



Tantra Philosophy and it's Yogic Approach for Self– Transformation:A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Tantra is a practical, empirical and experiential science that lights the torch and shows the way to self-transformation through mental, emotional, and spiritual growth. Tantra is the one of the ancient system for human evolution. In fact there are references about Tantra in the Vedic scriptures. The word Tantra comes from two Sanskrit roots 'tanoti' and 'trayati'; 'tanoti' means expansion of awareness or consciousness and 'trayati' means liberation of energy. The meaning of Tantra is thus the expansion of mind, consciousness, and the liberation of energy. Tantra is also understood as a device, technique, loom, or weave. Tantra regards emotions as trapped energy and seeks the release of that energy, in which the form of the emotion subsides like a wave into the sea of awareness. This process occurs when recognition occurs that emotions are various cosmic energies limited and broken up by patterns of attachment. Energy is liberated so that it can be united with consciousness. Energy is often trapped in tensions, old unconscious habits, and patterns within the body-mind. This leads to mental health conditions. Tantra provides the maps, techniques, rituals, and methods to liberate trapped energy. In this way, qualities towards improving mental health, emotional awareness, healthy nervous system regulation, and constructing coping mechanisms will increase. Tantra provides a synthesis between spirit and matter, enabling to achieve the fullest spiritual and material potential.

Key Words- Tantra, Self-transformation, consciousness, liberate, emotional awareness.

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Introduction –

In Hindu mythology, Shiva sends Shakti to create existence; however this separation causes Shiva more suffer than he expected. Shiva without his Shakti is left feeling like SHAVA (dead). Shiva spends ages wandering the universe and finally in earth (in human form) he found. Shiva is re-united with Shakti who is now also in human form. Her human form is Parvati. Their re-union fills Shiva once again with life. His consciousness and soul are as one creating a feeling of bliss Shakti is the medium of Shiva. Without her, Shiva remains inert, motionless and immersed in self-contemplation. She is the doorway to Shiva and brings him alive.

This mythology can be looked at as a metaphor. This is the same situation as our own individual soul finds itself when it is separated from the cosmic or universal soul.³

In the ancient science of Tantra, the human body is viewed as the most perfect instrument for the expression of consciousness. This perfection is realised through the development of the psychic centres - chakras. Through understanding and utilising the energies of the chakras we ultimately reach an enlightened state of being.⁴

Tantra is Indian cult and is practised by Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Jains alike. Tantra is not a religion or magic, but a way of thought and action which works for the benefit of people. The old texts, as far back as the 6th century, consist of prescriptions for actions including mental action.⁵

Tantra has been always regarded as an esoteric and secret way of spiritual practices not accessible to the untrained one and to the common folk. The teachers of the tantra hold that a seeker on this path has to outgrow the social and even the human outlook and develop a superhuman and divine outlook in respect of the things. Since this would be to expect too much from the common man in the world, Tantra is supposed to be closed secret whose gates can be opened only the key provided by a competent Guru.⁶

Meaning and aim of Tantra -

Tanyate vistarayate jnanamanena iti Tantram. The Tantric scriptures define tantra as “That by which knowledge (or wisdom) is extended or elaborated, is Tantra.”⁷

The Sanskrit word is derived from the root word “Tana”, meaning “to spread” and “Tra” means “to save”. Thus, Tantra means the technique which saves or serves us by spreading and or expanding our consciousness or knowledge.

Tantra is a kind of philosophy having its aim explanation of the world and of the human individual, the various problems facing him and their possible solutions. It describes in great details very concrete system

³ www.akramyoga.co.uk/single-post/2017/03/19/the-first-yogi-part-2-a-discussion-between-shiva-parvati The First Yogi Part 2 - A Discussion between Shiva & Parvati.

⁴ *Chakras energy centers of transformation.* Harish Johari. Noida, 1987

⁵ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra.* Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

⁶ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga.* Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

⁷ *The Tantric tradition.* Agehananda Bharati. London, 1965

of practices directed towards the goal of self-knowledge (atma -jnana) a state which every school of philosophy of ancient India placed before adherents as the most cherished ideal of human life.

But when the word tantra is used in the sense of a Shastra or science including principles and techniques, it indicates a sort of worship using mysticism and ritual for the attainment of supernatural powers. In this sense, “tantra” is also called agama or Mantrashastra. Tantra, like other Shastras in the spiritual field, points and leads upto Moksha through its peculiar ritualistic Sadhana. Tantra does not show a way to Mukti from a distance, it is not like a sign-post. It is a way of life itself. And it is a practical way based on theoretical foundations. It tells us what to think, what to aspire for, what the nature and goal of human life is, and through what concrete procedures the final goal of atmajnana may be achieved. They believed in certain basic principles which appear quite reasonable and sound even on a scientific scrutiny from the point of view of modern knowledge. This is perhaps the reason why young men and women from most affluent societies all over the world are getting attracted toward tantric sadhana, in actual practise in ever increasing number.

Tantric sadhana provides a practical way of taking the mind slowly towards a realisation of the formless nature of the Atman through the mind can actually handle and experience.⁸

The Origin of Tantra -

As the Kularnava Tantra says, for each age (Yuga) a suitable Sastra is given - namely:

- 1) In Satyayuga - Sruti,
- 2) In Treta - Smriti,
- 3) In Dvapara - Puranas,
- 4) Kali - Tantra.
- 5) The truth to be taught ever remains the same, though the method of inculcating it varies with ages.⁹

The tantras claim their origin from the veas. Penetrating six chakras may be found in the prashna Upanishad and much of the black art, dealt with in some of the tantras may be found in the Athrav Veda. The sacred syllable OM occupies a very important position both in the Vedas and the Tantras.

The Tantrism seems to have come into existence at the time when:

- 1) The elaborate details enjoined by the Vedic sacrifices, taking a long time to be performed, could not be accomplished by short-lived people of feeble attainments.
- 2) The Upanishadic method of acquisition transcendent knowledge surpassed the intellects and equipments of most people.
- 3) The Puranas were at this time preaching the Bhakti cult in order to place before people an easy method capable of being grasped and followed by all. But these could not reconcile themselves satisfactorily with the Vedas and Upanishads - the accepted and time honoured authority and seemed to have promulgated something foreign to them.

⁸ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

⁹ *Principles of Tantra*. Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon). Delhi, 2011

- 4) The Tantras adopted eclecticism and offered to the people fresh spiritual discipline which combined oblations and the essence of the monotheistic philosophy of the upanishads, of the Bhakti cult preached by the Puranas, of the yoga method propounded by Patanjali, and the mantra's elements of the Atharvaveda.¹⁰

Divisions of Tantras-

Dhakshina char and Vama char are two parts in Hindu Tantra and likewise Kriya Tantra and Charay Tantra are two parts in Buddhism.

Brahmnin tantra had been divided into 3 categories:

- 1) Vaishnav, called Sahita, includes mantras, yantras and yog sadhana. Granths (books or works on specific subject) were published between 4th and 12th century. The important Granth is Ahirbudhaaneyya Samhita, important topics have been detailed, such as Dharma, Darshan, Mantra, Yantra, Chakra, Yog and methods and rules for victory over enemies.
- 2) Shaiva - Aagam. Deal with mainly Shakti Siddhies and due to this were divided into many branches. Shaivagam Samhita is quite detailed. In Agam Pramanye, Shiv Puran and Agam Puran many more methods of Tantra have been included which are quite effective. In the olden days Tantra was divided into two parts Vam and Dakshin.
- 3) Shakti tantra known as Tantra. This tantra had been divided into 3 parts: Saroto Vibhag of Shaiva, Peeth Vibag of Bhairon and Kaulmarg Anuyatiano and Amanaye Vibhag of Shat.

Tantra shows the way of Moksha by first indicating difficulties and then showing the way to overcome or cross them.¹¹

Philosophy of Tantra -

The philosophy of the Tantra is based on the concept of a dual nature of everything. Nothing is single, but everything is bi-polar. The so called-unity of things is only a form taken by a particular manner of the coming together of two forces, Siva and Sakti, we may say the positive and negative poles. In the beginning there was a universal Uni-Cell, as it were, known as the Brahmanda, which split into two, one part of which was the Cosmic Man and another part the Cosmic Woman. We may call these parts Siva and Sakti. Even our modern science seems to be corroborating this view when it holds that in the beginning the universe was a single Atom, which split into two and the into the multiplicity of the present form of the universe.

According to Tantra, the sorrow of life is caused by a bi-polar existence, a split of the one into two, because the truth of things is oneness and not the dual existence in any of its forms. The dual form of life being, in a sense, an unnatural way of life, there is always an ambivalent attitude of like and dislike at the same time between one pole and another, love getting suppressed when hate supervenes, and hate being suppressed when love gains the upper hand, while the fact is that both these attitudes are present in an individual

¹⁰ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002.

¹¹ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998.

hiddenly and only one of the aspects comes to the surface as and when the occasion demands. To get back from duality to unity is the process of Tantra Sadhana.¹²

The tantric method of Sadhana; which combines in it yoga and Bhakti, Mantra and Homa (Oblation), Jnana and Karma, and its promise to its followers of the easy and speedy attainment of the end. The special characteristics of the philosophy of Tantrism are mentioned below:

1) It promises to award to the Sadhaka not merely liberation (Mukti) but also worldly enjoyment (Bhukti), not merely final beatitude (Niksreyas) but also progress and, as such, suits each and every one irrespective of his/her capacity and temperament.

2) It preaches something very like the philosophy of the Upanishads and holds that the individual (Jiva) can become and does actually become the absolute (Shiva).

3) It holds that the individual (Jiva) becomes identical with the Absolute (Shiva) when liberation is attained and that there is no difference, in essence, between them. This distinguishes it from the philosophy of Bhakti schools which agree in maintaining a difference of some sort of the other even after liberation.

4) It maintains that the world process as well as the Jivabhava is real and not illusionary and believes that the many do actually come out of the one.

5) It has firm belief in that the individual has in him the element of infinitude and absoluteness; otherwise, all Sadhana would have been a myth; but this infinitude has to be realised and actually attained. According to it, Kundalini Shakti (Serpent Power) brings about the union of the individual and the Absolute, and makes the realization of the absoluteness and infinitude of the individual possible. The absoluteness is not considered anything foreign to the individual to be acquired from outside, but is inherent and latent in him to be gradually unfolded and realized. It is through the effort (in the form of certain physical and physiological practises and definite moral standards) and the grace of the spiritual Guide (Guru) that the Sarpent Power which ordinarily lies dormant at the root of the spinal column becomes awakened and joins itself to the Absolute that resides in the thousand petalled lotus in the highest centre of the cerebrum.¹³

6) Tantric yoga teaches control of the body and its functions so that the tantrist may reach the ultimate spiritual experience. The tantric path teaches commitment to others and demands equality between men and women. Activating the energy of each chakra by chakra in an orderly fashion creates a psychic loop that empowers to overcome emotions, gain new knowledge and bring wisdom back into consciousness.¹⁴

Classification of Sadhakas -

It is said that Veda and tantra runs on parallel lines which converge at the end. Still there are certain differences. Vedic initiation is somewhat restrictive, as it shuts out women and persons of certain castes, while Tantra opens its doors to all and excluded none. Even low cast people, women are as eligible as men.

¹² *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

¹³ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

¹⁴ *Tantric Yoga. The royal path to raising kundalini power*. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Delhi, 1994.

One has to undergo strict discipline, develop mental discrimination and detachment involving study and meditation.¹⁵

It prescribes different methods and rules for the conduct of life for men of different capacities and temperaments. It distinguishes 3 classes of sadhakas in order of the merit of the existing status of their spiritual development. On the basis of this classification Sadhakas have to follow different types of Puja, Upasana and daily regimen as required. The three classifications are as follows:

1) **Pasu** - person of tamasic nature, endowed with ignorance, error, carelessness, inertia, sloth. He behaves in accordance with instinctual needs and easily aggravated by emotions. As he is yet to attain a self-control and is attempting to have mastery over his passions and impulses. He is not allowed even to include such things as wine, meat, etc. (Panch Makaras) as articles of offering to god and is prohibited even to touch or to have a sight of these things. Have strictly to practise Vedacharas (first and the lowest stage and comprises the Vedic rites).

2) **Vira and Kaul** - assertive and of fickle nature because of predominance of rajguna over satguna to some extent. He has attained self-control and does not forget himself even in the most trying and tempting circumstances. He is not only allowed, but is definitely instructed to include such things as wine, meat, etc. as articles offering to the God. This method prescribed is beset with danger and risk and the Sadhaka undergoes such trials as tests of the degree of his mastery over his passions and impulses. The sadhakas have to follow kaulachara which forms the highest stage of trials. There is neither any vidhi (do's) nor any nisedh (do'nts), neither merit (dharma), nor demerit (adharma), neither Virtue or Sin. Under all circumstances he has not to lose his consciousness and to maintain awareness of pit falls.

3) **Divya** - divine qualities. Satva predominates: calm, pure, dispassionate, wise, passionless, egoless, compassionate, kind, pious, devoted. No need to undergo the trials that the Vira has to pass through as he has established unto himself by now. He is allowed to take substitutes of all material things in his process of worship. He does not require the help of external objects for rousing his spiritual sentiments, and the meditative mood emerges spontaneously in him.^{16;17}

Stages of Sadhana -

In all forms of religious practise, mostly there is an ascetic injunction towards a rejection of the outer for the sake of the inner, the material for the sake of the spiritual, a cutting off of every desire as a baneful obstacle to Sadhana, and a considering of every joy in life as an evil to be eradicated at the earliest opportunity. To the Tantra, the things of the world, the material forms of perception, are not really obstacles, and a desire for them cannot be overcome by rejecting the desire itself. Everything in the world, the whole world itself, is a passage to perfection. The visible is a way to the invisible and not an obstacle to it. Human desires arise on account of the unintelligent attitude man develops towards desire, and he had a fear of desire since he is being told that all desire is bad and all objects are bondages. The Tantra holds that

¹⁵ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

¹⁶ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

¹⁷ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

the object is not a bondage, because of the fact that the object is inseparably related to the subject, the object is the other pole of which the subject is the complementary pole. Every experience is a subject-object relation, and therefore, no one can even think of overcoming the consciousness of the object, except by a relationship already established with the object. Thus, the attempt at overcoming the object involves one in a vicious circle. No effort in the direction of a getting rid of the object is possible, in as much as there is already a consciousness of the presence of the object. Thus comes in the great dictum of the Tantra, that desire can be overcome only by desire, even as the

object can be overcome only by the object. The other aspect of this principle held by the Tantra is that “that by which one falls is also that by which one rises”.

The art of Sadhana along this path is considered to be a graduated movement through different ascending stages of understanding and disentanglement of the subject from involvement of the object, by a rising to a condition transcending the very relation between the subject and the object. The stages are:

1.	Vedachara	Intended for	For rituals
2.	Vaishnavachara	lower category	For devotion
3.	Saivachara	of Sadhakas, known as Pasu	For knowledge
4.	Dakshinachara		Attempts to conserve the results achieved through the practise of the first 3 stages
5.	Dakshinachara	For the Vira	Here is the beginning of the most secret practise or the esoteric aspect of the Tantra Sadhana, where objects of attraction, whatever be their nature, are regarded as instruments, not to be rejected, but assimilated into and made part and parcel of one's own being, but with the intention of overcoming the consciousness that they are outside oneself as a sort of opposing object or an external something.
6.	Siddhantachara		Complete process of Sadhana, whereby one gets established in the true nature of things and become veritably superhuman. The renunciation involved in religious practise is not a rejection of the object or the thing as such, but the idea or the notion that it is outside oneself. It is this wrong idea that generates desire, not the object or the things.
7.	Kaulachara	For the Divyajiva	

The greatest obstacles to spiritual perfection are generally considered to be wealth, power and sex, and it is these that Tantra intends to harness and overcome by the very means by which an untrained mind may head towards a fall. Every object has a gross form, a subtle form and a divine form, and every Sadhaka has to

pass through all these stages. The Tantra insists that no stage can be rejected as an obstacle but has to be traversed personally. An unknown thing, and object of fear, cannot come under one's control.

The Tantra holds that the impure, the ugly and the unholy things of life are things which have been wrongly seen out of their context, and, from their own particular positions, or from the point of view of the things themselves, they are neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither holy nor unholy. These are all suggestions given by the mind from the standpoint of the particular interest which refuses to take into consideration that there can be other interests than one's own.¹⁸

Main characteristics of Tantric Sadhana -

1) The first characteristic of Tantric Sadhana is that the body influences the mind and vice versa. Now by modern medicine recognised that there are certain disorders of the body whose cause is located in the anxious state of mind. In Tantric Sadhana, the bodily and simple looking acts of the worshipper like image worship, Nyasa, Homa, Tapa and so on actually influence the mind. They help to purify the mind and remove afflictions like fear, envy, greed, ignorance, etc, and thereby promote true knowledge of the self. This characteristics of educating the mind through training the body in the practise of Asana, Pranayama, Mudra. Our ancients knew it very well that the mind which is by its very Natura savage, unsteady, and vicious, can be restrained and disciplined by doing certain bodily acts again and again. These acts were included in Tantric Sadhana with the aim of influencing the mind.

2) Tantric Sadhana is a passage from the gross to the subtle, from the superficial to the essential. Tantra utilizes image (Murti) of one's choice (Ishta-devata) and prescribed such acts as invoking the deity, making it, feeding it, offering the flowers, bath and so on. By doing the acts the mind of the Sadhaka is trained to get attached to the deity, thus giving up attention from all else. Thus, one can learn to do concentration (Dharana) and meditation (Dhyana) progressively. Mind from the gross image to its inner power, from the things used in worship to what they signify. Based on belief that a passage from the gross to the subtle is possible and it gives due importance to such a passage.

3) Reconciliation of monism and dualism. Monism is the doctrine that there is only one single basic reality underlying the multifarious universe. The multitude of objects of experience is not real. It is illusory. As against this, dualism holds that there are two basic realities underlying the universe, one representing the material, the other representing the spiritual. According to Tantra view, the world is many so long as the Sadhaka is ignorant, but it becomes one when the Sadhaka becomes a Siddha by a complete unification with the Ishtadevata.

4) One special characteristic feature of tantric Sadhana is that there are ways and means in it available to aspirants of all dispositions, tendencies and abilities. For the lowest type of aspirants there are crude and preliminary forms of Sadhana, while increasingly subtle, intelligent and advances procedures of Sadhana are also available which are meant for the superior aspirants. For all castes, and also for women.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

¹⁹ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

Tantra Sadhana includes the recitation of Mantras, performance of ritual through Yantras and an adjustment of oneself to the particular degree of reality, which is the specific meaning of Tantra. In this process one has to learn many minor details directly from the Guru. The purification of the body, the mind and one's social relations, are all important preparation of Sadhana.²⁰

Need for Guru In Tantric Sadhna -

Tantra Yoga should be learnt from Guru. It is the Guru who will recognise the class to which the aspirant belongs and prescribes suitable Sadhana. Diksha is giving of the Mantra by the Guru. Initiation gives spiritual knowledge and destroys sin. The divine Sakti consisting of Mantra is communicated from Guru to the disciple. Initiation tears the veil of mystery and enables the discipline to grasp the hidden truth behind scriptural truths. You cannot understand them by self-study. The Guru only will give you, by Diksha, the right perspective in which to study the scriptures.²¹

In Hindu shastras it is laid down that neither a visit to a place of pilgrimage nor the practise of meditation and observance of ritualistic vows by a person becomes successful unless initiated by a Guru.²²

Progressive Courses of Training and Instructions -

The course of instructions has been divided into 4. These are referred to as:

1) **Jnana-Pada** - theoretical aspect of Tantric Sadhans, which includes the knowledge of philosophical background of Tantrism: purpose, goals, understanding human nature including body, senses, mind and the soul.

2) **Yoga-Pada** - only theoretical knowledge is not enough, tantra developed sort of internal discipline known as Yoga. Its detailed description are available in Tantra-Sastras. The traditional teacher-discipline interaction was considered to be core of real Sadhana.

3) **Kriya-Pada** - a code of social conduct was also conceived essential because an individual is an indivisible part of society. He leaves the impact on society and in turn is influences by the society. Tantrism developed a complete life-style for his Sadhakas. The spirit of Tantrism encouraged raising of institutions, temples, places of Pilgrimages.

4) **Charya-Pada** - comprises of material and methods of worship, regimen of different practises and traditional observances along with the details of code of conduct for both-the Sadhaka as well as the teacher.²³

Mantras and Yantras -

The Tantra recognises that inner contemplation and worship is not practicable for all. For majority of

²⁰ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

²¹ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

²² *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

²³ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

people physical form or an external material symbol is needed. And this it provides in the form of images, idols or symbols like Yantra, Mandala, linga, Salagrama etc. Tantras use mystic symbols, and they called like that because they help the devotee to be in close communion with Deity, which is true significance of mysticism. The tantric conception of symbol is a visualisation of an idea or particular Sakti whom the Sadhaka worships.²⁴

Tantra and Mantra are interconnected. Tantra cannot be successful without Mantra Siddhi. Unless both are practised simultaneously success cannot be achieved in Tantra. In Mantra, Tantra and Yantra, one makes offerings to an image. In the act of offering, the Tantrik identifies his or her own self with the image focussing that self upon it. The things offered are flowers, light, bells, ghee, incense, food, etc, which are sensory symbols. It welcomes the image into his or her home and into himself or herself. The offerings are made to different images in different ways. One of them is the Devi's image. Other's may be diagrammatic Yantras. It is believed that the images gain power and value by being used in worship over long periods or by highly developed Tantriks.

Mantras are used continually in Tantrik rituals. Mantras uttered during the rituals are so designed as to create appropriate vibrations within a psychic field. Light and sound play an important role in the Panchamakara rite. Dim lights are required. In purifying themselves sadhakas make use of different colours such as red, violet, pink colours. The cosmic rays of colours that strike the body are incorporated within by the process of Pranayama. Corresponding vibrations are set up, as each breath has its own characteristic colour rays which penetrate various chakras, being absorbed and rediffused through chromatic colour breathing.²⁵

Nyasa and Matrika -

The universe proceeds from words, which are the combinations of the letters composing the alphabet. The tantras regard them as the Matrikas and worship the power contained in each. Now, the physical body of the Sadhaka seems to be apart from consciousness and conscious forces working within. The eye derives its power of sight from within, similarly the other senses derive the powers from within. These powers are different and all have got different names. A name and the object it stands for a closely related. When one thinks of the sun, i.e. name sun, the idea of the physical sun at once flashes before the mind. The tantras, therefore, describe the letters as symbols of elemental forces which again combine together to produce a multitude. The tantrics while practising Nyasa, have to forget their material existence and think that such and such letters, i.e. forces are working as such centers. Every force though working everywhere has a centre, for example the centre of sight is the eyes. By such practise the whole body seems to be surcharged with force tending toward identification with the Deity.²⁶

²⁴ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

²⁵ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

²⁶ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

Asana -

Asana is actually a step by step dissolution of the body into the subtle elements, a process of gradual involution whereby the body is identified with the sense of smell, water with taste, fire with vision, air with touch, ether with sound. These five elements are merged one by one into their sources with the potentials of the energies (Tanmatras) and ultimately ego, is dissolved into mahat, the great one. The asanas aim is to make one aware of one's potential and to realise and experience joy in being one with cosmos. Tantra itself is unique for being a synthesis of bhoga and yoga, enjoyment and liberation. There is no place for renunciation or denial in tantra. Instead, one must involve oneself in all the life processes which surround us. Tantra asana is a method of uniting the individual self with Absolute Infinite in the cosmic conscious state known as Samadhi. Here the only Pure Existence, Shiva Shakti, where the formed and formless are united and merged. It is the state of Sat-Chit-Ananda, that is pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

To perform Hatha Yoga without doing any inner work on the subtle body is a pointless exercise from the Tantra point of view. A person practising Hath Yoga will easily recognise the relations between its pulls, twists, contractions and pressures and various centres of the subtle body.

However the extra dimensions in Tantrik Yoga comes from bodily actions which are performed during sexual intercourse. These are meant both to enhance the physical sensations and to transform them into a vehicle for blissful insight, which can be experienced only with a sexual partner, under the guidance of Guru.²⁷

Certain Asanas are considered essential in Yoga Sadhana as they are calculated to enhance mental concentration. In other words, certain physical processes are held to be necessary for developing and augmenting the psychic powers. Asanas have two distinct meanings; firstly they denote the seats on which a worshipper is to sit for meditation or worship. Secondly, they imply different prescribed postures of the body which the worshipper should conform to at the time of the worship in Yoga Sadhana. In Tantric worship, there are some notable seats on which a spiritually advanced may sit for practising yoga or for meditation and worship. These are Shavasan (sitting on dead body), Mundasana (sitting on five skulls of different animals including man), Chitasana (sitting on the funeral pyre).²⁸

Panch Makaras -

Panch makaras are explained as under:

1) **Madya** - if a man drinks the nectarine stream that issues from cavity of the brain, he is filled with joy. This is Madya or wine. It stands for the yogic process of bhuta-suddhi by which Sadhaka turns inward and unifies with the Kundalini Sakti which is lying dormant at the Muladhara with the Parama Shiva who is at Sahasrar. Another meaning a turning within from outside.

2) **Mamsa** - the word "Ma" means a tongue from which proceeds words. One who always feeds on them is really yogin who has controlled his speech. Our thoughts are also so many words

²⁷ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

²⁸ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

expressed mentally. Hence, mamsa is Pratyahara, i.e. also means Kechuri Mudra which prescribes the raising of the tip of the tongue of the palate. Meaning - control over words and thoughts.

3) **Matsya** - the fishes are always moving about between the Ganges and Yamuna. He is the worshipper of fish who eat them up. Both the Ganges and the Yamua represent the two nerves Ida and Pingala. The two fishes represent respiration, drawn in and sent out. So the worshipper of fish means one who has control over his vital breaths. This is Pranayama by which the desires of the flesh are overcome and the Sadhaka enjoys a quiet attitude unrealised before. The Sadhaka has to practise pranayama or regulate his breath which is the cause of surging up of all desires. The Sadhaka has to think within that in fact he does not see, it is the consciousness within that is the real seer, he does not hear, the consciousness within that is the real hearer.

4) **Mudra** - The Supreme being is extremely charming and is accompanied with Kundalini Sakti. One who requires the knowledge of this charming soul is the worshipper of Mudra. This is the yogic state of Dhyana, when the mind is fully absorbed with the idea to be realised. Literally means making signs and movements indicating the Sahakas attachment towards the Deity

5) **Maithuna** - cohabitation is at the root of creation, preservation and destruction. It is regarded as a great principle in the shastras. The esoteric meaning of Maithuna is the sense of yogic process is Samadhi and the Sadhaka forgets himself by the recitation of the principal attributes of God and contemplation about the creation and its end. Sadhaka has no more separate existence. He is merged with Deity. All limitations here vanish and the Sadhaka is blessed with the glimpse of the Anandamaya stage in which all senses of self vanish. The highest pleasure that a man are capable of enjoying.

Pancha Makaras is intended to denote a progressive course of Sadhana leading to the realisation of the absolute self.²⁹

Principles of Sakti philosophy -

Though Shiva and Shakti are two independent co-existing things conjoined together but they are ultimately one and the same, because they are but two modes of the manifestation of the Eternal and Infinite Brahma, i.e. spirit and matter which the Tantra have described as Shiva and Sakti. The deity of the Tantrasvis both Shiva and Shakti, in other words Brahma and his divine energy. In philosophical terminology, Sakti is Kinetic energy of Brahma, Shiva represents the Static aspect of Brahma. According to Tantras, creation is not as illusion, but the creation is real, because it is a mode of Divine manifestation of Brahma. They do not dismiss the creation totally as Maya, but regard it conditional reality.³⁰

The Sakti philosophy is as old as the Vedas. In the Sakti doctrine Siva is the supreme unchanging eternal consciousness and Sakti is His kinetic power. Universe is Power. Sakti being the Power of God, Sakta is one who possesses Sakti.

The Sakti Tantra is Advaita Vada. It proclaims that Paramatma and Jivatma are one. The Saktas accept the Vedas as the basic scriptures. They recognise the Sakta-Tantras as texts expounding the means to attain the

²⁹ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

³⁰ *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

goal set forth in the Vedas. The Sakta Tantra is a Sadhana Sastra of Advaita Vedanta. It is indeed a deep and powerful system.

Mahanirvana, Kularnava Tantra are the important books in Tantra Sastra. Yoga Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yuarveda, Yoga Tattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajurveda, Jabala Darsana, Trishikh Brahmana, Varaha Upanishad are useful for getting knowledge of Kundalini Sakti and the methods to awaken it and take it to Sahasrara Chakra. Sastras show the path to liberation, perfection, freedom and immortal bliss.

Tantra is in some of its aspects a secret doctrine. You cannot learn it from the study of books. You will have to get the knowledge and practise from the practical Tantrics, the Tantric Acharyas and Gurus who hols the key to it. The word “Sakti” comes from the root “Sakt” which means “to be able”, “to do”. Sakti is symbolically female, but it is in reality neither male nor female, but only the force which manifests itself in various forms. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, electricity are Her gross forms. Tantra Yoga lays special emphasis on the development of the powers latent in the six Chakras. The power or active aspect of the immanent God is Shakti. Shakti is the embodiment of power. That is God in Mother form, as the supreme Power which creates, sustains and withdraws the universe. All women are the forms of Divine Mother. The Sakti must be awakened by Dhyana, Bhava, Japa and Mantra Sakti. She is in the Mooladhara Chakra in our bodies. She vitalises the body through the Sushumna. In this system of Sakti philosophy Siva is omnipresent, impersonal, inactive. He is pure consciousness. Sakti is dynamic. Siva is embodiment of Bliss and Knowledge. Siva Himself appears in the form of man with life pleasure and pain. Bhuta Suddhi is an important Tantric rite. It means purification of five elements of which the body is composed. The Sadhaka dissolves the sinful body and makes a new Deva body. He infuses into the body the life of the Devi. The Sadhaka imagines that Kundalini is aroused and that one elements is absorbed into the other and so on, until all are absorbed in Brahman.³¹

The absolute (Parma Shiva) resides in the cerebrum (Sahasrara). The spiritual guide (guru), who is, in essence, identical with Prama Shiva, also has his real habitattion there The Jivan-Shakti lies dormant in the lowest centre at the root of the spine (Muladhara) and passes through the gradually higher and higher centers to the forehead to the cerebrum. The conscious working at the higher centers, the definite turn from the control by the lower self to that by the Higher, signified by the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti.³²

Tantra Yoga is practical type of Yoga wherein the body and mind are considered to be the one, and the body is believed to be a vehicle of the mind. According to this system the mind is abstract, the body concrete, to work with the abstract mind we need to use the concrete material stuff called body. It is in the body that the psychic venters are located. The functional aspects of the cerebrospinal system is called the mind. The spine is the seat of all responses. Tantra’s basic principle is Shakti (female power), which is manifested as matter and mind, though supreme consciousness is mindless. When there is no mind, there is no limitation, and man is then pure consciousness. To go beyond the mind, one stops its vehicle so that its activities become suspended.

Prana is the mind’s vehicle. *Apana* is prana that exists in the region extending from below the navel to the

³¹ *Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga*. Swami Sivananada. The Divine Life Society, Tehri-Garhwal, 2000

³² *Classical and modern approached to Yoga*. Ganesh Shankar. Delhi, 2002

anus. If this prana, which is charged with negative ions, is made to function with apana and is forced to enter through the central canal in the spinal column, there is fusion between the negative ions of prana and the positive ions of apana. This generates great amounts of energy, which in turn, help in the ascent of the dormant energy that is at rest at the base of spine - Kundalini. Before the generation of this energy is physically possible, the aspirant must become prepared through bodily purifications: asanas, mudras and pranayama.

The system of working with the Kundalini is basically tantric in origin. It works through the union of the psyche with matter, and the mind with the physical body. The body plays a great role in producing various moods, including highest - samadhi. The state is achieved by channeling energy through the nervous system and through the spine. The energy ascends through a narrow passage in the spinal column and passes through six psychic centers before it reaches its final abode, the seven center. The seventh center is located in the cerebrum, the hollow space between the twin hemispheres of the brain, where again a fusion takes place, and where the activities of the mind are completely suspended. Both hemispheres become calm, the inner dialogue stops, one loses all sense of time and space, and identifications and false notions of the phenomenal world melt away.³³

Chakras -

Chakras - energy centers containing latent psychic powers. If activated they hold potential for reaching cosmic planes of existence. Sahasrara is said to be the abode of Lord Shiva, Cosmic consciousness, and Muladhara the seat of Shakti, from whom originates that Cosmic force known as Kundalini. Ultimately, Tantra asana aims to arouse Kundalini Shakti to unite Shiva.

Through planned meditative asanas, Kundalini Shakti, the great power within the human body, usually latent, lies awakened. Once released from the Muladhara Chakra, it uncoils and begins to rise upwards, breaking open and transforming each energy centre as it ascends until Shakti enters the magnetic sphere of Shiva consciousness.

In Yogic practise, discipline of breathing is absolutely essential. Prana, the life force, or vital air, enters the human entity through these psychic centers and nadis getting diffused throughout according to different functions.³⁴

Chakras are centers of activity of subtle, vital force. Everything in the body is of a circular shape and is constantly in movement, the center of those movements are called chakras. The Yoga that focuses specifically on the chakras and dormant Kundalini energy is variously called Kundalini Yoga, Tantra Yoga. Concentrate on subtle centers in relation to each presiding consciousness. These centers have an ultimate relationship to each presiding consciousness. Diagrams of chakras enable the aspirant of Kundalini Yoga to meditate by colouring the drawings and simultaneously repeating the bija (seed) sounds and other sounds. One of the hemispheres in the human brain is visual, the other verbal. The visual hemisphere works with

³³ *Chakras energy centers of transformation*. Harish Johari. Noida, 1987

³⁴ *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Dr. L.R. Chawdhri. New Delhi, 1998

the visual images of the chakras presented in the illustrations that have been specially designed here for colouring. Simultaneously the verbal hemisphere is engaged by sounds and seed sounds. Using the faculties of hearing and sight together is a form of Tantra. One who masters this practise will find himself or herself in a meditative state while neither inert nor inactive. One subtly receives inspirations from the forms and colours

The connection between the gross and the subtle in the human organism is through intermediate conductors that are connected with the sense organs and work organs. Through Yoga one trains both types of organs to adopt a discipline and to help the body become a true asset. Yoga makes an aspirant the best friend of his own body, sense organs, and work organs, and creates coordination between the right and left sides of the body, which normally do not coordinate, but rather alternate.³⁵

Modern Tantra -

Modern Tantra encourages its participants to experience the world and its pleasures and thus control their minds so that they can choose to partake or abstain. The tantrists believe that after living on bread and water or being celibate for years, the body forgets the exquisite pleasure of the finer things of life and bodily demand for fulfilment becomes so atrophied that the mind has no difficulty in suppressing the bodily urges. The world of the esthete is full of grays, whereas the Tantrist's world is alive with vivid colour.

Nirvana, the ultimate place of serenity and all knowledge, is gained by the Tantrist through a regular cycle of indulgence and abstinence. Through this cycling training, keyed to the phases of the moon, the Tantrist keeps all the bodily appetites honed to a high degree of sensitivity and the times of abstinence become more and more difficult to endure. Then there is a bursting of the chains, when the mind takes control and Nirvana is achieved.

Tantra is designed to teach a strict moral code, and to develop its adherents spiritually. To achieve that it requires that both women and men learn to control their passions, and through that ability to gain control of all other body functions, including temperature, pulse rate, pain, disease, etc.

Tantra places Women first, for only through her, it is believed, can Man learn emotional control. Tantra places great emphasis on discipline, cleanliness, spirituality and gentleness, but little emphasis on physical beauty.

Through Tantra we gain complete control of our own emotions, and those around us learn similar control. Some of the strongest human emotions are those raised by sexual differences. Once we learn to control them, the lesser emotions - such as anger and pain - are more easily controlled as well.

In Tantra, the most fundamental urges, those of procreation and survival, are used to develop the mind's control of the body. High levels of sexual activity with several different experienced partners alternate with proximity but abstinence. Ample food, beautifully prepared, alternates with fasting. Sex is used as one means of traversing the path control, making possible a transition into deep meditation and psychic experience. Tantra is an extension of Hatha practise - an extension that uses sex and power (prana) raised

³⁵ *Chakras energy centers of transformation*. Harish Johari. Noida, 1987

from human body. To the Tantrist, the understanding of natural sensory pleasures comes only after experiencing the pleasure. You eat well of delectable food, then have totally tasteless food, then fast; in this way you gain discipline through voluntarily giving up pleasure, and enjoy the pleasure more by contrasting it with the of withdrawal. Tantrists also disagree with those who take the path of pain. Anything that should be done must be pleasurable and natural.³⁶

Conclusion -

1. The Sanskrit word is derived from the root word “Tana”, meaning “to spread” and “Tra” means “to save”. Thus, Tantra means the technique which saves or serves us by spreading and or expanding our consciousness or knowledge.

2. In the ancient science of Tantra, the human body is viewed as the most perfect instrument for the expression of consciousness. This perfection is realised through the development of the psychic centres - chakras. Through understanding and utilising the energies of the chakras that we ultimately reach an enlightened state of being.

3. According to Tantra, the sorrow of life is caused by a bi-polar existence, a split of the one into two, because the truth of things is oneness and not the dual existence in any of its forms.

4. There are 3 classes of sadhakas in order of the merit of the existing status of their spiritual development. On the basis of this classification Sadhakas have to follow different types of Puja, Upasana and daily regimen as required. The three classifications are as follows: Pasu, Vira and Divya.

5. The course of instructions has been divided into 4 parts:

1) Jnana-Pada - theoretical aspect of Tantric Sadhans,

2) Yoga-Pada - sort of internal discipline known as Yoga.

3) Kriya-Pada - a code of social conduct was also conceived essential because an individual is an indivisible part of society.

4) Charya-Pada - comprises of material and methods of worship.

6. The tantric method of Sadhana which combines in it yoga and Bhakti, Mantra and Homa (Oblation), Jnana and Karma.

7. Tantra Sadhana includes the recitation of Mantras, performance of ritual through Yantras and an adjustment of oneself to the particular degree of reality, which is the specific meaning of Tantra. In this process one has to learn many minor details directly from the Guru. The purification of the body, the mind and one's social relations, are all important preparation of Sadhana.

8. Shiva resides in the cerebrum (Sahasrara). Shakti lies dormant in the lowest centre at the root of the spine (Muladhara).

9. Activating the energy of each chakra by chakra in an orderly fashion creates a psychic loop that empowers to overcome emotions, gain new knowledge and bring wisdom back into consciousness.

10. Chakras - energy centers containing latent psychic powers. If activated they hold potential for reaching cosmic planes of existence.

³⁶ *Tantric Yoga. The royal path to raising kundalini power.* Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Delhi, 1994.

11. Through planned meditative asanas, Kundalini Shakti, the great power within the human body, usually latent, lies awakened. Once released from the Muladhara Chakra, it uncoils and begins to rise upwards, breaking open and transforming each energy centre as it ascends until Shakti enters the magnetic sphere of Shiva consciousness.

