

WHAT IS TANTRA



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Part 1: The Basic Of Tantrism.

Tantra has been one of the most neglected branches of Indian spiritual studies despite the considerable number of texts devoted to this practice, which dates back to the 5th - 9th century AD.

Many people still consider Tantra to be full of obscenities and unfit for people of good taste. It is also often accused of being a kind of black magic.

However, in reality, Tantra is one of the most important Indian traditions, representing the practical aspect of the Vedic tradition.

The religious attitude of the Tantriks is fundamentally the same as that of the Vedic followers. It is believed that the Tantra tradition is a part of the main Vedic tree. The more vigorous aspects of Vedic religion were continued and developed in the Tantras. Generally Tantriks worship either Goddess Shakti or Lord Shiva.

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The Meaning Of "Tantra"

The word "Tantra" is derived from the combination of two words "Tattva" and "Mantra". "Tattva" means the science of cosmic principles, while "Mantra" refers to the science of mystic sound and vibrations.

Tantra therefore, is the application of cosmic sciences with a view to attain spiritual ascendancy.

In another sense, Tantra also means the scripture by which the light of knowledge is spread: Tanyate vistaryate jnanam anemna iti tantram.

There are essentially two schools of Indian scriptures - "Agama" and "Nigama". Agamas are those which are revelations, while Nigama are the traditions.

Tantra is an Agama and hence it is called "Srutishakhavisesah", which means it is a branch of the Vedas.

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Tantric Scriptures

The main deities worshipped are Shiva and Shakti. In Tantra there is a great significance of "Bali" or animal sacrifices. The most vigorous aspects of Vedic traditions evolved as an esoteric system of knowledge in the Tantras. The Atharva Veda is considered to be one of the prime Tantrik scriptures.

Types & Terminology

There are 18 "Agamas" which are also referred to as Shiva Tantras, and they are ritualistic in character. There are three distinct Tantrik traditions - Dakshina, Vama and Madhyama.

They represent the three "Shaktis" or powers of Shiva and are by the three "Gunas" or qualities - "Sattva", "Rajas" and "Tamas".

The Dakshina tradition, by the "Sattva" branch of Tantra is essentially for good purpose. The Madhyama, characterised by "Rajas" is of mixed nature, while the Vama, characterised by "Tamas" is the most impure form of Tantra.

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Rustic Tantriks

In Indian villages, Tantriks are still not quite hard to find. Many of them help the villagers solve their problems. Every person who has lived in the villages or has spent his childhood there, has a story to tell. What is so easily believed in the villages might appear illogical and unscientific to the rational urban mind, but these phenomena are realities of life.

Desire For Worldly Pleasures

Tantra is different from other traditions because it takes the whole person, and his / her worldly desires into account. Other spiritual traditions ordinarily teach that desire for material pleasures and spiritual aspirations are mutually exclusive, setting the stage for an endless internal struggle.

Although most people are drawn into spiritual beliefs and practices, they have a natural urge to fulfill their desires. With no way to reconcile these two impulses, they fall prey to guilt and self condemnation or become hypocritical. Tantra offers an alternative path.

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The Tantrik Approach To Life

The Tantrik approach to life avoids this pitfall. Tantra itself means "to weave, to expand, and to spread", and according to Tantrik masters, the fabric of life can provide true and ever lasting fulfillment only when all the threads are woven according to the pattern designated by nature.

When we are born, life naturally forms itself around that pattern. But as we grow, our ignorance, desire, attachment, fear, and false images of others and ourselves tangle and tear the threads, disfiguring the fabric.

Tantra "Sadhana" or practice reweaves the fabric, and restores the original pattern. This path is systematic and comprehensive.

The profound science and practices pertaining to hatha yoga, pranayama, mudras, rituals, kundalini yoga, nada yoga, mantra, mandala, visualization of dieties, alchemy, ayurveda, astrology, and hundreds of esoteric practices for generating worldly and spiritual prosperity, blend perfectly in the Tantrik disciplines.

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Part 2:

Uses & Abuses of Tantrism

Proper recitation of Mantras help invoke the natural forces to produce the desired effect. "Tantrasadhana" or Tantrik meditation and worship helps one attain many supernatural powers. These powers may be used for good or for bad purposes.

Shiva & Shakti

Tantrik practices mainly aim at the illumination through the unification of polarities inherent in the world and one's self. These opposites are symbolically subsumed as "Shiva" and "Shakti" or consciousness and energy, personified as male and female forces of nature.

Shiva, the Destroyer, represents universal consciousness diffused throughout the galaxies, while Shakti, the Divine Mother, is the power swinging in a celestial dance, between energy and matter, giving birth to all creation, both tangible and transcendent.

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Awakening The Latent 'Shakti' In Us

Long ago, Tantrik masters discovered that to be successful externally or internally we must first awaken our latent power, for only those who are strong and blessed with great stamina reach the final destination.

The key to success is the Shakti - the power of the soul, the power of divine force within. Although every individual possesses an infinite and indomitable Shakti (power), most of it remains dormant.

Within this Shakti, we can neither find spiritual illumination nor enjoy worldly life.

The Misuse of Tantrik Powers

Unfortunately, a large number of Tantrik enthusiasts, in both the West and the East, mistakenly identify Tantra as the yoga of sex, black magic, witchcraft, seduction, and an amalgam of techniques for influencing the minds of others.

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This is due, at least in part, to the fact that Tantra is both a spiritual path and a science. As a spiritual path, it emphasizes on the purification of mind and heart, cultivating a spiritually illuminating philosophy of life.

As a science, it experiments with techniques whose efficacy depends on the precise application of "Mantra" and "Yantra", ritual use of specific materials, and the performance of Tantrik Mudras and accompanying mental exercises.

In the layman's language, such practices can be thought of as Tantrik formula They will yield a result if properly applied, regardless of the character, spiritual understanding or intention of the practitioner.

When this scientific aspect of Tantra falls into the hands of charlatans, it is inevitably misused giving Tantra a bad name. Fortunately, however, there are still Tantrik masters, authentic scriptures to undercut such false and distorted notions and make it possible for us to gain a better understanding of this sublime path.

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Tantra Master Aghoriji writes on Tantra Yoga

Classical Advaita Tantra yoga tradition was fathered by Lord Sadashiva, the original expounder of Tantra, the indigenous mystical tradition of Eastern India. He is supposed to have lived around 5000 BC in Eastern India, a contention supported by archaeological explorations in the area.

Sadashiva, is traditionally considered the founder of Tantra and yoga systems and the first one to introduce music, dance, medical and marriage systems to human civilization. He was a remarkable human being in whom the Supreme Being was fully manifest; as such, he was the bridge between the phenomenal and spiritual worlds, and thus fully capable of systematizing, developing and inventing tools for spiritual growth.

He was so revered for his spiritual and social service accomplishments that he was elevated to a status of Divinity in India: Lord Sadashiva, the Destroyer of spiritual ignorance and the Lord of Yogins.

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Over the past millennia, the original teachings of Lord Sadashiva were preserved in the classical Advaita Shaiva Tantra yoga tradition.

If we define science as the rigorous inquiry into the nature of reality, Tantra would be the science of spiritual journey. The term "Tantra" means liberation through expansion; thus the discipline rigorously explores all energies and their application associated with human existence and human environment.

This exploration markedly does not limit itself to the intellect but uses all faculties available to humans. This acquisition of knowledge is never purely for the sake of knowledge but for the express purpose of enriching human life and for practical use in the exploration of its spiritual dimension.

Classical Tantra yoga tradition asserts that this universe we live in, and are part of, is the manifestation of Brahma - The infinite, all embracing, ever blissful Supreme Conscious Being.

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It has been observed to manifest in two polar but interrelated ways:
Shiva, the Eternal Consciousness, and Shakti, his creative power.

Both of these principles cannot be distinct entities;
they are two poles of the One Being experiencing itself.

According to the wish of Shiva and under the influence of Shakti, living beings identify with material and mental objects created by Shakti, and thus feel incomplete due to the lack of connection with Shiva.

After they attain human life, they can perform a spiritual practice to accelerate the development of consciousness, i.e: Identification with Shiva, the Eternal Consciousness.

This spiritual practice (meditation) will reveal that all manifested objects are a play of Shiva and Shakti and that both are simply two faces of one Brahma, the Supreme Conscious Being. This realization restores living beings to their original state of Eternal Bliss, which is the state of the Supreme Being or Brahma.

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In fact, it is said in Sanskrit: "Brahma is Eternal Bliss." Brahma can be experienced through direct perception deep within one's own mind. Well performed spiritual practices help explore and master the mind and eventually lead to the realization of our inherent eternally blissful existence, i.e: Unity with Brahma, the Eternal Bliss.

All teachings of the Tantra yoga tradition are preparations and directions leading one towards the unfolding of this realization.

Classical Tantra yoga tradition uses two main approaches to the realization of Brahma: The first one is simply a gradual effort to release oneself from habitual or addictive behaviors. It is a preparation for the other, subtler system of practices, called yoga.

Classical yoga training teaches sophisticated methods of releasing oneself from habitual behavior and deepening one's feeling of connectedness to the Eternal Bliss. The final spiritual consummation is the direct experience of the Eternal Bliss that leads to dissolution of individuality, which is the source of all happiness.

A vibrant, symmetrical mandala-style artwork. The central square features concentric circles in red, yellow, and blue, bisected by a vertical line. This central square is surrounded by four large, dark red triangular sections. The background is a complex pattern of blue, yellow, and red, with wavy lines in green, blue, and orange. The entire design is framed by a thick, multi-colored border in purple, yellow, and red. The text "Back To Home Page" is overlaid in the center in a blue font.

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