funny, but nice funny; still laughing, I pictured, as if in an animated movie, a mighty yoni superhero — a yoni avenger.

Then he had me stare deeply into his eyes while we breathed in unison. At this point, I wasn’t sure if he was a cad, a predator, or just a poseur: but in fact he met my gaze levelly and I had to admit: I trusted his motivations.



Women are buying sexual aids from shops such as Coco de Mer (Lee Alan Browne)

My judgments were flying out the window, and when I considered his repeated mission statement — that his life’s work was to heal women who had been sexually harmed — it was very difficult to find a reason to dismiss or deride his work, despite my very real aversion to all forms of prostitution.

At the end of the breathing session, he smiled and said: “Welcome, goddess.” And I couldn’t help smiling too. I thought of all the women in loveless marriages, women who were verbally ground down daily with disrespect or simple disregard. I thought, too, of the “whore with the heart of gold” stereotype that is part of traditional male culture, and the claim that many men visit female prostitutes just for the experience of someone listening to them or praising them.

For many, Mike’s acknowledgment of the sacred feminine in every woman — even if hard to take with a straight face — would alone be worth the price of admission. How many exhausted mums or taken-for-granted wives wouldn’t be at least as tempted by a £95 apparently sincere “welcome, goddess” as by a new outfit or hairstyle?

What is his modus operandi, I asked.

“We start with massaging the body ... we move into working on the yoni. First we work externally. When it’s appropriate I would ask if it’s okay to enter with my fingers. This is a sacred space. It is the holy of holies of your body. No one may enter without your permission. I ask, ‘Goddess, may I enter?’

“If I get the consent, I check with the yoni to see. I place my fingers at the entrance and if she is ready to receive me, it will draw me in.”

He continued that he advised men never to enter if “the yoni doesn’t say yes too”. I had to admit I thought that would be good advice to give to young men as part of their basic education.

Does he ever have intercourse with his clients? “I don’t generally have intercourse with my clients unless it is extremely therapeutic.”

He re-stated that he generally worked with his hands.

Within 30 seconds I was in a state of — yes — bliss. Within five minutes I was laughing and within 10 minutes I was in an altered state Do clients usually have orgasms? “Generally,” he replied, “but that’s not the goal. I have three types of client. [The first is] women who come to me because they are not happy with their relationships, with their own masculine or feminine. They are over-identified with the masculine. They yearn for a masculine man but are not attracting that because they are in their masculine themselves.”

He spoke about the pressures of modern working life on women — how it rewards them for becoming unbalanced in terms of their “masculine”. When they see him, he claimed, they restore a feminine balance and start to attract grounded, responsible, protective, masculine men. I was sceptical but he offered to put me in touch with them. I asked him about the second category of client.

Category number two, he said, was “women who have suffered severe abuse or trauma. And they want to deal with it because it is ruining their lives”.

Category three? “Sometimes there are women who just want to experience pleasure.”

And if he doesn’t find them attractive?

“There is always something beautiful about a woman,” he said. He explained that some of these clients were in their fifties or sixties; some were physically challenged in various ways; many were alone in their lives. “In a session I can always see something.” He said that he took two or three hours for the yoni massage — he wanted the woman to feel that there was no rush. That sounded a long time to me. After all, if you told an average man that he needed to take two or three hours to pay attention to the woman in that way, he would immediately look for the remote control, I joked. “That’s why I need to teach men,” he said seriously.

Okay: I was sold, at least on Michael’s sincerity. On to the massage — or the amount of it I would be comfortable with. He led me upstairs, into a seductive little bedroom lit with candles and fragrant with more incense.

There, once again, we got into a negotiation: he was intent on a yoni massage, and I — reader, it was such a potentially sexual situation, with no lotuses, no vague deniability — I couldn’t go there. I was in bed with an attractive strange man and there was no way to

pretend that what he was proposing would not be sex. The nice Jewish girl in me once again drew a line.

“Can’t we do some ... body work?” I asked.

He looked insulted. “Yoni work is what I do,” he said, with professional pride.

Finally we agreed: he would work with me non-sexually and I would keep my shirt and sarong on.

Well: within 30 seconds I was in a state of — yes — bliss. Within five minutes I was laughing and within 10 minutes I was in an altered state.

What was he doing?

Nothing except tracing the meridian lines — the energy pathways — of my body with the tips of his fingers.

When I left Michael’s studio, colours looked brighter, the world seemed full of joy and sensuality and the friend who met me afterwards (grumpily) said I looked flushed and beaming. Michael had explained after the session that through a great deal of training he could project his male energy into every part of his body — including his hands, his fingers — and that was what caused the effect of his touch.

Did my Tantra session, even the definitely not X-rated version that it was, change me?

I have to say it changed some of my assumptions and prejudices. I can’t so easily dismiss all sex work as pure commodification, or all sex workers as victims in an oppressive economy. For me this is an intriguing, though philosophically problematic, development. Ultimately, I found his way of seeing female sexuality empowering and I am going to send a friend who is single and who does not have my qualms — to give me a first-hand description of the whole treatment.

And I did walk away with a great new catchphrase. As my friends and I now sometimes joke to one another when some adventure is being narrated — only sometimes it is not really a joke — “But what did the yoni have to say?”

Naomi Wolf

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A Guide to Tantric Massage

Lisa Mills

TANTRIC MASSAGE

I guess the majority of us have heard about Tantric sex and massage. Had anyone asked me what it was exactly I would have giggled shyly and muttered something about gentle touching, feathers, massage and no orgasm. How wrong I was.

Tantric massage is basically just a massage. However it was created from the belief that if you are sexually happy and relaxed then your health will benefit. The Hindus describe Tantra as achieving personal growth through pleasurable existence. The massage itself does tend to cause orgasms, but these are described as a bonus rather than the aim.

Although Tantric massage does not involve actual penetrative sex, it does involve full on touching of the organs. For this reason you will not find it offered down your local health centre. You are far more likely to find it on offer in the many massage parlours in London and other major cities.

If you want to have a go with her or him indoors here is a pretty basic guide to Tantric massage.

Firstly, from this point on, your manhood is referred to as Lingam (wand of light - don't be thinking light sabre it's not that big!) and the lady's bits are called Yoni (sacred space or sacred temple). Let's face it those words sound much nicer than the alternatives.

If you are visiting somewhere for your massage you need to decide in advance whether you will be getting naked or not. Proper Tantric masseuse prefer you to be naked, they believe this helps the healing process all over your body. If you are shy you can choose to keep some clothes on, I am guessing you will want to cover your Lingam or your Yoni. If you are at home with the missus or the husband, get your kit off and turn the heating up.

Choose some gentle music (whale music is optional). Now banish all thoughts of kneading your lover all over until she or he begs for mercy. It's not that kind of massage. Make your lover lie on his or her back, legs apart and a cushion under the hips to raise up the Yoni/Lingam area and a cushion under the head so they can look at their genitals. Explain that although there will not be any penetrative sex this evening you will take them to previously unknown heights of sexual satisfaction. It may help to convince them if you do not print off this article and place it next to them on the bed. Choose your lubricant wisely; chocolate body sauce has no place here.

The massage itself involves every part of the body, although I guess the Yoni/Lingam area will receive more than its fair share of attention. The massaging of the body is to help prepare the receiver for the attention you will be paying their genitals.

Yoni Massage

Pour a small amount of oil on to the mound of the Yoni, just enough so it drips down the outer lips. Massage each outer lip slowly between thumb and forefinger, sliding up and down the entire length of the lip. Only ask your lover if the pressure is too much or not enough. Try to look into their eyes during the massage and ensure she can see what you are doing. Do the same for the inner lips of the Yoni. Take your time and watch your lover relax.

The jewel in the crown is the clitoris. Four times more sensitive than your Lingam so take it easy here. Begin by gently stroking it in a clockwise and anti-clockwise direction and squeeze it gently between your thumb and index finger. The missus will be well and truly fired up by now but try not to allow an orgasm just yet, let the sensations build. If it becomes too much, just back off a bit and encourage her to breathe deeply. Now insert the middle finger of your right hand (I can't remember why it has to be the right one but I shouldn't think it would cause too much trouble if you need to use your left instead.) and gently feel around inside continuing to massage gently.

With your palm facing upwards and your middle finger buried in the Yoni, bend your finger back towards the palm and you should feel a spongy area just under the pubic bone. This is known as the G-spot ("that's where it is!" I hear you yell). Gently massage here, in circles, back and forth, side to side. Your lover may feel the need to pee but hopefully she should feel pleasure building slowly. At this point you may wish to insert the finger between your middle finger and your little finger. Whilst a few of your digits are employed inside, you may as well use your thumb to continue circling the clitoris. Another option is to leave your middle finger inside, continue stimulating the clitoris with your thumb and insert your little finger up her anus. I would suggest you perhaps test the waters first as anal penetration when you are not expecting it would definitely ruin the mood. Whilst all this is going on, your left hand may feel a little underused. Use it instead to continue stroking and massaging other parts of her body (**her** body parts not yours!). Your lover will more than likely experience a very intense orgasm and afterward will feel completely relaxed. She will generally drift off to sleep and leave you in a state of arousal with no prospect of a Lingam massage for you tonight!

Lingam Massage

Traditionally the giver, some men may find it difficult to lay back and think of England whilst his lover goes to work on his wand of light. However, I do suggest you give it a go bearing in mind the fantastic massage you gave her Yoni last night.

Get your man to lay back on the bed with a pillow under his head to enable him to see what you are doing. Put a pillow under his hips and spread his legs with his knees bent. His Lingam must be completely exposed. Begin as before by gently massaging all over his body, avoiding this area for a while. This allows him to become completely relaxed and prepared for the touching of the Lingam. Pour a small amount of oil over his shaft and testicles and begin gently massaging his testicles. Next massage the area on the pubic bone above the Lingam. Massage the area between his testicles and his anus (perineum). Moving on to the Lingam, gently grasp the base with your right hand and move up the shaft and then remove your hand, repeat with the left hand. Do this for some time, then change to grasping the Lingam at the top, slide down the shaft and remove your hand, replace with the left and repeat this process. The head of the Lingam is very sensitive and deserves special attention. Massage it in a circular motion. Don't worry if the Lingam goes soft, it will shortly perk up again. Likewise if your partner seems to be on the brink of orgasm, back off and encourage deep breathing.

Keep bringing him close to orgasm and then back off. This is not a method of torture, it helps them to control their ejaculation and therefore achieve longer and more pleasurable orgasms. Whilst continuing to massage his Lingam, you can search for his sacred spot. This is located between his testicles and his anus. It is a small indentation about the size of a pea. If you massage here and gently increase the pressure he may well feel uncomfortable at first. Applying pressure here will help him gain control of his orgasms in future. If he is nearing ejaculation you can apply pressure here and this will increase the intensity of his orgasm.

The end of the massage is signalled by either ejaculation or snoring. If he is snoring you still have some practising to do. If he has ejaculated, you have some clearing up to do.

I am still very much a beginner however I was pleased to discover that Tantric massage is not a mysterious sexual cult and is certainly not difficult to do. Anyone with an hour to spare and a bottle of strawberry flavoured body oil can do it.

Lisa Mills owns two commercially driven websites, one selling [baby hampers](#) and the other promoting [children educational toys](#)

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