

TANTRA THE INDIAN WAY

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](#).

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.

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 characterised by the three "gunas" or qualities - "sattva", "rajas" and "tamas". The Dakshina tradition, characterised 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.

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.

Explore More: [The Uses & Abuses of Tantra](#)

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.



Tantrik Rangeen Baba

Have you ever seen anyone praying his or her own portrait? You may think it's preposterous, but what

about those few who do not believe in God and instead consider the physical self as the Supreme Reality? Here's a peek into the wild world of Tantrism.

Satisfying the Self

There are some ancient Hindu texts, which emphasize the exaltation of the physical self more than anything else. The concept that arises out of this kind of devotion to self, forms the basis of what is known as tantra, and the followers of this 'crude side' of Hinduism are called tantrics. These people not only glorify the physical body but also go to any extent to satisfy the self to attain occult powers. Tantrism entails the antinomianistic or immoral way of gaining uncanny powers. According to Tantrism, it is through *bhoga* or satisfying desires that man can gain salvation, and he must do anything that he wishes to do, particularly those that are regarded sinful.

Origin of Tantrism

There are many disputes about its origins. Some observe that the Pre-Aryan Indians could have been the originators, others ascribe it to the tradition of primitive people. Whatever its remote origins may be, historically it can be dated about the time of the

rise of Buddhism, because the later Buddhists adopted some of the Tantric symbols and have grown as a sect. Today, tantra is not practised widely in India, and survives mostly in the far northeast, amid the jungles and foothills of the Himalayas.

Life of a Tantric Sadhaka

A *sadhaka*, or person performing tantric acts, lives a simple life, practices yoga and meditates in the quiet of the countryside, far away from the madding crowd. He is distinguished by his saffron robe and begging bowl, or in some cases he might go stark naked! He sells charms, amulets, 'magical' medicines and herbs. He sometimes gathers together with other sadhus to form vast processions during religious festivals. So much for the brighter side of a tantric. The darker half involves taking drugs, inflicting austerities upon himself, or doing certain things that outrage morality.

Tantra Teachings

Tantras, like the Vedas, are collections of verses suggesting elaborate directions for the right way to worship. They are generally esoteric, mystical teachings addressed to the *sadhakas*. Sex and the various postures of love-making form an important tenet of tantrism. There is an adolescent fascination

about breaking the sexual code with women. Using obscene words, visiting prostitutes or seducing another man's wife is held conducive to acquisition of uncommon powers.

Kundalini: Serpent Power

Another way to acquire *siddhi* or occult powers, is by practising Kundalini or 'serpent power'. According to the tantric texts, a serpent lies in our crotch, extending to the rectum. To awaken it, one must perform certain yoga, which will gradually arouse it. Practising Kundalini uncoils the serpent and releases vast energy, which proceeds up our spine like hot liquid. The skin burns, we sweat and experience a stinging sensation. The siddhi attained through this method can be so powerful that it may destroy the person if not controlled. Kundalini rises and when it reaches its limit, there is complete bliss. And once the sadhaka reaches this goal he becomes a sadhu or sage.

Obsession for the Female Form

For the tantrics, the object of devotion is not the male God, but his wife. They fanatically admire the woman form in all her aspects. The cruder the better. Their frenzy goes to the extent of abasing themselves before motherhood, the apotheosis of womanhood.

The tantric devotee yearns for mother to take him on her lap. He craves for the security and warmth of her breasts.

Sex for Nirvana

Tantism upholds the view that the best way of being godlike is to have intense sex with a woman. Having sex to the point of utter exhaustion can attain nirvana. While meditating, it is usually the woman's sexual organs that arrest their concentration, especially when it is combined with the mental picture of penetration.

Gender Bender

One tantric sect believes that every human being has both the male and the female attributes within. Similarly, gods too have bisexual characteristic. A representation of Lord Shiva, at the Elephanta Caves, show the right side of the god being masculine, the left having a female rear and a breast. Another sect of tantrism opines that the male devotee, to complete himself, must think of himself as a woman. He should walk like her, talk like her, have her emotions, and dress like her. Some men, by nature, are more feminine than male and these are particularly holy. They are of several kinds: the eunuch, hermaphrodite, the neuter whose sex has dried up and

so on. The devotee, in his search for sexual experience, can try out having sex with such kinds of people.

The orthodox Hindus shun and fear a tantric. He is detested and persecuted by the police, who considered him a charlatan, and an antisocial. Large tantric gatherings are banned. So, very little of it is left in actual practice. Nevertheless, its legacy cannot be ignored.

Source ;

<http://hinduism.about.com/od/tantra/a/wildtantra.htm>

Top Ten Tantra Temples

Followers of the [tantra path](#) of Hinduism as well as people of the 'bhakti' tradition attach great significance to the Hindu shrines that are linked to tantrism. In some of these temples 'bali' or ceremonial sacrifice of animals is carried out even today, while in others, like the Mahakaal temple of Ujjain, ashes of the dead are used in the 'aarti' rituals.

Here's a quick guide to the top ten tantrik shrines or *Shakti Peethas* of India.

1. [Kamakhya Temple, Assam](#)
2. [Kali Temple, Kalighat, West Bengal](#)
3. [Vaital temple, Bhubaneswar, Orissa](#)
4. [Shiva Temple, Ekling, Rajasthan](#)
5. [Balaji temple, near Bharatpur, Rajasthan](#)
6. [Khajuraho temples, Madhya Pradesh](#)
7. [Kaal Bhairon Temple, Ujjain, MP](#)
8. [Mahakaleswar Temple, Ujjain, MP](#)
9. [Jwalamukhi Temple, Himachal Pradesh](#)
10. [Baijnath, Himachal Pradesh](#)

Kamakhya Temple, Assam

The followers of the tantra path attach more significance to some particular Hindu temples. These are not only important for tantriks but also for people of the "bhakti" tradition. In some of these temples "bali" or ceremonial

sacrifice of animals is carried out even today, while in others, like the Mahakaal temple of Ujjain, ashes of the dead are used in the "aarti" rituals. Here are the top ten tantrik shrines or "Shakti Peethas".

Kamakhya is at the center of the widely practiced, powerful tantrik cult in India. It is situated in the north eastern state of Assam, atop the Nilachal Hill. It is one of the 108 Shakti Peethas of Goddess Durga. Legend has it that Kamakhya came into existence when Lord Shiva was carrying the corpse of his wife Sati, and her "yoni" (female genitalia) fell to the ground at the spot where the temple now stands. The temple is a natural cave with a spring. Down a flight of steps to the bowel of earth, is located a dark, mysterious chamber. Here, draped with a silk sari and covered with flowers, is kept the "matra yoni". At Kamakhya, tantrik Hinduism has been nurtured by generations of tantrik priests down the centuries.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)
Kalighat, West Bengal

Kalighat, in Calcutta (Kolkata), is an important pilgrimage for tantriks. It is said that when Sati's corpse was cut into pieces, one of her fingers fell at this spot. Many goats are sacrificed here before the Goddess Kali, and innumerable tantriks take their vows of self-discipline in this Kali temple.

Bishnupur in Bankura district of West Bengal is another place from where they draw their tantrik powers. Intent on worshipping the Goddess Manasa, they make their way to Bishnupur for an annual snake worship festival held in August every year. Bishnupur is also an ancient and well-known cultural and crafts center.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Bhubaneswar, Orissa

In Bhubaneswar, the 8th-century Vaital temple has a reputation of being a powerful tantrik center. Inside the temple stands the mighty Chamunda (Kali), wearing a necklace of skulls with a corpse at her feet. Tantriks find the dimly lit interior of the temple an ideal place for absorbing age-old currents of power that emanate from this spot.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Ekling, Rajasthan

An unusual four-faced image of Shiva carved from black marble can be seen at the Shiva temple of Eklingi near Udaipur in Rajasthan. Dating back to AD 734 or thereabouts, the temple complex draws a steady stream of tantrik worshippers almost throughout the year.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Balaji, Rajasthan

One of the most interesting and popular centers of tantrik rites is at Balaji, near Bharatpur off the JaipurAgra highway. Exorcism is a way of life at Balaji, and people from far and near, who have been "possessed by spirits" flock to Balaji in large

numbers. It requires nerves of steel to watch some of the exorcism rituals that are practiced here. Often the wails and screams can be heard for miles around. Sometimes, 'patients' have to stay on for days on end to be exorcised. Visiting the temple at Balaji leaves one with an eerie feeling.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

Khajuraho, situated in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, is known all over the world for its beautiful temples and erotic sculpture. However, few people are aware of its reputation as a tantrik center. The powerful depictions of gratification of carnal desires coupled with the evocative temple settings, which represent a spiritual quest, are believed to denote the means to transcend worldly desires and reach out for spiritual exaltation, and finally nirvana

(enlightenment). The Khajuraho temples are visited by great many people throughout the year.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Kaal Bhairon Temple, Madhya Pradesh

The Kaal Bhairon Temple in Ujjain has the darkfaced idol of Bhairon, known to cultivate tantrik practices. It takes about an hour's drive through the peaceful countryside to reach this ancient temple. Tantriks, mystics, snake charmers, and those in search of "siddhi" or enlightenment are often drawn to Bhairon in the initial stages of their quest. While the rituals vary, an oblation of raw, country liquor is an invariable component of Bhairon worship. The liquor is offered to the god with due ceremony and solemnity.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath

Ji.)

Mahakaleswar Temple, Madhya Pradesh

The Mahakaleswar Temple is another famous tantrik center of Ujjain. A flight of steps leads down to the sanctum sanctorum that houses the Shiva lingam. Several impressive ceremonies are held here during the day. However, for tantriks, it is the first ceremony of the day that is of particular interest. Their attention is focused on the "bhasm aarti" or the ash ritual — the only one of its kind in the world. It is said that the ash with which the Shiva lingam is 'bathed' every morning must be that of a corpse that has been cremated the day before. If no cremation has taken place at Ujjain, then the ash must be obtained at all costs from the nearest cremation ground. However, the temple authorities assert that though it was once customary for the ash to belong to a 'fresh' corpse, the practice had long been discontinued. The belief goes that those who are fortunate to watch this ritual will never die a premature death.

The topmost floor of the Mahakaleswar Temple remains closed to the public all through the year. However, once a year — on Nag Panchami Day—the top floor with its two snake images (which are supposed to be sources of tantrik power) are thrown open to the public, who come to seek "darshan" of Gorakhnath ki Dhibri, literally meaning "the marvel of Gorakhnath".

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Jwalamukhi Temple, Himachal Pradesh

This spot is of particular significance to tantriks and attracts thousands of believers and skeptics year after year. Guarded and cared for by the fierce-looking followers of Gorakhnath — who is known to have been blessed with miraculous powers — the spot is no more than a small circle of about three feet in circumference. A short flight of stairs leads down to

the grotto-like enclosure. Within this grotto are two small pools of crystal-clear water, fed by natural underground springs. Three orange yellow jets of flame flare continuously, steadily, from the sides of the pool, barely inches above the surface of the water, which appears to be on the boil, bubbling away merrily. However, you will be amazed to discover that the apparently boiling water is in fact refreshingly cold. While people try to unravel the marvel of Gorakhnath, tantriks continue to draw upon the powers that are centered in the grotto in their quest for self-realization.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Bajjnath, Himachal Pradesh

Many tantriks journey on from Jwalamukhi to Bajjnath, nestling at the foot of the mighty Dhauladhars. Inside, the 'lingam' of Vaidyanath (Lord Shiva) has long been a symbol of veneration

for the vast number of pilgrims who visit this ancient temple the year around. The temple priests claim a lineage as old as the temple. Tantriks and yogis admit that they travel to Baijnath to seek some of the healing powers possessed by Shiva, the Lord of Physicians. Incidentally, the water at Baijnath is reputed to possess remarkable digestive properties and it is said that until the recent past, the rulers in Kangra Valley of Himachal Pradesh would drink only water obtained from Baijnath.

(With inputs from Tantrik Master Shri Aghorinath Ji.)

Source;

<http://hinduism.about.com/od/tantra/a/wildtantra.htm>