

## An Overview of Tantra Sadhana

By Arun Naik

Tantra is perhaps the most talked about, but the least understood of Indian philosophies. Its paths and practices are believed to be mysterious, and any attempt to understand it becomes difficult due to the difficult nature of the subject itself, and the secrecy over the keys to its terminology and methods.

A proper definition of Tantra is critical to understand the subject. The word 'Tantra' is formed from the Sanskrit root  $tn!$  which means 'to spread, to widen, to expand, to elongate, to cover, to fill, to create'. Therefore the meaning of Tantra may be interpreted as i) Knowledge which encompasses all that is to know, and which itself is expansive in nature, and ii) a system which leads to growth of one's intellect and awareness, resulting in sharper intelligence and other mental faculties, higher faculty of reasoning and intuitive power, very high mental creativity, and a speedy progress on the path of self-realization. In practice Tantra is a dynamic philosophy which supports life, action, aspiration, knowledge, quest for truth, a path which unshackles the infinite potential of the human mind and helps one be One with the Divine.

Tantra view the Universe as a playground of Form and Energy. Shiv is the Form and Shakti is the Energy, though; both are inseparable and hence the same. Shiv is Shakti and Shakti is Shiv. . Without Shakti Shiv is dead, a corpse, incapable of action, and without Shiv Shakti is unable to manifest and incapable of action either. This is best seen in the image of Mahakali who stands upright over the corpse form of Shiv.

शिव - ई = शव

ई + काल = काली

In Tantric terminology \$ is Shakti. When Shakti leaves Shiv and stands separate, Shiv turns into a corpse and falls down. But to be Kali, Shakti also needs a union with Kaal, and Kaal is none other than Shiv. This male-female form is inseparable and is depicted as Ardhanarishwara, where half the form is of Shiv and the other half is

Parvati. Shvetashvaropanishad says the Divine is Male and also a Female: त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ॥

From a worldly point of view, however, Shiv is Purush, the unchanging Consciousness, the Silent Witness. Shakti is Nature - Prakriti, the changing supreme Power which creates, sustains and destroys. And yet, Prakriti can do nothing till Shiv wills it.

Tantra expressly differentiates itself from the Vedic methods of Yoga. In the Vedantic tradition the Purush is Divine, the Creator who runs the world, and Prakriti is the Maya, the power of Illusion who creates a world of mirage and casts a veil of ignorance. The god of a Vedanti sadhak is essentially Purush, the saviour from the clutches of Maya.

But in Tantra the prime force is Prakriti, the Energy, the Nature, the Divine Mother, Aditi who reigns supreme. In essence She is Formless, She is Maya who manifests herself in infinitesimal forms to create the Universe, and nothing is away from her. She is Mahakali, Mahasaraswati, and Mahalaxmi, but beyond the description of any known language. Yogis says that her seat is in the Self-Illuminated Chidakash where she rests on a throne whose legs are none else than Bramha, Vishnu, Rudra and Ishwar, and the plank is Sadashiv Himself

The ultimate aim of Tantra Sadhana is to realize the Truth, reach a higher state of consciousness, change mortal imperfection into a divine perfection, realize the Divinity within and attain godhood - all this while staying in the world and performing the worldly duties. Unlike the Vedic philosophy which treats the World as an illusion and a cobweb created by Maya, the Tantra Yogi looks upon the world as a manifestation of Nature, admires and respects it, lives in it and works towards Higher Consciousness, and Mantra becomes his most essential too.

**Sound is the source of all manifestation...the knower of the mystery of sound knows the mystery of the whole universe (Hazrat Inayat Khan)**

### **Naad, Matrika and Mantra**

Bramha has infinite aspects, and each of them is seen as an independent deity. Each deity has unique attributes of form and behaviour and represents a unique set of Cosmic. A Mantra is the phonetic expression of its Deity, just as a Yantra may be taken to be a geometric expression of the deity. Sri Aurobindo explains a mantra as a set of phonetic sounds which create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolizes.

Before the manifestation of the Creation all knowledge rests in Para-Vak, which itself rests in the Nishkal-Shiv, or Shiv who has no kalā or form. It is the state of being and nothingness. Nasadiya Sukta portrays the condition before dawn of Creation:

There was no Existence, nor Non-Existence. There was no air and no sky beyond it. There was neither Death, nor Immortality, There was no sign of the Divider of Day and Night. There was Darkness, concealed in Darkness. All around was an indiscriminate chaos.

Creation begins to manifest when Nishkal-Shiv decides to become Sakal i.e. manifest into various forms or kalās. With his decision to manifest, the Para-Vak begins to acquire a sort of semi-independent entity and flows out of Sakal Shiv as Naad - the Primordial Unstruck Sound of the Divine. Naad flows in five directions, and this phenomenon is recorded in Tantra as the formation of five Amnayas - Purvamnaya, Dakshimnaya, Pashchimamnaya, Uttaramnaya and Urdhwamnaya – by the five faces of Shiv: Sadhyojat, Vamdev, Aghor, Tatpurush and Ishan. (Kularnava Tantra).

Para-Vak is the seat of all knowledge, all vibrations, therefore not only the seat of all languages and communications, but in a way also of all gross

substances and matter. With the manifestation of Naad it first manifests as Pashyanti, a state of abstract knowledge, like an idea which has not yet been expressed in words. Here Knowledge is a Thought and a distinct entity, unlike Para-Vak. This is the playground where Shiv acquires the dual form of The Divine Teacher and the Student. Where one part of him questions and the other part dispenses Knowledge. This is the ground where we look for answers to our problems and queries, where the Divine within us plays the role of the Disciple when we have a question to ask, and then the Divine becomes the Teacher and reveals the answer. The ground of Madhyama is the terrain of Mantras, because it is here that the aspirant is able to purify himself and begin his spiritual ascension. This is the ground where the Mantra works.

When Vak descends to the level of physical manifestation, it loses its subtle powers and turns gross. This is the level of Vaikhari, the level of manifested Naad, or Sound as heard by the human ears and uttered by the human throat. This is the interesting field of Naad where Vaikhari expresses Thought in various languages and forms, written or spoken. Each syllable is called a Matrika. These Matrikas are extremely powerful and shroud the intellect, creating level of Ignorance. At Vaikhari level the Being is more close to the lower levels of human intellect and existence, to grosser elements, to lower human nature. Tantra turns it around: it uses these Matrikas to formulate Mantras. Mantra is the instrument by which the aspirant scales Vaikhari and ascends to Madhyama, eventually to transcend the Pashyanti and realize his godhood.

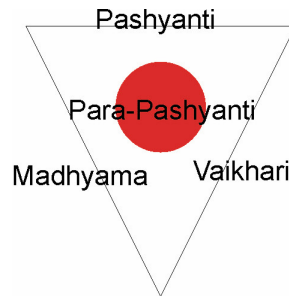
Thus we see that Para-Vak manifests itself as the physical world by turning from subtle to gross through the following stages:

Para-Pashyanti > Pashyanti > Madhyama > Vaikhari  
Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari are the three sounds of `.

सुधा त्वमक्षरे नित्ये त्रिधा मात्रात्मिका स्थिता । अर्धमात्रा स्थिता नित्या  
यानुच्चार्याविशेषतः ॥

The fourth sound of Om is the Chandrabindu which belongs to the higher realm of Madhyama and cannot be spoken by the human throat. A yogi or a sadhak can only hear it.

These three levels of Naad later develop into the Cosmic Trinity, three dimensions of Time, three dimensions of Space, the three Vedas, and their ultimate ascension can be seen as the formation of the Divine Triangle .



These are the three stages of Shrishti, Stithi and Samhara - Creation, Maintenance and destruction. The triangle also represents the three manifestations of Shakti as Ichha, Gyan and Kriya, as the three Goddesses: Gauri, Brahmi, and Vaishnavi, This Triangle and the Bindu represents the Cosmic Union of Shiv and Shakti, and is the source of all manifestations. Naad, therefore, is the source of all Knowledge. All the Knowledge which is available, all which has been lost, and all which is yet to manifest in present in the Naad. This is the highest stage of Tantra, and also the original form of Tantra.

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