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November 2005

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Mighty and mysterious, powerful yet calming – why are so many people around the globe drawn to the ocean like a moth to a flame? Renata Provenzano delves deep to find the answers

BODY MIND SOUL

Renata Provenzano

## WAVES OF KNOWLEDGE

**I FIRST** learned to walk on a ship when my family emigrated to Australia in 1972 on a six-week voyage from The Netherlands. I was 11 months old. Ever since I can remember, I have loved the ocean and I believe, her salty scent, her constant rhythm and her powerful magnetism stuck to my cells as an early memory, making a direct connection to my life. She is soft and healing. She is strong and playful. She is powerful and demands respect. She is who I turn to when I find answers nowhere else... and yet, she is a mystery. Why am I and millions around the world both fascinated by the ocean's raw power and drawn to her for comfort?

The ocean is where we spend our summers for sun-loving holidays, fishing, surfing, sailing, swimming and playful memories. For some people, there is a resurgent ancient belief that the ocean is where human beings were created. Many scientists and indigenous cultures have long believed life on earth began as the single-cell sponge in the 400 million-year-old ocean. Over eons these sponges morphed into other life forms and crawled onto land.

Regardless of whether this can be proved, there is no denying that the magnetic energy of the ocean attracts us and heals us. Not just the obvious waves, such as the daily theatrics of ebb and flow or the ocean's tides being connected to the moon cycle, but the tingling energy that

makes us behave differently, heals rashes and cuts, and is a phenomenal reminder of a beginning not yet understood.

Why do we feel so good after a dip in the ocean? Why does it leave us refreshed and hungry? How is it that aching muscles unrelieved by prescription drugs are miraculously cured after bathing in the ocean – especially where the water is high in nutrients, such as in the Dead Sea? Why do we go to the ocean to meditate and clear our minds, our hearts and souls? What is the connection we yearn to remember?

Maori Tony Mason feels "the ocean is the spiritual connection between this life and eternity. The ocean is so vast, we cannot comprehend its majestic power that it provides for us. It is life. The ocean has always been there, even before man walked on this earth. From the ocean comes land and from the land comes the earth and from the earth grow all the nutrients that keep human beings alive."

According to Tony, it also offers spiritual intelligence. "When I go to the ocean I treat it with respect because I'm aware of its awesome power," he says. "It's also meditation because it gives me a sense of calm. I use the ocean as a form of release. When you can see your troubles are nothing compared to when you look at this vast, huge ocean, it brings you back to reality."

Toni Cullins from Wildside Adventure Tours, on the north shore of Oahu in

BODY MIND SOUL

Hawaii, believes we are tied to the ocean through our veins. "Our blood is like salt water. It brings to mind a quote by former US President John F Kennedy. [He said] it is an interesting biological fact that all of us have the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean. And we have salt in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean and when we go back to the sea – whether it is to sail or to watch it – we are going back from whence we came."

Tori agrees with Tony that the sea definitely has a calming effect. "There's something about being between the air and the ocean – the positive and negative ions." Tori's two decades of researching wild spinner dolphins has confirmed extraordinary communication methods actively pursued by the ocean's creatures. "The dolphins we have here are like a learning laboratory. We have traced them back 800 years coming into the same resting grounds. I have approached dolphins from a scientific and New Age angle. Whenever I try to give them unconditional love and centre the energy through the top of my head, the dolphins become goofy and playful. It seems the message is that we are spiritual beings but right now we're in physical form and while we are physical we should have fun being physical. When we die we then go back to being spiritual."

Tori tells the story of taking a blind man on a tour who discovered the dolphins seemed to know he was blind and therefore used their sonar to guide him. ("There is a belief that dolphins can tap into certain energies with their sonars," she says.) Initially, Tori attached rope between him and herself for guidance in the ocean, but before she even spotted the dolphins the blind man had swam past her. "Being blind he was acoustically based and dolphins are acoustically based so he was more in tune with them. Seventy percent of the time he was leading me. One dolphin kept making a noise I had never heard before – it was like a submarine in that it went off in exact intervals only with a double tone. When he got out of the water he

said when the dolphins would sonar him he could feel it bouncing around in his chest."

Native Hawaiian board shaper Pohaku Stone believes the ocean is our home and we all need to connect to it. "Have you ever heard the ocean breathe? We should be learning the heartbeat of the ocean – listen to her breath. She is a living entity, and if you listen you can hear the ocean sigh and take a deep breath." Pokahu laments that most people are unaware of minute changes in nature, which the animal world is so in tune with. He gives the example of the recent tsunami, when animals ran to the mountains long before the waves arrived and the earthquakes occurred. "There would have been a pause in the rhythm of the earth that nobody paid attention to, because we are so wrapped up in this contemporary world we live in."

Since time immemorial, people have observed the ocean. We don't just learn that tides come in and go out; we learn countless lessons about life's simplicity and complexity. If we observe her, play with her, be one with her long enough, will she reveal her mysteries? What does she teach us?

Being human is to feel. To experience every kind of emotion, waves of highs and lows, is a natural part of life. So it is with the ocean – not ashamed of her tempestuous ever-changing and miraculous existence. Sometimes she is affected by forces outside of her own control such as the movement of plates, lava-heated geysers on the deep ocean floors and other energies of the universe, just as we are sometimes affected by other people's emotions and energies created by situations outside our control. When this happens, perhaps we should just go with the flow and wait for another day, when calm returns.

Adjusting to the rhythm of the ocean means surrendering to the ebb and flow of life. Tuning into nature allows your body to return to natural energies – the rhythm of all that is the earth and all that is our bodies – and when you no longer fight it, the magnetic relationship

that is your birthright helps you glow.

It is no coincidence that ancient cultures developed healing spas and bath houses around the ocean and this is still a feature of many cultures today. Salt scrubs and floatation tanks are extremely popular options for people who don't live near the ocean. Ancient ceremonies for cleansing and thanking the universe for its gifts are often retained by indigenous peoples and are being embraced by nationalities looking for a reconnection.

Many water sports rely on our connection to the ocean. The ancient sport of surfing, which enjoyed a resurgence thanks to legendary Hawaiian surfer and Olympic swimmer Duke Kahanamoku in the early 1920s, is not just for gnarly dudes. Surfing requires the ultimate balance of mind, body and spiritual strength, and connection to the ocean. Clyde Aikau says surfing requires the ultimate respect for the ocean. "You can never control the ocean or the waves. For one to flow with the ocean is always the best thing to do, to be a part of it and enjoy it is what really matters."

So, is the ocean really a mystery or are her lessons as bold as her command of our planet, each day a remembering of thousands of years past and thousands more to come? Are her lessons secrets, or does she unveil simple truths to us every single day?

Magnificent, scientifically fascinating and perfect, the world's ocean is a unique creation of forces not yet understood. Magnificent, scientifically fascinating and perfect, human beings are a unique creation of forces not yet understood. A great energy formed both. The ocean is our purest connection to the earth, real and eternal. Maybe we need to spend some time thinking about that.

Renata Provenzano is an international author and freelance travel journalist. She has two books published on Hawaii, A Little Book of Aloha and A Little Book of Aloha: Spirit of Healing. Both are available online at [www.booklines.com](http://www.booklines.com)

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