

Tantric Tools for Self-Discovery

BY ELIZABETH A. ALLEN

Tantric Sex for Women: A Guide for Lesbian, Bi, Hetero and Solo Lovers
By Christa Schulte
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When I got *Tantric Sex for Women: A Guide for Lesbian, Bi, Hetero and Solo Lovers* in the mail to review, I thought I was getting a how-to guide for endless orgasms. Perhaps author Christa Schulte would tell me how to attain Nirvana through screwing! Not knowing anything about Tantric sex, but always seeking out good love-making, I cracked the book.

I soon discovered that Schulte's goal in *Tantric Sex* is far more radical than just getting her readers off for hours. As a feminist psychoanalyst, she knows the effects of patriarchal oppression on women's psyches. And, as a *tantrika* (practitioner of Tantra), she sees Tantra as a means to empower and embolden her sisters. Schulte argues Tantric practices can give women back their strength and joy in themselves.

Schulte begins by reclaiming Tantra from its misogynist history. According to her, Tantra is the channeling of sexual energy through the seven energy nodes or chakras of the body. Controlling sexuality this way supposedly leads to euphoria. This transcendent use of sexuality originated, she says, in the ancient subcontinental Indian Zami cult, a secret group of women. The Zamis' terms, such as "breasts of the sister" to refer to the heart chakra, focused on women, their pleasure and their creativity.

Tantra suffered, though, when co-opted by Buddhism and Hinduism. These religions emphasized male gods, as well as a duality or split between men and women. Tantra turned from a women-centered mystery into a path to the male divine. Tantra's resulting anti-female bias, says Schulte, continues to the present day,

since modern mainstream Tantra advocates sexual and spiritual balance for women only if they fuse with men or masculine energy.

Schulte wishes to return to Tantra some of its glorious validation of female sexuality, so she creates her own version. Schulte's curious combination includes Cherokee lore about types of women's orgasms, a little bit from the Buddhist mythology of enlightenment

which women imagine to be sexuality, even if they only experience a fragment thereof." Women's sexuality is transpersonal, transcultural. Thus love and sexuality are a way of linking up with women across time and space. Female sexuality is divine. Let's jack into the Goddess!

Taking the view that women's sexuality is an exciting world of which we each know very little, Schulte seizes your hands and says, "Let's explore and

Schulte gives you rituals where you can shower your love with sweet scents and orgasmic bliss. All of this takes dedicated effort, but don't fear the hard work; Schulte will always reassure you with her ebullient tone and ever-present "creative ways to deal with stumbling blocks." How can you resist?

Well, I for one certainly can't. Basically I find Schulte's Tantric framework too New Agey and historically suspect, but her enthusiasm rubs off on me. Plus Schulte provides many exercises and experiments that you can benefit from, for information, self-interrogation, relaxation or just plain fun, whether you like Tantra or not. Basically *Tantric Sex for Women* is a detailed guide for those who wish to love their bodies and their lovers. I will keep this one in my library, not because I'm Tantric but because I like sex, and I like good sex, and I can always

Schulte's version of Tantra includes Cherokee lore about types of women's orgasms, a little bit from the Buddhist mythology of enlightenment goddess Tara, and a little bit from her psychoanalytical perspective on women.

goddess Tara, and a little bit from her psychoanalytical perspective on women. It seems like a strange group of sources to me, but I'm completely down with Schulte's goal: the "creation of maximal pleasure and the expansion of this pleasure in all directions."

In order to fill yourself and other women with love, Schulte says that you must challenge your notions of female sexuality. It's not just what you yourself imagine and live out, she says. Rather, "female sexuality is the totality of that

have fun!" Her copious exercises are balanced and rigorously structured, but flexible enough for any learning style. For example, after basic biology and chakra lessons, you accustom yourself to your own sensuality by visualizing yourself as a flaming dragon or by dancing. You can learn to meditate through controlled breath and move on to exercises for two, like the sensual delight of the pleasure-receiving tutorial called "How to be comfortably flattened."

Once you're well-practiced,

use cool new ideas in the bedroom. Plus I want to see about that ongoing perpetual orgasm ... ▼

Elizabeth Allen practices her newfound knowledge in Boston.