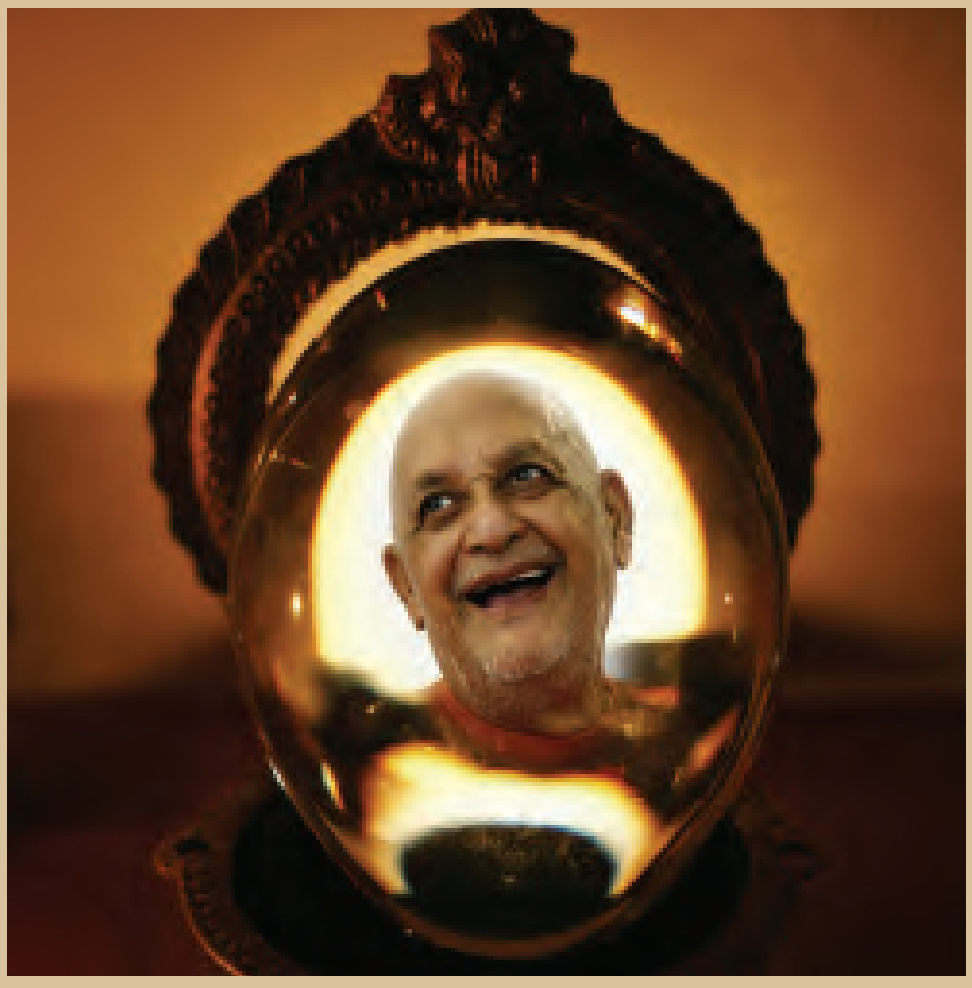
Tantra Darshan

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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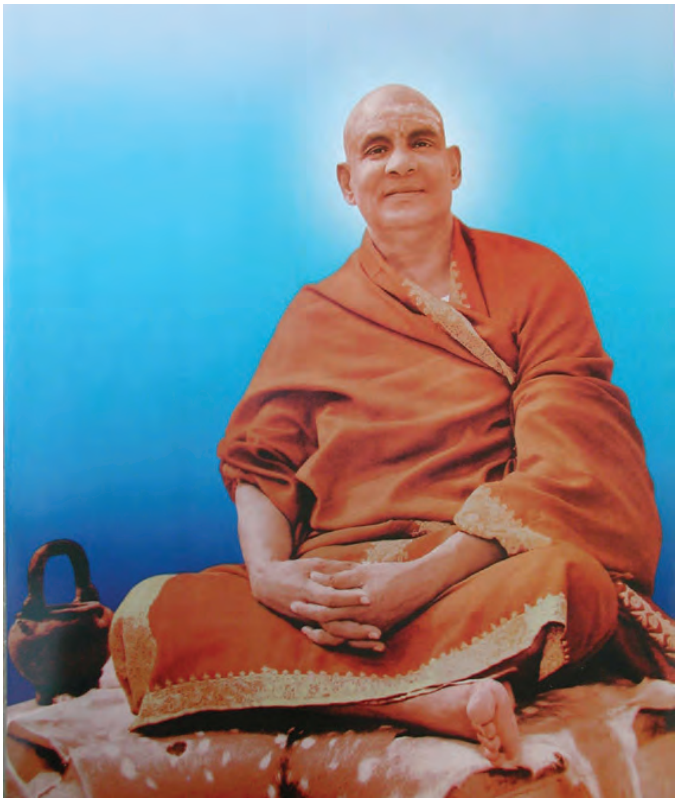
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Dedication

In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.

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Preface

Over millennia in India, spiritual seekers have walked the land with a single aim: to find a master who will reveal the truth to them. They have chanced upon such a one in Himalayan caves, amid the chaos of a city, or in the tree-lined courtyards of dusty towns. During the encounter, something inexplicable is known to happen. The seeker turns into a *shishya*, 'one who is taught'.

The teaching that is received by the shishya is not through books or a blackboard, though a book and a blackboard may be used as aids, nor is the learning through the linear intellect, though the linear intellect may be used as an aid. The exchange between guru and shishya is based on transmission. Knowledge, understanding, ability and experience are passed from the learned one to the learner in the language of silence. Words may be spoken from time to time; however, it is not their meaning but their power that conveys the truth, stirring the cogs of the pupil's psyche and spirit.

Among all the spiritual traditions, the exchange is most vital in tantra.

Since the first western explorer stumbled upon the science of tantra, scholars and laypersons have been vying to record their impressions on the subject. Thousands of books have been written, yet distortions are perceived as facts and hazy ideas abound. The reason is simple: tantra is not knowledge; it is experience, stimulated by the exchange with a master. Unless the experience comes, one cannot know tantra.

Experience being subjective, over the ages the body of tantra has expanded, becoming such an inclusive system that virtually every spiritual idea finds a place here. Therefore, it is impossible to pin down tantra, and the understanding remains peripheral even for those who studiously pore over hundreds of volumes. In fact, such ventures often cause confusion rather than enlightenment.

Tantra is best learnt from one who has perfected it. The presence of such a being may do in a moment what study will not do in a thousand years, because tantra does not reveal itself to a curious questioner; it unfolds in a sincere seeker. That said, there are occasions when a book will indeed become a medium of insight. One may chance upon a rare work one feels an intuitive affinity with – for it holds the energy of a realized master. If this be the case, an inroad has been made. Now one must hold a conscious intention to tune deeply with this energy and imbibe through what the Upanishads call 'the eye behind the eye, the ear behind the ear'. The journey may just be spectacular beyond expectation.

Such was the experience of all those who worked on this book. As the sections unravelled, something unravelled within for every transcriber, translator, compiler, editor, designer. As they danced with the words and concepts, inner windows opened up and wide vistas were glimpsed. There were luminous moments of inspiration, when a force was freed and the consciousness soared. Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, 'the supreme swan', had led them into the very centre of creation within their own selves.

Tantra Darshan is not an exhaustive treatise on tantra; however, it contains the core of tantra, and more importantly, it contains the power of a *siddha*, perfected master. Compiled from discourses that Swami Niranjan gave over a two-year period from 2011 to 2013 at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, it explains the fundamental precepts of tantra through which one's highest potential may be realized.

The journey begins with trying to understand the philosophy of tantra, which constitutes the first section of the book. This includes the meaning of tantra, the origins, the cosmic protagonists, the view on creation, and the place of the created being in the cosmic scheme. The individual's predicament is explained through a description of the subtle aspects that make up the human existence. Finally, the path to freedom and expansiveness is discussed. The second section focuses on the tools of tantra. It describes the main components of the sadhanas of tantra, along with the necessity of a guru to proceed on the path. Practices of gross and subtle purification, 'shatkarmas', the purpose of a deity, aspects such as mantra, yantra, mandala and mudra, as well as the more esoteric practices are detailed.

The nine levels of the step-by-step ascent are found in the third section. It highlights the *acharas*, codes of conduct, which allow for a harmonious and integrated awakening of consciousness. The five principal traditions of tantra – Shaiva, Shakta, Ganapatya, Saurya and Pancharatra – make the fifth section. Finally, as an epilogue, Swami Niranjan gives a brief account of how tantra has been assimilated in the Satyananda Yoga tradition, illustrating the practical and accessible nature of the teachings.

Even though the book appears to follow a linear structure, the teachings are anything but that. An idea may find mention in more than three contexts, and each will convey a unique aspect of the truth. There may be apparent contradictions, and one will have to acquire the tantric insight that reveals the homogeneity. In the section on the traditions, each is given a distinct treatment, and it may be surmised that during each discourse Swamiji was addressing a level of the audience's psyche appropriate to the occasion. Therefore, one familiarizes with Ganesha through stories and follows the Shaiva path through philosophy.

Tantra Darshan provides an opportunity to widen the dimensions of the mind and acquire an experience of the transcendental reality, beyond body, intellect and rationality. The reading of the book itself can be regarded as a sadhana for the liberation of energy and expansion of consciousness, the purpose of tantra.



Philosophy of Tantra

1
What is Tantra?



Tantra is a lifestyle, a sequence of disciplines, a philosophy and a mentality that allows one to experience the higher dimensions and higher nature of oneself. Intricate, interesting and inspiring, the subject of tantra is applicable to people from all walks of life. In fact, the philosophy of yoga, and of life itself, is contained in tantra. It is a path of evolution that every individual can adopt, starting from where they are.

Practical science

While tantra does not form part of the *shaddarshana*, the system of six philosophies, it touches very closely and intimately upon all aspects of human life. Tantra uses an individual's given experiences, which may sometimes seem useless or negative, as stepping stones to growth, expansion and evolution. Even if there are flaws and negativities in life, they are used to progress in life. No aspect of life is considered unimportant, irrelevant or without an identity of its own. For tantra, nothing is avoidable, dispensable or repulsive; its point of view and approach to each and every aspect of life is positive. If an individual is dominated by *tamoguna*, lethargy or negativity, then that state becomes the identity and the

individual begins their journey from there. If one is self-indulgent, that forms the starting point in the journey of spiritual life. With self-recognition and correct understanding of one's surroundings and circumstances begins the expansion of consciousness. This understanding then motivates one to move further along the path of self-discovery.

Tantra is not a play of the intellect; it is a practical tool. Therefore, tantric texts do not provide detailed material on tantric sadhana. Instead, the guru or guide is the most important aspect of the tantric tradition. Practical sadhana is performed under the guidance of the guru. The guru has full knowledge of the aspirant's nature, gunas, capabilities and the state of spiritual progress. The guru prescribes sadhana according to the aspirant's progress and checks that it is performed correctly under direct guidance. Errors in the performance of sadhana can create adverse results. Thus, it is essential that tantric sadhana is performed under the subtle and personal supervision of the guru. Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati has said that whether sadhana is performed with faith and devotion or from a scientific point of view, it is bound to produce results, and if there are flaws in the performance of the sadhana, it may produce harmful results.

Etymological meaning

There are various dictionary meanings of the word 'tantra'. It has been described as a theory, as a branch of *shruti*, sacred knowledge, and *iti kartavyam*, a group of duties. It is sometimes described as a training or education in the performance of one's duties in life, and many other explanations are given by various commentators in their writings. According to Kalidasa, tantra is a political or administrative system; the word 'tantra' is used as a suffix to indicate various political systems such as *prajatantra*, democracy, *rajatantra*, monarchy, *adhinayakatantra*, dictatorship, and so on.

From the spiritual perspective, tantra is a science of life that leads to the development, awakening and expansion of consciousness and energy. The two ideas of expansion and liberation are contained in the word 'tantra' itself, which is made up of 'tan' and 'tra'. 'Tan' is derived from the word *tanoti*, which means to enlarge, to extend, or to expand. Expansion of what? Of knowledge and of science. If knowledge and science do not dawn and expand in life, then one cannot free oneself from the bondage of ignorance. This is indicated in the mantra, *Tanyate vistarayate jnanamanena* – "(Tantra is) that by which knowledge is expanded." Swami Satyananda also says that the purpose of tantra is to cultivate awareness of the transcendental consciousness and energy. Thus, the real meaning of tan or tanoti is 'expansion of consciousness' and relates to the development, awakening and expansion of the conscious faculty.

One cannot receive or perceive any knowledge or teaching unless an expansion of consciousness takes place in life. The expansion of consciousness cannot be regarded as an expansion of the intellect, as this experience goes beyond the intellectual capacity. With the expansion of consciousness, various experiences and realizations awaken. They enable an individual to transcend the external, gross, material world, and become established in higher states.

The second word 'tra' in tantra is derived from *trayati*, which means to let go, to release, to liberate, to free from bondage. To liberate what? An internal, subtle and dormant energy is hidden within all. Normally, people cannot make use of this dormant energy due to their extroverted state of being. Trayati means to liberate that invisible energy and to experience and utilize it in life. It relates to the energy structure, and freeing up the energy inherent in one's body by removing the limitations and conditions around the energy. Consciousness and energy constitute the two most important aspects of life. Swami Satyananda describes tantra as a process of sadhana by which it becomes possible to expand the limited consciousness and to free the conditioned energy. If this concept of consciousness and

energy can be understood, then the entire process of tantra becomes clear.

Masters of tantra and the science of transmission

After Swami Satyananda was initiated into sannyasa by Swami Sivananda, on 12th September 1947 in Rishikesh, he continued to work in the ashram of his guru. He worked in all capacities to fulfil his duties in the ashram, as secretary, administrator, publisher, editor, kitchen-in-charge, building-in-charge, and so on. One day, Swami Sivananda called him and said, "Satyam, your time in the ashram is over. Twelve years have gone by." Swami Satyananda said to Swami Sivananda, "I don't want to leave the ashram; I want to stay here with you." Swami Sivananda said to him, "No. If you stay in Rishikesh, you will always remain a bonsai. If you go out into the world and propagate my message, you will become a huge banyan tree, under whose shade many can come for rest and shelter. Therefore, I am giving you the mandate to go and propagate yoga from door to door and shore to shore."

Swami Satyananda replied, "You are giving me this mandate, yet I have no knowledge of yoga. I have never practised yoga. I have no idea about yoga." Swami Sivananda said, "Come, I will teach you yoga", and initiated him into the yogic path in ten minutes.

What took place between Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda is known as *shaktipat*, transmission of energy. It is the downloading of the energy of the guru to the disciple; the downloading of information from one hard drive into another hard drive. As a result of this shaktipat diksha, in ten minutes Swami Satyananda knew everything that there was to know about yoga. After that, he left the ashram and propagated yoga, as instructed by Swami Sivananda.



Later on, Swami Satyananda decided to experiment and see whether this type of transmission could take place in the subconscious and unconscious states. At that time I was a young boy. While I slept, Swami Satyananda educated me through the practice of yoga nidra, which he developed from the nyasa system of tantra. It is a tantric practice that enables the feeding of information, samskaras and appropriate seeds for the future development of the personality and the consciousness. I would be sound asleep and have no idea of what was happening; nevertheless, the transmission took place and something happened in my mind. Without any prior knowledge or understanding I received information which became useful in the course of time.

When transferring information from one hard drive to another newly-formatted hard drive, the new hard drive must be empty. As the information flows from one drive into another, the entire package is transferred. After five minutes of transferring information, this hard drive becomes an exact replica of the first hard drive. The effect of such a transmission is the instant expansion of consciousness, and the method is tantra. Usually, only a fraction of the consciousness is used, and the impressions in that fraction are what enable one to survive and function in the world. The same consciousness has to be realized in total, in completeness.

Tantra and the Vedas

India has always allowed for free play of thoughts and ideas. Talent has never been controlled here. Mutually opposite and contradictory ideas, thoughts and philosophies have originated, evolved and developed side by side. The two main schools of thought that have arisen from the Indian culture are the vedic and tantric philosophies. The tantric texts are called *agama* and the vedic texts are called *nigama*. Many thinkers regard tantra to be older than the Vedas; however, both have evolved and developed on parallel tracks simultaneously, sometimes embracing and sometimes opposing each other. On the one hand, the light of vedic philosophy has been destroying the darkness created by illusion, the source of all afflictions. On the other hand, tantra has been guiding humanity with its own cool, soothing light, through the deep, dark nights of ignorance.

A common belief about tantra is that is it not vedic. This concept is misleading. The word 'tantra' has been referred to in the Vedas. Tantric literature provides support for vedic theories and principles, and gives them new direction. Therefore, to consider tantra a non-vedic or atheistic philosophy is incorrect. The Vedas describe tantra as a machine that is used for weaving or tailoring cloth, stating that just as a machine is used for tailoring clothes, one should adopt tantric principles in life to attain the highest experience of consciousness, Brahman. Tantra has also been eulogized by the *Shatapatha Brahmana*. According to this work, tantra presents the basic philosophy and the fundamental principles of life. These references make it clear that there is no difference of opinion between tantric and vedic philosophies.

The goal and the methods

The goals and methods of tantra are many. Its first objective is to establish a spiritual philosophy and spiritual understanding in life. Second, it provides a systematic method to adopt in life. Third, it brings about a change, a transformation in the predominant binding and restrictive gunas or characters of the individual. If an individual has tamasic or rajasic traits, then it is necessary to transform that nature into a sattwic nature.

The methods of tantra include: *vidya*, knowledge or teaching; *charya*, conduct; and *kriya*, action. Vidya constitutes the description and elucidation of spiritual philosophy and aspects of sadhana. Charya is related to the discipline, regulations, and conduct of life. Kriya implies proper education and training in rites and rituals. All these have become integral parts of tantra.

Two paths

The whole system of tantra is divided into two parts. One is the path of transformation; the other is the path of transmutation. These two paths have been defined by many people as the right hand and left hand of tantra. The right hand of tantra, *dakshinachara*, is the path of transformation; and the left hand of tantra, *vamachara*, is the path of transmutation. The path to be followed is according to one's nature, predisposition and samskaras.

When there is no idea of the spiritual aspect of life, one's entire attention, cognition and identification are with the sensorial world. The senses and the mind act and respond to the sensorial world and the sense objects in a predetermined manner: this is the basic structure people are born with. The impressions from society, family, friends, culture, religion, philosophy, gurus, and others, are influences that come later in life. Attraction and desire are the fundamentals that people come with in this life, in this world of senses and sense objects. When an identification takes place, a particular trait of mind develops that can be tamasic, rajasic, or sattwic. In the majority of people, it is fifty percent tamasic, forty percent rajasic, and ten percent sattwic. When the mind and consciousness respond in a predetermined manner to the senses and sense objects, there is attraction, there is desire and there is bondage.

The right-hand path of tantra aims to transform the quality of the mind, so that there is a gradual increase of sattwa, and sattwa is increased to fifty percent, rajas is maintained at forty percent and tamas is reduced to ten percent. This is the dakshinachara aspect of tantra, the transformative dimension of tantra, in which one becomes aware of oneself and then modifies the behaviours and attitudes accordingly. On the other hand, in vamachara, the left-hand path of tantra, a complete change occurs, iron is transmuted into gold. The transmutative dimension aims to "Kill this little I." It says, "Die to Live. Lead the divine life." According to Swami Sivananda, the killing of this little 'I' and the emergence of a new nature, a new being from the old, is transmutation. Vamachara does not denote the sexual tantra and dakshinachara does not denote the passive tantra. Rather, they are indications of the two processes of tantra: transformation and transmutation.

From the point of view of sadhana, the entire range of tantra has been divided into three: the right-hand path, the left-hand path and the middle path. The right-hand path, *dakshina marga*, is the sattwic path of sadhana, in which the aspirant or *sadhaka* becomes the channel, the *lakshya*, goal, or the *devata*, deity. Yoga belongs to this path. The second method of sadhana is the left-hand path, *vama marga*, which is related to Shakti, the mother form of the cosmic energy. The middle path is the combination of both the right and the left paths.

Five schools and subjects of tantra

As tantra developed, five major schools of tantra came into existence, each with a different guru or original teacher:

1. Shaiva tantra, the tantra of Shiva
2. Shakta tantra, the tantra of Shakti
3. Ganapati tantra, the tantra of Ganesha
4. Pancharatra tantra, the tantra of Narayana or Vishnu
5. Saurya tantra, the tantra of the Sun.

These five schools have a fundamental, common purpose: the exploration of how one can perceive one's relationship with the world and creation; how one can develop the understanding of this relationship; how one can expand the horizons of consciousness, and how one can free the inherent shaktis and powers that lie dormant within. Each school of tantra contains five main subjects:

1. *Philosophy*: Tantra in relation to the development of consciousness and realizing the supreme transcendental consciousness within oneself. This covers Shiva, Shakti, Ganesha, Narayana and Surya's representations in relation to life, the universe and human experiences.

2. *Creation*: The process of how things have come into being from the state of non-being.

3. *Devata* and *aradhana*: The deity that is the focus of each school, and the method of worshipping that deity to create an environment conducive to the development of consciousness at home, in the community and in society.

4. *Upasana*: The means to purify and uplift oneself spiritually and internally. Upasana is the individual practice to transcend the nature and the limitations of the self.

5. *Sthiti*: Sthiti means to become stable in, to become fixed in; to become established in one state of understanding, knowledge, experience and state of consciousness. This includes how to maintain the state that has been gained and live in that state for a long period of time.

In today's times, the tradition of tantra is lost all over, save for a few regions where it has been safeguarded or resurrected. From these five schools of tantra, the prominent ones remaining today are the Shaiva and Shakta tantras. The other three are virtually lost.

Geographic development

The Indus Valley civilization has been the central source of information for the modern tantric thinkers and researchers. A large number of images, idols, pictures and other remains, have been recovered as a result of excavations in the Indus valley. Amongst them, in large quantities, are the images and pictures of Shakti, Shivalingams, and tantric yantras.

According to archaeologists, the Indus Valley civilization flourished during 3,000 BC; however, the tantric theory and philosophy is believed to have existed even before that. Thereafter, there was a period when tantra became a secret science. It re-emerged with many branches and sects between the seventh and twelfth century. Tantra was prevalent in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Assam and Bengal belong to the area known as Gauda. It has been said that tantra was born in Gauda, refined in Mithila, practised in Maharashtra, and it met its end in Gujarat:

Gaude pracharita vidya, Maithile prabalikrita, Kvachit kvachit Maharashtre, Gurjare pralayam gata.

Most of the Shaktipeeths are situated in Bengal, Assam and Bihar, and there are many Shaktipeeths in Maharashtra and Gujarat also. The archaeological evidence makes it clear that tantra was prevalent from one end of the country to the other. While tantra must have been practised in other areas in between these two ends of the country, no concrete evidence has been offered at this stage. Nevertheless, it is known that after its expansion in other parts of the country, tantra also reached Kashmir. It is accepted that the roots of tantra lie in these ancient civilizations and that, over time, it expanded and gradually took a definite, stable form.

The profound spiritual structure of tantric science seems to have appeared over a course of time. In every age, something new was added to tantra vidya. During its downfall and decline, superstition and mysticism became mingled with it, whereas during its growth and expansion, spiritualism and rules of social conduct were incorporated. Thus, tantra is a confluence of various thoughts and beliefs. It is clear that the origin and development of tantra did not take place in one particular age; its present, well-organized shape has evolved over thousands of years.

Misconceptions on tantra

Many misleading concepts and ideas about tantra have been prevalent in society. To some, it is a magical science. To others, it is a system of sadhana to be performed in the cremation grounds. Some also believe it to be a method to prolong sexual enjoyment. These interpretations are neither the true understanding nor the true form of tantra. In fact, this limited knowledge of tantra is similar to the use of yoga in modern society, where asana is the only component focused on. In this ignorance of the breadth and depth of yoga, a whole treasure trove is missed. After all, what

is yoga without pranayama, mudra, bandha, kriya, kundalini, nada, or mantra? Similarly, the wealth of knowledge of tantra remains untapped.

For many thousands of years, the actual point of tantra has been missed. Even today, the majority of books emphasize either the mystical, magical aspects, or the sensual, sexual aspects of tantra. This situation has arisen because the people who have written such commentaries have never studied tantra. Those who have written authentic commentaries on tantra do not speak of tantra as mystical, magical, sensual or sexual. Such misunderstandings lead to interpretations that merely justify one's actions and oneself. People have not moved beyond this. To write that incantations are tantra and that the art of sexuality is tantra has no meaning at all; such ideas and concepts are incorrect. They represent the abuse of the tantric system, philosophy and process. This invaluable treasure of the Indian culture could not protect itself against the onslaughts of pollution generated by mimicry and deformations that set in within the social system over time.

The prevalent misconceptions of tantra arose primarily as a result of its mysterious or secretive form. Additionally, many tantric works have been lost, which also led to misinterpretation of the tantric ideas and practices. The well known but wrongly interpreted panchamakara sadhana of tantra is a prime example.

Misconceptions have also arisen because people do not understand how the practices affect and influence the consciousness and the energy systems. The majority of people believe that there is nothing beyond the body. The body is the only entity they identify with, therefore the body is considered to be the culmination. However, for a tantric, the body is only a carrier, a container of different forces, powers and shaktis. Beyond the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, skeletal system, muscular system and cardiovascular system, there are many more subtle elements and components contained in this physical frame. In tantra, the body is a container, and each aspect, ripe with dormant energy, has to be taken out and used in the appropriate manner. This process is the path of tantra. In fact, when a thorough and impartial investigation into this philosophy is undertaken, tantra is found to be a universally acceptable and auspicious system. The misleading ideas are found to have no basis, and with the natural passage of time they are bound to meet their end.

To bring forth and expose the jewels of tantra, its fundamental components are expounded upon within this text. For, within the knowledge of tantra lies the answer to succeeding in all challenges of human existence.



2
Origins of Tantra



From the very beginning of their existence on planet earth, humans have been struggling with the situations, conditions and forces created by nature. The form, tools, techniques and methods for contending with the struggle have been changing with the passage of time; however, the ceaseless effort continues. The irrepressible human urge for survival has not been vanquished by the forces of nature. Through every shock received, new vistas of knowledge have been discovered. By testing and observing these discoveries, new solutions have been found to the problems of each and every age. The philosophies of the world are nothing but stories of humanity's eternal struggle. They are the milestones of humanity's free, unbound thinking and the products of the mental churnings of the seers of the various ages. The single purpose behind this thinking and effort has been elimination of pain and attainment of bliss.

What is the source of pain? What is the source of pleasure? Everyone has tried to answer these fundamental questions in their own way. Everyone has their own logic, testimony and explanations to offer. The most acceptable answer has been that manifest nature is the cause of pain and suffering, as

it is destructible and transient. It is subject to change and is relative to time and space; therefore, within it there is no lasting pleasure or happiness. It is like a mirage in the desert. The question arises: how can the mirage be eradicated and the bliss found and attained?

Source of bliss

The root source of pleasure and of bliss is an inaccessible, inconceivable Being to which a name or form cannot be attributed.

The traditional scriptures speak of various types of suffering that are experienced in the span of one's life; from the time in the womb to the death of the body. They describe suffering that arises during birth, diseases of the body and mind, ignorance, old age, natural calamities and 'acts of God' that are beyond the control of man. Even so, as one moves through life, moments of grace can be experienced in the form of peace, happiness and joy. Although those moments are fleeting, and one is soon back on the road of life, marching on through struggles, conflicts, difficulties and expectations, for that moment the grace has descended, and it provides the inspiration to seek liberation, to seek a state of lasting peace and happiness.

The ultimate aim of spirituality is to become one with the higher powers that exist within and without. Regardless of the name attributed to it, most people accept the existence of some power beyond one's knowledge, understanding, perception and awareness which cannot be rationalized. Even an atheist, who does not believe in God, believes in life. The experience of life itself is an indication that there is a life-giving force that exists within, that is beyond the senses and the mind. That life force is called the soul or the spirit and exists both within and without. This power pervades the entire creation and the experiences that each individual has in creation.

The creation constitutes of five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and space. Space is the most subtle and vast. The permutation and combination of the five elements give form and create an experience, yet they are all contained in space. The entire universe, including the stars, planets and galaxies are all contained within space. Similarly, each individual is surrounded by a subtle element which is known as energy, or *shakti*, and that cosmic power is all-pervasive. Inherent within shakti are two aspects: *jnana*, or knowledge and *kriya*, or action. The third aspect of shakti is manifestation and occurs when this cosmic power takes a form. This form is identified as *iccha*, will, or the will of God. If that will does not take a shape or a form, then there is no awareness or concept of God. The attitude 'Let Thy will be done' means to subject oneself to the cosmic will that has materialized a form, the individual. It is that cosmic will which represents the faculty of God.

This concept of God is the universal, single-entity Self which is called the 'Higher Self'. This transcendental Self is beyond all denominations, restrictions and limitations. It is not confined to a particular culture, creed, or religion. Just as the air is not considered Hindu, Christian or Islamic, in the same way, God cannot be labelled. It is all-pervasive. When an individual takes birth, it is this cosmic principle which also takes birth in the form of the spirit, or soul. Therefore, the sages have said that the transcendental nature, the cosmic power, the God element is within, and that it is all-pervasive.

There is life due to the spirit. Unlike the body that is definite, physical and visible, the spirit is not easily recognized. Just beyond the body there is a field of experience, which is the mental field. Nobody has seen the mind, yet people experience the mind in the form of sentiments, thoughts, emotions, ideas and other internal mental processes and activities. The realization that mind exists emerges when an inner process begins and becomes perceptible in the field of awareness. For example, when thoughts enter the field of awareness, one becomes conscious that one is thinking. Emotions and thoughts exist all the time, yet if they do not enter the realm of awareness, one remains unaware of them. The spirit is more subtle than the mental dimension.

Most people are unaware of its presence and therefore cannot experience it. However, it can be experienced.

The experience of bliss is an expression and realization of the spirit. Not sensorial or mental bliss, but total and complete bliss. The nature of the spirit is not a person; it is life expressing itself in a beautiful manner with the possibility of experiencing truth, expansiveness and bliss. It is this inspiration that sustains and generates optimism, hope and passion to seek that which is great and beautiful. Generally, life is endowed with the tamasic and selfish qualities such as greed, lust, passion, anger, frustration and jealousy. Faith in God, spirit or that higher reality generates hope, trust, faith, love and compassion. It reinforces all the soft, sattwic and divine qualities that are lacking in life.

Tantra as a solution

Tantra is a process by which bliss becomes a tangible experience. It is a system, a discipline and a practice dating back to remote antiquity, created in response to the human struggle. In the system of tantra, a universal and comprehensive understanding of the human nature, mind and consciousness is found. Tantra deals with the evolution of human nature from its limited condition to a transcendental, blissful level of knowledge, experience and awareness.

Tantra cannot be easily understood without some basic foundation. To acquire this foundation, one must go back to the beginning of time and civilization to discover what inspired the development of tantra and the appreciation of the spiritual nature of every individual. One must comprehend what initially motivated people to lead life in a better manner. There must be an understanding of the emergence of early human thinking that gave birth to philosophies, lifestyles, and finally, religions, of the world.

Appreciation and reverence for nature

The prehistoric man who first walked on this planet was not a spiritual man. He was not a God-fearing man, nor did he possess self-awareness. He was a person who struggled to survive day and night. The only thought that emerged in his mind was, 'How can I make myself safe and survive?' With the constant danger of being eaten by wild animals and the need to hunt and forage for a living, there was little time to think about anything else. However, through this process of thinking about survival, the human being evolved and, in the course of time, tools and weaponry developed.

Tools and weapons were the discoveries that allowed human evolution to take place. They were developed for the purpose of surviving and of nourishing the body. Many important discoveries, such as fire which was used for protection from wild animals, fall in this category. Once people had tools and weapons, life became easier, more stable and allowed for more free time. This permitted early humans to look around themselves, at nature, mountains, jungles, trees, fruits, flowers, the sun, the moon, the elements. They looked at caves and discovered that a cave could become a shelter. In this manner, the process of search and discovery started. These early people developed an appreciation of the gifts of nature, understanding that nature was providing everything in abundance. This appreciation developed into reverence.

The river became the source of life, of water, nourishment and sustenance. The river also took on an identity and form in relation to one's own life, 'How do I interact with the river? What can the river give me?' Similarly with other aspects of nature: 'How do I interact with the tree? What can the tree give me?' In this manner, the appreciation of nature gave birth to the realization that the source of abundance was unknown: 'How is this fruit growing on the tree? By what power can this fruit become rosy and sweet, when at first it was green and sour?' When these kinds of questions arose in the minds of people, nature took a living form, the form of power.

The ancient people started their social journey with the discovery of fire, tools and weaponry, and their spiritual journey with

the appreciation of nature. At that point, the social life and the appreciative life both went hand in hand. In order to enrich the social life, the appreciation of nature became a part of the culture. Nature took the form of both feminine and masculine powers: the sun took the form of a masculine figure; thunder took the form of a cosmic power; water took the form of a feminine figure. Different ideas were superimposed on nature, which led to the experience of a higher force, a power beyond 'me'. With the identification of that force in all aspects of creation, the idea of many powers came into existence. The sun, moon, wind, water and earth were all considered as powers. This is how deification of these powers took place in the human mind and the first understanding of 'me as an individual' and 'something beyond me' as different, invisible, and transcendental emerged.

Prior to the deification of the elements, philosophy and religion did not exist, only an appreciation of the abundance of nature: 'The sun gives me warmth and light. I appreciate it.' The sun then became one's God: an attractive power that removes the darkness and fear from the environment and from life. In the same manner, rain, thunder and all the elements of nature became part of the cosmic expression that came to be considered divine, as it nurtured the life of the individual.

Development of religion and philosophy

As the early humans began settling and forming an agrarian society, the few who were able to perceive the subtle power in nature became the wise ones of the tribes. They were the seers who communed with nature and the higher forces. The first outcome of this communication with the higher forces was the introduction of laws to bring order, structure and a system to the society that was developing.

It is from these laws and regulations that religion emerged and the regulation of society began. For example, Moses had the vision of a burning bush on Mount Sinai, where God gave him the Ten Commandments. God



gave the commandments; however, these commandments were social, not spiritual. 'Thou shall not steal' is not a spiritual commandment; it is a way of life and a law to regulate a congregation of people who are forming a society, tribe or village. In the name of a higher power, laws were introduced to regulate the behaviour of society.

The original spiritual thought, reverence of a higher force through nature, was maintained in India. Therefore, what emerged here was philosophy, not religion. Due to ignorance, those who do not understand the concept of humanity's interaction with the cosmos and the transcendental dimensions perceive Indian thought as religion, but it is not religion. It is a philosophy, a way of life and a culture. Culture is the positive and integrated expression of the creative abilities, personality and nature of the citizens. Many people think of tantra as being part of a religion, but it is not so. It is a philosophy.

The question arises, what is the ultimate purpose of all these religions, philosophies and schools of thought? There are five main purposes for which spiritual systems have been developed: to discover and establish the connection with a higher power or God; to follow the disciplines such as prayer, meditation, yoga, pilgrimages, etc.; to inspire active social participation to help others; to understand the philosophy and apply the

wisdom to create a better quality of life; and to cultivate unity within all beings. These five purposes form the foundation of most religions and philosophies, and represent the gradual evolution of human thought.

Tantra is the ancient philosophy of humankind which looks at life from various angles. While it traces the development and growth of life, it also follows the thought that humans are individual beings interacting with their environment. If the environment is material in nature, they will interact with it in a material manner. If the environment is spiritual in nature, they will interact with it in a spiritual manner. This behaviour comes naturally, just as when one goes to a temple, church or mosque, there is a natural feeling of reverence and respect. One does not need to say, "Now I have to feel reverence and respect." It comes naturally, as does the appropriate behaviour. One is continuously interacting with the environment around, and that environment is simultaneously material, sensual and sensorial, and spiritual, sattwic, and peaceful. One should cultivate the ability to move among these different dimensions with equipoise; that is the skill of an evolved human being. Tantra has brought to life the possibility of awakening the potential that allows one to interact in a better manner in both the material and spiritual dimensions.

The story of tantra

The story of tantra begins many, many thousands of years ago in a small hamlet in the mountains. In this hamlet lived Shiva and Parvati, a rishi couple who spent their time performing austerities, following spiritual disciplines and learning about different systems of living and the relationship humans have with nature and the cosmos. The rishi couple passed many years in this manner, living a happy, contented and fulfilled life. From time to time, they would leave their hut and visit the hamlets and villages that dotted the countryside by the mountains and the rivers. While travelling, they encountered different people, observed their conditions of living and behaving, their inborn nature and their manner of performance in action. After wandering for some time around many countries, the couple would return to their hut in the mountains and carry on with their austerities, studies and sadhanas.

The question: One morning, after having completed the daily austerities and sadhana, Parvati was looking perplexed. When Shiva asked Parvati what she was thinking about, she posed the question that gave birth to tantra: "Lord, we have been living in this idyllic place with our neighbours, where God has given us everything in abundance. There are grains in the fields, vegetables on the earth, plentiful rain, seasons that change in good time, the trees give fruits and flowers bountifully; there is nothing lacking in our lives. On our journeys around the world we have seen this abundance everywhere and people using the bountiful resources that nature has given to live and grow in life. However, there is something I don't understand. I find that despite lacking nothing in life, the minds of these people are full of tension, strife, suffering, pain, anxiety and difficulty. I don't understand why, despite having everything, there is so much desire and craving in human beings, leaving them dissatisfied with what they have. They constantly desire to acquire something more, which leads to further mental instability, agitation, strife, tension and anxiety. Why do human beings get entangled in this vicious cycle? Is it possible to outgrow, overcome and transcend these difficult situations in life or are we subject to them as a part of life itself?"

Play of energy and consciousness: Lord Shiva's subsequent answers to Parvati's queries propounded the entire philosophy of tantra. He replied, "Your question is valid. Yes, this is the reality of life. Life is full of surprises, and from time to time there are difficulties and distresses that affect the human mind and take from life one's peace and contentment. We have been given everything for our survival and living, but we are always dissatisfied with what we have and desire for something more to make us happy, fulfilled and content. This behaviour



is seen in every individual. If, however, one tries to maintain one's own peace, harmony and balance, then managing the conflicting situations of life becomes easier."

He continued, "The state of discontentment is an expression of the consciousness within each individual; it is an expression of the energy within each individual. In fact, everything is an expression of consciousness, which is personal and universal; everything is an expression of energy, which is personal and universal. What we feel as happiness, contentment, bliss and joy, and what we feel as disturbance, distraction, distress and difficulty are only projections of consciousness and energy. All of what we experience in life is nothing but an expression of that internal consciousness and internal energy."

Parvati asked her husband, "What is the location of consciousness and energy in this creation and in this life?" Shiva answered, "Consciousness and energy are two principles which are eternal and all-pervasive; they pervade every aspect of creation. Every life form and every element is infused with the principles of consciousness and energy. There is nothing perceivable which does not contain consciousness and energy. They are everywhere, and we are their expression and projection."

Parvati posed another question, "If consciousness is in everything and everyone, then it must be within me and you also. Why are you not agitated by situations and circumstances? How are you able to maintain your serenity and peace? How are you able to experience bliss? No matter what you are engaged in, you always find happiness in that. If you are performing austerities, you are happy in that; if you are eating, you are happy in that; if you are fasting, you are happy in that. Why is that consciousness not reacting or responding to situations in you or in me like it is doing in other people? Is there a method, a way by which one can overcome the anxieties, tensions, sufferings and pain that, according to you, are projections of consciousness and energy? Is there a way to explore consciousness and energy and awaken them to experience peace, bliss, equanimity and a higher reality?"

Law of attachment: Lord Shiva answered, "To begin with, know that each individual is moving, acting and living because of consciousness and energy. The flow of these powers, these forces, is moving outwards into the world. When they flow out into the world, they identify with different sense objects: the flower, the mountain, the tree, the hut, the

individual, the boy, the girl, the man, the woman, the donkey, the horse, the camel, the goat, the chicken. When the consciousness is extroverted, all these different objects are identified. As soon as an identification takes place between consciousness and an object, an association is created; a *sambandh*, a link, is created, although they are two different things. The sense object is totally different from my consciousness; however, when I look at an object, a link is created between me and the object. A connection and bond is created between me, my consciousness, and the object. That bond is known as 'attachment', association of the consciousness with an object.

"This attachment begins with the body. I identify with my body. The consciousness identifies with the body. If you look around, everyone is trying to groom the body. Everyone is trying to maintain the body in a healthy state. Therefore, the body is the first attachment in everyone's life.

"The second part of attachment is external, not what is here, but what is around you. When you look around, an association or connection is created and attachment develops. With attachment, desire develops. It is due to desire that people entangle themselves in the world and lose awareness of their inner, peaceful, luminous nature. The entanglement with desire leads to anxiety, strife, problems and difficulties."

Parvati asked again: "Is there a method by which one can find liberation and freedom from the worldly experiences of attachment, desire, suffering, pain, gain and loss?" Shiva answered, "Yes, there is a method by which one can explore and understand the play of consciousness and energy, and attain liberation and freedom. However, before one begins to understand the method, one must understand what the purpose of life is."

Bhukti and mukti: Lord Shiva continued, "The purpose of life is twofold: *bhukti*, which means enjoyment, and *mukti*, which means freedom, liberation. Bhukti and mukti are the two purposes or experiences in life, which are common to all. If one can understand these two, then it becomes easier to explore the realms of consciousness and energy. Bhukti is the association of one's consciousness with senses and sense objects. That is enjoyment. As long as one identifies with the senses and sense objects, one is experiencing bhukti, which is the case with most people. Conversely, mukti is the process of separating the consciousness from the senses and sense objects. It is disconnection from attachments, desires and outward identification. One is in the state of liberation when one disconnects from the senses and sense objects, and becomes centred and focused within oneself. The world does not distract or disturb this focus, as one is connected to the state of inner purity and luminosity. The system which gives the understanding of bhukti and mukti is tantra."

Tantra: Now Parvati asked, "What is tantra? Can you define and describe it to me?" Shiva replied, "Yes. Tantra is a simple process of expanding the consciousness, the horizons of perception, and liberating the energy, the shakti, the power inherent in each and every one. It is the process, system, discipline and practice that can pacify and bring balance to the agitated, identified consciousness. Tantra can create harmony and can take you inwards to experience your own purity and luminosity to counter the dissipated state of consciousness arising due to outward identification."

This discussion between the rishi couple, Shiva and Parvati, brought tantra to the world. Parvati asked why humans suffer so much in life and if there was a method to overcome this suffering. Shiva said, "The path of mukti, liberation, and the path of understanding bhukti, enjoyment, lies in the system and in the process of tantra." Thus, tantra is said to have originated from Lord Shiva, the first yogi and the master of yogis, and tantric treatises and literature have been presented in the form of a dialogue between Lord Shiva and his spiritual consort, Parvati, the representations of cosmic consciousness and cosmic energy.

3

Sadashiva and Yogamaya



Underlying the philosophy of tantra are two basic ideas: Shiva and Shakti. They are not religious figures, but concepts denoting the essence of creation. In the ongoing dialogue between Shiva and Parvati, Parvati said to Shiva, "You have told me that consciousness and energy are the basis of everything. Do they have a name?" Shiva replied, "Yes, consciousness is named after me; it is called Shiva. Energy is named after you; it is called Shakti." Parvati was surprised to hear this, and watching her perplexity, Shiva said, "Do not identify these two concepts with me or you. We are living in this world and we have limited time on this plane. Once the body dies, your identification of me as Shiva will also die and my identification of you as Shakti will also disappear. Therefore, do not think that consciousness and energy are named after us. They are terms used to signify the transcendental reality."

Shiva represents the benevolent, positive, nurturing aspect of consciousness and Shakti represents the movement of energy from subtle to gross and from gross to subtle. *Shiva* means 'the auspicious one' and *Shakti* means the power, the force, the energy inherent in each and every dimension of the visible and

the invisible creation. In the transcendental dimension they are also known as Sadashiva and Yogamaya.

Consciousness and energy

Although the names are different, in reality consciousness and energy are one. They are two functions of the same principle, the same element: the ultimate reality. Cosmic consciousness can be likened to a lame man and cosmic energy to a blind woman who are married to each other. Consciousness cannot walk, but can see, perceive and recognize everything. Shakti cannot see, but has full use of the limbs: she can move, walk, run, jump, and perform all types of activities. In order to coexist, they must help each other. Just as the blind and the lame person can coexist by helping and supporting each other, Shiva and Shakti coexist by helping and supporting each other in creation.

Shakti is an integral part of the Shiva state. If Shiva is the sun, then Shakti is its rays. The sun is experienced through its rays and luminosity. These are the forms of Shakti. Both are inseparable from each other. Shiva is complete in itself and Shakti is its manifestation. The fire manifests only if a flammable substance is available. Like fire and fuel, creation and destruction are the consequence of mutual play between Shiva and Shakti.

The Shiva-Shakti interaction can also be likened to the body and its strength. One has the strength to move a bed or pick up a child; one can do many things with the strength of the body. That strength is not separate from the body; it is inherent. It comes into play when the situation demands it, otherwise it is simply an integral part of the physical structure. In the same manner, Shakti is an integral form of Shiva and manifests when Shiva needs to create, sustain and destroy.

According to tantra, Shiva is the passive principle and Shakti is the active principle in the interplay between the two. It is through the strength of Shakti that Shiva is able to divide itself into many different forms in the manifest universe. The gene of Shiva is inherent in human beings as consciousness, the faculty that enables one to transcend the lower natures of creation. The gene of Shakti is energy: the body strength, which is physical; the willpower, which is mental; the expansiveness of the heart, or the emotions; and the desire to transcend the limitations of the self, which is in the spirit. In the tantric tradition, rich descriptions are found that attempt to convey the depth and breadth of the principles of Shiva, the cosmic consciousness, and Shakti, the cosmic energy, the two dimensions of the ultimate reality. These two principles each have particular attributes and roles. To fully comprehend the influence of Shiva and Shakti in both the transcendental and manifest dimensions, these must be identified and understood.

SADASHIVA

The higher consciousness is denoted by the word 'Sadashiva' in the tantric literatures. *Sadashiva* means permanently auspicious and benevolent. This is the nature of consciousness; it is always benevolent and it is always auspicious. It is infused with the *Shiva tattwa*, that element of consciousness which is eternally auspicious in both the physical and transcendental realms. With the right application of consciousness and the faculties of perception and knowledge, the gross nature of life and the mind can be transcended. When this takes place, the darkness surrounding life is removed and everything becomes bright. The nescience of life disappears and luminosity sets in, elevating the consciousness with wisdom. This wisdom transforms the behaviour of the mind and the senses.

Consciousness is also known as chaitanyata. *Chaitanyata* means the faculty of self-awareness. I become aware of myself and once I become aware of myself, I become aware of life, of the process of living, experiencing, being, and becoming. That is the nature of consciousness: self-aware and observant, sajag and drashta. *Sajag* means self-aware, 'I am', 'I exist', and *drashta* means the observer. With that faculty

of awareness I can observe everything: things that happen within me and things that happen around me.

Chaitanyata is said to be infinite; there is no measurement of consciousness, where it begins or where it ends. In the Vedas, consciousness has been defined as *Kham Brahman*, which means that the higher reality is as all-pervasive as space. *Kham* means space and *Brahman* means the higher reality; the evolving, expanding, self-aware consciousness. Consciousness is not space, but it is all-pervasive and infinite like space. Space cannot be measured. Where does it begin? Where does it end? How many galaxies does it contain? How many universes exist in deep space? What is the dimension of space? Nobody knows. Therefore, one word has been used to define it: infinite.

Brahman is all-pervasive, all-expansive like space. It is beyond the experience of time and object; it is an eternal presence, and in that eternal presence are the powers of omniscience, knowledge of all things; omnipotence, unlimited power; and omnipresence, the quality of being present everywhere at the same time.

The nature of Sadashiva or Brahman, this eternal presence, has three aspects. The first is *sat*, truth; in the transcendental state, there is no duplicity and there is no other experience except that of being one undivided self. Thus, being one undivided self represents the awareness and experience of truth, 'I am what I am'. The second aspect of consciousness is *chit*, the expansive nature. The third aspect is *ananda*, bliss and absolute fulfilment, absolute contentment and absolute beatitude. Therefore, one of the names by which the higher consciousness is recognized is *satchidananda*, which represents the truthful, expansive, blissful nature of the higher consciousness. The higher level is known as 'para' or 'param'. *Para* means transcendental and *param* means great, the highest. Sadashiva at that level is also Paramatma. *Atma* means the spirit, the essence of life, thus *Paramatma* is the cosmic, Supreme Self, the Soul of the entire universe. That is the nature of Sadashiva.



Five roles of Sadashiva

In the transcendental realm of consciousness, Sadashiva fulfils five different roles:

1. *Srishti* or creation*:* The first role of Sadashiva is that of creator; consciousness can think of what to create. What is needed prior to creation? A plan, a blueprint. Before anything is manufactured, such as a machine, car or bicycle, a blueprint is required. Only when one is satisfied with the blueprint will the item go into production. For example, an architect designs a building by drawing up a building plan. He does not construct the building. He only creates the design; the construction contractor is another agent.

In the same manner, Sadashiva is the creator and has the faculty of planning. It can evoke a particular emotion within itself and does that in order to make a plan. Take another example. You are sitting in meditation and a thought flashes, 'I want to design this type of a table.' Suddenly the image, a concept of that table, is seen in meditation. You open the eyes, get a pen and paper, and make a sketch of the table. There is activity. Therefore, Shiva is not only passive, but must also become active in order for the plan to be drawn up and the blueprint made. Thus, the first function of the higher consciousness is to become the creator. As it is self-aware, the idea of creation comes first: *Ekoham bahusyamah* - "I am one, let me become many."

2. *Sthiti* or maintenance: The second function of Sadashiva is as *palankarta*, the

maintainer, sustaining that which has been created. Everything that is created needs to be maintained by following a specific plan. When a body is created, it must be maintained. When a building is created, it must be maintained. When a new car is bought, a maintenance manual comes with it providing instructions for its care: after so many kilometres change the oil, replace the wheels, check the brake fluid, tighten the screws, etc. The maintenance manual must be followed to ensure that the car functions properly.

It is a natural tendency to maintain the good. If one possesses something nice, there is a desire to maintain it, to preserve and protect it. However, to maintain what has been created involves conscious planning. In the transcendental realm, Sadashiva creates a perfect maintenance plan to sustain creation.

3. *Sanghar* or transformation: Whatever is created and maintained has a lifespan, an expiry date. When something reaches the end of its usefulness, change is automatic and natural. For example, when the body is no longer able to survive and sustain life in this dimension, it expires. As long as the body is able to survive and sustain the life-force, it remains alive. When it is unable to sustain the life-force, it dies. The date of departure is predetermined; no one can live beyond that date. When the expiry date of a created entity arrives, a change must take place in its present form. That transformation is called sanghar. Thus, destruction and transformation is the third aspect of Sadashiva.

4. *Tirobhava* or diversionary tactics: The purpose of life, according to Swami Satyananda, is to cultivate spiritual awareness. Spiritual awareness ultimately takes one to the experience of the highest consciousness, in whatever form it takes. It can happen at any moment and at any given time. Sadashiva creates diversionary tactics to stop this ascent of the individual to its source. Much like a magician, Shiva is showing one magic: the attention is diverted to one hand, but what is happening with the other hand is not known. Then Shiva opens the hidden hand and something disappears or appears. A magician diverts the attention from the actual change that is happening. This is the meaning of the word 'tirobhava', diversion of attention. Tirobhava is a diversionary tactic to keep one engaged in the experience of life, and not separate from life. If one becomes separate from life, free from life, then one attains Shivahood, one attains the experience of the transcendental nature. While one is engaged and involved in the cycle of birth and death, one cannot come close to one's essential nature.

Love, hate, peace, compassion, sympathy, understanding, jealousy, greed, all these experiences arise to divert the focus of the individual's mind when attempting to realize the highest consciousness within. The scriptures say: *Kamah krodhascha lobhascha dehe tishthanti taskara*, which means that the negative traits in life are like thieves residing in the body. What do they steal? *Jnanaratnopaharaya* – "They steal the jewel of knowledge." When there is freedom from all negative traits, the jewel of knowledge can be applied.

At the time of death, the pranas leaving the body are diverted by Shiva. It is the pranas, contained in the body, which are responsible for life. The individual self, the individual consciousness, is actually a part of the supreme consciousness; spirit is pure and spirit is a part of Shiva. Therefore, when pranas ascend at the time of death, they are rising with the spirit. If the pranas are able to go up with spirit, there is *moksha*, liberation, freedom. At that moment, Shiva intervenes and blows the pranas back to the realm of Prakriti. When he blows the pranas away, instead of rising upwards, they go sideways, back into the realm of Prakriti; into another womb, into another life, into another body. The purpose of the use of diversionary tactics is to keep the eternal *lila*, the divine play, of creation going.

5. *Anugraha* or grace: When he is not using diversionary tactics, Sadashiva showers his grace. While he is using the play of diversionary tactics, there is entanglement in the world of

imagination, fantasy, senses and sense objects. This gives rise to all the identifications one has in life, whether desire, dislike, rejection, hate, love, and so on. Anugraha, grace, is freedom from the attractions, attachments and afflictions of the world. It allows for the ascent to the Shiva state. This is where Sadashiva says, "Now you can reach me. Come to my home."

Experiencing Sadashiva

When Sadashiva associates with his counterpart, Shakti, he takes on a different role. From infinite he becomes finite. As a finite experience, awareness, and consciousness, he begins to interact with the material world created by Shakti. In the world, consciousness is perceived in four forms: the conscious faculty, the subconscious, the unconscious and the superconscious, which are also known as *jagrat*, the waking state, *swapna*, the dreaming state, *sushupti*, the sleeping state, and *turiya*, the internally aware state.

In each state, consciousness adopts a different medium to experience itself and the world. In the waking state, the senses become the medium, the instruments through which consciousness experiences the world and interacts with the world. In the dreaming state, the mind becomes the medium through which consciousness can experience itself and create its own world and images within. In the deep sleep state, consciousness becomes free from the grip of the senses and sense objects and goes beyond time and object awareness. One may sleep for several hours, but one cannot know how much time has passed in the state of sleep due to the lack of body consciousness, place consciousness and time consciousness. The consciousness is contained in its own nature. In the turiya state, the awareness emerges again; however, that awareness is not only of the senses or sense objects, but of everything, the entirety.

One can experience the Shiva nature within oneself in these four ways. The process and path of transformation in tantra work with this consciousness. The effort is to sublimate



the gross, material and sensorial experiences of consciousness into divine qualities, into the experience of Sadashiva.

YOGAMAYA

Just as one can experience Sadashiva in two dimensions, transcendental and gross, in the same manner, energy is also experienced in two dimensions, the transcendental and the gross. In the transcendental dimension, energy is known as Yogamaya.

There are two aspects of the cosmic Shakti that are defined in the name Yogamaya. *Yoga* represents the process of bringing together, the process of union, bringing one closer to the source, the experience of the transcendental nature. *Maya* represents the process of separation, taking one away from the source; the power that can take one away from this experience and involve one in some other activity, mood and dimension. Thus, the word *Yogamaya* means a faculty that can bring one closer to the source and that can take one away from the source; both possibilities exist in that Shakti.

Once the aspect of maya is understood, it is easy to understand the aspect of yoga. As maya, Shakti has the ability to actualize Shiva's blueprints, thus maya becomes the catalyst in following the mandates of Shiva. By following the mandate of Shiva, the transcendental consciousness, Shakti is able to create through Yogamaya. All the worlds, universes, galaxies, the manifest dimension, the invisible dimension, the subtle dimension, the elements, the body, and the different types of life forms are created through Yogamaya. Shakti manifests and actualizes the plan that has been made by Shiva. Some people also call this power Adishakti; *Adi* meaning the primordial, the first, the eternal. Thus, *Adishakti* is the primordial, the first power of creation.

Shakti, in the form of maya, can also create illusions, and maya is generally translated as illusion. The word 'maya' actually comes from the root *ma*, which means 'measurable'. Maya in this context means something that can be measured, that is limited, and that cuts 'I' from 'this' and 'this' from 'I', creating a complete separation. Another definition of maya is the power that deludes; everyone is in a state of delusion while under the influence of maya.

All the saints, masters and prophets have said, "Connect with your spirit." Everyone listens to them and says, "Yes, wonderful." However, how many are able to connect with the spirit? There is a mass delusion and much greater identification with the body and mind than with the spirit. Identification takes place through the senses, sense experiences and expressions, and logical comprehension. How can the spirit be understood logically? Can the feeling of being in love be explained logically or intellectually? It can only be known through experience.

In the eternal Sadashiva state, where everything is in balance and harmony, one finds omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. Energy waves are travelling and continue to travel from one end of the universe to the other. If space is infinite, then the energy, waves and light are also travelling infinitely. Now imagine that maya arrives. One of the qualities of maya is the ability to reflect back that which is shown to it. In this way, maya is like a mirror. When maya is placed in any point of the space, what will happen? The waves that were travelling infinitely will now bounce back; maya blocks this infinite flow, creating ripples in it. Her dimension opens up. This is the dimension where maya begins to function as something that can be measured, and when maya becomes active, creation takes place.

This example of the mirror illustrates the reflective power of Shakti. It can only reflect the things that it encounters. Similarly, as beings are manifested through maya, they contain this reflective quality as well. Through the faculties of consciousness: buddhi, ahamkara and manas, and the organs of perception and action, these beings can project their experiences and encounters of life, thus becoming mirrors themselves. Now, when these two mirrors, maya and the individual, are placed in endless time, in endless consciousness, the waves begin to bounce back and forth between the mirrors, and maya becomes predominant. Her bonds have strengthened and the individual, the pashu, can only experience life and the self through the reflection of maya. In this manner, the Shiva tattwa, the ultimate reality, is further hidden and the bondage and delusion in the realm of maya thickens.

In the interaction between Yogamaya and Sadashiva, when Yogamaya becomes active, the spontaneous and natural flow of Sadashiva is contained and defined. Once consciousness is defined, creation takes place. Hence, maya is called illusion because it is not giving the actual glimpse of the real condition of consciousness or of energy; it is only giving a reflection. At the same time, this Shakti is the catalyst to actualize the blueprint created by Sadashiva so that creation can take place. There is no difference between Shiva and Shakti; they are not two distinct personalities; they are the two sides of the same coin and are integrated with each other.

Five powers of Yogamaya

The tantric tradition says that there are five aspects of the illusive power of Shakti, which restrict the universality of consciousness. Just as Sadashiva has five functions, Yogamaya also has five aspects, called kanchukas (also see Section 1, Chapter 4). All these aspects play a major role in one's life experiences and life expressions:

1. *Kalaa* or expression: Kalaa also means action or performance and it is the first kanchuka. Kalaa becomes creative expression when it is combined with yoga and it becomes a limiting expression when it is joined with maya. When expression takes place in the manifest dimension, that expression reduces the identification with universal awareness to a physical awareness, which in turn limits the creativity and effulgence of universal consciousness to make it more usable in material life.

Electricity, for example, is in a very high voltage at its source, the plant where it is generated. In order for this electricity to become useful, it must go through different transformers so that the 11,000 KVA can become a safe 220 volts or 110 volts and used in the home. In the same manner, kalaa, the individual expression, limits the potency and the expression of the universal consciousness to what is contained, confined and experienced by the mind. When maya uses this faculty of kalaa, it is to limit the creative expression, to limit the power of action. Ultimately, it curtails the freedom of action.

Why does maya curtail or limit any action? It does so in order to give an experience of life. To experience life, one cannot have a universal, non-dual mind; rather, an independent, individual mind is required. Thus, the universal possibilities of creative action are limited so that the actions can be performed by the individual using the senses and other agencies, giving rise to the experiences of life.

Consciousness has infinite possibilities and potential. However, when the soul is born into this dimension, there is only a partial activation



of its potential; the full potential is not active. According to science, only about ten percent of the brain is active at any given time and the remaining ninety percent remains in a state of dormancy. Imagine the possibilities if the remaining ninety percent of the brain faculty is awakened!

2. *Vidya* or knowledge: 'Vidya' means to know, to realize. When vidya is used by maya, it is to limit the omniscience of the individual, to reduce the knowledge of consciousness when the consciousness is interacting in the world. Hence, vidya under the power of maya is the veiling power of the omniscience of consciousness. One will not perceive, know or realize the knowledge that lies within. Thus, one becomes dependent on outer inputs in the absence of that awareness. When one identifies with the material knowledge, with the material vidya, the awareness of omniscience is lost.

Vidya can be perceived in two ways, *para vidya* and *apara vidya*, higher knowledge and lower knowledge. Higher knowledge is the knowledge of the transcendental, and lower knowledge is the material knowledge. With the creative potential limited, the knowledge acquired is material or sensorial. This knowledge reduces the quality of omniscience,

adding another binding on the soul. Therefore, vidya becomes a limiting faculty.

When the same vidya is supported by yoga, it enlarges and expands the area of knowledge. Yoga is the expansive factor while maya is the limiting factor. The purpose of yoga is to increase one's knowledge, so that eventually, one begins to experience the higher knowledge through the application of yoga. In this material dimension, vidya makes one aware of the personal limitations and the conditions surrounding the individual, while for those who are free from the influences of the material dimension, vidya leads to a greater understanding of the self. Therefore, vidya can both condition into and free one from material life.

3. *Raga* or attraction: When maya is using the power of raga, it is connecting one to the sense objects through the senses, creating attachment, association and identification with something else. A flower, a person, a building, anything one gazes upon can create an attachment. Raga represents the sense of incompleteness, as it is an outcome of a desire, and the emergence of desire always indicates a lack of something in life. When there is a perceived lack of something in life, the desire surfaces to attain it and with that desire and attachment, raga arises. Attachment is there to seek pleasure from that association, and pleasure from association becomes the cause of attachment. It is a very difficult to be free of this cycle. All this is maya, which causes personal identification. When yoga uses raga, it diverts the attention from the gross nature to the divine nature of the individual. Thus, when raga is in maya, desire leads to bondage, and when raga is in yoga, desire leads to a deeper, closer and personal identification with the inner spirit.

4. *Kaala* or time: The fourth limiting aspect of Shakti is the factor which gives the realization of the impermanence of life, of impermanent conditions in life, of time which one cannot control. Time is eternal and infinite; however, when it becomes subject to maya it is defined as past, present and future, rather than one continuous state of experience. As maya, the infinite time is converted to a quantity of time that can be experienced. The quantities of time that one experiences in this life between birth to death – the hours, days, weeks, months, years and decades – this concept of time from seconds onwards is the limited time perceived due to the influence of maya. Instead of seeing one stream of time, it is experienced in little pieces and fractions. When kaala is experienced in yoga, time becomes infinite and loses its limitations, its measure. In the higher stages of yoga, the division of past, present and future does not exist; everything becomes one perception, one thought, one glimpse.

5. *Niyati* or the law of restriction: Niyati is often defined as fate, but from the tantric perspective, niyati is the law of restriction. Niyati restricts the expressions and experiences of the pure soul to those defined by the samskaras and karmas that have accumulated over the course of time. When this restriction sets in, one becomes subject to time, space, object and causality. That becomes the path one walks, the destined path, the determined path. That is how niyati is interpreted as destiny.

Niyati restricts the expression of life and sets a particular pattern for the individual to express. The samskaras and karmas create a mosaic which decides the direction one will walk in a particular lifetime. Thus, niyati is the power of restriction ensuring that one functions and lives in one dimension, in one time, and makes all-pervasiveness and omnipresence no longer possible.

These are the five *kanchukas*, the functions or the powers of maya when Shakti becomes the agent responsible for creation, which engross the individual, conditioned being.

With the separation of Shiva and Shakti, the transcendental nature is limited to suffering the pleasures and pains of the material dimension. It is for the purpose of releasing this inherent nature from the bonds of maya that Shiva has propounded the philosophy of tantra to Parvati. When the individual being has the urge to move from the realm of maya, tantra becomes the vehicle for its liberation.

4

Tantric Concept of Creation



How have beings come into existence from the state of nonbeing? How can the unmanifest manifest itself? What is the sequence? What is the procedure? What transformations have taken place from nothingness into millions of forms, into millions of shapes, into millions of identities? Various schools of thought, world traditions and spiritual lineages have their own concepts of creation that answer these fundamental questions.

Tantra does not view creation as the emergence of planets, galaxies, and stars in the physical sense only. Creation is viewed as the creation of sentient life, and an insentient life form is a stepping stone to sentient experience. For example, first earth was created as an insentient form, and then it became the container and the home for sentient beings. In this manner, creation is not the emergence of an object, but the emergence of life, for it is life that experiences creation. According to the permutation and combination of the elements of creation, different levels of sentience emerge, from a single-cell amoeba to animals to the human form. Evolution of sentience until it becomes universal is, in fact, the aim of tantra.

Within tantra, each sect explains the process of creation using its own terminology and enumeration; however, the basic principle remains the same. From the unified, unmanifest

Supreme Element, manifestation takes place through a sequential process of multiplication, each level becoming grosser and denser than the one before it until the sentient being emerges. According to Shaiva and Shakta tantra, from the cosmic state of non-existence, thirty-six *tattwas*, or elements, emerge. These tattwas and their combinations and permutations represent the sequence of growth and development of life, of the non-being coming into being. These thirty-six tattwas will be explained here.

Paramshiva: the ultimate reality

The tantras state that the ultimate reality is the union of *Paramshiva*, the transcendental Shiva or cosmic consciousness, and *Paramshakti*, the transcendental Shakti or cosmic energy. It is a state of equipoise and peace. In the transcendental state, Shiva is in perfect samadhi, balance and harmony. There is no agitation or movement, only pure *shanti*, peace. That shanti is known as *samyavastha*, the state of bliss, peace, balance and harmony; the state of stillness before manifestation or creation. In that state known as Paramshiva, Shakti exists within Shiva as reflective consciousness and the power to create.

There is an image of Shiva in which he is depicted as half-male and half-female, known as *Ardhanarishwara*, which represents this state of union. The ultimate reality is neither masculine nor feminine; however, the half-female principle represents Shakti, and the half-male principle represents Shiva. They are in union; the two halves are one and there is no difference or separation between the two, illustrating the ultimate state or reality of oneness as perceived by tantra.

Shiva is also known as prakasha, and Shakti is known as vimarsha. *Prakasha* means the light of consciousness. It is luminosity, the state when consciousness becomes aware and the conscious faculty is in its full potential. *Vimarsha* means experience and any experience that one has in life is because of luminosity of the senses and mind. Thus, luminosity and experience, prakasha and vimarsha, both go hand in hand. In the sunlight, each and every object can be seen. In the dark, however, although the same objects are present, they cannot be seen; only blackness can be seen. In the light of the senses and the mind, the world can be perceived, and when the light leaves the senses and the mind, the world does not exist. Hence, consciousness is known as prakasha, luminosity of life, and vimarsha is the experience had when living in that light and consciousness. It is only due to the presence of consciousness that one can have other experiences. The reverse is not true; the experiences of the senses and the mind do not give an awareness of the luminosity of consciousness. However, the luminosity of consciousness gives the awareness of the potential of the senses and the mind.

Where luminosity and experience are contained as one, where Shiva and Shakti are one, where there is total fusion: that is the ultimate reality according to tantra. In this reality, no manifest object exists, only nothingness, *shoonyata*, the void state of transcendental consciousness. In this nothingness, however, the basic potency of creation lies in the Shakti of the Supreme; just as the colourful plumes of a bird lie as mere potency in the plasma of an egg. With birth and creation, all the variety of colours, shapes and sizes contained within the potency are seen.

It can also be said that Shakti is the mirror and contains the power of reflection. She reflects the image of consciousness back to consciousness. When Shiva sees his own reflection in this mirror of Shakti, he's in bliss, ananda, samyavastha. When Shakti turns around and the mirror faces outside, Shiva is unable to see himself, and the state of ananda is gone. Shakti then becomes active in creation of the world and life. Shakti has reflective ability; she can reflect the nature of Shiva and the nature without Shiva. Therefore, the transcendental state is the state of perfect harmony and balance; the state where consciousness and energy remain in harmony with each other. This state is also known as

the 'undivided reality', that in which *aham*, 'I', does not exist and *idam*, 'this', does not exist. In manifest creation it is always aham and idam, 'I' and 'this'; there is always a separation. In the state of transcendence, the state of Paramshiva, there is no 'I' and no 'this', no aham and no idam; Shakti and Shiva are in union.

Five powers of Paramshiva

Paramshiva has five major potencies or powers: chit, ananda, iccha, jnana, and kriya. These five potencies remain inherent in the transcendental state with Shiva and Shakti. They are the expressions of Shakti in the state of peace, and they become the power of the Shiva nature when required for creation.

1. *Chit*: This is the power of self-revelation. Prakasha is the aspect of self-revelation which illuminates everything. *Chitshakti* is the power of self-revelation by which the Supreme Being expresses and reveals itself. It is also known as prakasha, luminosity.

2. *Ananda*: The second potency is *ananda*, the state of absolute bliss. The Supreme Artist pours out the delight of splendour into creation; that is the bliss, the natural, spontaneous ananda. This absolute bliss is a natural expression of the Paramshiva nature, like the morning sunrise in beautiful colours. Imagine the sky filled with different colours and hues of orange, red, blue, white and pink; it is intoxicating to watch that beautiful array of colours in the sky. That is ananda, something which is expressing naturally, as its nature is to be that.

3. *Iccha*: The third potency of Paramshiva is iccha, the will or *icchashakti*, the power of will. Within will there is an inherent desire. A sunflower is a good example of this. It is always fully open and turned towards the sun. As the sun travels from the east to the west, the sunflower also turns from the east to the west, as a consequence of an inherent desire. Icchashakti, the power of desire, is inherent in the Shiva tattwa in an unmanifest but well-established form.

4. *Jnana*: Jnana is the power of knowing and, in this context, implies eternal knowledge or



omniscience rather than intellect. For example, the possibility of a tree is inherent in a seed, provided that all the necessary conditions pertaining to land, water, fertilizer, sunlight, and so on, are favourable. If any of these conditions are not favourable, the seed will not sprout. This state signifies omniscience, a state of self-realization where there is no effort involved.

5. *Kriya*: In relation to Paramshiva, kriya does not mean action. It is the power of assuming or adopting a form and the process undergone to assume that form is known as kriya. The state of kriya includes the five different but correlated states of creation, preservation, dissolution, prevention and bestowal of grace (see Section 1, Chapter 3).

The urge to create

The union of Shiva and Shakti leads to the experience of the highest in life, the Paramshiva.

Conversely, the separation of Shiva and Shakti leads to the experience of the world and the pleasures and pains of the world. In tantra, and more specifically in kundalini yoga, another representation of the union of Shiva and Shakti is the awakening of kundalini. Here, kundalini represents Adishakti, and Adishakti is lying dormant in mooladhara whereas Sadashiva is established in sahasrara. According to kundalini yoga, the kundalini power has to awaken and travel from mooladhara to sahasrara to unite with Sadashiva, at which point duality disappears. When Shakti is separate from Shiva, duality emerges, and duality is creation. Adishakti and Sadashiva are one; they are not two different entities. Just as the strength in the body is contained in the muscles and can manifest when required, in the same manner, Shakti is an integral part of Shiva. Only when the desire, thought, idea or ripple arises in the Supreme Consciousness can that ripple be identified as Shakti potential. The ripple that arises in the field of Supreme Consciousness is the desire to multiply, to become many, from the state of oneness. Once this ripple arises from the idea 'I am one, let me divide myself and become many', the Shakti principle becomes active.

When the ripple arises in the passive field of Paramshiva consciousness, it indicates a movement, the surge of an idea. That surge indicates the emergence of Shakti, and as Shiva had the urge to become many, Shakti is now endowed with icchashakti as willpower and jnanashakti as knowledge of creation. Thus, the desire of Shiva becomes willpower in Shakti, the determination to act, and the omniscience of Shiva becomes knowledge in Shakti. Therefore, the first attribute of Shakti is icchashakti, the power of will and the second attribute of Shakti is *jnanashakti*, the power of knowledge and knowing. The third principle, *kriyashakti*, the power of action and assuming a form, is inherent in Shakti as that is the nature of Shakti itself. Shakti is only visible when there is action; Shakti is dissipated when there is no action. The inherent nature of Adishakti is kriyashakti; it has the power to act. Icchashakti and jnanashakti arise from the surge in Shiva consciousness, and with kriyashakti, these three become the strengths of Shakti's creative functions. These functions become active once Shakti is endowed with all three attributes; icchashakti, jnanashakti, and kriyashakti, enabling her to take her own action, independent of the Shiva tattwa.

Blueprints of creation are made by Shiva, and Shakti actualizes these plans. Hence creation comes forth, from causal to subtle to gross. From the transcendental state, the first emergence is of the causal elements. Creation indicates that the infinite source of energy and the infinite source of consciousness are reduced down and contained in one idea, one experience, just as an enormous voltage of electricity is transformed from the generating station to a usable voltage that can be utilized, for instance, to operate a light bulb in the home.

Elements of creation

Tantra holds the philosophy that a total of thirty-six tattwas, combined from pure, pure-impure and impure elements, comprise the complete transformation from the unmanifest to manifest state, from the universal experience to individual experience. Tattwa literally means 'thatness', 'truth' or 'reality', that is, the true principle or essence from which each stage is derived. Through this process, creation undergoes two phases: *shuddha*, pure, and *ashuddha*, impure creation.

Creation is the first form of kriya. At the time of creation all the forces of Shiva and Shakti, the five potencies which rest in absolute harmony, must undergo some agitation of motion and movement. When a movement occurs within this state of harmony and balance, the *shuddha tattwas*, the pure elements, are first to appear. The shuddha tattwas are considered to be a product of Shiva's desire and composed of *vidya*, knowledge. Therefore, pure creation emerges from knowledge. These pure elements indicate a state of universal experience, and attainment of this state is the aim of tantra.

Impure creation takes place when the pure tattwas merge with the material or manifest world after further transformations. Once this occurs, the experience is of duality and becomes an individual experience, and the universal awareness is clouded. This process highlights the nature of creation, which according to tantra, is a process of becoming gross, material and impure from the transcendental purity. For example, when rivers come out of the glacier there is no difference in the qualities of their water, all are equally sweet. Creation is also like this. Streams come from the endless, unlimited state and only then do they become limited. From the source, these streams begin with the same qualities and tattwas. As the rivers move outwards and traverse long distances, their waters acquire salinity from the soil and the air. Ultimately, the waters of the rivers become saline and impure, yet they retain the essence of purity, having been born from the unlimited source.

The five pure elements

From Paramshiva, the indefinable unmanifest reality, the shuddha tattwas are the first to emerge. These pure elements, the first five of the thirty-six elements of creation, are: Shiva, Shakti, Sadashiva or Sadakhya, Ishwara and Sadvidya. The terms Shiva, Shakti, vidya, etc.



have been previously introduced. Now, the specific qualities of these pure tattwas must be understood in order to fully comprehend the process of creation according to tantra.

1. *Shiva*: Shiva becomes a pure element himself, and represents the passive consciousness of aham, 'I'. It is only pure aham; the existence and consciousness of 'I'. Knowledge, desire and action remain inherent in the Shiva tattwa, as this tattwa is stable, static and passive.

2. *Shakti*: The second tattwa is the Shakti tattwa as idam, 'this'. The shakti of Shiva, which was resting within the integrated form, now separates from Shiva with the intent to create. Here, the separation or polarization of aham and idam takes place: 'I' and 'this', or 'I' and 'am', creating a ripple upon the surface of the superconsciousness. The shuddha tattwa with the intent to create is Shakti.

3. *Sadashiva* or *Sadakhya*: This tattwa correlates to the emergence of the power of will, or icchashakti, as it is the will to affirm the idam. Sadashiva is the will to affirm 'this', the presence, the existence. Sadakhya is composed of two root words: *sat* or *sad* means 'truth', and *akhya* means 'name'. Therefore the word *sadakhya* means 'true name'. 'Sat' is the realization of 'I am this'. This is 'sat', the identity of truth and the realization of the individual presence, the individual existence.

4. *Ishwara* or *aishwarya* is connected to the power of knowledge, or jnanashakti. Due to its connection with knowledge, 'I am this' becomes more defined: and turns into, 'This I am'. There is a greater identification and awareness with the form of purity. It is a deeper identification, more intense identification; however, the identification is still of omnipotence and omnipresence, despite being deified and called *Ishwara*, or 'God'. There is no loss of purity. *Ishwaratva*, the omniscience and omnipresence within individual awareness, continues.

5. *Sadvidya*: In Sadvidya, the power of action or kriyashakti is prominent and where the true relation of things is experienced. How does one connect to the Higher Self? The answer lies in

Sadvidya; with this tattwa, the true relationship and connection with the Higher Self is realized. It means realizing the deeper connection and the true relation of things.

These are the first five elements to emerge, and they are purely cosmic and universal in nature. The body that is created from the pure tattwas is the body of the soul, of light, and in this form the soul has been given two names: *Vidyeshwara*, lord of knowledge; and *Ananta*, eternal or endless. All the attributes or qualities of the Paramshiva tattwa are present in this body. In this form, the soul is a self-contained, self-fulfilled and self-inherent unit, and is capable of acting independently. As the nature of this soul is that of light, it is eternal; it is indestructible. Only at the time of *pralaya* or dissolution is it transformed back into the Paramshiva tattwa.

Vidyeshwaras are the units of knowledge, desire and action which are still under the control of Shiva. Shiva's control extends only up to this pure creation. Thereafter, Shakti takes over fully. Due to their inherent attributes, qualities and power, Vidyeshwaras acquire a manifest state with definite names, forms and attributes or qualities. Therefore, Shiva, Shakti, Sadakhya, Ishwara and Sadvidya are the pure, the shuddha elements in creation which lead to a universal experience. It is this universal experience that is the aim of tantra; from this material, individual experience, which is the final stage of creation, the soul must make the effort to return to the universal experience. To achieve this, one must strive from the manifest dimension to become Shiva, to become Shakti, to become Sadakhya, Ishwara and Sadvidya. This is the pathway to re-experience the transcendental, and as one moves into this high realm of experience from the limited dimension, a universal awareness develops.

Before creation, in the unmanifest dimension of Paramshiva, Shiva and Shakti rest in a state of union and harmony, as peaceful as a beautiful, tranquil lake. In this state there is no duality between them. Together they assume the pure idea of 'I' and are inherent within each other. When, from this harmony, Shiva has the urge to multiply, this urge awakens the polarizing, separating 'this' or 'am' element of Shakti. This first awakening between the 'I' of Shiva and the 'this' or 'am' of Shakti agitates the harmony of their unity, and from this agitation, the Sadakhya tattwa is stimulated. This Sadakhya tattwa, Shakti's power of will which is still inherent within Shiva, deepens the identification that 'I am this', and what emerges from this wilful identification of 'being' is the first vibration, the first *spandan* of manifest creation.

In the *Shiva Purana* it is said that before Shiva revealed himself in the mind of the sages, the sages heard the sound *Om*. It is from this sound *Om* that Shiva emerged and revealed himself. It is from here that creation begins, through the first vibration of *Om*. Therefore, *Om* represents the first sound, the first vibration of the initial, primordial urge to create.

Following and strengthening this initial vibration of Sadakhya is the Ishwara tattwa, which relates to knowledge, jnanashakti. Before Shakti can begin any further process of creation, she must have knowledge. This fourth tattwa awakens the knowledge of the truth, and the idea 'I am this' becomes solidified into 'this I am'. Here, Shakti realizes her true state, which is of kriyashakti, the power of creation, and she sees herself as independent from Shiva. Thus, it is at this stage that Shakti takes over fully, and through her power of action, the next group of elements emerge and manifest creation begins. This next group to emerge are the shuddha-ashuddha tattwas, the pure-impure elements.

The seven pure-impure elements

In the next stage of evolution, Vidyeshwara, the lord of knowledge or body of light, comes into contact with Mahamaya, a manifestation of Shakti. Through maya, Vidyeshwara undergoes gross transformations by the six *shuddha-ashuddha tattwas*, the pure-impure elements which emerge after the five pure tattwas. These shuddha-ashuddha tattwas limit the soul to the individual experience, which begins with maya, the sixth element. In this context, *maya* means

something that can be measured, something that is limited and limits, something that cuts 'I' from 'this' and 'this' from 'I'. Thus, at this stage, a separation begins in the identification or awareness of being the transcendental, universal form.

In tantra, Mahamaya has been mentioned as the main cause of transformation rather than Shakti. Why? What differentiates Shakti from Maya? Shakti is perpetual, eternal and conscious, and there is no difference between Shakti and Shiva. Shakti identifies completely with Shiva. If they merge into one, the work of creation stops. Therefore, the next form of Shakti to emerge has been given the name Mahamaya or maya, as in this form the identification with Shiva has been severed by the illusory nature of the maya tattwa. This identification has been cut so that a transformation in the pure elements can occur. It may be said that whatever transformations take place in the elements, ranging from causal to gross, all are a consequence of the union between Mahamaya and Vidyeshwara. This is why it is called pure-impure creation; it is here that the separation from universal consciousness begins.

When a life form emerges, all the functions of Shakti as maya become active. Maya limits the expansive nature of the universal consciousness to function in a limited, conditioned world. Thus, the creative aspect of consciousness is curtailed and actions become limited; a veil sets over the luminous knowledge. The transcendental and the expansive nature of consciousness is diminished and reduced. If a small pot is created, the entire ocean cannot fit inside that container; only one or two cups of water will fit in it. Nevertheless, the water in the pot will be of the same nature as the ocean water, although it is not the ocean. It is now in a different shape, container and form, just as universal consciousness is transformed and reduced to individual life forms. That is one way of explaining maya: as the container which defines, determines and binds the universal consciousness.



In the pure elements, up until Sadvidya, the experience was universal. However, here in the shuddha-ashuddha group of elements, the middle group of the elements of creation, maya becomes the cause for separating 'this', idam, from 'I', aham. Maya now makes one see things as separate from oneself, while earlier there was a universal identity and no perceived separation. The moment maya influences life and creation, there is a separation from the transcendental awareness. When that division and separation happens, then *kamanas*, cravings and desires, begin; maya draws the veil and the real nature is forgotten. Of the pure-impure creation, maya is the primary tattwa, from which the next five tattwas emerge. These five tattwas of maya are known as the five kanchukas: kalaa, vidya, raga, kaala and niyati. They represent elements seven to eleven (see Section 1, Chapter 3).

Kanchuka means something that binds, holds, and limits. The first kanchuka is *kalaa*, which means expression, thus it has the power to limit omnipotence. It reduces or limits the awareness of *kartritva*, authorship, the universal

authorship of the Cosmic Self, of Paramshiva. The second kanchuka is *vidya*, knowledge. Vidya limits omniscience to some specific subject and causes knowledge to be limited and restricted. The third is *raga*, creating like and dislike and attraction to pleasure; it represents connection with the senses, through which one connects with the world. With this connection through the senses and the world, the universal feeling of completeness and contentment is drained from life and desires come forth. The fourth evolute of maya is kaala. *Kaala* means time. Here, as part of maya, it brings about limitation in respect to time. It reduces eternity to the concept of years or a lifetime. The fifth evolute of maya is niyati. *Niyati* is often defined as fate, but it is actually the law of restriction. It restricts the expression of the self to the karmas and samskaras only, creating limitations with respect to cause and space, and reducing freedom and pervasiveness of the spirit.

In the understanding of the tantric concept of creation, the shuddha tattwas, the pure elements, relate to life in transcendental space. They are the Shiva tattwas: chit, ananda, iccha, jnana, and kriya. Next, the element of maya, the Shakti of Shiva acting independently, is the power which is used to now create and to limit. The five evolutes of maya further restrict the universality of consciousness and cosmic experience into an individual experience, known as *purusha*. Purusha is the twelfth element, the last pure-impure element and the first subjective manifestation of Shakti. Every sentient being and form is purusha, not only human beings. Purusha is the power that enables life to be experienced.

Prakriti and the three gunas

From purusha, the tattwas of the limited individual come forth; the *ashuddha tattwas*, or the impure elements. The experience of subject and object come through these tattwas. The first ashuddha tattwa is *prakriti*, the objective manifestation of Shakti constituting the three gunas. Just as maya is the name of one aspect of Shakti that performs five specific functions, prakriti is another aspect. Every sentient form is both purusha, the sentient being, and prakriti, the nature of that purusha. Prakriti is the power of Shakti responsible for creating the multiverse; the sun, the planets, the bodies, and the different life forms. There is a difference between the concept of prakriti in Samkhya and the concept of prakriti in tantra. According to Samkhya, prakriti is one; however, according to tantra, every purusha has a prakriti, purusha being the consciousness and prakriti the nature, expression and manifestation of that consciousness. Due to maya, purusha sees itself as separate from prakriti. The universal identity is limited to the individual identity in these two tattwas.

What is the meaning of the word 'prakriti'? In Sanskrit, the verb *krit* means to perform, to act, to do; and *kriti* means something which has been done or acted upon already. The prefix *pra* indicates a force or intensity behind that action. Therefore, prakriti means an action that has been completed with strength behind it, in a forceful manner. The prakriti aspect of Shakti is the catalyst for creating everything that is perceivable and also not perceivable through the senses and the mind. Prakriti also means nature, the environment, that which is seen; something that already exists.

Prakriti is composed of the three *gunas* or qualities of nature, which are *tamas*, inertia; *rajas*, activity or dynamism; and *sattwa*, luminosity and balance. It is through the gunas that the purusha perceives and interacts with the material world, and experiences in the realm of prakriti become objective, coloured with feeling. Thus, the next twenty-three tattwas to emerge through prakriti are considered impure, ashuddha.

When prakriti creates something, it has to be a conditioned form. To create an earthen pot, earth must be collected as material. Earth by itself has no shape and no form; however, when a pot with a form and a shape is created, the earth acquires a distinct character. Once the pot is broken, again the earth becomes formless. By itself, earth has no form, but it has the potential



to take on multiple forms: a toy elephant, plate, or cup. Similarly, the Shakti principle uses all the different elements, tattwas and bhootas, to bring forth an expression of life, causing the innumerable variety in creation. On planet earth itself there are countless life forms, from insect, to reptile, to animal, to bird, to human. The *rishis*, seers, of the past gave a number to the existing life forms as 8.4 million. They said that the human body is the last in this sequence of life forms as it is the most complex, and the only life form endowed with the possibility of realizing the higher nature.

The attainment of this body is prakriti. Here, the transcendental self is housed in a container made from the five elements, and it is a powerful transformation. It can be compared to raw electricity being contained in wires so that it can flow. As long as electricity flows through wires it is safe, but if the wires are not covered with a composite material such as rubber or plastic, the naked wire will create a shock. In the same manner, prakriti refers to something that has been forcefully created, actualized and contained. By virtue of birth, all beings are a part of prakriti. Thus, the soul changes completely when it comes into the realm of prakriti, the manifest dimension. However, it still retains an aspect of Shiva consciousness in itself, though it is forgotten.

Up until purusha, the elements have been pure and pure-impure. However, once creation reaches the realm of prakriti, whatever she creates now comes under the influences of the three gunas; sattwa, rajas and tamas, and the experiences become objective. Thus, prakriti and the next twenty-three elements are called ashuddha, impure.

The three elements of the mind

Prakriti creates the basic structures of the mind, the subtle instruments that the consciousness can use to interact in the world. These elements of consciousness are three faculties that emerge from the causal dimension and together make up the *mahat tattwa*; the mind element. These subtle tattwas of the mind are elements fourteen, fifteen and sixteen: buddhi, ahamkara and manas.

Buddhi means intelligence. However, this buddhi is more in relation to the gross nature: how one interacts with the world of senses and sense objects. *Ahamkara* is the self-identity. Aham means 'I', *akara* means 'form'. Accordingly, ahamkara can be understood as awareness of form and of existence. Ahamkara is often translated as ego, but the term 'ego' can be understood diversely. A more accurate way of defining the function of ahamkara is to state that from ahamkara comes the awareness that 'I exist, I am'. This awareness of one's existence is in both the gross and subtle dimensions. Here, the identification of being an independent unit is made. Ahamkara is the 'I' identity. When this 'I' identity becomes engrossed in the material dimension, it becomes ego. When it is not engrossed in the material dimension, it is simply an awareness of 'me' as an independent, individual self. *Manas* is the power of contemplation and reflection. These abilities often cause worry, rather than being the tools of finding solutions. Thus, the instrument of manas often gives rise to worries and mental confusions.

With the creation of these three faculties in the realm of prakriti, the manifest individual begins to identify with the surrounding objects. The first identification is with parents. The relationship with one's mother and father becomes the first identification with the external world, and represents nurture, support and protection. The second identification is with the society of relations, friends and well-wishers. The third identification is with culture, tradition, belief and religion. In this manner, from the time of birth the individual begins to develop certain associations with the surroundings, and by developing that association the individuality is strengthened and enforced.

The final elements

Once the elements of the mind have come into existence and are established, the final elements to emerge are the indriyas, the tanmatras and the mahabhootas. These are elements seventeen to thirty-six and they emerge from ahamkara. The *indriyas*, organs of perception and action, are the powers through which the purusha interacts with the world. The *tanmatras* are the subtle essences of the indriyas, and the *mahabhootas* are the gross elements, the final manifestations of Shakti, and include earth, water, fire, air and space.

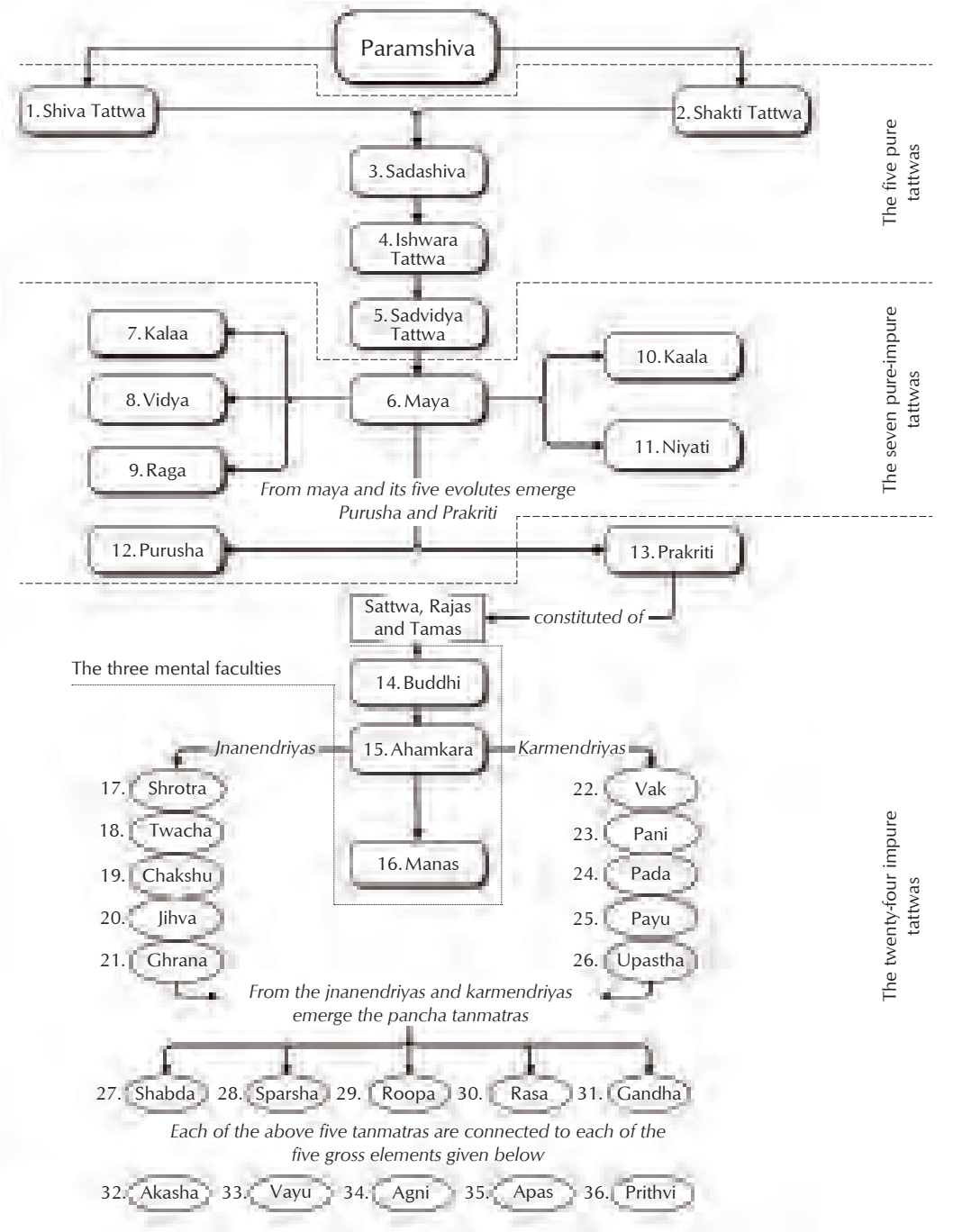
The organs of perception are the five *jnanendriyas*, elements seventeen to twenty-one. Through these five organs, the senses are perceived: the sense of taste via the tongue or *jihva*; the sense of smell via the nose, *nasika* or *ghrana*; the sense of sight via the eyes or *chakshu*; the sense of touch via the skin or *twacha*; and the sense of hearing via the ears, *karna* or *shrotra*. When something is tasted, this gives the cue to know what is being eaten; knowledge is received. When something is smelt, seen, touched or heard, it becomes a medium for knowledge. Hence, the power of taste, smell, sight, hearing and touch become the senses of perception, as some information or input is always received from them, increasing knowledge and understanding of the environment and world. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin themselves are not the jnanendriyas, but the organs in which the faculties or powers of the jnanendriyas exist. In the absence of these mediums, there would be no effective functioning in this world.

Along with the organs of perception come the *karmendriyas*, the powers of performance or action, elements twenty-two to twenty-six. These are the five motor organs: the vocal chords or *vak*, for the power of speech; hands, *pani* or *hasta*, for grasping and handling; the feet, *pada*, for locomotion; the genital organs, *upastha*, for reproduction and pleasure; and the anus, *payu*, for excretion. These are the senses of action which integrate one into life. As with the jnanendriyas, the karmendriyas are not the organs themselves, but the force and power inherent within the physical organs. The process of speech is the actual karmendriya, not the vocal chords. The ability to grasp is the karmendriya, not the hands themselves. The ability to move is the actual potency inherent in the feet. Similarly, sexual activity and excretion are the karmendriyas.

The organs of perception and the organs of action integrate to become the body. Apart from the physical structure, the body is living through the indriyas, the interaction of the senses with each other and the response of the senses and the sense objects in the world. When two people speak, they are identifying with each other. There is an identification between the individual self and the other as a sense object which can be seen, perceived and touched. The reverse is also true, the 'other' sees one's own individual self as a sense object that it can perceive and interact with.

From the ten indriyas come the subtle qualities or associated elements of sense experience, known as the *pancha tanmatras*. The five tanmatras are elements twenty-seven to thirty-one: sound or *shabda*; touch or *sparsha*; form and colour or *roopa*; flavour or *rasa*; and odour or *gandha*. After the emergence of these subtle tattwas come the five gross tattwas of materiality known as the *pancha tattwas* or the *pancha mahabhootas*. These represent an

The thirty-six tattwas of creation



extension of the tanmatras into the physical world as a manifest form of the tattwas, and are the final stage of prakriti's creation. They are the gross elements of nature, elements thirty-two to thirty-six: earth or solids, *prithvi*; water or liquids, *apas*; fire or light, *agni*; air or gases, *vayu;* and ether or space, *akasha*. They are supported by a sixth tattwa, the *atmatattwa*, the element of the spirit (see Section 1, Chapter 8).

A relationship exists between the ten indriyas, the five tanmatras and the five mahabhootas. Each mahabhoota is represented by a unique quality or tanmatra, which is perceived or performed through the associated indriya. For example, the element earth is a mahabhoota, and in earth there is smell, which is the associated tanmatra. The tanmatra of smell is perceived by the nose, which is the jnanendriya. Similarly, in water there is taste, perceived by the tongue; the special quality in fire is form, perceived by the eyes; in air there is touch, perceived by the skin; and in space there is sound, perceived by the ears. Space also contains the potentiality of all the other tattwas. Touch is always connected with movement and movement is a quality of air. In this way, the tanmatras and the mahabhootas are linked with the karmendriyas and jnanendriyas, the organs responsible for perceiving or responding to the tanmatras and mahabhootas.

Summarizing the thirty-six elements of the manifest spirit

To summarize, the soul's journey of becoming manifest from the unmanifest union of Shiva and Shakti is the story of creation told in sequence. In this process of creation, it is the thirty-six elements which create the manifest, embodied individual. Just as one packs a suitcase when one has to travel any place with certain things, whether toothbrush, toothpaste or clothes, the thirty-six elements are carried with the individual wherever one goes. Before the soul has reached the stage of prakriti, twelve elements have already emerged.

The soul's journey starts with the urge to create from the Shiva tattwa and the subsequent action by the Shakti tattwa. These tattwas are two of the total five pure tattwas of the universal, cosmic experience; the three remaining being Sadashiva (icchashakti), Ishwara (jnanashakti) and Sadvidya (kriyashakti), through which the process of creation proceeds. Following the fifth element of Sadvidya, the seven pure-impure elements emerge, beginning with maya, the sixth element. Maya represents illusion and the first state of duality, where the truth of unity is veiled. The five kanchukas or limiting powers arise through maya and further restrict the awareness of the ultimate truth. The category of the pure-impure elements ends with the creation or emergence of purusha. Purusha, the twelfth element, represents the beginning of the subjective, individual experience of matter and the end of the awareness of universality.

Now prakriti, element thirteen, manifests through maya. As prakriti manifests, she brings with her the three gunas of sattwa, rajas and tamas, the qualities which colour experiences with objectivity. The following twenty-three elements to emerge from prakriti are those that allow the soul to experience and interact with the manifest dimension through the play of the gunas. The first of the impure elements to emerge from prakriti are the three elements of the mind: buddhi, manas and ahamkara, the faculties that begin the state of consciousness in the individual manifestation. Emerging through ahamkara and solidifying the manifest experience are the ten indriyas, the organs of perception and action, the five tanmatras, the essence of the senses, and the five mahabhootas, the grossest, most material created elements.

Paramshiva transcends all the thirty-six tattwas and exists as the Pure Being unaffected by time, space and causation, while standing as the support and substratum of everything. Thus Paramshiva not only remains as the transcendental reality, but also as the immanent principle which exists in everything and yet remains unaffected by it all.

5

Pati-Pasha-Pashu



The relationship between the individual and the transcendental reality is explained in tantra with the help of a threefold symbology. This is the concept of pati, pasha and pashu. *Pati* is the master symbolizing the ultimate reality, *pasha* is the bondage inherent in creation, and *pashu* refers to the experience of the individual soul in human life.

When a form and a life are given to the pure soul with the permutation and combination of the thirty-six elements of creation, a pashu is created, composed of these subtle and gross elements. The word 'pashu' means something that is bound. The individual soul is bound by the effects of Shakti. Shakti creates the pasha, the bindings, and the master or pati is Paramshiva. Here a sequence is seen: Paramshiva at the top level, then Shakti and the noose that binds the individual soul, and finally, the individual soul which lives in this world as the bound being.

Pati: the master

Pati means one who governs or rules, who is the master or protector, yet remains the passive principle. Pati is the transcendental Self, which is not bound or conditioned by the senses, the body, the mind, or any other attribute of life; it is absolutely free. It is from pati that pasha and pashu emerge.

Pati as the transcendental nature is the name given to the Shiva tattwa, hence Sadashiva is the pati. Here Shiva is in a non-dual, free and tranquil state. He is formless and indivisible. He is not influenced by any activity, restlessness or vibration. He is the creator and controller of all. He is auspicious, omniscient and omnipotent.

Shiva is that pure, untainted, unconditioned and timeless factor which is beyond mental grasp, yet which exists in each and every aspect of creation. Shiva is therefore the ruler of the entire multiverse, of everything that is created, visible and invisible both. The word 'universe' identifies the presence of only one; however, in the tantric tradition it is said that there are many *brahmandas*, cosmic eggs or universes, which together form a multiverse. What controls the multiverse is the transcendental, cosmic Self, Shiva, in the form of sentient perception.

Metaphorically speaking, much like a king, Shiva stays in the palace and does not bother much about what is happening in the kingdom, as the work has been delegated to other authorities. The defence has been delegated to the generals. The commerce and trade has been delegated to the ministers, and they have to function effectively. The king is only the ruler, the passive figure. In the same manner, Shiva is the passive sentient element.

Pasha: the rope that binds

Pasha means noose. It is the rope around the neck of animals by which they can be controlled. By pulling the rope, the goats, bulls and cows are led around; that is an illustration of pasha as the noose. *Adishakti*, the primordial power in the form of Yogamaya, becomes the pasha which is held by Sadashiva. The pasha binds the pashu, the embodied soul.

Shiva is the pati, the transcendental ruler, while Shakti is the pasha, the rope that binds. Therefore, Shakti in the form of Maya is responsible for managing this entire multiverse. Through her power of illusion, Maya attracts the conditioned beings into her fold by creating forgetfulness of one's true nature and identification with that which one is not. Just as it is possible to have a nightmare during sleep and think it is real, *maya* is the power of delusion that leads one into believing this illusion to be the truth. Upon waking up from the nightmare, there is a sigh of relief, 'Thank God! That was only a nightmare, only a dream. I am safe.' This concept is offered by both tantra and Vedanta: that life is being lived, but there is a dreamy, illusory quality to it that is identified as reality, when actually it is false and inaccurate. This is the effect of maya, rather than of the true self.

Shakti is the active principle, as she is directing the entire creation. Through her noose, Shakti holds the individual being in one dimension and does not allow movement from this dimension to another without breaking out of the old. The fear associated with breaking the old to accept the new is also the power of Shakti. Due to her ability to hold one in a single dimension, Maya becomes a conditioning power. To change that conditioning, Shakti must be propitiated; otherwise, change will not come about.

Shakti is the cause of discipline and transformation in the world, the cosmos and in the manifest and unmanifest dimensions. It is because of her influence that an individual either becomes capable or incapable of knowing the real truth, the fundamental existence. To understand the functioning of Shakti as pasha, five causes have been attributed to her: mala, maya, karma, nirodha and bindu.

1. *Mala*: 'Mala' means dirt and impurities, and in tantra mala refers to the animalistic tendencies or basic instincts and impurities that keep the human personality and life in bondage. The actions and reactions of human beings are part of the basic instincts, and animality is an ingredient of the internal aspect of humans. Therefore, many reactions appear either on account of pre-planned programming and influences of previous births, or due to one's own thinking, personality or nature. They are also related to environmental conditions and situations. These actions, reactions and

animal tendencies are where the mind gets stuck. Tantra generally refers to five types of malas. Three pertain to sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna, and two are related to *vikara*, mental modifications, and *pratyaya*, contents of the mind.

In certain situations, the mind becomes entrapped even by sattwa. This is when the mind is stuck in the desire for purity and equanimity, restraint and balance. In rajoguna, the mind is stuck in the desire for pleasure, enjoyment or passion. In tamoguna, the mind is entrapped in lethargy, distraction, confusion and ignorance.

Vikaras are related to subtle samskaras. In the process of development of the personality, one acquires certain samskaras and is trapped by them. The fifth mala of pratyaya is related to the external, material situations and conditions. The feelings of like and dislike, passion, desire, anger, greed, attachment, envy and hatred that one experiences for worldly objects are known as pratyaya. Those pratyaya that do not find immediate expression are transplanted as seeds in the personality. Later, these seeds take the form of vikaras or samskaras.

These are the different forms of mala, the impure states of consciousness. There is no mala in the state of purity. Once impurities set in, every visible and invisible object and experience influences the gross and causal layers of consciousness.

2. *Maya*: Through the effect of maya the pure soul becomes the purusha. Maya has been divided into the five *kanchukas*, or bindings: *kaala*, the bondage of time; *niyati*, the effects of karma; *kalaa*, expression; *raga*, attachment; and *vidya*, limited knowledge. Through these five kanchukas, the human consciousness becomes confined to worldly karmas and enjoyments. When an aspirant rises above them, there is attainment of the state of *Vidyeshwara*, the soul, the being of light and knowledge.

3. *Karma*: 'Karma' is action and its result in both the manifest and unmanifest dimensions. The bonds of karma limit the omniscience of consciousness; they restrict the consciousness



from experiencing the infinite element, the infinite power behind creation. Karmas have mainly two forms, manifest and unmanifest. Manifest or external karmas are then further divided into three types: gross, subtle and causal.

The experiences of life are hidden within the gross karmic consciousness in the form of memory, and within the memory in the form of a seed. In the subtle state, the individual acts through the *antahkarana*, the tool of consciousness: *manas*, rational mind; *buddhi*, intellect; *chitta*, memory; and *ahamkara*, ego. When karma is produced within the antahkarana, it is hidden within the depths of consciousness only to re-emerge later on in a causal form. In the unmanifest state, karma simply refers to *kriya* or action, yet action influences the entire range of life and effectively puts the omniscience of consciousness under a veil. Even in the unmanifest state, one cannot

attain liberation from the bonds of karma. The only difference is that the definition of karma changes in the unmanifest state. The form of karmic enjoyment also changes.

4. Nirodha: The word 'nirodha' means blocking. Here, it applies to different conditions and transformations taking place in the consciousness. The experience of attraction or repulsion in life is actually a state of nirodha, where one expression of consciousness is being blocked by another expression. For instance, if the experience of heat or pleasure is blocked, then one has the experience of cold or pain, respectively. The attraction one feels to heat on a cold winter's day is due to the block or absence of that heat experience. Similarly, one enjoys the experience of a happy mood where there is a block or absence of a depressive, sad experience. There is a natural repulsion to any negative or sad experience while in this happy state. This blocking of one state from another, and the resulting attraction or repulsion, is the state of nirodha.

Nirodha shakti causes both development and decay, evolution and decline. If nirodha shakti appears, change is experienced in life. It is an attraction, a magnet in itself, which sometimes attracts in one direction and at other times in another direction. One pole will attract, but if the magnet is reversed, there will be repulsion from the other pole. Thus, attraction and repulsion are the two qualities of nirodha shakti.

5. *Bindu*: The basis from which the first principle, the first ripple, emanated, 'bindu' means source, the centre of generation or creation. It is the centre from which a state actually emerges, where the Self begins the action of its own manifestation. According to tantra, there are two types of bindu: para bindu and apara bindu. The apara bindu relates to the material world, while para bindu is the transcendental experience.

In the realm of apara bindu, the first place has been assigned to *nada*, sound vibration, and the nada is followed by buddhi as intellect. Vibration is the first experience in nada and from this vibration, language is produced. Within all matter, including the human body, a vibratory action is consistently and continuously occurring, although it cannot be easily understood or experienced due to its subtle nature. To understand the concept of vibration, one must consider the composition of matter, the atom.

Atoms are the building blocks of every object in creation, therefore they are present in every form of matter; in the body, in metal, stone and wood. These atoms are subject to forces of repulsion and attraction, via temperature or electromagnetic charge for example, and these forces cause the atoms to move towards or away from each other depending on the strength of the force. It is the movement of these atoms which creates vibration. With these vibrations, a sound or a wave is produced that can be experienced and measured. This is known as atomic intensity, the frequency of the vibrations or waves produced by the movement of atoms within matter. Atomic intensity varies from object to object, and the visibility or non-visibility of any form depends upon the atomic intensity of the object. If the intensity is greater, the form becomes visible. If it is less, the form cannot be seen. In this way, vibration then becomes the actual form of matter. The body, stone, metal, water, everything is a form of vibration.

Wherever there is vibration, there is action; there cannot be stability or steadiness. Vibration cannot be produced in a steady and stable situation. Thus, movement or action is essential for the production of vibration. Whether it is the process of creation or an action of the human body, there is bound to be vibration. In desire, the action of desire and the fulfilment of desire involve vibration, movement, drive or effort. It is within this vibration that nada is experienced.

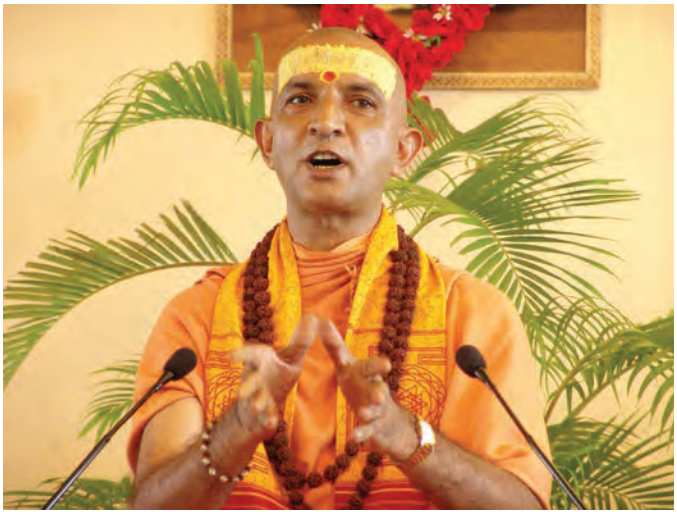
In the deeper states of nada yoga, a variety of sounds are heard within when the ears are closed during the practice. Sounds such as a bell, flute or a stream can be heard inside the brain of the practitioner. Where are these sounds being produced? It is at this point

that the principles of baikhari, pashyanti, and para vibrations become relevant. *Baikhari* is an external vibration that is expressed in the form of speech. *Pashyanti* is mental vibration, and *para* is the transcendental vibration. When an aspirant enters the deeper layers of consciousness through meditation, the *anahad nada*, the unstruck sound, becomes perceptible. The experience of nada and mantras begins to take place. Whether it is in the form of a mantra or any other form of nada, it is a vibration being produced from within the consciousness. The manifest form of this vibration, when experienced in the material world, takes the form of a language.

How does one receive the words spoken by another person? A sound produced by one person reaches the ears of another in the form of sound waves. These waves are related to that area of the brain which is connected with buddhi or intellect. It is then analyzed and differentiated by the intellect and only then is it properly understood. Nothing can be understood in the absence of correct analysis by the intellect. Thus, vibration is related to the intellect, which is a part of bindu.

Intellect here is directly connected with phonetics, the science of speech production. In other words, 'intellect' can be defined as the science of words or formation of words. Efforts are made to recognize the form taken by a particular vibration. Consider the letters of the Devanagari vowels: a, aa, i, ee, u, oo, e, ai, o and au. All these vowels are different, and to recognize them, each one has been given a particular form based on its particular vibration. Words are formed by the permutations and combinations of different vibrations of their sounds and then they are understood. That aspect, that part of consciousness which is trained to understand the vibrations composing sound and words, is called the intellect, and bindu is its original centre.

Para bindu relates to the Vidyeshwaras, the units of knowledge, desire and action, which emerge from the Shiva tattwa. They exist in the form of light at bindu. They manifest and evolve from the Shiva tattwa and ultimately merge into the soul in the form of bindu. In the realm of para bindu, the first *loka* or dimension of the Vidyeshwaras is Sadashiva loka. The second and third dimensions are Ishwara loka and Vidya loka. In Sadashiva loka, there is the state of control and restraint in *kriya*, action, and *jnana*, knowledge, in the form of Vidyeshwara. Kriya and jnana are experienced simultaneously, not separately. Generally, one



experiences action and knowledge separately. In Ishwara loka, there is knowledge of the *sanatana tattwa*, the eternal element. The knowledge that 'I am not separate, I am inseparable from and integral to the Shiva tattwa' is awakened in the Vidyeshwara. 'I am not transient or destructible. My function is not related only to the expansion and contraction of myself, I am an integral, inseparable part of the eternal element.' In Vidya loka, there remains the experience of omniscience. All these three constitute the realm of para bindu.

Thus, these five effects of Shakti - mala, maya, karma, nirodha and bindu - describe the nooses that bind the pure soul to the material dimension in the form of the limited individual, the pashu.

Pashu: the bound self

In between pati and pasha is the pashu, the individual self. This individual self experiences itself as an independent unit in the realm of prakriti, maya, the created dimension. As an individual living in this created dimension, there is an identification of oneself as belonging to a particular tribe, nationality, country, culture, and tradition. This unique, independent identity is what makes one an individual being and in the realm of maya, it makes one a pashu. A pashu is a restricted, limited and bound being, not a free being.

As soon as one enters the realm of maya, due to the five functions of maya, the whole mind becomes partial. From an unlimited possibility of creativity, the individual becomes contained and limited. From an unlimited source of wisdom, one becomes contained and limited to one subject, one theory, one idea and one belief. From unlimited expressions, one becomes limited to a few expressions in life. Due to the experiences that take place in the manifest dimension using the senses and the mind, the individual becomes conditioned to the gross dimension. As one becomes more conditioned in the gross dimension, the awareness and memory of the spiritual dimension, of the transcendental nature, is lost and there is the experience of being the pashu, the animal.

This pashu is influenced by the different functions of Shakti, and is led by the bindings of Shakti. However, the master is Shiva. Just as a rider controls the movement and direction of a horse, Shiva keeps the pashu under his control. He is the truth, the conscious state ruling over the animal or the purusha. Shiva controls and directs the animal, the purusha, through Yogamaya. Yogamaya is the medium. Tantra says that Shiva uses Shakti as the noose to enact a *lila*, a play, to engage the individual in diversionary tactics deluding the individual to think that pleasure and enjoyment are everything there is to be found in this world. Shakti becomes the power of delusion and illusion. Using these powers she can create a false identity for the individual, by giving the impression that one is something which one is not.

Pashu is also called *kshetrajna*, which means one residing within a particular area. *Kshetra* means a boundary or limit. It implies residing within a particular boundary. Therefore, the *purusha*, or soul residing within a boundary is called kshetrajna or pashu. It has also been named *jivatma*, or the individual soul.

All forms of life and all the elements created are defined as pashu. The term 'pashu' indicates something that has limited knowledge and understanding. There is no logic, only the experience of identifying oneself with what is happening today, not how growth can take place in the future, nor an understanding of the effect of past experiences. This can be seen in the life of the majority of individuals, who think only of what can be acquired today, always worry about the future, and never derive any learning from the experiences of the past. The concepts, intellect and intelligence are limited and directed towards sense objects.

The boundary or area in which the individual soul functions is defined by the bindings of pasha. Among them, mala, maya and karma are important. Nirodha and bindu are experiences. Knowledge and experience of different states are gained under the

bindings of karma, maya and mala. Under maya, one gains the experience of time, destiny, expression, attraction and knowledge. Under karma, one experiences the actions and reactions of gross, subtle and causal consciousness. Under mala, one attains the experiences of the three gunas and their impurities. As a result of all this, a feeling of ego is generated within the mind. However, this feeling cannot be generated without the experience of body, prana, senses and intellect. These feelings and experiences emerge under the bindings of karma, maya and mala, providing worldly experiences and knowledge.

Pashu and the experience of antahkarana

The life of the pashu includes the experience of the antahkarana, the inner organ, the instrument of consciousness that describes the experience the individual goes through at the level of the mind. Otherwise known as the *mahat tattwa*, it is comprised of the four different experiences or expressions of consciousness: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. They are the subtle principles and instruments that the consciousness uses to actualize and experience itself. It is in this dimension that the states of consciousness can be perceived: conscious, subconscious, unconscious and superconscious. It is here that the experiences of jagrat, swapna, nidra and turiya operate. These subtle instruments become the container for the descent of Shiva consciousness.

Manas: Manas is the power of reflection, the finite, rational mind concerned with the world of the senses and sense objects. For example, how does one recognize all the qualities of a flower? By looking at the flower and seeing the colours and shape of the petals and smelling the fragrance. Tantra says this does not occur through buddhi, but through manas, and manas is fed by buddhi. When one looks at the flower, the total flower is seen. There is an awareness of the colour, shape and fragrance. Everything that is seen in the flower is observed through manas, which buddhi substantiates: 'Yes, the rose is red', 'Yes, the petals are nicely formed',



'Yes, the colours are there', 'Yes, the smell is there'. This is an affirmation by buddhi, yet analyzed via manas. Sometimes there can be no affirmation by buddhi. For example, there are certain experiences in life that the intellect cannot explain, such as the experience and expression of love. Can the experience of deep love be analyzed? Can it be intellectualized? No. It is an experience, and in that experience, logic and intellect have no role. Love is an experience, not an intellectual analysis. Similarly with compassion; it is something the intellect cannot support, as it is an experience. Therefore, as manas interacts with the world of the senses and sense objects, there are encounters that buddhi is unable to define.

The ability of manas to reflect, contemplate and analyze happens in relation to all things that surround one, whether positive or negative. When *manan*, reflection and contemplation, is carried out in relation to one's surroundings, worries, tensions and anxieties often come up. Limiting, distracting and disturbing thoughts arise, fears and insecurities surface. This aspect is also a part of manas.

Buddhi: Buddhi is intelligence or intellect, the discerning or discriminating aspect of the mind. Buddhi acts as an agent to receive every kind of information about the world and about the self. It is a product of the omniscient nature of consciousness, of Sadashiva. Therefore, it has been stated in the scriptures that there is nothing new to know, as everything comes from within. Science and art have come from the inner consciousness in the form of flashes and intuition, in the form of sequential understanding. All knowledge, arts, sciences, every trade and commerce in this world is nothing but a projection, expression and actualization of what buddhi has received, decided and expressed. In the moments when buddhi connects to its source, intuitive flashes take place.

For example, an apple fell on Newton's head, which made him think about gravity. Apples have been falling from trees since time immemorial and nobody had noticed or thought about the implications. Why did this person suddenly have a flash of intuition in the form of the question: 'Why does this apple fall to the ground? Why does it not go up?' This speculation started a train of thought that allowed intuitive knowledge to emerge into an understanding of gravity being the cause for the falling apple. Newton's intuitive flash brought something from the higher consciousness down to this limited consciousness, which was developed into a concept. It became something that was analyzed, understood and accepted.

Similarly, many discoveries that have impacted the human civilization have not been made in laboratories; they have been intuitive flashes that were developed over a period of time and thus provided succour and relief to human civilization. Buddhi is the agent and instrument that allows effective functioning in this limited, material, physical dimension. Therefore, buddhi is geared to think of the manifest, the created and the physical only.

The buddhi function of consciousness has the trait of being interactive. Buddhi interacts with everything, particularly loss and gain. Apart from other functions like learning, loss and gain are the two things that buddhi analyzes. In every situation it asks, 'What am I gaining here, what am I losing here?' The ability of buddhi to realize gain and loss is associated with attractions and attachments, raga. Therefore, this intelligence does not work when considering the transcendental and the intuitive; there is a block as that is not a trait or function of buddhi. Buddhi, from the tantric perspective, is only there to identify and associate with the world of senses and sense objects in which one lives.

Chitta: Chitta is the area in which all the latent impressions of consciousness are stored, beyond the reach of the conscious and the subconscious. Their actualization is through karmas. The latent past impressions, known as *samskaras*, are brought to life through action or *karma*. The first impression made in the consciousness is desire. Birth and creation has occurred due to the desire of God or Paramshiva. The first desire was, 'I want to be many.' This same desire becomes the instinct of sexuality for procreation, following the pattern to desire continuation of life.

Desire is the first aspect of chitta, and all other latent impressions, the building blocks of life, are contained within it. Chitta is not only memory; that is a superficial understanding of chitta. Prior to impressions of past experiences comes the first memory of desire. Together with that first memory are the imprints of prakriti, the sum of which define one's character. Each individual has a different character, nature and personality. No two human beings in the world are the same; nowhere can one find two fingerprints, two pairs of eyes or two noses that are the same. This unique information is stored in chitta along with samskaras and karmas, creating the software that one requires to live properly. Most human beings do not know what they are, what their samskaras and karmas are, as there is little access to the deep realm of chitta. Nevertheless, these deep impressions make each individual what they are.

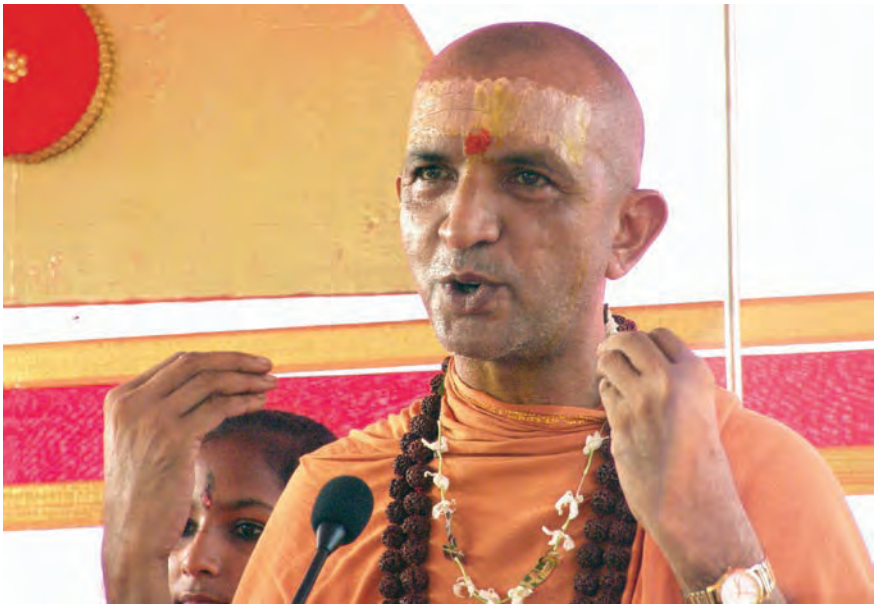
Ahamkara: Ahamkara represents the individual, independent identity, the experience of 'I' (see Section 1, Chapter 4).

In the tantric tradition, the mind is seen as a body having four limbs, just as one has a physical body with two arms and two legs. In the same manner, this greater mind, the antahkarana, has been visualized as having four limbs: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. These four components identify the pashu's experience of consciousness in the material dimension.

Different levels of pashu

Pashu, *jivatma*, *atma* and *Paramatma*: There is no difference between pashu and jivatma, between atma and Paramatma. All are made of the same element; however, different kinds of experiences are inherent within them. Consider the versatile element of clay; clay is everywhere, the whole world is made of clay and earth. Now imagine that some of this clay is taken from somewhere, water is added, and it is crushed to remove its hardness. Finally it is prepared and made into a pitcher, an idol or a doll. The clay remains clay, but its name, form and quality have changed within the different states. Without kriya, this clay cannot acquire another form. Similarly, the Shiva tattwa can be seen in the form of clay, and the capacity to acquire any form is inherent in it. The creation of a pitcher or doll from a formless substance represents the atma emerging from the all-pervading, omnipresent, original element. When that atma is confined to a particular area by any action, like the clay being formed into a pitcher, then that state is of the *jiva*. Thus, Shiva is the first state, atma the second and jivatma the third state. Jiva is the kshetrajna and atma the original nature; however, both remain separate from the all-pervading, infinite body of its original element, the Paramatma.

It should be understood clearly that energy is inherent in earth, Shiva or matter. Matter and energy cannot be separated from each other. If matter and energy are separated, both will become inactive and lifeless. To sustain life, both matter and energy are essential. Shiva and Shakti are one. Shiva is matter and Shakti, energy, is the inherent capability of Shiva. However, when matter is transformed by any action, by willpower, iccha, by the power of knowledge, jnana, or the power of action, kriya,



the original form does not remain the same. That transformed state is maya. In other words, to give a different form to the original element by making use of energy is maya. The process and system of transformation from the infinite to the finite is maya.

The experience of consciousness always takes place at two levels. These experiences have been named *apara anubhuti*, mundane experience, and *para anubhuti*, transcendental experience. *Anubhuti* means something perceived or understood, therefore apara anubhuti means the perception of all the elements, manifestations and reactions of nature. The para state exists beyond the realm of nature. It may be said that the realm of apara experience extends from the individual soul to atma, and that of the para experience extends from atma to Paramatma. In the process of transformation from the state of atma to that of Paramatma, one has to pass through many states of knowledge and action, called 'lokas'. There are seven lokas in the realm of human experience, otherwise known as *chakras*: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna and sahasrara. There are seven states below the realm of human experience and they are known as *patala*: atala, vitala, sutala, rasatala, talatala, mahatala, patala. There are seven states above the realm of human experience and they are known as: bhuh, bhuvah, swah, mahah, janah, tapah and satyam. The sahasrara of the realm of human experience is the bhuh loka or mooladhara of the higher lokas. Mooladhara of the human experience is the sahasrara of the lower lokas. These are the various realms where karma and jnana manifest themselves in different forms. This is the tantric theory of evolution.

Types of pashu: According to tantra, there are three types of pashu: sakala pashu, pralayakala pashu and vijnanakala pashu. *Sakala* is the present state of life, lived while under the influence of impurities within the bonds of sattwa, rajas and tamas and within the pasha of maya and karmas. Untiring effort and sadhana are made to release oneself from the state of sakala pashu.

The state of pralayakala pashu is attained after eliminating the influences of the kanchukas: kalaa, niyati, raga, kaala and vidya, which fall within the realm of maya. *Pralaya* here means destruction or dissolution. *Pralayakala* is the time of universal destruction. Only the bonds of karma and *pashuttwa*, the sense of animality, remain in pralayakala. There is multiplicity in the sakala experience and understanding, while in pralayakala there is only duality. Therefore, one has travelled from plurality to duality and must now travel from duality to an experience of singularity, of unity.

Vijnanakala is the third state of animality, or the third type of pashu. *Vijnana* is the state of higher internal knowledge, understanding or perception. Here, all the bonds of karma are dissolved. This is the state of the awakened or self-realized pashu. However, even in this state the sense of animality continues. The knowledge has dawned that 'I am eternal, I am the Self', but the merger has not taken place. The realization that 'I am an integral part', 'I am a part of the Supreme Self, I am indestructible, I am This' is there, but duality still persists, the state of complete unity or oneness has not yet come.

In the state of merger, the soul cannot remain as Vidyeshwara; it becomes the Shiva tattwa itself. Thus, the transformation takes place from the state of vijnanakala to the state of Vidyeshwara, and from Vidyeshwara to the Shiva tattwa. Ego disappears in the higher state of Shiva tattwa. In the state of vijnanakala, however, the *pashu bhava*, the animal nature, continues to be present. One still experiences the gunas and is influenced by them. This state is transcended when the idea of duality ends, and all karmas and samskaras pertaining to sattwa, rajas and tamas are eliminated. At that time there is balance in jnana and karma. The aspirant now views the self as omnipotent and omniscient. In this state of Vidyeshwara, one is capable of either moving down to the state of pashu or moving up to the state of Paramtattwa or Shiva tattwa.

6

Stages of Consciousness



The purpose of tantra is to expand the individual consciousness and to liberate the inherent energy lying dormant within. The ultimate state is the union of individual consciousness and energy with the cosmic consciousness and cosmic energy. To reach this goal, one must cultivate an awareness, understanding and experience of the totality of mind and consciousness.

Nature of consciousness

There are two realms of experience, para and apara. *Para* refers to the transcendental experience, and *apara* refers to the mundane, material experience. In the para, transcendental state, the consciousness is not bound to the experiences of time and object and thus is able to be all-pervasive like space, in absolute tranquillity. In that state of tranquillity the three characteristics of consciousness, *sat-chit-ananda*, truth-awareness-bliss, are effulgent. *Sat* means the truth; there is no falsity, there is no duplication or replication, there is only one state of existence. *Chit* means conscious, self-aware, 'I exist', 'I am what I am'. *Ananda* means bliss, beatitude, absolute contentment and fulfilment, and freedom from cravings, expectations and desires.

At the para level, consciousness is omnipresent; it is not bound by time or object and it pervades the entire space. It is omniscient; it contains the essence of everything within itself. It is omnipotent; it has infinite possibilities of expressing itself.

At the apara level, when the interaction with Shakti takes place, the lower experiences arise. At this level, the consciousness is perceived as chaitanyata. *Chaitanyata* means being aware of existence; being aware of life. Consciousness is no longer experienced as an independent phenomenon within oneself, but is experienced now in relation to one's life. Whenever consciousness is experienced, it is in relation to one's own life as the experience of 'I am living, I am alive'. This experience is called chaitanyata, and it is a state of being in which the transcendental and the gross are both accessible. When this interaction with Shakti has taken place and chaitanyata is operating, the awareness of one's individual existence arises, not as the transcendental being, but as a manifest being. At that time, the consciousness responds to the world in a number of ways.

Consciousness responds to the world by recognizing name, form and idea. For instance, the word 'guru' does not mean anything in itself. One may imagine a fakir sitting on a mountain-top in his loin cloth in deep meditation, as that may be the image in one's consciousness of what a guru looks like. However, if a particular name is used, for example Swami Sivananda, the name identifies a particular person with a particular form. In the mind, along with name, comes the visualization of the form. Along with the name and the form is the recognition of the inherent qualities of Swami Sivananda, 'He is a good man. He is saintly, pious, pure, with equal vision for all. He is a Godman.' This associated idea appears. Hence, name, form and idea are the three things by which consciousness interacts in the world.

Four states of consciousness

In this material dimension of existence, the consciousness that manifests has four stages that can be experienced and utilized by the individual. According to tantra, these four stages are known as *jagrat avastha*, the waking state; *swapna avastha*, the dream state; *sushupti avastha*, the state of sleep; and *turiya avastha*, the internally aware, superconscious state. Present-day psychology classifies the mind under three categories of consciousness: conscious mind, subconscious mind and unconscious mind. These correspond to jagrat, swapna and sushupti respectively. The *Mandukya Upanishad*, one of the major Upanishads of the Vedanta tradition, concerns itself with describing states of mind, and defines and names the four states of consciousness: vaishvanara, tejas, prajna, and turiya.

The use of the words, 'conscious', 'subconscious' and 'unconscious', in relation to the mind, defines the state or stage of awareness that the mind holds at any given moment. They do not define the mind itself; they only determine the range of conscious perception in the waking state, the dreaming state and the state of sleep. In daily life, the first three stages are experienced on a regular basis. The fourth stage of turiya is glimpsed from time to time, such as during meditation when the awareness expands in all directions and there is awareness of everything, yet one remains detached.

Jagrat avastha

The first aspect is jagrat, which has been translated as wakefulness or the conscious mind, and represents awareness of the interaction between the self and the world of name, form and idea. Simply stated, it is the state of consciousness that is interacting with the manifest dimension.

The *Mandukya Upanishad* describes the conscious mind as *vaishvanara*. The word 'vaishvanara' is formed from the words *vishva*, which means the universe, and *nara*, which means a presence, a body, a figure or a form. Thus, in the jagrat state there is total identification of the mind with vishva, the world and universe. 'Nara' is also the principle of decay. Thus, vaishvanara means consciousness associated totally with prakriti and, in the course of interaction, it goes through change, transformation, growth and progression.

The text says that vaishvanara has nineteen mouths. 'Mouth' represents the faculties of the

senses and the mind by which one receives, assimilates and processes information about the world. The *jnanendriyas*, five organs of knowledge, and *karmendriyas*, five organs of action, are the ten mouths with which vaishvanara enjoys the pleasures of the world. The antahkarana with its four components of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, and the *pancha tattwas*, the five elements, are added to this number, which makes a total of nineteen. Thus, the vaishwanara in the waking state uses nineteen faculties to recognize, receive, process and analyze information from the environment, the surroundings and the world. Vaishvanara leads to awareness of the external phenomena, the senses and sense objects.

The waking state is the major experience for half the life; in the twenty-four hours of the day, almost twelve hours are spent in the jagrat state. All this time, the consciousness is dissipated and distracted. It is rarely focused, still, pure or happy; it is always craving, desiring, wanting and enforcing its will.

In the jagrat avastha all the senses are active, all the mental faculties are at their peak of performance, and there is a connection with the environment, with the world, with the senses and sense objects. In the waking state, all the faculties are active and the conscious awareness has the potential for a one hundred percent performance. It is a different matter how aware one actually is. The potential of awareness does not reflect one's actual mental nature. For example, if one shines a torch in a large hall, it will illuminate only one area of the hall. It will not illuminate the whole hall. In the same way, human beings who are not in control of their mental faculties are not able to experience the completeness of the conscious faculty, the full range of the conscious awareness in their daily life. They are only aware of those areas where a sensorial awareness has taken place.

Sense awareness is an important factor in guiding the awareness. For instance, when something pleasant or desirable is looked at, that is sense awareness. When something pleasing and desirable is tasted which gives contentment and joy, that is sense awareness. When something soft is touched, the contact is sense awareness. In daily activity, one only follows the awareness of one sense at any given moment; only partial awareness is used even while awake. The potential for the full range of conscious awareness exists in the waking state, yet only the yogis and those who have mastered their consciousness can become aware of it, for their mind is not confined to one observation. They are able to observe and be the *drashta*, the witness, of everything that is happening.

Swapna avastha

Swapna is the dream-like state of subtle, non-physical activity. One is aware of the subtle processes, perceptions, visions, ideas and thoughts. However, they are not associated with the physical body, physical dynamism or movement. It is an experience of *sukshma sharira*, the subtle dimension. One is not sleeping, one is awake; at the same time, one is not awake, one is sleeping. There is no depth in the sleep and there is not total awareness. It is an in-between state, a drowsy state, and that is the subconscious state, the swapna avastha. That drowsy state has been identified as the subconscious mind, where there is neither an absence of conscious awareness nor direct cognition of or relationship with any sense object. Yet, there is an awareness of one's existence and that awareness keeps the mind active.

In the dreaming state, consciousness projects its own images, impressions and creations. In the *Mandukya Upanishad*, the dreaming state is known as tejas. *Tejas* is the area of the mind or consciousness where the enjoyment is of the invisible subtle experiences. The mind creates its own imagery and inner world, and enjoys that. In tejas also there are seven limbs and nineteen mouths. The difference between vaishvanara and tejas, the waking stage and the dreaming stage, between jagrat and swapna, is the relationship between the mind and the sense objects. In the first state, there is direct identification with the sense objects, while in

the second state, a world of inner imagery is created from the impressions that the mind and consciousness receive through interaction with sense objects.

The dream state lasts for a limited time only. Some people may not dream at all, some people may dream for one hour, some people may dream for six hours, regardless, the dreaming time is limited. Within this limited state, the consciousness is projecting itself on the mental screen in the form of impressions, images, ideas, fears, expectations, cravings, happiness, depression, anxiety, and so on. Everything is being projected by the consciousness on the mental screen. A separate world and reality is created which one mistakenly experiences as real. For example, when one has a nightmare and there is sweating, anxiety and fear, the dream becomes a reality in itself. It is a projection of the consciousness on the screen of the mind. Whatever is projected by the consciousness, one begins to live it.

Swapna does not only reflect the state of sleep in which one dreams at night; it is an indication of the range of conscious awareness having been reduced from one hundred percent to fifty percent. It has become half, therefore one is neither here nor there; neither fully attentive and alert at the external level, nor fully attentive and alert at the internal level. One is on the threshold of the waking and sleeping states, the threshold of full conscious awareness and the absence of it.

Tejas means luminosity. In this state, one is only partially aware of the luminosity of two things: luminosity of the mind and luminosity of prana. When disassociation of consciousness from the ten senses occurs, the consciousness stops receiving information from the physical gross body, but the mind is active and becomes the source of information. In the waking state, one is only aware of the luminosity of the senses, while in this middle state of tejas, one is aware of the luminosity of both the mind and prana simultaneously.

Take the example of blind people who cannot see, yet have concepts of the objects that surround them. They can identify things, they still see with the inner mind. Some people think that blind people cannot perceive colours. That is incorrect; they do perceive colours and can often identify them. They dream in colours, not in black and white as many people may think. If they are not able to see with the physical eyes, and they have never seen colours with their physical eyes, what is it that has given them the understanding of objects and colours? That is the luminosity of mind known as tejas.

The state of swapna, subconscious, is the experience of two dimensions at the same time. There is awareness of the visible and also the invisible, the manifest and the unmanifest, the gross world and the subtle world, in harmony with each other. This state is a meditative state. From distraction of consciousness in the world of name, form and idea, there is concentration of the mental faculties in the swapna state.

Sushupti avastha

In the state of sushupti, deep sleep, there is peace and stillness in the consciousness. In psychology, sushupti can be compared to the unconscious realm of mind. In the *Mandukya Upanishad*, the state of sushupti is known as *prajna*: the deep, thoughtless and dreamless condition of consciousness. In this state, everything vanishes. It is a dimension where time, space and object become totally still. In that state of unconsciousness, there is no concept of time, object or space.

Modern research says the state of deep sleep takes place around 2 am to 4 am, for two hours. The hormone melatonin, secreted by the pineal gland, takes one into a deeper state of relaxation where peace, rest and stillness are attained.

When one sits quietly for half an hour, without doing anything, agitation arises and one continuously looks at the clock thinking, 'How much time has gone by?' However, in the sushupti state, eight hours can pass swiftly with no awareness of the environment, the senses, the sense objects, and no creation of mental imagery either. There comes a point where

one begins to experience *shanti*, peace, as all the tensions are forgotten in the state of sleep. Although there is no awareness of peace in the unconscious state of sleep, shanti is still being experienced. If the awareness could remain active, there would be realization of what peace is. To become aware of sleep is not lucid dreaming; it is knowing that 'I am awake when I sleep'.

In the state of unconsciousness, the mind is not connected with the senses and the external objects. Instead, the energy of the mind remains contained in itself. Such containment of the energy of the mind is the state of nidra. This can be experienced in yoga nidra. Often people will lie down, hear the first line of instructions, 'Lie down comfortably', and wake up upon hearing the last line of instructions, 'Hari Om Tat Sat, the practice of yoga nidra is now complete, please sit up.' They are often astonished and are sure they did not sleep, but were awake the whole time, following the instructions. Where did the mind go? That is the state of *nidra*, sushupti, prajna, the state whereby a few minutes of peace was experienced by disconnecting from the surroundings. If a connection with some agitation remained, the spikes in consciousness would not allow that experience of peace. Thus, even if the awareness is not conscious during yoga nidra, it is helpful to realize that this experience represents the first flutters of peace in one's life. In nidra, the awareness of the manifest world is withdrawn to see the invisible within. When the awareness encounters the invisible, there is no direct cognition. Thus, in yoga the state of nidra is called *shoonya*, nothingness or void. The experience of shoonya and nidra is a state of meditation.

Nidra and prajna represent the state of consciousness where the ideas of time, space and object dissolve completely, yet one's awareness, knowledge, and wisdom remain. It is this wisdom aspect that is known as prajna. In this state, only the luminosity of the mind is experienced, not that of prana or the senses. 'Prajna' means to know. The state where total



knowledge is contained within the mind, and the mind is aware of it, is prajna. That is the unconscious state.

Sushupti indicates the absence of conscious awareness from the senses and their association with sense objects. In this state, the senses have been disconnected from the mind. When one withdraws oneself, the agitations of the senses and the mind lessen. When one is active, the mind and the senses are agitated, but when one becomes internalized and is able to balance and restrain the mind, one becomes free from the effects of mental agitation. This happens when one sleeps at night. There is no awareness of the sensory experiences; instead, the mental awareness becomes powerful.

Turiya avastha

Modern psychologists have started to speak of a fourth state, the superconscious mind. For westerners this idea of the superconsciousness is new; however, for easterners it is not a new territory on the map of consciousness. The fourth state, turiya, is identified as being beyond the levels of conscious and unconscious, whereupon one experiences omniscient consciousness, bliss, peace and purity.

In the state of turiya, one becomes completely alert in the total field of consciousness. Alertness means a sharpening of all the faculties that are inherent in one's personality, being attentive and ready to move or act in any direction necessary. The self-luminosity of the *chetana tattwa*, the totality of consciousness, is experienced, where one is the observer, the *drashta*, of past, present and future.

In the *Mandukya Upanishad* also, the fourth state has been named turiya and is described as the transcendental state where the mind has separated from the influences of the senses and sense objects. Here the mind is not influenced by its *sankalpas*, volitions, or its *vasanas*, desires, obsessions and attachments. It is free from it all, and continues to exist as an entity beyond the influence and gravitational pull of time, space and object.

The ancient yogis have identified this state as one that lies beyond the unconscious, in which the mind breaks all its barriers. In turiya, one is able to see the internal world and the external world as one; it does not differentiate between the two. Right now, there is a separation between the experience of the external world and the internal world. There is a push and pull between the mind and the senses, and that is perceived as this separation.

With the end of this separation, the mind becomes balanced, its agitations cease and its wandering tendency lessens; the mind force awakens. The mind becomes so powerful that it can influence the environment. The mind assumes total consciousness and becomes the witness to the senses. It becomes its own witness and directs its behaviour as well as that of the senses.

When the turiya state is attained, one can still function efficiently in the world and not be influenced by the negative effects. For example, even while working in a construction site, one can maintain peace, purity, integrity and bliss due to the developed state of mind. Swami Satyananda says, "There is no peace and quiet in the Himalayas and there is no noise and distraction in the world." Whatever is experienced is one's own projection. If the mind is allowed to be swayed by the influences of the world, this reflects the waking state where distractions and dissipations are rampant. If the mind is pure and at peace, then even in the middle of the Munger marketplace, the peace and silence will remain. However, if the mind is impure, dissipated and distracted, then even in the most remote cave in the Himalayas, that disturbance and distraction will be felt. If the state of peace and purity can be maintained in every life situation and condition, one has attained the turiya state.

The state of turiya comes only when one has gone past jagrat, swapna and nidra. Turiya is beyond the known patterns of the individual mind in which the barriers of time, space and object do not exist. Yogis have maintained that the mind has the potential to experience transcendence, for it is nothing but a form of energy. That is the theory of consciousness.

The sages and the siddhas attain the state of turiya spontaneously. Once the individual attains this state, the boundaries of time do not apply. When such siddhas look upon a person, they see an open book, not a limited individual. They can look at all the chapters of one's life, and know it completely, both the past and the future.

Turiya represents the three faculties of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, but as they are contained in the structure of prakriti. Beyond turiya, there is the other state of pure consciousness known as *turiyateeta* which has no relation with prakriti at all; it is beyond the transcendental state.

In this way, the ancient yogic system of thought has carried the concepts of mind and consciousness beyond the realms of psychology. The subject has been explained in depth through contemplation and experiential understanding by the sages. It is these thoughts that modern psychologists are now trying to understand and research, and even adopting, giving psychology a firmer base to work with.

Atmatattwa: the sixth element

There is another aspect of consciousness. In addition to the pancha mahabhootas: *prithvi*, earth; *apas*, water; *agni*, fire; *vayu*, air; and *akasha*, space, a sixth element has been identified, which goes beyond the gross elements, known as the atmatattwa. *Tattwa* means element and *atma* means spirit; *atmatattwa* is the element that is aware, sentient and conscious.

In the para realm, atmatattwa becomes Paramatma. *Param* means great, thus *Paramatma* is the great or highest spirit. In the transcendental dimension, atmatattwa is the Paramatma tattwa, the divine element. In the apara dimension, atmatattwa becomes the individual jivatma tattwa, interacting with the senses, people, environment, and the world, assuming a more contained from. In the higher dimension it is Paramatma, the divine, the transcendental. In the lower dimension it is jivatma, the contained, the finite.

Two examples illustrate the atmatattwa. In the Bible is the story of Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses had the vision of the burning bush, the flame upon the bush. The bush was on fire, but it was not burning; there was no charcoal and no smoke. The second example is an incident that occurred fifteen days prior to Guru Poornima in 2010, the year following Swami Satyananda's mahasamadhi. A *deepak*, a small lamp, was lit in Gurupeeth of Satyam Udyan at Ganga Darshan in Munger. For sixteen days that deepak burned without changing of the wick, without putting a drop of oil in, and without manipulating it in any way. The light continued to burn continuously day and night for sixteen days, and was witnessed by a number of people in the ashram. How did that happen? What made that flame continue? Why was the oil not consumed? Why was the wick not burned?

While there are vast differences between these two events, both incidents point to an element that is beyond the material elements perceived by the material senses. In tantra it is said that this element is the atmatattwa,



which one could call the 'God element'. In fact, research is currently being conducted in Switzerland to discover the God principle. Atmatattwa can be considered exactly that: the God principle, the God gene, the sixth element, and the controller of all the other elements.

Consciousness as the sixth element is the container of the whole of creation and the experiences that are part of this creative process. That is the Sadashiva aspect. *Sada* means forever, permanent, unchanging, unalterable; it does not decay, it does not grow, it is always the same and constant. *Shiva* means that which is auspicious, benevolent, and good. Thus, Sadashiva indicates constant auspicious awareness.

Realizing the totality of consciousness

The aim of a spiritual aspirant is to develop awareness of the totality of the mind and its stages of consciousness. Once the awareness has spread throughout the mind and is no longer compartmentalized, one begins to work at the level of consciousness, and that is known as realization. The concept of normal realization is from jagrat to nidra, and self-realization is from turiya to turiyateeta.

What is the importance of this difference between realization and self-realization? Realization is not a permanent state; it is a flash of understanding or insight in which one is able to see the whole picture and not simply a part of the picture. The term realization, when

associated with the states of jagrat, swapna and sushupti, represents the expansion of the lower consciousness, the expansion of perception in the gross dimension. If one becomes aware of the nature of the mind, the emotional structure, the behaviour and the responses, the personal ambitions, aspirations and desires, one is then able to manage and channel them to positively transform one's personality, responses, behaviour and attitude. That is realization. Understanding the process of the mind and body is termed realization.

Understanding the process of the spirit is termed self-realization or spiritual realization. Self-realization is not a permanent, fixed or defined state, but a progressive state of consciousness. It is an evolving state of knowing and understanding. In the state of realization at the level of jagriti, swapna and sushupti, one is aware of oneself as an individual; however, in the state of self-realization extending into turiya and turiyateeta, there is a merger of the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness.

Requirement for realization

How does one train oneself to be able to realize the consciousness? What are the requirements for bringing the mind to its full potential? The first requirement is shanti, peace, a state where the entire antahkarana is at ease with itself. Peace means absolute harmony, absolute tranquillity of mind, and it is from this peaceful state that the mental energies can be harmonized and balanced. If one becomes caught up in the current of a vritti, in the expression of an emotion or desire, all tranquillity of mind is lost. If the mind and mental energies go haywire there is no peace.

Peace is the first and the foremost requirement if one wants to transcend the mind and utilize the faculties of consciousness. When peace is attained, all the expressions of the mind are stabilized and harmonized, alignment of the mental energies takes place, the gunas become balanced and disturbances are totally eliminated. It is the faculty of awareness that leads one to peace, as that is its final outcome. With peace comes the understanding of contentment, *santosha*, as there is no craving left in the mind. Contentment is a natural outcome of peace, a state where the mind is free from all cravings, whether pertaining to manas, buddhi, chitta, or ahamkara. The state of being insecure is overcome. The identification with the body and sense objects is also overcome.

Self-awareness deals with the expressions of the mind and personality in relation to the senses, the sense objects and the material, manifest world. When one moves from self-awareness to realization, the experiences change, they become more internal. They are not associated with the senses or the sense objects; they are associated with the deeper structure of the individual psyche. As the level of awareness expands, nothing remains unknown, whether it is an unconscious, subconscious or conscious activity. A light in the room at night illuminates the entire room, not only one specific part of the room. Similarly, in the state of expanded awareness, the entire subtle personality, composed of all three states of consciousness, is illuminated and there is no division or barrier.

In the usual waking state, there is a total lack of understanding of the processes of the unconscious and subconscious, with some practical understanding of the conscious in relation to the body and mind. However, with increased awareness and realization, the conscious, subconscious and unconscious states are seen as one state of consciousness, without any barrier. Becoming free of this barrier is becoming free of the concept of 'I and this', the state of duality. The moment duality falls away, one enters into the turiya state and becomes free from the fetters of maya and the bondages of *avidya*, ignorance. This is the state where the connection is made between the individual consciousness and the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent consciousness; the state where the individual soul returns to unity with the cosmic consciousness.

7

Gunas and Bhavas



From the state of cosmic consciousness to manifest consciousness, Shakti continues to work until the individual soul is created and the human being comes forth. In this manifest world, the human being is subject to the conditions of prakriti as nature. The permutations and combinations of the elements result in the emergence of three gunas or qualities to which all individuals are subject.

Gunas of Prakriti

The *gunas* are traits, characters, or qualities that endow each personality and determine the nature of the individual. These gunas are broadly classified as tamas, rajas and sattwa. Although they are only three, their combination within every individual results in a distinct and unique nature. It is helpful to understand the gunas and nature according to the tantric viewpoint, as the gunas control the koshas, governing their actions and expressions and becoming the cause of karmas.

Sattwic means without bondage, free, without conditioning. *Sattwa* represents luminosity and freedom from the influences of Shakti, where the character is not being bound or held by Shakti. In sattwa, a specific character is not being developed for the individual. To be *tamasic* means to be deeply conditioned; tamas does not mean negative. In tamas, a specific

character is developed. *Rajas* means dynamism and a state of activity. The rajasic nature becomes the dynamic, active principle that allows one to shift from a conditioned state to an unconditional state or from an unconditional state to a conditioned state. The rajasic state allows one to move from the state of tamas to the state of sattwa.

Imagine dreaming of constructing a perfect house, but without sufficient resources to build it. Therefore, instead of constructing a house, a readymade house is purchased. The house is completely different from what was envisioned. It is not the dream home seen in the mind's eye, but it is what one must live in, and it cannot be changed. If one does not want to live in that house, another one must be constructed independently, and for that the resources must be gathered.

In this example, the pre-constructed house represents the tamasic conditioning of the mind and nature by Adishakti, acting in the form of Prakriti and maya. The dream house of the mind's eye represents the unconditioned and free state of sattwa, and rajas is seen as gathering of resources, representing the determined, dynamic activity that goes into creating the perfect place to live, the sattwic state. Sattwa is the house at one end of the road, tamas is the house at the opposite end of the road, and in the middle is rajas, the road itself, the path that must be traversed.

Bhavas

The tantric journey begins with an understanding of the individual nature, before any change or transformation can take place. When the individual comes forth through creation, traits of character develop resulting from the gunas. Individuals are exposed to various experiences in life which foster a different character in each one. Certain experiences may lead some to become negative, destructive, and more tamasic, while other experiences and conditions may lead to a positive, happy and joyous nature. The unique nature of each individual can be seen in children and their varying responses to the scenarios of life. It is important for one to consider the influences and opportunities that have made one what one is today.

These opportunities and experiences create the conditioning of a habit and, consequently, a nature of personality. In tantra, this nature is known as *bhava*; the individual self experiencing different types or moods of consciousness that develop a particular feeling within itself, and that feeling determines the character and nature of the individual. According to tantra, there are three bhavas: *pashubhava*, the animal nature; *veerabhava*, the warrior nature; and *divyabhava*, the divine nature. These three types of bhava are influenced by various combinations of the three gunas: a predominance of tamoguna produces pashubhava; a predominance of rajoguna produces veerabhava; and a predominance of sattwaguna produces divyabhava.

Pashubhava

In the process of manifestation, the individual is subject to the influences of maya as the power that directs the functions of the created and the known dimension. In maya, there is a state of hypnosis with the surroundings, the world, the senses and the sense objects. In this state of hypnosis the mind is clouded, and in that cloudiness a particular type of conditioned mentality sets. This conditioned mentality experienced and expressed on a daily basis is known in tantric language as 'pashubhava', the nature of an animal controlled and directed by Shiva with the noose of Shakti.

An individual who is tamasic by nature has a strong pashubhava and is under the control of passions, desires and karmas rather than wisdom, and lives a life of bondage. This bondage is represented by attachment to family and property, and the dominance of selfish tendencies. Pashubhava, the animal nature, is guided by instincts and not by logic. The majority of individuals live in pashubhava with a predominance of animal instincts, even those who would otherwise be considered intelligent.

According to tantra and yoga, there are four basic instincts of life:

Ahara: The craving for fulfilment is the first instinct and is known as 'ahara'. It is represented by desires and wants that do not follow a logical process; they are instinctive and spontaneous. Even a newborn baby with little understanding experiences craving, need, and desire; this is the first instinct. The craving to fulfil oneself physically, mentally, spiritually, sensually, psychically and spiritually begins with desire. Desires are not to be considered negative; they are inherent and natural expressions of life that need to be managed by discriminating between the desires that lead towards limited expression and awareness, and those that lead towards expansive expression and awareness. For aspirants wishing to progress in spiritual life, this differentiation and distinction must be made in the course of life. Thus, ahara, craving, is the first instinct of the hypnotized mentality, constituting the pashubhava.

Nidra: 'Nidra' is the second instinct and means disconnection or sleep. When consciousness is disconnected from the sense objects, the state of sleep comes in. In the sleep state, one is physically disconnected from the senses and the outer environment, and experiences peace and rest in deep consciousness. This can be viewed as a safety-valve in life, for without nidra, the entire brain and mind of the individual would become overloaded with information that one would not be able to manage. Thus, it is a basic requirement for consciousness to disconnect from association with sense objects. It is not a voluntary disconnection, but rather an unconscious, instinctual disconnection of the consciousness from sense objects.

Bhaya: The third basic instinct is fear, or 'bhaya'. This fear may be of loss or lack in life. Remember, desires are the outcome of a condition of lack due to disconnection with the cosmic identity, therefore fear is also related to absence and perceived lack within oneself. Modern psychology has defined many types



of fear experienced by people, for example, those who refuse to travel by airplane due to intense fear that the plane will fall from the sky, fear of spiders, fear of open spaces, and so on. In this manner, several types of fear have been described; however, as an instinct, fear is something much deeper than the superficial expressions found in life. The last vestige of fear is the fear of death and dying. This final imprint of fear involves the fear of losing our associations, connections, attachments, comfort, security and safety; the fear of not existing. The fear of death and dying holds a very deep place in the mind. It leads to the development of various insecurities, including lack of strength and clarity.

Maithuna: The fourth instinct is sexual activity, 'maithuna'. It is considered an instinct, as when passions rise, logic is inevitably clouded. There is a statement: *Kamaturanam na bhayam na lajja* – "A person in the throes of passion knows no fear or shame." It is such an overpowering force that it causes the clarity of mind to disappear entirely, and sex becomes a completely physical, sensorial act. It clouds one's decision-making ability and things are

judged in the light of that act; even the feeling of love is translated as sex. When one feels love for somebody, maithuna arises as a natural desire in the mind, for love is never understood in the right manner. Love is always associated with union between male and female principles and interpreted as involving oneself in sexual activity, for sensorial and sensual satisfaction. Therefore the experience is known as 'falling in love' rather than 'rising in love', meaning that love has been reduced to the lower, gross, physical, material instinct.

These four basic instincts are those that the pashu mentality faces in life. Pashubhava represents the immature mind; instincts are expressions of the immature mind where it cannot discriminate between what to do and what not to do. This also characterizes the state of tamas in the mind, as there is no clarity or understanding, only selfish desire. Motivation comes from the selfish nature in the form of desires, passions, expectations, needs, and the clutch of ambition driven by the dictates of the mind.

The classical Indian epic *Mahabharata*, tells the story of two opposing groups: the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Pandavas are the good, pious group and the Kauravas are the negative, destructive group. The eldest brother in the Kaurava group is called Duryodhana. He is asked, "Why do you commit so much sin and disturbance? Why do you not live in peace and harmony with everyone? Why are you keen to create conflict between the two factions? Why do you want to create war to obtain a kingdom? Why can't you live peacefully and coexist with others?" Duryodhana answers, "I know what is right and what is wrong, but I am not inclined towards the right, and I can't free myself from the wrong. I know what is right, what is appropriate, what is just, what the eternal duty or *dharma* is, but I have no attraction for these things. I know what is wrong, what sin, destruction and death are, yet I cannot detach myself from their influence and attraction."

The statement of Duryodhana represents pashubhava, the mind of an animal, which works to fulfil itself under the influence of instincts due to the gross, material personality. Until there is an awakening and the realization that 'I can become something better', this gross state of mind continues. According to tantra, this tamasic state of mind predominates until the age of sixteen. The present-day environment, however, does not allow a shift from the state of tamas, whether at the age of sixteen, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty or seventy.

There is such a heavy influence and hypnotization by the surroundings and influence of maya that it leads to a deeply-rooted belief that fulfilment lies outside and that it can be satisfied by following the instincts and ambitions. The hypnosis leads one to believe that social and economic prosperity is the highest achievement, despite having a shattered mind and disturbed emotions. Happiness is sought outside of oneself, guided by the desire to 'become something' and to be accepted and recognized by society. After all, what does society give an individual and what does the individual expect? There are three things expected by the individual when interacting with society: recognition, friendship and companionship. These three are the things sought for in society, and seeking these is the result of the instinctive mind.

Hence, the four instincts of craving, sleep, fear and sexuality are expressed in the course of life from the time of birth to the time of death. Some may become obsessive about fulfilling these instincts: to fulfil the need of sexuality, to try and compensate for fears and insecurities, and to disconnect and reconnect with society again and again. As the individual goes deeper and becomes more obsessive in attempting to fulfil these instincts, the mind becomes more material and gross. As a result, the negative tendencies gain more strength.

Take the illustration of a garden where there are many large and shady trees, under which the grass does not grow. The grass and the little plants trying to survive find it difficult to grow in the shade. Similarly, when the negative tendencies are strong and powerful, they



become like the huge tree. They block out the light. In the shade of these negative tendencies, the positive qualities are unable to flower. The positive qualities may germinate, but they are weak, not strong. Therefore, from the tantric perspective, the state of tamas creating pashubhava has to be overcome by managing the four basic instincts of life, and allowing the grass of positive qualities to grow..

Veerabhava

Once the ability to manage the four basic instincts of life has come about, the second bhava arises with the degree of maturity attained, known as veerabhava, the mentality of a warrior. *Veera* means warrior and here tamas is converted into rajas, action. Performance, drive, motivation and action become an integrated part of life, thus veerabhava is a product of rajoguna. These actions guide the behaviour and develop the character of the individual. The main attributes of veerabhava are self-restraint and self-control, despite the influence of tamoguna and pashubhava.

Tantra says that once maturity is attained and one has gained the ability to observe and recognize the surrounding world and its influences, the effort must then be made to rectify the defects, imbalances and distractions in life by fighting against the influences considered to be unhealthy. That constitutes the attitude of a warrior; the desire for change and the ability to work towards that change. The warrior is trying to swim against the current, and this requires the use of all the force at one's disposal. Therefore, all the practices of yoga and tantra are used in this stage. Whether it is asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, yoga nidra, prana vidya, mantra or meditation, these are used when the individual has the motivation to fight against the existing conditions. When one is able to bring about some change in one's life through such personal effort, no matter how great or small, one moves into a stable and peaceful type of mentality. The conflict within oneself, with society and the environment reduces.

In the life of a spiritual aspirant, as the mind goes through a process of purification and elimination of negative traits, the negativity can become powerful. At such times, when the positive traits are subdued by the negative



forces, the bhava of a veera, a warrior, is to confront the negativity by accepting, observing, understanding and altering the negative principle. The effort is made to alter negative traits into positive and creative traits. The warrior is ready, willing and determined to change the detrimental, limiting, destructive conditions within. The attitude of a warrior does not mean fighting with oneself; it means that one remains unaffected by whatever one is faced with by protecting the virtuous and the positive within oneself. Thus, a warrior does not fight against the negative; the warrior protects the positive.

Swami Satyananda says that if one wants to radiate light, either become the lamp or become a mirror that reflects the light of the lamp. It is a mammoth feat to become the lamp itself; however, the ability to become a mirror in order to reflect the light or deflect the negativity is possible. The negativity can be deflected and one can remain unaffected by it.

The neutral, reflective qualities of a mirror are inherent in both Maya and the individual. However, while under the influence of tamoguna and pashubhava, what is reflected from Maya to the individual is a false identity created by her limiting conditions. Maya also has the ability to reflect the light of Shiva himself, but this can only be seen by manifest beings once her limitations and bonds have been broken and her potential has been discovered.

In the process of transforming from the state of pashubhava to that of veerabhava, one begins to see that they are but a reflection in the mirror of maya, and one's negative, destructive qualities and instinctive behaviours become apparent. Once these traits have been accepted and understood, the process of changing the pashu nature begins through the determined effort to reflect the positive and beneficial, and deflect the negative and the destructive.

There is an example from the life of Lord Buddha. A person approached him and began to verbally abuse him with every insult he could muster, and continued to do so for one hour. For one hour Buddha sat quietly, and when the man finished his ranting and raving, Buddha said, "Answer one question of mine." The man asked, "What?" Buddha said, "If you go to somebody with a gift and the recipient of the gift does not accept the gift, what you do?" The man said, "I take back the gift." Buddha said, "You have just gifted me a lot of abuse, and I do not want it, so I am returning it to you. You can take it back." This demonstrates the attitude of a true warrior, the peaceful warrior. The violent warrior will react and grab the abusive person by the neck and give him two tight slaps. In this way, aggression and negativity will build and destruction will take place. Conversely, as a peaceful warrior, one can deflect anything and remain unaffected by it. That is veerabhava, the mindset which is able to deflect all the destructive and negative influences which normally affect the mind, behaviour and responses. When the capacity to deflect is developed, the internal negativity ceases to have strength and grip, and the positive is allowed to mature and manifest.

Divyabhava

The third is divyabhava, the divine or transcendental mentality characterized by the feeling of transcendence, peace, purity and upliftment. When the positive qualities

are manifesting and one is able to protect the positive, one enters this stage of mentality. This transcendental mind is not influenced or affected by situations or circumstances of the world. It is not affected by the experiences of the senses. It is not affected by the cravings of the mind or sense objects. Rather, it maintains its own balance and purity. This is the mentality that the tantrics try to attain through their effort and sadhana. Sattwaguna produces divyabhava, hence divyabhava represents the sattwic nature: luminous, pure, transcendental, peaceful, harmonious and balanced.

In divyabhava, there is an identification with the higher consciousness, known as enlightenment or realization. In this mentality, the gross tendencies of life and the mind have been transformed and transcended, and the beneficial, benevolent and auspicious faculties have been developed. Thus, the mind is not bound any more by cause and effect; it is no longer subject to causality. The mind does not become the cause of strife and it does not react to anything destructive or negative; it simply rejects it, and identifies with the *Shiva tattwa*, the element of consciousness.



In divyabhava, one follows the yamas and niyamas such as *ahimsa*, non-violence; *satya*, truth; *asteya*, non-stealing; *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness; *brahmacharya*, centred in higher consciousness; and *Ishwara pranidhana*, awareness of the divine, as duties of life in harmony with the natural, pious, virtuous personality.

In the process of evolution, the pashu individual has to move from the instinctive mentality of pashubhava to the pure mentality of divyabhava. In divyabhava, a connection is made with *pati*, the master, by transcending the *pasha*, noose, of Prakriti and the mind. Therefore, according to tantra, in the course of spiritual life, transformation through effort occurs twice: once from pashubhava to veerabhava, and the second time from veerabhava to divyabhava; from instinctive to warrior to a balanced, harmonious and divine mindset. To develop the type of mentality that is free, pure and balanced, different codes of conduct have been defined in the tantras, which are called *acharas* (see Section 3).

When recognition of the inborn pashu nature dawns, this nature has to be managed, altered and transformed to attain balance and harmony. By making the effort to remove the weeds and thorns from the mind and replace them by planting good seeds, the positive seeds can then germinate in the future. The fruit of those positive seeds is a peaceful, blissful and stable condition of life. This is a life in which one becomes an observer of everything that life offers and takes away, without being subject to the attractions and rejections, pains and pleasures. At this stage, equanimity, balance and harmony of mind are maintained.

Conditioning of life

The traits of personality develop during the experience of life when the individual is subjected to different influences. These influences can come from the family, society, culture, philosophy or religion to create a specific conditioning of the human personality. This conditioning is so deep that anything

that goes against its grain is not accepted by the individual. A barrier of non-acceptance comes up before experiences or ideas that are different, new, or that could affect the previous ideas, concepts and conditionings. There is a natural, unconscious rejection reflected in one's behaviour.

It is a fantasy of the human mind to think that everything is based on faith, devotion, love, compassion and dedication. People fantasize about love, as they have never experienced true love, only sensuality. Compassion is fantasized about as true compassion has not been experienced; it has always has been a self-oriented, self-gratifying and self-directed action. Many good qualities are fantasized about as they have never been experienced in life, and thus a craving arises. If these qualities were experienced, there would be no craving. The presence of the craving indicates that they are absent in one's life due to sensorial conditioning. If true love was attained, ideas such as 'How do I develop my love?' 'How do I develop my compassion?' 'How do I connect with other people?' would not be present.

Love, compassion and other positive qualities are not part of the tamasic conditioning; they are a part of sattwa. Sensual and physical love creates binding through attachment, possessiveness and heartache, while sattwic love is free of these bindings; it is spiritual and transformative. Similarly, in the conditioned state of mind, the compassion experienced is not true compassion; it is only caring for a few near and dear ones when they are sick, whereas no sentiment is offered to those sick and dying people who are not personally known. Thus, all the good qualities become conditioned by tamas and are lived as personal expressions in the form of the bhavas.

Movement from tamas to sattwa

Generally, the gunas of the individual cannot be changed. To bring about a change or transformation of the gunas, there must be an awareness of the *karmas*, actions. However, the negative influences of the gunas can be reduced to a great extent if the bhava can be changed. Tamas can be relegated to the background with the help of rajas, and rajas can, in turn, be relegated to the background by enhancing sattwa. Here, the change or transformation takes place by reducing the strength or intensity of one guna and increasing the strength and intensity of another guna. If the strength and intensity of the rajasic guna is reduced, the sattwic guna will be stronger and more dominant. Finally, when the aspirant attains divyabhava, having strengthened the sattwic nature, the gunas are merged into one, resulting in liberation from karma. The states, experiences and reactions of life are all the products of one's nature; the gunas are not responsible for them. The tantric viewpoint in this regard is that one can change the nature, but not the gunas.

Ultimately one must become established in either tamas or in sattwa. It is not accurate to describe an individual as rajasic, because the rajasic nature is used to either become more tamasic or more sattwic. Rajas is an action which leads one to either point A: sattwa, or point B: tamas. Therefore, the tamasic character is seen in the distracted, instinctive, and destructive mentality belonging to pashubhava. The sattwic character is seen in the pure, luminous, balanced, harmonious mentality belonging to divyabhava. The rajasic qualities of motivation, determination, willpower, aggression, arrogance to effect change, belong to veerabhava. Rajas is a process of movement only.

The basic principle of lifelong learning in tantra involves evolving from the tamasic and conditioned state of mind, behaviour and performance into a rajasic and dynamic state of mind, behaviour and performance. The effort is then made to evolve further into a sattwic state of mind, and when one moves into sattwa, one can experience the peace and luminosity of a life free from limitations and conditions. The awareness of the inner nature increases manifold until the spirit is experienced within and the true self emerges forth.

8

The Subtle Body



One of the perceived limitations of a human being is its physical body, with all its needs, urges and functions. On the tantric path, however, the body becomes a mighty vehicle on the journey towards liberation. For a pashu, the body is its temple. It houses both the individual identity and the Shiva tattwa. Thus, it is the means through which the material and spiritual worlds both can be experienced. When striving to transcend the base, animalistic tendencies and come nearer to one's true self, the vast potential waiting within the body must be explored. The discovery of this potential starts with understanding the physiology of the body from the tantric perspective.

The tantric understanding of the body is a unique one. The tantras say that although the body is composed of matter and survives on matter, within the material body exist four more bodies. All of them together allow one to live and express the dimension of individual experience. The five bodies are known as *pancha sharira*, also called *pancha kosha*, literally 'five sheaths'. These are the various spheres in which a human being lives at any given moment and they range from gross to subtle. The pancha kosha are: annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijnanamaya kosha, and anandamaya kosha.

Annamaya kosha

Annamaya kosha is the physical, material or gross body of matter nourished by *anna*, food, which is also matter. *Maya* in this context means 'comprised of'. Annamaya kosha is the grossest level of existence, and is referred to as the 'food sheath' due to its dependence on food, water and air.

Everything in creation is the result of different permutations and combinations of the *pancha tattwas*, five elements. The moment the pancha tattwas of the body are destroyed, the body has no existence. Similarly, all the trees and plants, food materials and animals are made of the pancha tattwas. For the preservation and sustenance of the pancha tattwas, one consumes grains and other kinds of anna, including animals, which are themselves a product of combinations of the pancha tattwas. Things made of the five elements sustain other matters made from the same five elements. Annamaya kosha is not nourished by air alone, as hunger cannot be satisfied with air, fire, or water. In order to satisfy hunger, something substantial must be eaten to give nourishment and strength. What is eaten is called anna, thus the annamaya sheath is known as the dimension of matter. The entire material existence could be seen as nothing but a transformed form of food. This is why the physical body has been called the annamaya kosha.

Pranamaya kosha

Pranamaya kosha is the energy field of an individual. It is the subtle body which is made of energy, thus the level of experience here is more subtle than the physical body, which it pervades and supports. Pranamaya kosha is in turn supported by the subtler koshas. Together, the physical and pranic bodies constitute the basic human structure, which is referred to as the *atmapuri*, the city of the soul. They form the vessel for the experience of the higher bodies. The pranamaya kosha is described as the pranic, astral and etheric counterpart to the physical body. It has almost the same shape and dimensions as its flesh and blood vehicle. Just as the material body is in the form of a person, similarly, this vital self is in the shape of a person. Clairvoyants see the pranic body as a coloured, luminous cloud or aura around the body, radiating from within the physical body, like the sun flaring from behind the eclipsing moon. The pranic body is subtler than the physical body and takes longer to disintegrate.

Within the pranic body there is a vast circuit of *nadis*, meridians or energy channels. It is through these nadis that the prana shakti flows throughout pranamaya kosha. According to yoga, there are 72,000 nadis carrying *prana*, vital force, through each and every part of the body. Nadis are generally divided into two groups, gross and subtle. In tantra, one finds the mention of thirty-five million nadis which integrate all the five koshas. These thirty-five million nadis do not mean the physical arteries, nerves and veins of the body. Rather, they are the channels, paths or flows through which movement or communication occurs between prana, consciousness and gross and subtle energies. A further breakdown of theses nadis has been made of seventy-two thousand nadis. Of these seventy-two thousand nadis, seventy-two are considered to be important. Of these, the breakdown continues to eighteen nadis, then ten nadis, and of these ten, only three are considered to be the most important. The single most vital nadi, however, is the brahma nadi, situated inside the sushumna pathway.

The three main nadis are known as ida, pingala and sushumna. According to yogic theory, *pingala nadi* is the channel or flow of prana shakti or vital energy. *Ida nadi* is the channel or flow of gross and subtle chitta shakti, mental energy. *Sushumna* is the quality or consequence of a balanced flow within ida and pingala nadis. When chitta shakti and prana shakti begin to flow evenly through ida and pingala, the sushumna nadi then awakens. The brahma nadi awakens only after the awakening of sushumna.

According to tantra, the experience of awakening the nadis and the rise of internal energy is the symptom of the awakening of

the brahma nadi. Even after the awakening of ida, pingala and sushumna, the brahma nadi is not stimulated or awakened until sushumna is sufficiently stimulated and strengthened. When brahma nadi is awakened, the energy rises and spreads throughout the whole body like an electric current. It is this energy that is known as *kundalini shakti*.

Manomaya kosha

The third sheath is *manomaya kosha*, the mental dimension. The level of experience is the conscious mind, which holds the two grosser koshas, annamaya and pranamaya, together as an integrated whole. Interaction with the senses and the world of sense objects takes place through the mind. It is the bridge between the outer and inner worlds, conveying the experiences and sensations of the external world to the intuitive body, and the influences of the causal and intuitive bodies to the gross body.

Vijnanamaya kosha

The fourth sheath is *vijnanamaya kosha*, the psychic level of experience, which relates to the subconscious and unconscious mind. This transcendental sphere pervades manomaya kosha, but it is subtler than manomaya kosha. Vijnanamaya kosha represents the experience of higher wisdom, higher knowledge, higher understanding. In vijnanamaya kosha, one is working in the realm of consciousness, in the subtle dimensions of consciousness rather than the gross mind. Higher knowledge is experienced in the realm of vijnanamaya kosha. According to many thinkers and analysts, vijnanamaya kosha implies intellect, intellectual evolution and development; however, that is not correct. Vijnanamaya kosha is a subtle state in which one establishes oneself after transcending the experiences of external and internal worlds. The state of vijnanamaya means experiencing the transcendental state while still remaining amid sensorial attractions. Vijnanamaya kosha is the link between the individual and universal mind. Inner knowledge comes to the conscious mind from this level, which leads to wisdom. When this sheath is awakened, one begins to experience life at an intuitive level, to see the underlying reality behind outer appearances.

Anandamaya kosha

The fifth and the last body is *anandamaya kosha*, the level of bliss and beatitude, representing the experience of the blissful nature of the



spirit; absolute, total contentment, with nothing lacking in life, *poornata*, fullness. This is the causal or transcendental body, the abode of the most subtle prana. It is a realm of *para* experience, knowledge of the Supreme Self. One attains this highest state only after being liberated from all bonds, external as well as internal.

All these five bodies are inseparable from each other. They are integrated with each other through the nadis, pranas and chakras. Tantra views the body in this manner and maintains that by awakening the *shakti* or power, regulating the pranas, balancing the mind and by exploring the lesser-known areas of consciousness, the horizons of awareness can be expanded to ultimately experience spiritual bliss, anandamaya kosha.

Transformation of consciousness and energy

In the process of creation, when the cosmic consciousness and energy want to manifest, they pass through a process of transformation involving the experience of the tattwas and chakras. Sahasrara chakra has been accepted as the main centre of the unmanifest in the individual body. The merger of Shiva and Shakti in sahasrara is the symbol of the unmanifest, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient state.

Mahat tattwa is said to be the first manifestation of the unmanifest expanding itself, experienced in the form of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. It appears as ajna chakra or guru chakra in the subtle body. Thereafter, the energy tattwa transforms itself from ajna chakra to the form of vishuddhi chakra. This centre is pervaded by the experience of *akasha tattwa*, the ether element. The further transformations of energy in this visible, manifest world occur along a clear, definite course. From vishuddhi to anahata, *vayu tattwa* or the air element, from anahata to manipura, *agni tattwa* or the fire element, from manipura to swadhisthana, *apas tattwa* or the water element, and from swadhisthana to mooladhara, *prithvi tattwa* or the earth element. *Kundalini* is the form of energy that manifests in mooladhara chakra, and is responsible for the attraction towards the physical, material or sensorial objects and worldly pleasures. This process describes the systematic chain of evolution from the unmanifest to the manifest states.

Relationship between koshas and chakras

All the five sheaths are pervaded by prana, which nourishes and sustains them and maintains their appropriate relationship. The movement of consciousness from one kosha to another is also achieved with the help of prana. One must use the faculty of prana shakti to move from any one state to another. The dimension of energy is like the neutral space in the gearbox of a car. With the activation of prana, one gains access to the physical, mental, psychic and spiritual dimensions.

The pancha kosha and the chakras are interrelated in a definite pattern. Mooladhara and swadhisthana are related to annamaya kosha. Manipura relates to pranamaya kosha, anahata to manomaya kosha and vishuddhi and ajna to vijnanamaya kosha. Sahasrara relates to anandamaya kosha which is the realm of the transcendental experience or para state.

Ascending through the koshas

The aim of an aspirant is to attain higher levels of consciousness by piercing through kosha after kosha. All yogic and tantric practices facilitate this aim. The five sheaths are interlinked and what happens in one affects the others. Purification of manomaya kosha results in clarity of thought and a balanced expression of emotions and ego. There is a better understanding of different conditions and situations, and greater creativity in the realms of *buddhi*, intellect, and *kriya*, action. When annamaya and pranamaya are cleansed, there is no longer any barrier between them and manomaya. Mind, body and energy can work in unison, and that tears the veil to vijnanamaya kosha. When the psychic sheath is accessed, concentration becomes refined and the deeper mind comes to the surface, purging

the deep-rooted samskaras and manifesting the psychic experiences and extrasensory perceptions. As vijnanamaya kosha is cleared, creativity becomes inspired and clarity comes intuitively and effortlessly. At this stage, the mind is actually and truly being emptied and prepared to experience anandamaya kosha.

The process of gradual ascent through the koshas may be reversed for the rare aspirant who is endowed with grace. In this case, the experience of anandamaya kosha brings about purification at all the other levels.

Temple of transcendence

According to tantra, the body is a spiritual tool to realize one's higher nature. This concept is not only limited to the physical body but encompasses the chakras contained in the body. The awakening of chakras induces an altered state of seeing the world in a different manner. With the awakening of each chakra, the interactive consciousness and the passive consciousness also awaken. The interactive consciousness is used to relate and understand the external world, while the passive consciousness looks within as the observer of all experiences. As the awakening of chakras takes place, the two forms of consciousness become one, giving rise to a new awareness. Working through the five koshas and the seven chakras, tantra can take one from the gross dimension to the transcendental dimension, and this process is part of tantric sadhana.

Tantra teaches the individual how to explore the body, how to use the faculties of the body, and how to realize the awakening of chakras and the shakti inherent in each chakra. The body is a temple to be utilized and not misused or abused. Smoking or overindulging in eating are common instances of misusing the body. To follow the natural rhythms of life is the way to properly use the body. If the lifestyle becomes unnatural, the body is abused and misused. The body is therefore seen as the only temple where a connection can be made with the real Self.

The human life form is the only form that has the inherent possibility to make this connection, thus tantra says this body is a special gift. To use it properly, one must maintain discipline and restraint in life, and avoid things that will destroy the body, nature and personality. Purity of heart and mind are the requirements in order to advance in tantra. Tantra recognizes the special character of this body as the temple of supreme consciousness, where one is able to realize the higher nature while living in the gross dimension. Therefore, the advice from tantra is to cultivate respect and awareness for the body, for the self and for life itself.



9

Returning to the Source



When Shakti plays the role of prakriti, the process of manifestation takes place and an infinite array of creation bounds forth. Among this multitude, the only created form that has the possibility to go back to its source and experience its real nature is the human form. In the human incarnation, the soul develops the capacity to take back the consciousness and energy from the manifest to the unmanifest dimension. This journey back to the source from where the comic play began, grants it freedom from bondage.

To explain and clarify this process of return or involution is the real purpose of tantra.

Sthiti shakti

In order to make the journey back, the individual soul must understand where it is at. It must understand the body it inhabits, both at the gross and subtle levels, it must understand its nature, its consciousness, and its relationship with the cosmos and the transcendental reality. Above all, it must understand the force that keeps the created world in its place. This is called *sthiti shakti*, the static energy responsible for the task of preservation.

The sthiti shakti keeps the manifest and unmanifest, gross and subtle under a discipline. Where there is no discipline, there can be no creation. Each one of the elements such as

earth, water and so on, is governed by certain *niyama*, rules, and has a particular condition, quality and state. If a change occurs in this rule or state, the elements will not remain the same. The capacity to preserve the status quo is due to sthiti shakti.

The other function of sthiti shakti is to establish a relationship between matter and soul. The relationship between soul and matter, or soul and the elements, is called creation. Neither humans nor other living beings can have their existence without this relationship between soul and matter. The existence of the body made of five elements, the experience of the five elements and functioning in the realm of the mind are not the functions of the soul, but of *maya shakti*, the energy of maya. It is through the energy, the power of maya that one receives experiences of the body, energy, consciousness, and of their qualities and defects. The soul is related to maya, and that state of relationship between the soul and maya is known as *jivatma*, individual soul.

The product of the soul's contact with matter, elements and creation is enjoyment. Creation itself is a state of enjoyment, and it provides the experiences of enjoyment both in manifest and unmanifest forms. The positive and negative qualities within any tattwa such as air, ether or fire are enjoyed. The experience of enjoyment is the consequence of the contact of the soul with the elements, matter and creation. This enjoyment produces karma. Enjoyment is of two kinds: the first is that which provides pleasant experiences, and second are those that provide painful experiences.

If an individual can experience enjoyment with awareness and can prevent the resulting karmas, this state of enjoyment is a movement towards evolution. However, if there is engrossment in enjoyment with intense and strong feelings of pleasure and pain, then the production of karmas begins. It is difficult to come out of this situation, and this leads to a decline and downfall. Human consciousness then comes under the influence of grosser, negative and tamasic qualities. Instead of being liberated, it becomes more and more subjugated and its bondage becomes stronger. Two words are important here: liberation and bondage. Not allowing karmas to be produced from enjoyment is a state of liberation. The state of bondage is created when enjoyment produces karmas.

Spiritual struggle

According to tantra, since the human being has the ability to attain liberation and rediscover the inner nature, maya has an even a stronger grip on him.

The purpose of maya is to create conditioning, to create limitations, to create areas where the senses can function and the mind can be used to enjoy the sense objects. The influence and nature of maya ultimately results in a decline of consciousness. As a person becomes more capable of releasing the noose of maya to realize the Self, maya becomes even more active. Looking into the biographies of enlightened beings, it is evident that these great souls have had to confront the last grip of maya in the form of the demonical and dark side of their nature. Jesus Christ had to face it; Lord Buddha had to face it. All those who walk the path of change and transformation have to face the final dark aspect, the dark nature of themselves, the 'dark night of the soul'. That is the last grip of maya; to create a distraction from the seeker's aspirations, purpose and goal. If it can achieve that purpose, maya reigns. If maya cannot achieve the purpose of keeping the individual bound to this material plane, it changes into yoga, and union is experienced.

An average individual can barely experience their own mind, let alone the spirit within. There is an awareness of the mind in the form of thoughts, ideas, desires and expectations among other manifestations such as logic, emotions, behaviours and attitudes. However, this awareness is only a superficial aspect of consciousness interacting in this world, just as the waves on the surface of the ocean are not the depth or expanse of the ocean, but only a small part. In

the same manner, as one begins to work through the conditionings and to break down the structures that define the character, the personality, the tamasic nature or other negative conditionings, the mind becomes free to explore the deeper aspects of consciousness.

The flow of maya is to carry the individual towards the world. There is no struggle against maya in this regard as it is a natural flow. However, when the individual wants to return to the source and discover the deeper spiritual nature, there is struggle with every stroke as one swims against the current of maya. Doubts creep in, inspiration falters, motivations dissipate, ideas and aims change, directions are lost and confusions set in. All this happens. It happens every day to everyone. There is indecisiveness over small issues due to lack of clarity on right and wrong choices.

People often ask, "What should I do with my life?" The answer is sought in someone else who does not know anything substantial about the questioner's life. God or the higher consciousness has given each person the capacity and intelligence to find their own solutions, yet others, who are also clueless, are sought for the solution to one's own life circumstances and challenges. The guru is often the target for such questions; however, the guru points the aspirant back inside to find their own solutions and wisdom. This example represents the level of disempowerment in people's lives due to the snare of maya. Confusion sets in, and the result is a dissipated nature of the mind caused by the duality of maya. The mind swings like a pendulum; it is never fixed in one place, but is always swinging from like to dislike, acceptance to non-acceptance, to be or not to be.

Sri Krishna states in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62): *Dhyayato vishayan pumsah sangasteshupajayate* – "When an individual thinks of objects, attachment to them arises." When one is aware of a particular sense object in the field of attention, no matter what the object is, the mind becomes associated and therefore attached to that particular object. With the association of mind, a particular emotion and response surfaces, which is most often desire. The desire to acquire, to obtain, to possess, and to have the object arises like a wave. With that, motivation and aggression take birth and build up in the nature and the character of the person who now wants to make this acquisition.

The sequence is first desire and then aggression: dynamism, motivation and aggression. When this aggressive nature becomes dominant in order to fulfil the desire, there is delusion. In that rush of desire, passion and aggression, the intellectual awareness of what is appropriate and not appropriate is lost. The individual forgets what is right and what is wrong and is only guided by the force of desire and passion. In that state, clarity of mind is absent as the desire for the object and the motivation to attain it have taken the predominant seat in the mind. Consequently, the inner peace is lost.

Once the inner peace is lost, one moves into a state that can be compared to death. The individual effectively gets caught up in the whirlpool of maya's illusion and endures a perpetual struggle, like Abhimanyu of the *Mahabharata* fame trapped in the *chakravyuha*, the impenetrable circle of soldiers. In the course of this struggle, there is attack from all sides by passion, anger and attachment, with no clear exit available. The individual is like an animal, a *pashu*, caught in a state of bondage or *pasha* of nature and Shakti. In this state, a process is required to enable the struggling aspirant to cut the pasha, to break free from this chakravyuha and become liberated from the state of *pashutva*, animality, and this is where tantra comes in.

Imagine emerging from a beautiful, comfortable room into the sun on a very hot day. The body reacts; one begins to feel the heat, to sweat, and to observe and analyze everything that one is experiencing in the body due to the heat of the sun. The urge to move out of the sun then arises. When one moves from a comfortable room into the hot midday sun, the state of comfort is gone, the state of peace is gone.



Similarly, as one moves into the realm of maya, the state of ease is gone and one must encounter, adjust and adapt to new situations, new environments and new climates. Then one has to live under the sun, sweating all the day. This is what has happened to the inherent transcendental nature with the separation of Shiva and Shakti; the transcendental nature has been limited to suffering the pleasures and pains of the material dimension. It is for the purpose of releasing this inherent nature from the bonds of maya that Shiva has propounded the philosophy of tantra to Parvati, for when the transcendental nature has the urge to move from the realm of maya, tantra becomes the vehicle for its liberation.

Two paths of life

The cause of one's affliction and suffering is desire and the associations created by the consciousness in this material world. If one can understand one's associations and desires, the majority of the difficulty, strife and problems faced in life will subside. Tantra says that there are two directions that one can take: one is the path of enjoyment, which is known as *bhukti*, and the other is the path of liberation, *mukti*.

Path of bhukti: The entire drive in life for most humans is to discover pleasure, fulfilment and happiness. It is understood that when human life comes forth, the senses, the mind, intelligence and emotions become the dominant tools for the realization and experience of life. In the process of realizing and experiencing life, these tools find different sense objects to attach themselves and associate with. This association of the senses and the mind with sense objects gives birth to both a sense of pleasure and disappointment.

The discovery of pleasure, happiness and fulfilment is directed by desire. However, whenever a desire appears in the mind it is an indication that there is something lacking inside. If the drive is to experience happiness, it is because happiness has never been experienced, and therefore it is that which is being sought. If the drive is to attain peace, it is because peace has not been experienced; it has only remained a concept. Hence, bhukti combines absence and attainment both. To fulfil that feeling of absence or lack, the desire presents itself to begin the process of acquiring what is desired, and to satisfy oneself by filling this sense of what is lacking in life. As desire is the cause of one's association with the sensorial world, it gives birth to the various experiences of pleasure and rejection, happiness and suffering.

Bhukti is the process through which one can experience joy, happiness, contentment and bliss, but it also subjects one to the influences of pain, suffering and distress. Both the positive and negative are experienced. Realizing how the behaviour of consciousness is affected by this bhukti state of receiving both the negative and the positive is one aspect of tantra.

Identification and enjoyment is the path of bhukti, and one can evolve even through this, provided the true nature is not forgotten. This can be achieved by maintaining an awareness of oneself experiencing enjoyment using the attitude of the *drashta*, the witness, the observer. With the proper witnessing awareness, bhukti becomes a path to uplift and

liberate human consciousness, as it connects the individual with aspects of consciousness which evoke the response of beauty and contentment. If pleasure is understood in the right manner, it can evoke the necessary response of beauty and contentment. However, if enjoyment is not observed with the right witnessing awareness, the individual is pulled into the vortex of enjoyment and pleasure, becoming disconnected from the higher source. One then only experiences that particular moment of enjoyment. After the moment has passed, new desires spring forth to again relive the response which has now been identified with the state of happiness. This creates further bondage. Hence, with the drashta attitude, enjoyment can become the path to experience the *sundaram* and the *shivam* aspect of consciousness, the beauty and the auspiciousness.

Path of mukti: The other aspect of tantra is mukti, liberation, freedom. There is an innate desire and drive to free oneself from the bondages that limit and restrict individual expression, to become more efficient, creative, and to become more whole. To achieve these aims is the concept of mukti, where the individual comes out of the shell which restricts and limits the expression of the positive virtues in life. Mukti is the experience of creativity flowering in one's nature and life. It has been said that the purpose of spiritual traditions is to move from bhukti as material involvement towards mukti as total freedom of the self. Thus, evolution involves the movement from identification with materiality and enjoyment towards freedom and transcendence.



In mukti, the mind simply withdraws from the senses and sense objects; it does not identify with external phenomena, but begins to experience its own inner self. The tantric process of both bhukti and mukti leads one through a sequence of experiencing the growth and maturation of consciousness. The systems that lead to this maturing of consciousness are twofold.

Two hands of tantra

Just as the body has two arms and hands, the body of tantra has two arms. The arms and hands are the most used instruments of the body, performing countless functions: eating, washing, carrying a child, holding a book for reading, writing, steering a vehicle, constructing a home, using a phone or computer. Similarly, the most important aspects of the tantric path are two, which are known as the hands of tantra. One deals with transformation of the mind or consciousness, and the other with transmutation of energy. *Dakshinachara* is the right-hand path of tantra, leading to the transformation of the gross mind into a transcendental mind. The other path of tantra is the left-hand path, known as *vamachara*, leading to the transmutation of gross energies into higher forces.

Dakshinachara leads to progressive transformation of the interactive consciousness, that aspect of consciousness which is interacting with the world of senses and sense objects. This same consciousness has to change and transform. It may continue with its interaction, but not in the same way. Rather than interacting with only the aid of the senses and sense objects, one interacts

in a different manner where attractions, desires and greed are balanced.

Dakshinachara is the path of personal transformation in which the conditioned self is transformed into something unconditioned, something more creative and expansive. It deals with transformation of the states of consciousness as one perceives them in this world of senses and sense objects. Thus, the evolution and transformation of consciousness, the gradual progressive transformation from gross to subtle to transcendental, is taken by following the right-hand path of tantra.

The aim of vamachara is sublimation of gross energy into transcendental energy. The gross energy has to be redirected and guided to eventually awaken a higher dimension of consciousness where the Shiva nature is experienced within oneself. Vamachara deals with the transmutation of the gross energy into cosmic energy, sublime energy, energy with spiritual power and force.

Thus, transformation of consciousness and transmutation of energy are two complementary paths of tantra. Originally these were the two main systems of tantra; however, over a period of time the proper understanding and practice of tantra has declined in both the West and the East. Those who are initiated in tantra know the systems, the purpose and the role of each practice and follow them with awareness. The uninitiated, people who do not know the aspiration, aim and objective of tantra, believe that it is good for them, yet attempt to practise tantra according to their own beliefs.

Evolution and freedom

It is said in the tantras that a sadhaka must move from the state of conditioning to the freer state of being. The ultimate effort in tantra is to move past the illusion of maya and change the animal nature. The soldiers of passion, anger, attachment and other negative forces responsible for the decline and downfall of human consciousness have to be struck down with arrows made from the efforts of the sincere aspirant. The pashu tendencies in life must be converted and transformed, so one can release oneself from the grip of maya and the pasha, the noose.

Two things are clear here. First, humanity is caught in a perpetual struggle; second, through vigorous efforts, freedom can be attained. Upon discovering who is truly 'in charge', how deeply one is caught in the delusion and by what means the fetters can be removed, the aspirant moves forward on the path of liberation. Each step increases the level of awareness of one's own nature and enhances the spiritual awareness towards infinity. There is no end to the development of spiritual awareness in life.

Swami Satyananda says, "The purpose of life is to cultivate spiritual awareness", not to achieve self-realization. If that be so, then the path of tantra becomes clear: to move from tamas to sattwa. The movement of evolution is from the distracted, tamasic condition of life towards the *sattwic*, the luminous and peaceful nature. Once established in the sattwic nature, the effulgence of the self is realized and becomes known, taking one far along the human journey of evolution.

At this stage of creation, another purpose of the preserving, sthiti shakti is to aid an aspirant by removing internal impurities, and preparing them to receive the grace of Shiva. Mukti or liberation is said in tantra to be possible only through grace, *anugraha*. However, until all the impurities and defects of human life mature, one cannot have a glimpse of anugraha in life. An eye surgeon does not operate on a cataract in its initial stage. Only when it matures completely can the surgeon bring it out easily through surgery. Anugraha is also a process and action of this type; one cannot receive anugraha until impurities within the personality ripen or mature as a result of intensive sadhana and vigorous efforts by the aspirant. Grace is a blessing, and having received grace, one attains liberation.

Dissolution of creation

It is a part of nature's scheme to take the individual soul to its source. Swami Satyananda says, "Nature's scheme is that everyone will rise above instinct. Consciousness will rise above

instinct, and then above the body, senses, mind and intellect. Ultimately, it will operate on a higher level. This higher lever is the spiritual level."

In the cosmic theory of creation, this stage is known as dissolution. After the maintenance and preservation of creation, the energy of dissolution eradicates all that has been done until now. It collects and contains everything in itself. Both the pure and impure conditions are affected by this process. In the process of dissolution, or involution, the pure tattwa or pure creation that had emerged from vidya merges once again with Shakti, and Shakti merges once again with Shiva. This is the dissolution or transformation of the pure creation. In the dissolution of impure creation, the impure tattwas that are experienced from prakriti down to the earth element, *prithvi*, merge back into maya. Then maya merges with Shakti, and Shakti with Shiva. Ultimately, the impure tattwas also attain the Shiva tattwa.

This process of dissolution operates at both the cosmic and individual levels. To become liberated on the individual level, the process of creation must be reversed, and the effort taken to have the universal experience after the experience of individuality. From the pashu state, the limited state, there must be an identification of the bindings, the five kanchukas, and effort to work with each one to gradually untie the knot. This process takes time, but the knot must be untied. It is the removal of these knots that allows the spirit to become free and to realize its omniscience and omnipotence, to realize that it is a reflection and a projection of the transcendental, non-dual Shiva consciousness and all the pure tattwas of Shakti, Sadakhya, Ishwara and Sadvidya. Once that realization takes place, the body is transcended; the knots are removed and one experiences freedom and expansiveness in the state of Paramshiva.





Tools of Tantra

1
Introduction



After listening to Shiva describe the philosophy of tantra, Parvati asks, "What are the tools that establish the sattwic nature? What frees a person from the influences of the sense objects that give birth to different mental and psychological stresses and afflictions?

How can a person free the inherent shakti and awaken cosmic consciousness?" In answer to this, Shiva tells Parvati, "It is the tools of self-transformation that change the patterns of behaviour, perception and consciousness."

Tools of transformation

The tools of transformation adjust the lifestyle so there is balance between the material and spiritual actions. They include all the methods employed to achieve this end. In fact, any discipline that develops kindness and joy in the personality is a tool of transformation. If there is kindness and joy, the mind is free from psychosis and neurosis, and one can go into the deepest levels of meditation. If there is a vestige of hatred, if there is a vestige of anger, if

there is a vestige of jealousy or anxiety, one can only go so far. There will come a point where the experiences of these emotions will force the awareness back out. These emotions are a *pasha*, a noose. If one is angry about something, that anger is a noose. If one is envious about something, that envy is a noose. It is binding the consciousness to a particular state of mind, to a particular experience. Even if one meditates, that experience will be highlighted. This concept needs to be well understood.

Often people consider themselves to be pure beings in mind, thought, emotions, behaviour, attitude and consciousness. Based on this belief, there is an expectation that one can simply sit for an hour's meditation and see the light. In one sense this is correct, for at the source all beings are pure. In reality, however, this pure state has not been actualized in the majority of people. The truth is that humans are gold mired in dirt, and it is this dirt that hinders the ability to experience the true nature. For the gold to shine forth, the mud must be removed. Rather than thinking of oneself as gold when the mud can clearly be seen, effort must be made to remove the layer of dirt that has hardened around the gold.

Sadhana

The ancient yogis developed the subject of spiritual life after much reflection and experimentation. They taught that just as in material life an awareness of the sensorial dimension develops, in spiritual life one cultivates an awareness of the higher nature so that its existence and presence can be seen, felt and perceived everywhere. This leads to an appreciation and understanding of the purpose, relationship and interaction with the powers that surround the individual. *Sadhana* is the process of this realization through the application of the tools of transformation. It reflects the effort needed to transform and change the normal conditions of life and attain a higher qualitative realization in life.

Sadhana has been prescribed in all spiritual traditions, including tantra. There are physical practices that divert the flow of the senses, mental practices that divert the flow of the mental faculties, and other methods that fine-tune the behaviour of the individual. In this way, sadhana can be divided into two parts: physical-mental, and mental-spiritual.

In the physical-mental dimension there are practices, routines, disciplines and efforts in the



form of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. These physical sadhanas are combined with some mental components such as relaxation, concentration and meditative techniques. These techniques aim to remove dissipations from the mind, to develop control and mastery over the mind, and to realize how the mind functions. At this stage, the meditation and concentration techniques are to develop an awareness of the mind, rather than to attain *samadhi*, unity with cosmic consciousness. Control of the senses and the mental functions occur in the first level of sadhana, the physical-mental aspect, and are a systematic attempt to bring balance, harmony and equilibrium into the functions of the body and mind. Thus, in this context, *sanyam* does not only imply discipline, control, or restriction; it includes the states of pratyahara, dharana, and dhyana. It means a sadhaka should remain fully aware and centred in every moment and every state. The sadhaka should be equally aware of the gross and the subtle forms of the state or action he is experiencing.

The second aspect of sadhana is mental-spiritual. The mental-spiritual component includes yogas such as the yamas and niyamas. The yamas and niyamas are the conducts of yoga; however, they are not impositions. The yoga of Sage Patanjali represents the personal attempt and effort to transform the quality of life and to become a better human being. The yoga of Swami Sivananda begins where the yoga of Sage Patanjali ends. The yoga of Swami Sivananda represents expressing and living the attainments of yoga. Once this has been achieved, meditation and realization become the sadhana to complete the cycle and become whole. Thus, in the yogic tradition the physical-mental unit is covered by Sage Patanjali, and the mental-spiritual unit by Swami Sivananda.

Vedic, yogic and tantric systems of sadhana

The difference between the vedic, yogic and tantric systems of sadhana is often unclear to aspirants, creating confusion in their minds. There is much overlap between the systems and they have developed parallel to each other. The different systems work concurrently to ensure a harmonious and complete awakening of the sadhaka.

Vedic system of sadhana: There is no struggle of any sort in the vedic system of sadhana. They are simple and easy. The vedic sadhanas have been divided into three categories: karma kanda, upasana kanda and jnana kanda. In *karma kanda*, efforts are made to become pure and introverted by adopting an external method or rite. In *upasana kanda*, efforts are made to develop oneself through an internal method. A rational, intellectual path is adopted in *jnana kanda* and efforts are made to attain self-purification through the transformation of the intellect. The state of physical and mental purification is achieved through the observance of yamas and niyamas, and this ensures transformation of the personality.

Yogic system of sadhana: The yogic system of sadhana lies between the vedic and tantric systems. Here, a state of purification is achieved through physical and mental efforts and discipline. This purification leads to the expansion of consciousness. Yoga recognizes five main systems of sadhana. These include hatha yoga, physical practices; raja yoga, the practices of meditation; bhakti yoga, channelling of emotions; karma yoga, channelling of actions; and jnana yoga, channelling of the intellect. Jnana yoga is similar to the vedic jnana kanda. Its main purpose is *swadhyaya*, self-study or self-analysis. This does not mean the study of texts or scriptures. This is the study of the self. In the emotional process, a sadhaka adopts the path of *bhakti*, or devotion. This process purifies the *chitta*, the storehouse of memories and samskaras. In the path of bhakti, the sadhaka makes an effort to generate sattwic qualities and to attain self-surrender. A physical method, such as asana which engages the body, is the process of hatha yoga. Its purpose is to purify the body through *kriyas*, or actions. In karma yoga, the right attitude towards every action leads to realization. The path of raja yoga is that of meditation, a form of

mind management. Other methods are also mentioned in yoga.

Tantric system of sadhana: One mantra found in the tantric shastras states, "That by which one falls, by that shall he ascend." This means that what may be considered to be a point of downfall in religious parlance is considered by tantra to be a springboard for higher evolution. Tantra is a system that declares that the life to which one is committed is part of spiritual life, and is not something removed from spiritual life. Nothing is rejected and whoever one is, wherever one is, with whatever properties and propensities one has, whether sattwa, tamas or rajas, one can start the pilgrimage of spiritual evolution. When the desire arises to improve the quality of the mind, tantra provides the tools and instructions for achieving this positive change.

The basic aim of tantric sadhana is to manage the four basic urges of the personality. Balance within the personality is lost due to four main instincts, which are food, sleep, fear and sex. According to the tantric point of view, whatever the extent or intensity of sadhana of an individual, downfall is certain unless these four basic instincts are eradicated from within. Thus, efforts are made to discipline these instincts, understand them fully, see them from a proper perspective and then eliminate them.

Over millennia, various practices have been incorporated in the tantric system of sadhana. For instance, in kundalini tantra, the chakras and kundalini are awakened. Through kundalini yoga, a sadhaka may experience fulfilment by awakening the different levels of consciousness. There are seven stages of transformation within the personality and these have been related to the seven chakras, from mooladhara to sahasrara. At each level, there is a distinct flowering of consciousness that culminates in union with the Supreme Consciousness.

Laya yoga also finds mention in tantra. *Laya* means 'to dissolve' and *laya yoga* is the yoga of conscious dissolution of individuality. It is a practice in which one becomes in tune with the personality; dissipations in one's nature are eradicated and the quality of the personality improved. It also means maintenance of awareness of one's different inner states of waking, dreaming, sleeping and turiya, and merging the different mental states into one another. In this way, laya yoga culminates into the state of total surrender.

In this section, some of the principal tools of tantra have been discussed. These include the six methods of purification: *shatkarmas* or the 'six actions', including invocation of a deity, mantra, yantra, mandala, mudra, and a few other esoteric practices. Before any of these is attempted, however, a tantric sadhaka must establish a connection with a guru. The dynamics of this relationship thus find the first mention.

The tools of transformation offered by tantra are common to each branch of tantra. They can be applied in any of the branches and are used by every tradition and sect of tantra. Within the traditions, however, there are variations as per the use of the tools, the methods and also the form of guru, disciple and initiation. Regardless of the variations, all the tantric tools aim to achieve the same goal: transformation of the lower nature, liberation of the dormant, boundless potential energy within and realization of the higher nature, as it is the birthright of every individual to experience the divine nature residing within.

Methods of sadhana

Many different disciplines, practices and sadhanas have been given in the tantras. The systems of tantra outline the purification process that involves the removal of impurities, maintenance of purity and in the final stage, adding the finishing touches. Some are basic and general and can be practised by everyone. They are personal attempts to concentrate and focus the mind and they include meditation, mantra and upasana. Another general tool that can be used is *sankalpa*, a positive affirmation and reminder of one's aspirations in life. Other tools include sanyam, restraining the mind and living a discipline. Living a discipline

means changing the lifestyle so that there is a balance between material and spiritual pursuits, allowing one to move from the conditioned state to a free state of being.

This aspect of tantra is exoteric, those practices that can be practised externally, such as rituals and pooja. Another aspect of tantra is esoteric, or internal. These tools are very specific and must be performed only under the direction and the guidance of an adept, the master. For this, however, the guru also needs a special type of student; specifics are not taught to everyone. Therefore, this aspect of tantra is kept absolutely private. Whether esoteric or exoteric, the sadhana is prescribed by the guru; it is not the choice of the practitioner. Many people create their own sadhana with the misguided impression that the more they do, the faster the spiritual progression. This is incorrect. The tantras have made it quite clear that sadhana must be done as prescribed, decided and guided by the guru. If the sadhana is not directed or guided by the guru, it should not be done. Books cannot be the teacher, only a person who has gone through that process is authorized and capable to be the teacher, and it is this person who decides the sadhana.

Another classification of tantric sadhana is into three groups: *sthoola*, gross sadhana; *sukshma*, subtle sadhana; and *para*, transcendental sadhana. In sthoola sadhana, an image or an idol is used as an *ishta*, an object of worship. When one begins a tantric sadhana, an external object is often needed to which one can surrender to. In sukshma sadhana, yantra and mantra are used instead of an idol. The internal sadhana begins only when the mind is totally concentrated and does not require any external object for the purpose of concentration. In para sadhana, no external object of any type is used. It begins with concentration and meditation, and its goal is *moksha*, liberation.

States of sadhana

A tantric sadhaka has to pass through three main states: shuddhi, sthiti and arpana. Regardless of the path or sadhana adopted, shuddhi is experienced first. *Shuddhi* implies



physical, mental, emotional and psychic purification. In yoga, the practices of asana, pranayama, and shatkarma are taught for physical purification, through which the external body is made clean and pure, and physical balance is established. By the observance of yamas and niyamas and the practice of pratyahara and dharana, mental and emotional impurities and disturbances are removed, resulting in inner clarity. One should not practise the higher sadhanas until the state of shuddhi has been attained.

Sthiti means establishing oneself in a broad, comprehensive range of experiences. Tantra states that it is essential to pass through all the experiences and attainments. One should accept the variety of experiences and understand them as an inner state, treating them as a base from which to proceed further. Most sadhakas miss this point. After having an experience they remain stuck to it. For example, if a sadhaka receives the darshan of Devi, the desire to have her darshan again lingers in the mind and that state of experience becomes the goal beyond which one cannot go. In the state of sthiti, a sadhaka may have the darshan of many different shaktis or achieve many siddhis. For this reason, ninety-nine per cent of sadhakas become stagnant at this second state. Some continue to revolve around siddhis, while others get caught up in some pleasurable experience. Sadhakas fascinated by a specific experience revert back to avidya. Thus, the *Ishavasya Upanishad* says vidya also leads one to avidya. This happens if one becomes caught in the sthiti of vidya.

The state of sthiti is for the dissolution of avidya and acquisition of vidya. The dissolution of avidya means the removal of the veil, curtain, covering or screen that masks the inner eye, or inner vision. Simultaneously, the observance and acquisition of *vidya*, inner knowledge, is also essential. Throughout this state of acquiring experience, it is necessary that harmony exists between the inner and outer life. Knowledge born of inner experience must be balanced with external actions and conduct. When such harmony is achieved and a practical, living observance of vidya becomes a way of life, only then can the state of arpana be attained. *Arpana* means total surrender. Yoga regards it as the union of the seen, the seer and the seeing. The seer does not only see the scene, but merges into and identifies with it. To merge oneself in a state or a tattwa is known as *eka tattwa dharana* and is a state of total surrender. A sadhaka has to pass through all these three states while observing oneself with full awareness.

It is the role of the tantric guru to make sure that the sadhaka does not proceed further until a particular state has been achieved. As the sadhaka advances in sadhana, external instructions from the guru are no longer necessary. In the state of surrender or samadhi, the guru guides the disciple in the language of yoga. External instincts, tendencies, attractions or attachments cease to exist in both these states. The contact of consciousness is broken from the activity of the external senses. In that state of merger, the instructions of the guru are not received from the outside and, if they are, it means the sadhana is not yet complete.

At the point of surrender, guidance from the guru may take one of two forms. One form of the guru is internal, where the guru manifests within the disciple and provides the necessary commands or instructions in the form of motivation, or *jnana*. These commands or instructions are clearly heard in the subtle and causal dimensions. In the other form, guru merges with the personality of the disciple; no distinction remains between the two. This is known as incarnation. The soul of the guru incarnates within the disciple and he is thoroughly pervaded with the spirit of the guru. This is the state of surrender, arpana.

The tools used in tantric sadhana are powerful, but their full potential to bring about a positive transformation of consciousness can only be realized through the guru. No book or class can replace this guidance, for only the guru can provide the aspirant with the appropriate tool at the appropriate time.

2

Guru-Disciple Relationship



In tantra, the relationship between guru and *shishya*, disciple, is essential for transformation of the personality and to attain the final goal of tantra, *moksha*, or liberation. The relationship between the guru and the disciple is subjective and varied. The traditions speak of many types of gurus, many types of disciples and various guru-disciple relationships. Nevertheless, to actually live the ultimate, true relationship as described by the tantric tradition is difficult.

There are many categories of diksha, gurus and disciples. However, no matter what type of guru one has, or class of disciple one is, the guru is always the guiding light on the path and any success met is due to the grace of the guru. Once one has embarked on the guru-disciple journey, the connection must be cherished.

If a gold ring falls into the toilet, one would not flush it but extract it, clean it and wear it. If something is precious in life, one will always preserve, protect and cherish it. In the same manner, the guru-disciple relationship is the most precious connection one can ever be blessed to experience in life, therefore it is to be cherished and honoured. Those disciples who honour the path of discipleship with innocence and sincerity automatically become the beacons of light themselves, channelling the guru's energy and upholding the ancient lineage of guru and disciple.

An enduring connection

From the traditional point of view, the relationship of the guru and the disciple is defined as being united in spirit but having two different bodies; one mind, two bodies; one spirit, two bodies. This concept of identification is difficult to imagine. How can there be two bodies, one mind and one spirit? This is the relationship that tantra declares one ought to cultivate. After all, what is the purpose of connecting with a guru? It is to fuse with the guru and to imbibe the shakti of the guru within oneself, just as it happened in the lives of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda.

Swami Sivananda met his guru for only ten minutes in his lifetime. It was under a tree that he was initiated, and that was the only connection Swami Sivananda had with his guru. From that moment onward, Swami Sivananda never looked back. This natural and spontaneous ten-minute encounter with his guru sustained Swami Sivananda until the very end of his life, until he attained mahasamadhi. A similar case of uniting mind and spirit occurred between Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivananda. The fusion that took place between their minds during *shaktipat*, transmission, during the training in kriya yoga, fused them together. Only a capable guru can do that to a capable disciple.

If one considers oneself a disciple in any manner or form, then one must discover for oneself the intensity of one's conviction, belief and faith. To hear lectures on belief and faith will not suffice, for these qualities must be discovered and experienced. If one can do that, then the connection will deepen, and that will become the real tantric connection. If two minds can become one, then one becomes an extension of the guru's energy and shakti. There are many people who like to display their proximity to the guru for their own ego satisfaction. They are not disciples, they are egocentric people. Discipleship is not proved by being in the proximity of the guru; discipleship is attained when one begins to feel that *tattwa*, that element, within.

If the awareness and identification with the guru is real, then one will never miss the guru. This does not mean that one stops going to the guru's place. The connection must be maintained; however, deep inside the heart and mind, one would not feel that absence. How one cultivates the relationship, how one is able to build faith and trust, and how one is able to perceive the guru is a personal and subjective experience. For this reason it is said that the guru-disciple relationship is the deepest and most fulfilling relationship possible.

My life is and always has been saturated with my guru, therefore there was never any need or desire to be in the close proximity of Swami Satyananda. In fact, the majority of my life was spent away from him. I was happy to let other people hanker and run after him and travel with him. Staying far away from him never bothered me. Even though there were times when we could not even speak on the phone and letters would take a month to reach, I never missed him as I felt him inside me. This feeling is something that comes naturally.

GURU

The word *guru* means one who can remove the darkness, one who can remove the veil of ignorance, one who can bring the aspirant to the light. This idea of guru is spiritual and not social, though the word is often misused. The real meaning of the guru is somebody who can enlighten, and the main function of guru is to provide diksha and sadhana; diksha to open new vistas and new perceptions in life, and sadhana for upliftment and realization of the inner nature and spirit. Beyond this, there is no third role or function of the guru.

Nowadays people turn the guru into a marriage consultant or divorce advisor and ask, "Should I leave? Should I not? I am disturbed, my emotions are shot to pieces." Some people make the guru their health advisor, "What should I do? I am having a little backache today." In this way, the real connection with the guru is lost. For such people, the guru becomes the solution-



provider to problems. That is a wrong concept. That is not the role of the guru. It is the role of those who consider themselves to be a guru and a reformist. The real gurus are not reformists. They want to be left alone in peace. They expect their disciples and followers to adhere to the guidelines and instructions that have been given, and not to be demanding and imposing.

In the West, the role and reputation of the guru has often been associated with the idea of brainwashing and mind manipulation. This is a false impression. True gurus do not manipulate the minds of others; rather, they inspire sadhakas to realize themselves and lift their minds from the normal state of awareness.

Gurus are the enlightened ones, and enlightened beings uplift the minds of others. They are people who have gone through a spiritual process until the end and realized its effects and benefits, who have applied that wisdom, knowledge and understanding in their own relationships, interactions, character and behaviour, who have attained the state of absolute peace, equilibrium and harmony, and who have awakened their consciousness.

These enlightened beings do not differentiate between dharma and karma. While most people live their karma, gurus live their dharma and it is the guru's life of dharma that inspires the disciple or aspirant to manage his or her karmas. As gurus are those who have integrated their karma and dharma, they can be equally at ease in material life as well as in spiritual life. The gurus were the first yogis, for a yogi is defined by an ability to integrate, rather than by proficiency in any particular kind of yogic practice.

Three types of tantric gurus

Three types of gurus have been discussed in tantra: divya guru, siddha guru and manava guru. The *divya guru* is the transcendental guru, the divine guru, the enlightened guru. The *siddha guru* is the master, and the *manava guru* is the human guru. The guru is always one; however, the functions and the roles of the guru change according to the time, place and need. In tantra, there are many more categories and functions of the guru, but all these thoughts are in relation to either the manava guru or the siddha guru.

Divya guru: When one looks at Swami Sivananda's life, it is clear that he was a divya guru. Swami Sivananda's presence radiated peace and bliss. His presence tranquillized agitated minds and gave hope and solutions to all who came in contact with him. His presence inspired great devotion and an awareness that God is ever-present in every living being. Swami Sivananda was the epitome of the divya guru, from whose life light kept on radiating forth to all.

Siddha guru: In the presence of a siddha guru, one imbibes the shakti of the guru and that shakti comes alive within oneself. Such a guru is known as a *chandan guru*. *Chandan* is sandalwood and if you place an ordinary piece of wood near it for a period of time, it imbibes the fragrance of the sandalwood.

A guru who can change the thought patterns and the consciousness is known as a *vichara guru*. One who can give direction through his or her presence is known as the *darshan*

guru. These categories or functions fall in the realm of the siddha guru. The siddha guru transfers his energy and talent to the disciple and awakens the disciple's inner power. He can bring about this transformation in each and every disciple. The most important point in this context is the calibre of the disciple.

Swami Satyananda's life exemplifies him as a siddha guru, the perfect master, in control of the tattwas, the elements, in control of time, in control of death. He was a siddha in the truest sense of the word. He had attained that mastery, that wholeness and completeness by imbibing the teachings of Swami Sivananda absolutely, and he became the perfect master. By his mere glance people were uplifted, by his touch people were elevated, and in his proximity there was an experience of contentment, fulfilment and *ananda*, bliss. In his presence, the pranas never remained still, they were always effervescent.

Manava guru: The human guru is one who sees the potential for growth and development, and allows and facilitates that to take place in people's lives. He is an instrument to radiate the luminosity that flows through the lineage.

The manava guru is classified in six categories based on how he imparts the sadhana. These are preraka, suchaka, vachaka, darshaka, shikshaka and bodhaka. The *preraka guru* motivates the disciple to make progress on the path of sadhana. The *suchaka guru* shows the disciple a path for sadhana. The *vachaka guru* explains to the sadhaka the various methods of sadhana and their results. The *darshaka guru* goes much deeper and provides the disciple with detailed knowledge of a particular path or method. The *shikshaka guru* teaches the disciple a practical method of sadhana. The *bodhaka guru* lights the flame of knowledge within the disciple and removes the darkness of ignorance.

Twelve types of guru

There are twelve types of gurus according to another tradition of tantra: dhatuvadi guru, chandan guru, vichara guru, anugraha guru, parasa guru, kachchhapa guru, chandra guru, darpana guru, chhayanidhi guru, nadanidhi guru, krauncha pakshi guru and suryakanta guru.

The *dhatuvadi guru* leads the disciple to moksha or liberation through the observance of different *acharas*, or codes of conduct. The function of a chandan guru is like that of sandalwood, as described above. The vichara guru is useful for an intellectual sadhaka. He helps alter the process of thinking, which



transforms the consciousness. The *anugraha guru* liberates the disciple by grace. The disciple attains moksha with just the touch of the *parasa guru*. The *kachchhapa guru* thinks about the disciple from a distance and awakens the disciple's consciousness. The *chandra guru* transforms disciples with the rays of knowledge and conduct. The *darpana guru* shows the disciple the form of the real self; such a guru presents the real form of an individual before the disciple.

The *chhayanidhi* guru can be understood through the following example. There was once an ascetic sage to whom God appeared, offering him a boon. The sage told God that he was content to have His darshan and did not want anything more. When God pressed him further to ask for a boon, the sage turned his back towards Him and started walking away. God thought, 'What a peculiar fellow he is. He did not ask for anything, and when I pressed him to ask, he started walking away with some displeasure! However, My function is to give something to My devotees, therefore I should give him something.' As God was thinking this, the shadow of the sage attracted His attention. He blessed the shadow and said, "Wherever this shadow will go, happiness will be ensured there." The sage did not know anything about this boon. He continued on his way. One day his shadow fell on a sick person who instantly became hale and hearty. Gradually the news of the saint's miracle spread. People started running behind his shadow. A chhayanidhi guru is like this. He has already perfected his shadow. The effect of his momentary darshan remains throughout one's life.

The moment the *nadanidhi guru* hears the cry of the disciple, he immediately comes to the rescue. On hearing the call of Dhruva, Prahlada, Draupadi and Gaja, God himself rushed in to protect and save them. When a disciple calls to the guru from the heart, the guru immediately comes in some form or the other and provides the necessary help. *Krauncha pakshi gurus* are siddhas or accomplished gurus. Whatever the wishes or desires of a disciple, they are all fulfilled with the guru's power. A *suryakanta guru* is glorious, majestic and illustrious like the rays of the sun. He burns, destroys or dissolves all the karmas of a disciple and makes them perfectly pure.

Categorization in other tantras

There are four types of gurus according to the *Nirvana Tantra*. These are guru, parama guru, parapara guru and parameshthi guru. The Shakti form is known as parapara guru and the Shiva form as parameshthi guru.

In *Nila Tantra* there is mention of three types of gurus: divyaugha, siddhaugha and manavaugha. Other tantras mention two types of gurus, taraka and deva guru. The *taraka* or *tarini guru* shows a path to the disciple that ultimately leads to moksha. The *deva guru* transfers his or her own powers, siddhis and capabilities to the disciple, thus they awaken the inner talent and capacity of the disciple.

Types of gurus in yoga

There are four types of gurus according to yoga: yogi guru, jnani guru, tantric guru and brahmanishtha guru. *Yogi gurus* are sadhaka gurus who adopt a particular path, do sadhana accordingly, and take others on that path. They are also practical gurus. First of all, they try to understand the psychological level of a sadhaka, and then show the sadhaka a particular path to follow. *Jnani gurus* are those who have gone beyond the state of sadhana, have established themselves in jnana and are now guiding the sadhakas. They eliminate the pain, sorrow and afflictions of their disciples through their jnana. The *tantric guru* prescribes a system, path or sadhana for a sadhaka only after understanding the sadhaka's psychological and spiritual levels, so that they may make proper progress on the spiritual path. The attitude of a tantric guru is very practical.

Brahmanishtha gurus are liberated beings, *jivanmuktas*. Impurities and afflictions are removed just through their contact or company. It is said that in vedic times, all those who came in contact with the bright auras of the gurus or resided in their ashrams, were automatically

freed from impurities. The moment one enters such areas, one loses the feelings of enmity, violence, ego, anger, greed, attachment, and so on. Sattwic and spiritual feelings awaken within the individual. Even the darshan of such a sage is not necessary; the area where he resides is converted into a siddha area. The *gurutwashakti*, the power of the guru, awakens in that whole area and it vibrates with spiritual energy.

Finding a guru

Many times the problem of how to find a guru arises. How will a sadhaka know who is the most suitable or right guru? A sadhaka generally looks at the body, form, thinking and behaviour of a guru. If he finds the guru's thinking and behaviour favourable and convenient, he accepts the person as guru. In this case, the sadhaka is selecting the guru according to his own thinking and for self-satisfaction, and not for spiritual progress. This type of sadhaka wants the thoughts, speech and actions of the guru to suit him. Most people select their guru from this perspective.

If the guru starts thinking, speaking and acting as per the wishes, desires and expectations of the disciples, then what will be the point of being a disciple? What will happen to the glory and dignity of the guru? The guru will become the disciple and the disciple will become the guru!

One should select a guru on the basis of the guru's actions, jnana and conduct. A guru does not have one philosophy for himself and another one for others. When a sadhaka selects a guru on the basis of virtues, actions, jnana and conduct, then it does not make any difference whether the guru is hard or soft, rough or placid. In normal life everyone likes soft, tender behaviour and rejects harsh and unkind behaviour. However, in tantra both harshness and softness have been accepted. An integration of the two has been emphasized.

Establishing the relationship

Diksha marks the beginning of the connection that can be had between the guru and the disciple. Establishing a pure and deep connection with the guru is absolutely vital for any spiritual growth to occur. This is difficult as one must transcend many expectations and desires and, ultimately, the ego. Many people come to spiritual life and the guru with the idea, 'He is going to be my guru; I will give everything to him.' Then, in the course of time, they try to make the guru the servant by demanding things from him. They try to make the guru see the world through their eyes. This is manipulation, not pure intention.

In the psychological practice of transactional analysis, this manipulative relationship is known as the 'master-victim' relationship. For instance, a patient may approach a doctor in desperation, feeling helpless and in need. They completely trust that the doctor can help them with their problem. In this state, the patient takes on the role of the 'victim' and the doctor the 'master'. The doctor gives advice, writes the prescription, and the patient takes the medication home. The patient returns one month later saying that nothing has changed, the advice and medicine has not worked. The patient asks for something different and the roles start to reverse slightly. The patient is now becoming the master, accusing and demanding something more, and the doctor is becoming the victim. The doctor worries about the patient, gives more advice and writes a stronger prescription. Again, one month later, the patient returns and says, "Doctor, the medicine didn't work. You didn't help me." Now the patient has become the master and the doctor has become the victim.

This is what often happens with gurus as well. For instance, the guru gives an instruction which is difficult or unsatisfactory for the disciple. When the guru enquires after some time, "Have you done it?" the answer is "No." In the beginning, initiates feel comfortable thinking the guru is nice and kind, and after one year they complain how heartless, unsympathetic and cruel the guru is. This is an example of a superficial mentality, and it does not constitute a connection with the guru. Many aspirants think of themselves as

disciples and sannyasins on the basis of having received initiation, but this is not enough. What is the use of having a hundred initiations if the connection is not made? The most important question is how to connect and how to cultivate the connection, for discipleship and sannyasa start and end with connection.

DISCIPLE

According to the *Kularnava Tantra*, one who is qualified to be a tantric is "One who is pure of heart, rid of sins, devoid of anger and greed, joyous, devoted to meritorious actions, averse to inferior observances, with firm observances, of cheerful countenance, with full consecration (committed), knower of the Vedas and shastras, contained in his self, equipped with the teachings of a guru."

There is no training on how to become a guru. However, there is training on how to become a good disciple. In the tantras and in other sources, scriptures and literature, many facets of the guru have been defined such as who should be the guru, what the qualifications of the guru are and how the disciple must search for the right guru. This is acceptable from the point of view of knowledge. Nonetheless, is an ordinary person capable enough to discern such abilities and qualities, and recognize them in the guru? No. Therefore, where does one begin? One has to begin with discipleship, with practising discipleship.

According to tantra, there are three kinds of disciples: those endowed with pashu bhava, those endowed with veera bhava, and those endowed with divya bhava.

Pashu disciple

The majority of disciples are pashu or ordinary disciples. A pashu disciple has to work through tamas. He is full of feelings, thoughts, ideas and ambitions, and is completely influenced by them. Such a disciple cannot know or understand the passions, desires and ambitions, therefore cannot surrender. For such disciples the paths of bhakti, karma and upasana have been prescribed in tantra. As the feeling of bhakti becomes stronger, the basic impurities are reduced. After passing through the nine states of bhakti, the state of surrender awakens within a pashu disciple. He then attains the level of a veera disciple.

Initially, a pashu disciple's own needs are much more powerful than the devotion, and the ego is much more powerful than the commitment. A pashu disciple lacks reliance, faith and reverence, and is a slave to the mind, wishes, desires and passions. There is a constant struggle with one's nature, mind, desires, senses and sense attractions. There is always an awareness of the difficulties and problems that hamper and restrict the natural and spontaneous development. This is the most common state of discipleship. One only has to analyze one's life, expectations, needs and moments of anxiety to discover that one has been in the same pashu field and never evolved from that. Therefore, it is not guruhood that is important, but advancing on the path of discipleship that is the point of the journey.

In one endowed with pashu bhava, the tamasic tendencies and vrittis that arise in the mind restrict the emergence of the sattwic nature. The tamasic vrittis and tendencies can overpower the sattwic nature in the same way that weeds can overpower a garden if it is not cared for. Tamas can overpower if one is not careful to protect the sattwic nature. Therefore, for the pashu bhava disciple it is important to transform, change and overcome the lower nature and rise and attain the higher nature. That is the first level of discipleship.

One cannot go to a guru expecting miracles. One has to complete the first and second levels of discipleship before the guru will even look at one's spiritual problems and needs. First, the guru must guide one to work through the mind, to remove the dross in life and to become purified to a certain degree. At this level, the guru gives instructions to change the quality of the mind by confronting the fears, insecurities, tensions, envy, jealousy, aggression, anger, frustration, depression and elation. When one

is able to remain equipoised and balanced in all the conflicting situations and conditions in life, then one has progressed from a pashu disciple to a veera disciple; from a disciple of gross, lower mental tendencies to a disciple with a different perspective and with the strength to deal with situations within one's mind and outside in the world.

A pashu disciple has to adopt the path of action or service. When Swami Satyananda asked for sannyasa diksha, Swami Sivananda said to him, "You have come to this path too early. You are quite young. Now you have to perform action to exhaust your karma and to make your life fruitful." Swami Satyananda responded, "Well then, I am going back home. I will work there for twenty-five years, look after the household activities and then come back to you. I will come to you after finishing my karma." Swami Sivananda instructed, "There is a great difference between the worldly actions performed as a householder and the actions performed as a sadhaka. As a householder, you work to fulfil your needs and desires and also those of your friends and relations. You try to accumulate wealth and other material things. These are all selfish karmas. The actions are all motivated by worldly thoughts and ideas. Such actions do not exhaust the karmas; they lead to the accumulation of more karmas. In this way, you fall into bondage."

There is only one purpose behind the instructions for karma yoga. While performing any action, one should observe one's reactions to the action and try to eliminate the sense of selfishness or expectation of results related to it. All kinds of feelings arise in the mind with respect to an action and these feelings are difficult to eliminate. When I first came to the ashram and requested Swami Satyananda for karma yoga, he said, "The septic tank is full to the brim. You have to go in it, fill a bucket with the contents and pass the bucket to the person standing outside." I did not hesitate. I adjusted my dhoti and went into the tank which was waist-deep in 'material'. I continued to fill up bucket after bucket with the 'material' and pass it to the swami standing outside the tank. The whole tank became clean within one hour. When I came out of the clean tank I found Sri Swamiji smiling at me. He said, "You have passed the test."

I could not understand the meaning of his words at that time. The understanding came after many years when I realized the consequence of this event in my life. I understood that to overcome the narrow ideas and feelings which reside within is very difficult work. The path of karma is important for a pashu disciple, as it is only through actions, through the performance of karma, that one unties the knots of the complex mental concepts, and then destroys them.

Veera disciple

The people with a veera nature are those who possess the capacity to work hard, to make an effort and to face smilingly the problems and circumstances of life. A person of this category never feels disappointed and always tries to understand oneself. There is little laziness and negligence or distraction in such a person. Within such a disciple is a strong desire to go ahead at a faster speed. This desire and zeal takes one further on the road of progress. A disciple with a veera nature tries to understand the different levels of thoughts, desires, passion and ego. Such a disciple tries to eliminate their negative elements and tries to make an effort to transform. A sadhaka who has the capacity to transform himself is known as a veera disciple.

There is a story that exemplifies the state of veera. Many years ago when I was flying from Colombia to Guatemala, the flight had to land in Panama, where there was a military coup. We were all taken off the plane, put in vans, and taken to prison until everybody was verified. All the passengers from the plane, including myself, were put in a room. Everyone was pacing up and down, chain smoking and talking nervously. I was just sitting quietly in a corner, watching everything. People came to me and said, "Aren't you nervous? They may shoot us." I said, "What is there to be nervous about? Right now I'm not shot, I am sitting here comfortably. If something

is going to happen, if they are going to shoot us, fair enough, I can't stop that. If am going to be let free, fair enough, nothing is going to change that. Why enter into this anxiety? Why let the hair turn grey in a few hours due to such worry and anxiety?"

For three hours we were kept in the prison. After verification, one by one, we were let out and then boarded the plane and carried on with our journey. At that young age my first impression of the people was that they had lost control of their minds. In that group I would say that I was the only one with presence and peace of mind; the others had clearly lost it. This is the nature and the quality of veera bhava: one who is not fearful and is able to confront and overcome any situation with clarity and peace of mind; to come out victorious rather than fall prey to the influence of the situations and the mind. Normal responses that arise in situations like these indicate the nature and quality of the mind.

Veerata or bravery is not aggressiveness. It is an extension of awareness in all directions to protect oneself from every situation. A veera disciple has to work through the state of rajas by maintaining attention and awareness. Just as when one plants a seed and protects it from animals and birds, in the same way, the pure intention that one plants within oneself also has to be protected from the birds and animals that try to eat up that pure intention and sankalpa. The disciple with veera bhava is able to maintain that constant awareness and create protection from the influences that can divert them from the path.

Divya disciple

There is complete identity between a divya disciple and the guru. The disciple does not consider himself different from the guru, but instead feels complete unity with the guru. The divya disciple possesses a sense of equanimity, not only towards the guru but towards all the animate and inanimate objects of the entire universe. To the divya disciple, every female is Shakti and every male is Shiva. A strong,



unbreakable sense or feeling of reliance, faith, reverence and identity continues to exist ceaselessly within them. The yamas of satya, ahimsa, asteya, aparigraha, brahmacharya, and the niyamas of shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana, become an inner and integral part of life. These sadhanas continue perpetually in the disciple's life. There is no discrepancy between the thought, conduct, jnana and karma of such a disciple.

Types of disciples according to yoga and sannyasa

In the tradition of yoga and sannyasa, several types of disciples are included. These are:

householder disciple, karma sannyasin disciple, brahmachari disciple, sadhaka disciple, tantric disciple, sannyasin disciple, selfish disciple and selfless disciple.

Householder disciple: Such disciples have their own lives, environment and duties. They live in their own social environment and perform all duties as a householder. These disciples invariably have a strong, unbreakable faith and trust in the guru. Whether it is the marriage of their daughters or education of their children, they follow the direction of the guru in every area. They depend on the guru for every big and small decision. They believe that the guru will protect their interests and ensure their welfare. The householder disciples do not take much interest in japa, anushthana and sadhana. In fact, they do not understand these things. They regard the guru as a superior householder and accept the guru as their guide.

Karma sannyasin disciple: These disciples perform their duties as householders and also as sannyasins. They try to acquire a spiritual identity and towards this aim, take diksha from the guru. They may wear some special clothes, such as a geru dhoti, given to them by the guru at the time of sadhana. While performing the normal household activities, they devote a few hours daily to the sadhana prescribed by the guru.

Brahmachari disciple: When disciples first come to live with the guru in the ashram, they are called brahmachari disciples. They are also known as jignasus.

Sadhaka disciple: For these disciples, the instructions of the guru are regarded as *Brahmavakya*, a statement of God, and they follow this until another instruction is received. A good example of this is the story of Shabari. She was told by her guru that one day Sri Rama would come to her house. He did not tell her how or after how many years Sri Rama would come. Every day, Shabari would clean the path that led to her house. She would spread petals on the path and gather fruits and other edible roots for Sri Rama. This was her daily routine. Years went by and she became old. Nevertheless, she continued with this sadhana ceaselessly until one day, at the age of eighty, Sri Rama did indeed walk down the path of her hut.

The feeling of a sadhaka disciple is like that of Shabari who obeys the instructions of the guru with unshakeable faith. The householder and karma sannyasin disciples have their expectations. They want this, that and everything. They are interested in their own welfare. A sadhaka disciple does not have any expectations or desires and understands that the guru knows them and their personality. They firmly believe that whatever instructions have been received from the guru are in their interest and they always act according to those instructions.

Sannyasin disciple: These disciples are ever ready to serve their guru. *Nyasa* means protection or management of something. *Sam* means completely or in a proper way. Thus *sannyasa* means complete or total surrender of oneself so that the guru may take a correct decision about the utility of the disciple. Every sannyasin disciple has a goal, a purpose in life, and all their actions are directed towards that.

Tantric disciple: The tantric disciples may be compared to the disciples with divya bhava, who identify completely with their guru.

Selfish disciple: There are people who come to the guru with their own agendas. They associate with their guru for a limited time, extract whatever they want to extract from the guru, and then go their own ways to fulfil their ambitions and needs. Such disciples are selfish and completely lack the sense of service, surrender or sadhana.

Selfless disciple: There is another group of people, who have no agenda of their own, but who simply live for the sake of living with the guru. They make the vision of the guru their own vision, the agenda of the guru their own agenda, and they become one with the guru tattwa, over a period of time, as they identify more and more with the vision and mission of the guru.

Thela, dhela and chela

Thela, dhela and chela are three other categories of disciples mentioned by Swami Satyananda. *Dhela* is a rock. Some disciples are like rocks. Where you put them, there they remain, physically, mentally and spiritually. They don't move. They don't move at all, but they are content, maintaining an attitude of: *Yathayogyam tatha kuru* – "Do with me what I deserve."

Thela means a pushcart. A thela disciple moves ahead only when pushed by the guru. The moment the guru stops pushing, the disciple stops. When pushed again he moves, and halts the moment the pushing is stopped. These disciples constantly need to be pushed.

There are some who are known as *chelas*, disciples who anticipate what the guru wants. They act on the guru's wishes before the guru tells them to do so. They are one step ahead of the guru. That is the chela, and that chela is the one who has identified totally with the guru.

Passing through stages of discipleship

It is difficult to emphasize the importance and necessity of a guru, for the guru represents the light. Gurus who help disciples through the practical, social and spiritual circumstances of life, enabling them to move upward, are the great gurus.

A disciple should also consider what type of a disciple they wish to become. One should see and examine one's own merits and demerits honestly and evaluate oneself. From being a pashu disciple, one should make an effort to become a veera disciple. This should be the aim of every disciple. One should not aim to become a divya disciple as that is a state of attainment. A sadhaka may endeavour to reach the level of a veera disciple through the process of self-transformation. If a sadhaka gains divya bhava in this process of transformation, that will be the final attainment.

Generally, every sadhaka should aim to reach up to the level of veera bhava. Only the guru-disciple relationship can take one past this state. If, after achieving the veera level, the sense of identification is awakened with the grace of guru, then the sadhaka attains divya bhava. Therefore, continuous hard work and ceaseless efforts constitute the responsibilities and duties of the disciple. The guru may accompany them, but the disciple will have to undertake the journey on their own two legs.



The disciple should have faith and trust in the guru. It is necessary and essential to work hard, to follow the instructions and directions of the guru, although these may seem difficult in the beginning. These days, criticism of gurus has become common. The householders, and even the sannyasin disciples, criticize their guru. This is not correct. A disciple should become totally obedient and surrender to the guru. Only then does discipleship become meaningful and fruitful. On the one hand, the disciple surrenders the body and mind to the guru and, on the other hand, acts whimsically, wanting to have his own way. The moment the guru becomes harsh or rough, the disciple forgets about surrender and falls into a previous pattern of thoughts. It should not be like this. Once one has surrendered oneself, the observance of all the directions and instructions of the guru is essential. One has to learn to not focus on the external behaviour, but on the guru tattwa.

Regardless of how many years one may live with the guru, the connection may remain only skin deep. Too often the connection is made to a guru because of certain expectations and ambitions, and a connection based on this foundation is not spiritual. Sometimes the connection is made because of a desire or a need, and this connection is also not spiritual. In the true, tantric, spiritual connection between a guru and a disciple, there is no expectation of any kind. For the relationship to be fruitful, the connection must be innocent, sincere, and non-demanding.

DIKSHA

True discipleship is the deepest, sincerest, most innocent connection possible, free from all demands and desires. The connection must be pure. Therefore, a process of *shuddhi*, inner purification, must take place. This process of purification starts with mantra. Mantra diksha is the first and most important diksha, as mantra stills the agitated mind. Once the agitated mind has been stilled, one develops the ability to observe one's nature, the behaviours and mental expressions that sully the purity of the connection with guru. Once one can observe the negative expressions, the process of rectifying them can begin. This rectification of the conditioned behaviour is a necessary process for emptying the vessel of the mind, as the guru is going to fill the mind with wisdom, experience and shakti, and this can happen only if the pot is cleaned.

Diksha is generally translated as initiation; however, that is not its actual meaning. The word 'diksha' is derived from the root *drik* which means to see, thus *diksha* means 'acquiring the ability to see'. In another definition, the word 'diksha' has been derived from two roots, 'da' and 'kshi'. *Da* means to give and *kshi* means to transform, dissolve or destroy. In this context, the word 'diksha' means the guru provides the inner eye of jnana to the disciple which destroys the mental impurities. Acquiring the capability to see the real form of the soul and the eternal state, having removed the veil of illusion, is a form of diksha.

In yoga, the word diksha is used in the same way as the word 'dvija' is used in the sanatana tradition. An individual is born from the womb of the mother. This is the physical birth. Another birth takes place at the age of eight when the *upanayana samskara*, or sacred thread ceremony, is performed. Samskara is regarded as the second birth, after which the individual is known as *dvija* or twice-born. Similarly, diksha also means rebirth. One birth is physical and the parents are the medium. Another birth is an inner awakening or self-awakening and guru is the medium of this birth. Thus, through initiation, one has a new vision, a new perception; one receives new eyes with which to view the world, and these new eyes are spiritual eyes. This is the meaning of the word 'diksha'.

Tantra includes many types of diksha according to the various traditions. The first is mantra diksha, to begin the spiritual journey, and the ultimate and final diksha being *poorna abhisheka diksha*, in which the disciple becomes one with the guru. The shakti of the guru is transferred into the disciple. This is the final

and true diksha. However, one must remember that there are different categories of disciples, and the diksha is given at the behest of the guru according to the capability and spiritual evolution of the disciple.

Generally, there are two categories of diksha, bahya diksha and antarika diksha. The differences relate only to the rites and rituals which accompany them. *Bahya* or external diksha is known as vedic diksha. This diksha provides the rites and rituals necessary for worship, oblation, sandhya, japa, libation, etc. *Antarika* diksha is internal; it is related to mental prayer and worship and it is the diksha most used in tantra and yoga.

Types of diksha

In *Vishvasara Tantra*, there is mention of four types of diksha. These are kriyavati diksha, kalaavati diksha, varnamayi diksha, and vedhamayi diksha. *Kriyavati diksha* is the physical, mental and emotional purification achieved through external worship. *Kalaavati diksha* is related to the awakening of five types of *kalaa*, or talents; nivritti kalaa, pratishtha kalaa, vidya kalaa, shanti kalaa and shantyatita kalaa. *Nivritti kalaa* means abnegation of the path of attachment and adoption of the path of renunciation or detachment. *Pratishtha kalaa* implies establishing oneself in a mental attitude. *Vidya kalaa* is the acquisition of knowledge. *Shanti kalaa* means the experience of peace and satisfaction within oneself. Providing to others the peace experienced by the sadhaka is *shantyatita kalaa*. The methods related to these dikshas are taught by the guru to the disciple at the time of kalaavati diksha.

Varnamayi diksha is the *abhisheka*, or consecration, of different parts of the body performed through mantra. The physical, mental and emotional purification is achieved through a letter or a group of letters, a word or a mantra. *Vedhamayi diksha* is a kind of shaktipat diksha. Here the disciple receives diksha through the mental power of the guru. The mental power of the guru is directly related to the mind of the disciple.

In *Kularnava Tantra*, seven types of diksha are described: kriya diksha, varna diksha, kalaa diksha, sparsha diksha, vak diksha, drik diksha and manasa diksha. There are three types of diksha mentioned in *Rudrayamala Tantra*: anavi diksha, shakti diksha and manasa diksha.

Important tantric dikshas

From the variety of dikshas outlined in the tantras the important ones are: sparsha diksha, drik diksha, manasa diksha, anushthana diksha, varnamayi diksha, kalaa diksha, anavi diksha, shakti diksha, shambhavi diksha and abhisheka diksha.

Sparsha diksha: A disciple experiences the state of turiya through the touch of the guru. A bird keeps its offspring under its wings and provides warmth for them. In a similar way, in the spiritual realm, power or energy is transferred through touch. Swami Vivekananda is an example of this. Once he asked Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, "Have you seen God? Can you show me God?" Ramakrishna Paramahamsa touched his head and Swami Vivekananda immediately attained self-realization.

Drik diksha: Spiritual energy is transferred through vision. Sri Ramana Maharshi is an example of this. He would look into the eyes of a disciple and give them a mantra with instructions to repeat it. This transfer of energy through the eyes is drik diksha.

Manasa diksha: Another name for manasa diksha is 'shaktipat'. In this diksha the disciple receives the grace of the guru through mental, emotional and reflective faculties. The power of grace awakens the different states of the disciple's consciousness.

Anushthana diksha: This has been prescribed for the disciple or sadhaka with a pashu nature. It is also known as vedic diksha. It is considered essential before tantric diksha. In this diksha, the guru gives a sadhana to the disciple to practise regularly and systematically for a certain period of time. Discipline is essential in this diksha so that the pashu sadhaka can control any restlessness or instability and

awaken sattwic bhava. Tantric diksha is given only after the awakening of the sattwic bhava. Anushthana diksha is considered essential for understanding one's inner nature and for transcending it.

Varnamayi diksha: This diksha is said to destroy the bonds of pasha. A sadhaka gets rid of the bondage of maya by repeating the mantras of the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. These mantras awaken the prana shakti.

Kalaa diksha: Kalaa diksha awakens the states of nivritti, pratishtha, vidya, shanti and shantyatita. The real form of this diksha is awareness of bindu, nada and kalaa. Nada and bindu are inseparable. Where there is bindu, there is nada. Where there is nada, there is bindu. *Nada* is the primordial sound vibration. *Bindu* is the basis from which the first principle emanated. Kalaa is a force which emanates from the nucleus of bindu due to vibrations caused by nada. Kalaa is the outcome of creation or manifestation, and through kalaa diksha a sadhaka experiences the Shiva tattwa in creation or the manifest universe. A continuous experience of this tattwa leads one to the experience of nada and bindu. This method is taught only by the guru.

Anavi diksha: Mantra is used in anavi diksha and a sadhaka attains fulfilment through mantra sadhana under the guidance of guru.

Shakti diksha: There are several forms of shakti diksha. This can be obtained through a letter, dream or simply conversation.

Shambhavi diksha: This is the highest diksha. It leads to the attainment of *sahaja samadhi*, a spontaneous meditative experience where the mind is totally withdrawn from the external world.

Abhisheka diksha: This diksha is a combined form of vedic and tantric systems. The earth, water, fire, air and ether elements are used here. Through the chanting of mantras, the elements become witness to the ritual as the sadhaka is consecrated.

The last diksha in tantra is *poorna abhisheka*, where the disciple becomes one with the guru tattwa, with the higher tattwa. That is the attainment of *poornata*, wholeness, completeness, where the disciple becomes the guru. The important point is that guruhood is not attained; becoming a guru is the reflection of perfected discipleship. If discipleship has been perfected, one automatically becomes a guru. To come to that point of fulfilment and to that attainment of experience concludes the journey of a disciple. After the journey of the disciple is complete, then the disciple automatically becomes the illuminator of many, a guru.



3

Essential Practices



Before beginning the new day, one takes a bath. Before welcoming guests into the house, one tidies up. In the same manner, when commencing any sadhana with the intention of inviting divinity into this human body, tantra believes it is necessary to purify oneself.

To understand the importance of purification, one must understand the conditioning of matter and the constant involvement in the dimension of matter. The dimension of matter is a garb that the enlightened self is wearing, just as one wears sweaters and shawls to protect oneself from the weather. In the same manner, the garb of the spirit is the body, the mind and the emotions through which it expresses and experiences the world. However, in the conditioned state, full awareness of the enlightened spirit that resides within is not possible. There are too many layers of clothes.

There is a chapter in the Bible that describes the covering of seven veils and the experience of someone who was able to remove each veil, layer by layer, until he was able to perceive the pure luminosity, the pure light within. With each veil that was removed, the luminosity of the light became brighter and more intense. The conditions of the body, mind and emotions are the veils that cover the luminosity of atma, and they have to be removed. As long as the veils remain, the light is dim. Prior to purification, these conditioned faculties allow only the experience of the outer dimension.

One must analyze and come to understand the conditions of the body, the conditions of the mind, and the nature of the emotions. One must understand these three conditions and how they can be sublimated to allow for the experience of both the inner and outer dimensions. The ancients have said that the spiritual disciplines help to remove the veil from the mind so that it may first realize the nature, the conditioning of the mind, and finally, the luminosity of spirit, the state known as realization.

Purification is a necessary aspect of this process, as involvement in the material dimension taints and colours the experiences of the mind and the emotions. If one wears the same clothes for many days, they become dirty and must be washed. Likewise, if the senses are used continuously, they also accumulate dirt and must be cleaned. The mind accumulates dirt, the emotions accumulate dirt, and these must be cleaned. Physical dirt is known as *mala*, mental dirt is known as *vikara*, and emotional dirt is known as *vasana*. Vasana is the inherent emotional response to a connection of the senses with some sense object. Vikara is a distorted mind, distorted thinking, distorted perception, not being able to discriminate between the negative and the positive, the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, the just and the unjust. Mala is physical, the toxins. Therefore, purification has to happen at all these three levels, physical, mental and emotional.

To attain a state of purification in these three dimensions, tantra describes five methods of purification, beginning with the self: the body, mind and emotions. The cleansing practices of hatha yoga detoxify the body. Mantra detoxifies the mind, and *bhava* or pure sentiment, detoxifies the emotions. Following the fivefold path are the six tantric *shatkarmas*, six essential actions, which aim to further purify and sensitize the mind and emotions.

The most important element to be purified before undertaking any sadhana or spiritual journey, however, is the purity of intent. When the intentions and aspirations are pure, one remains in harmony with the forces of divinity being invoked, and sadhana can flow smoothly. When undertaking sadhana with impure expectations or uncertain intent, obstacles and difficulties will arise, making the journey difficult. Of course, obstacles in any path are there to assist the sadhaka in further progress and are a part of sadhana, but they can be transcended quickly when one maintains the purity of intention. Therefore, following the paths of tantric and yogic purification techniques before beginning sadhana will ensure a positive and harmonious journey.

FIVEFOLD PATH OF PURIFICATION

In the tantric shastras, it is said that purification must take place in the order of the self, the environment, the tools of offering, the mantra and, once invoked, the deity itself. One purifying tool of tantra is *upasana* (see Section 2, Chapter 4) which is generally translated into English as ritual, but literally means 'to come in close proximity of the divine'. *Up* means to come closer, and *asana* means place, posture or seat. Through upasana, the emotions are refined as awareness grows from the gross to the subtle, and the connection to divinity through ritual deepens. Upasana has both exoteric and esoteric components. It is not a religious ritual, nor is it limited to external worship only. Both external ritual and internal ritual are upasana; both allow one to come closer to the transcendental inner self and to experience the luminosity of that nature. In order to experience the luminosity of the higher nature, one must be purified first and the body, mind, emotions and ego pacified.

1. Purity of self

For purifying the physical body, the hatha yoga techniques of asana and pranayama are used along with the shatkarmas: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, trataka and kapalbhati. These practices balance the prana within the body, and practising the shatkarmas rids the body of excesses or imbalances in the three doshas of pitta, kapha and vata. Physical purity aids

the body and mind in accomplishing stillness during sadhana. Upasana is also considered to be a technique for purifying the self as, in order to perfect upasana, one must first perfect the self-disciplines of yama and niyama. The yama and niyama of the *Yoga Sutras* are a system of physical, mental and emotional self-purification achieved through discipline and codes of conduct. The five niyamas of personal discipline are shaucha, santosha, tapasya, swadhyaya, Ishwara pranidhana. The mind is further detoxified through the practices of pratyahara and dharana.

Shaucha means purity: purity of body, mind and emotions. When the body is free from toxins, when the mind is not constipated by stresses, tensions and anxiety, then that is the purity of body, cleanliness of the body, of this container. In order to perfect *shuchita*, purification of the self, one must adopt different practices of yoga. One begins to detoxify the physical body through the shatkarmas of hatha yoga mentioned above.

Santosha means contentment. When one is content, mental peace and tranquillity is felt, and the mental tensions are curbed. *Tapasya* refers to austerity, self-denial and self-discipline used to aid the process of burning away the impurities of greed and infatuation. *Swadhyaya* means study of the self. With increased awareness of one's habits, mental moods, actions and reactions, one can strive to alter the negative, detrimental traits and increase the positivity in life. *Ishwara pranidhana* means having complete faith in the divine, and surrendering, dedicating all efforts to that higher power. This harmonizes action with intention, lessens the selfish nature and purifies the path of sadhana.

Snana, or bathing, has also been prescribed for physical purification. The custom of snana has special significance before the beginning of any auspicious function. Symbolically, this custom helps one to achieve external and inner purification. Snana partially removes the physical and mental laziness, carelessness and negligence. A sense of purity also awakens through snana. It adds intensity, activity and dynamism to the nervous and circulatory systems of the body. In fact, after snana, these organs become more sensitive and they become fully active. This is the result of external bathing; with the practice of shatkarmas there is inner snana. Shankhaprakshalana, for example, is an inner bathing that cleans and purifies the internal organs of the body.

2. Purity of environment

Second, the environment, the place of sadhana should be clean and pure. The place should radiate peace and happiness if sadhana is to be fruitful. The place should not have any negative



energy in it. The place of sadhana should be clear of negative people as well. Any negative expression in the form of anger or hatred or jealousy or desire must be blocked at the time of sadhana.

Remember that thoughts are energy. Whatever one thinks is being transmitted in that environment. If one thinks ill, then negative waves are being transmitted. If one thinks positively and good, one is transmitting positive thoughts and waves in the environment. Each environment or location has the power to attract positive or negative forces. If one can create a positive environment in the location of sadhana and maintain that, then negativity cannot enter.

It is written in the ancient texts that in the *tapobhoomi*, place of sadhana, of a yogi, the lamb and the lion both drink from the same water and forget their animosity. The positive vibrations at such a place are so intense that anybody who comes within that environment forgets all the negative traits. The external rituals of upasana can work to remove the negative energies from the sadhana area and charge it with positive vibrations.

By offering water, flowers, incense and light to the deity in the place of worship, one is nurturing the positive, spiritual intention of one's actions, and cultivating a strong shield of positivity around the environment. Thus, purification of the place of sadhana is to create a positive environment and an ambience which is conducive to personal development, meditation, and realization.

3. Purification of the dravya

The third level of purification is *dravya shuddhi*, purification of the items used for sadhana. The items that are used for sadhana must be right, appropriate, pure and clean. For example, the flowers collected in the morning must be the best flowers. The wood used for havan should be the best wood, not rotten wood eaten by white ants. If grains are used, they have to be the best quality, free of stones. These items must be absolutely pure and of the best quality.



The idea is that what one accumulates is pure, what is given is pure and what is received is pure. Therefore, purity in every item must be accomplished. In every dravya, in every item, one has to be aware of purity, including the asana, including the clothes worn. The clothes, the asana, the environment must be clean; the items that are offered should be clean. This is the concept of dravya shuddhi.

4. Purification of mantra

The fourth purification is *mantra shuddhi*, purification of the mantra. In mantra shuddhi, the mantra is tuned to one's nature, frequency and vibration just as one tunes a tanpura or guitar. All the strings must be in tune with each other, only then will mantra create a harmonious sound. This is an interesting idea, for although mantras are known to be sounds of power, tantra says that the effect of mantra is locked and nobody can utilize a mantra effectively until its inherent power is unlocked. For example, one has a mantra, *So-Ham* or *Om Namah Shivaya*, and repeats it faithfully in meditation for years, whether one mala, two malas or three malas. The mantra is giving the desired result and benefit for the present state of spiritual evolution; however, when one moves into tantra, then the same mantra must be

unlocked. By unlocking that mantra, the power of the mantra intensifies a thousandfold.

Every mantra has a *kilaka* or lock. The word 'kilaka' literally means to be 'nailed shut' so that one cannot extract the power of the mantra. Mantra shuddhi is the removal of the block from the mantra in order to make the pure shakti of the mantra available for one's upliftment. This unlocking happens through the practice of purascharana, which is one of the six tantric shatkarmas. *Purascharana* means a long, fixed repetition of mantra; thousands and thousands of repetitions with a sankalpa to unlock the mantra.

When the mantra is unlocked, one can do anything; all siddhis are at one's doorstep. Thus, mantra shuddhi is the fourth component of the purificatory rites of tantra.

5. Purification of deity

The fifth purification is *devata shuddhi*, purification of the deity. This is also an intriguing idea of tantra, for when the deity is invoked, that deity also becomes conditioned. It takes a form, a shape, an image, an identity, and that image, identity and form is tainted due to the projection of one's mind: the desires, the expectations, the emotions.

There is a beautiful statement in the *Ramacharitamanas*: "It is easy to follow the path of *nirakara*, the unmanifest, but very difficult to understand the *sakara*, the manifest." This statement is in relation to Rama, as people could not understand why Rama, who is supposed to be divinity incarnate, was crying and suffering upon losing his wife. Even Parvati, Shiva's consort, was confused when she saw Rama crying for Sita. She said, "How can this person be the Supreme God if he is crying?" When such ideas are imposed, realization of or connection with that sakara form becomes difficult.

The concept of God as being unmanifest is one that can be accepted by everyone, as in the unmanifest form, no one's notions of what or how or who God should be can taint the idea of God. As soon as one says that God is manifest, a problem is created as the senses, the emotions and the mind become involved. The manifest always comes with the colouring of the mind of the aspirant. It is subject to conditioning by one's expectations, desires, and so on. Therefore, purification of the devata is important, so one is able to remove the conditioning and see the divinity in its true essence, in its true form. This removal of the veil from the devata, connecting with the pure essence of the devata, and experiencing that pure essence is known as devata shuddhi.

Another beautiful and cryptic statement is found in the *Ramacharitamanas* where it is said that gods or devatas live in the heart. The passage highlights the importance of purifying one's relationship with the devata. It states that these gods living in the heart will not allow human beings to attain peace, for when they see something they like, they open the door of the heart and allow it to enter. This is the cryptic description. What is the force that allows what one observes to enter? It is attraction and attachment. Before having seen the object of



attraction, one had no idea of its existence or of the desire it would create. Suddenly, something opens. Some devata, some god has opened something and connected one with the object, and attraction and attachment arise. Anything that leads one to an external connection and attachment is actually a negative, restrictive function of a devata residing inside, and this is the conditioned nature of human beings.

Therefore, the role of the devatas is twofold: one is to bind and limit one to the material dimension, and the other is to liberate and uplift one from this dimension. In order to experience the uplifting aspect of the devata, the purification of the devata must be achieved. This purification is achieved through mantra, and also through the practice of nyasa, which is included in the tantric shatkarmas. Through this practice, a positive shield of prana shakti is created around the body so that the negative, binding aspects of the devatas are pacified and instead become the source of upliftment, growth and evolution.

TANTRIC SHATKARMA

In this conditioned state of life, the actual, inherent potentials of the mind and emotions, and even the body, remain unexplored. The subtle energy and nature of the mind, emotions and matter is not yet realized. Human beings live only in the superficial area of mind, emotions and matter. Therefore, the purpose of spiritual traditions is to first allow cultivation and development of an awareness of the subtle experiences of matter, mind and emotions. The practice of introspection, observation, concentration and meditation are introduced, and one begins to explore the body, mind and emotions. However, once a point of awareness has been reached, one moves into another level of experience which is the tantric experience.

The tantras prescribe what is known as shatkarma. These are 'six actions of tantra' rather than practices of cleansing as in yoga. An essential part of the sadhana that a tantric aspirant undertakes, the tantric shatkarmas include nyasa, japa, dhyana, homa, pooja and tarpana.

1. Nyasa

Nyasa is performed before every form of worship. It is the practice of rotating the awareness through different parts of the body, purifying them, energizing them, and creating an armour around them. This practice protects the sadhaka from the negative powers that will come to disturb, distract and hamper spiritual attainment. *Nyasa* means to place in trust, and in this context it means to place each body part in the trust of a particular deity with the use of mantra.

In the practice, one becomes aware of each and every part of the body: the tip of the thumb, the first joint, the second joint, the whole thumb, and so on throughout the whole body. While the awareness touches each part, a mantra is given to the part, whether *Hreem*, *Hraum*, *Hrah*, *Kleem*, *Klaum*. There is a specific mantra for each part. Every organ is protected by a specific mantra so that no physical hindrance or obstacle can impede or obstruct the practice of concentration and dhyana.

The practice uses each part of the body as a trigger to awaken the pranic shakti within, which becomes the armour around the body. As discussed above, due to one's uncensored connections with the outside world, the devatas residing within are able to hamper spiritual growth by creating attachments. Through nyasa, one lessens the external connections by creating the armour of prana shakti around the body while the devatas within are purified through the mantras. When this armour is in place, the devatas act in a positive, uplifting manner, rather than creating obstacles. It is from this tantric system of nyasa that Swami Satyananda created the practice of yoga nidra.

2. Japa

Japa is constant and continuous remembrance or awareness. The japa or repetition of guru mantra or *ishta mantra*, mantra on a chosen form of divinity one is devoted to, is practised for concentrating and internalizing the mind

and for making the consciousness subtle. The mantra is repeated a certain number of times depending upon the method of worship.

Japa is not the duty of completing one mala, whether one is focusing or not. It is not one's duty as a sannyasin or spiritual aspirant to complete a given number of malas daily. The duty of an aspirant is to remain aware of every mantra with every bead. If it is one mala, then awareness is of the entire mala. If it is two malas, then awareness is of each and every bead for two malas. This practice allows the mind to become totally focused, one-pointed and merged with what one is doing. It is a state of absolute, one-pointed awareness, and to sustain such awareness is very hard.

When practising japa with a mala, for some moments one is able to sustain the awareness of the symbol, of moving the bead, of repeating the mantra, but after some time, the awareness drops. The process can take many years to perfect. Upon receiving mantra initiation in 1968, my guru, Swami Satyananda gave me the practice of one mala of mantra only. In the first week it used to take fifteen minutes to do a mala, but soon I discovered that I could finish the japa practice in about two minutes. I went to Sri Swamiji and said, "I am finishing my japa in two minutes. Can I increase the number of malas? I would like to at least sit for ten minutes. I would like to practise five malas." He said, "No. One." Then he said to me, "Are you aware of the mantra in every bead?" I said, "No." He said to me, "Become aware of the mantra in every bead, and whenever you miss the mantra, you must start back from one." He told me that in 1968. Now it is 2013 and I am still practising my first mala.

Perfection of sustained awareness is japa, and the practice of japa with a fixed aim is purascharana. It generally implies the japa of the guru or ishta mantra, or the bija mantra of an original mantra (for example, *Hrim* is the bija mantra of *Om Hrim Durgaye Namah*), for a fixed number of times. There are many types of purascharana and the mantra sadhana should adhere to the system from which it has emerged. A fixed number of repetitions should be performed so that the mantra may be transformed into *siddhi*, perfection. The sadhana influences the energy of the subtle and causal body of the sadhaka. This is the aim of purascharana.

3. Dhyana

After invoking the divine through upasana, tantra speaks of meditation as the next tool of sadhana. Meditation is of two types. The first is sakara, meditation on the manifest, the visible and perceivable experiences of the body and the mind, chitta and ahamkara. This is meditation on the ishta devata, on the guru, on the *aradhya*, the object of worship. Sakara uses the experienceable aspects to internalize the senses and the mind, such as images, symbols, breath or mantra. These tools become the steps of the ladder needed to reach the goal where one can begin to meditate on the nirakara, or unmanifest aspect of divinity.

To get up to the terrace, one must use a ladder and climb up step by step. Once the



top is reached the ladder is no longer needed, except to get down when required. In the same manner, meditation should always be a definite process and not an abstract idea. If one goes into abstract meditations, as many people do, thinking, 'I am light, I am light, I am light, I am floating, I am floating' one is simply floating in the mind. A base, a definite foundation is required, and this is sakara. Sakara has been defined by Swami Satyananda as anything on which to fix the mind for the duration of the time one chooses to keep it there.

As one goes higher into psychic awareness and spiritual awareness, one begins to unite with that experience and it becomes universal. Then the personal object awareness goes and universal awareness comes in. At this point, the ladder, the tool of manifest or sakara meditation, is no longer needed and one begins to understand and connect with the universal experience, entering into nirakara meditation.

The first level of meditation, sakara, allows one to become, change, grow, analyze, observe and transform. That is the first level of meditation; it allows one to 'become'. The second level of meditation is 'being'. One simply continues to 'be' what they have become. The second level of meditation allows one to maintain and be what one has experienced.

Meditation is not one practice; there are many different levels of meditation. In broad categories, however, they can be classified into the two groups of sakara and nirakara. What is practised as pratyahara, ajapa japa, antar mouna, and so on, are techniques to 'become'. Mastery and perfection of these techniques is required to 'become'. Once that perfection is attained, then one can 'be'. In this state of being, one maintains that meditative awareness twenty-four hours of the day. This meditative awareness is perpetual; it is with eyes open, with activity, with passivity, with eyes closed. Life itself becomes meditation. In the process of becoming, one must follow the system, the sequence, the discipline. Sit down comfortably, close the eyes, keep the body upright and straight, observe the breath, do the mantra, etc. One must follow the path, and this is the *dhyana* or meditative component of the shatkarmas.

4. Homa

Homa is the use of fire, mantra and meditation. Homa is a rite performed by an individual as a personal sadhana to connect with nature and the essence of the divine. When this rite is performed by a small group, it is called a *havan*. When this same fire ceremony is performed by hundreds of assembled people, it becomes *yajna*.



For the rite of homa being performed as sadhana, one lights a little fire, offers a few grains of rice, a few drops of ghee, and chants mantras. For the duration of the homa, one is using the elements to connect with nature and to connect with the divine. Homa implies offering oneself or surrendering oneself to the divine power. It allows one to connect and appreciate the bounty and beauty of nature and the divine through an external ritual.

5. Pooja

The fifth aspect of shatkarma is *pooja*, worship. This worship is not religious worship. It is an attitude, an awareness. When one goes to a temple, a church, or any place of worship, the mental behaviour, attitude, perception and belief change for those few moments that one is in the place of worship. One consciously tries to cultivate faith. On exiting the place of worship, one can forget about faith and go about one's normal business. However, in the place of worship, one must always have the idea 'I am here to express my faith'.

Faith and belief are two essential ingredients in any worship. Worship is an external act, but the purpose of that external act is to strengthen and intensify faith and belief. In this way, tantra uses worship both externally and internally. The external, ritualistic system is used to engage oneself and cultivate the awareness where one can perform worship internally, during meditation. The two forms of worship are called bahya pooja and manasi or antarika pooja.

External worship is known as *bahya pooja*. It includes burning incense, lighting a lamp, applying tilaka, offering flowers and *naivedya* or food. These rituals have a special purpose. Through them, the sadhaka tries to link his feelings and emotions with the worship of the concrete form. When this is achieved, an atmosphere favourable for sadhana is created.

Worship in the internal dimension is known as *manasi* or *antarika pooja*. According to tantra, manasi pooja is the highest level of worship. It is the state when one has gone beyond the rituals and is simply self-contained in that identity of faith, conviction and belief. One lives that, experiences that and expresses that. Manasi pooja is the state of self-surrender.

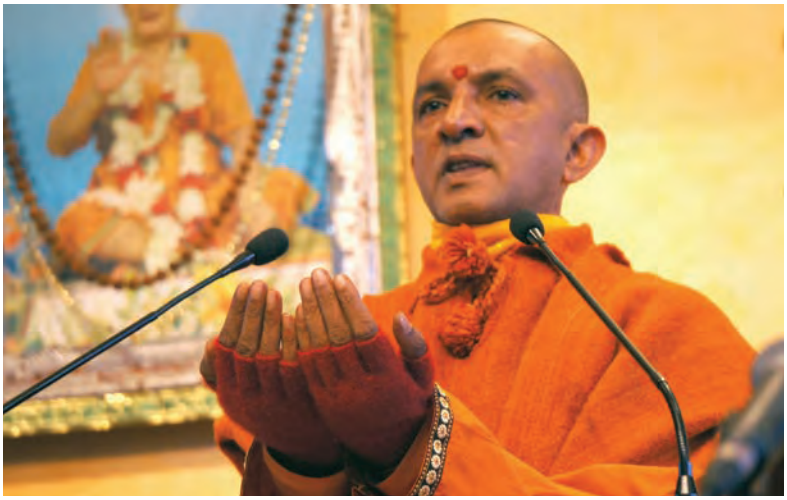
6. Tarpana

Tarpana is generally defined as a rite performed for ancestors; however, it implies the expression of positive feeling and respect towards others, of offering. The sadhaka who is performing tarpana makes a resolve and expresses reverence, faith and respect for the divine power through water. There is a simple and beautiful tradition in India called *arghya*, libation of water towards the sun. This ritual happens all across the subcontinent, in cities and in rural areas both. When bathing in the morning, whether standing under the shower, swimming in the river, or taking a bath with a bucket and a mug, people simply scoop some water into the hands, look towards the east and offer that water to the sun. Indians perform this act on a daily basis, as it is a part of the Indian culture and tradition; it is as natural for them as drinking a glass of water. It is part of Indian life, because the people believe in it. They have conviction and faith in this tradition. They know that it is something to be benefited from, therefore they do it without any question in mind.

Tarpana is the offering made by an individual of that which has been received from God, from guru, and from one's ancestors: 'I have received this life from God, and this is what I offer to God in return. This wisdom I have received from the guru, I offer this in return to the guru. This body I have received from my parents, forefathers, I offer them in return the potentials of this body.' In this manner, the three catalysts giving one this life, this body, and this opportunity are being honoured: the *devatas*, the divine beings, the *pitris*, the forefathers, and the guru. Through water and mantra, one is connecting with them, being grateful and thanking them for the opportunity they have been given in this life, the opportunity to realize the highest in creation.

4

Deity



The concept of the deity is fundamental to tantra. A *deity* is a form and a state which represents the supreme *devata*, divinity or divine power. It is the realization of this supreme devata that is the culmination of any tantric sadhana. The word 'deva' comes from the root *div*, which means 'effulgent', and the deity represents the effulgent aspects of consciousness that must be cultivated to progress on the spiritual path.

Deities are worshipped by the sadhaka striving to imbibe these very attributes, thus they become a tool for concentration. When tantra and the concept of deities came into existence, the social concept of religion did not exist. Christianity was not yet born, Islam was not even conceived of, Hinduism did not exist and no organized religion existed. Then, from where came about this concept of the deity, the realization that a higher cosmic power governs different aspects of creation?

Deity: the commander-in-chief

Prior to the idea of social order within society, the tantrics realized that there had to be some semblance of order to creation, even in heaven. It was discovered that the Supreme God had agents or assistants. The analogy can be made with the governance of a country. After all, how is a country run? All acts are made in the name of the president of the country, but the country is actually run by the ministers and the ministries of home, science, culture, water resources, and so on. There are many different departments and ministries that run the nation, but the supreme commander of all

the forces is one, the president. In the same manner, creation and the world are run by the parliament of gods. Indra is the Speaker, Varuna is the Minister of Water Resources and Kubera is the Finance Minister, and the controller of all is Paramshiva.

All the ministries have their own portfolio, and the divine equivalents of these are known as the devatas, the demigods, the little ones, the managers on behalf of the commander-in-chief, Paramshiva, who sits in total equipoise high up in the mountains, observing and ensuring that his people do the right work at the right time. He does not intervene or interfere.

Within tantra, there are five main deities who represent the five aspects of this supreme transcendental force. These are Shiva, Shakti, Narayana, Surya and Ganesha, and they are known collectively as the *panchadevas*.

There are two schools of thought regarding the panchadevas. One school believes the five deities to be invoked are the deities of the tantric traditions, Ganesha, Shakti, Shiva, Narayana and Surya. The other tradition believes the deities to be worshipped are Ganesha, Parvati, Shiva, Narayana and Brahma, with Brahma replacing Surya. These groups of deities were created by the ancients, and the philosophy and the sadhana were aids to realize their power.

Religion and tantra

Often, ritual is associated with religion; however, one must remember that anything done to beautify life instils a positive culture. If one is asked to express emotion, feelings, sentiments and devotion in a proper manner, then that is not religion. Religion is an idea. Religion is a thought. Religion is not a custom.

The deity is not used to increase the religiosity in a person; it is used to create an awareness of the link that one has with the divine, with the source. If there was nothing, then what would be the inspiring force to guide and to connect one to the source? How can that invisible God be experienced by the finite brain and mind? One cannot become infinite, because maya has limited humanity's omniscience. It is maya that has restricted creativity so that one cannot realize the infinite; however, the infinite can be invoked in this finite plane to become part of one's experience.

By creating a connection, a feeling, a communication, by identifying with the object of worship, it becomes one's personal God. The impersonal Brahman, the impersonal God, the impersonal consciousness, the all-expansive consciousness becomes the personal God when one begins to identify with it. Then the deity begins to inspire and connect one with the right, positive and creative culture inherent in every being.

Deity as a tool of intention

As the image or form of a deity is used as a focus for the mind and emotions, the deity is considered to be a tool of tantra. It is the medium for establishing communion with God. The deity allows one to engage the outer senses and emotions in order to disconnect and turn back inside, connecting to and realizing the deity within. This is achieved with the tantric sadhana of personalized form of worship or *upasana*. Upasana helps one to experience the subtle, subjective power of divinity.

One problem occurs in realizing the higher or subtle nature and the powers and the forces; one tries to realize them through the agency of the senses. It is not possible to realize the subtle powers that function beyond the range of sensory perceptions through the worldly senses. The experiences received through the senses are objective; they can be seen, felt, heard and proved. Objective experience is the domain of science. However, beyond the objective experience there is subjective awareness and experience. Sugar can be split into a thousand molecules and analyzed to show that it contains such and such chemical, particle and molecule, but all the description that one can give to a single piece of sugar does not give the experience of the taste of sweetness. Once the lump of sugar is on the tongue, the taste of sweetness is absolutely unique from the thesis that has been written and read about sugar.

The senses have only one function: to connect one with the objective, sensory world, and not with the subtle world. In order to connect with the subtle world, one must disconnect from the senses, and that is the theory of *pratyahara*. In meditation, what does one do? First, the senses are realized and then they are disconnected. When one disconnects from the sensory experiences, certain flashes, visualizations and realizations take place which become subjective experience. The devata is also a subjective experience; it is not something that can be objectively seen on a camera. It can not be touched, it can not be felt through the senses, but it can be felt by the mind when the mind disconnects from the senses. The concept of devata is that subtle power.

An example of developing subjective communication can be seen in the work of a Bulgarian scientist, named Itzhak Bentov. In his book, *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, he describes how one can pick up any stone from the road, place it on an altar, worship it every day and, after some time, the stone will come alive to the one offering worship. The stone will begin to fulfil wishes; the energy and consciousness of that stone will be connected to the energy and consciousness of the worshipper. This was the statement of a quantum physicist. It is a new trend, a new branch of physics and yet to be fully developed or accepted. Nevertheless, people are beginning to consider the possibility of inanimate objects possessing inherent subtle power. They are thinking along the lines of this power being in stone, in wood, in every speck of dust that can respond, for that is consciousness and humans are consciousness. One cannot objectively monitor that communication, but one can subjectively communicate with it.

Objective and subjective experiences are two different principles that one must deal with in the understanding of the words 'deity' or 'devata'. It is a subjective feeling, not an objective analysis. This subjective feeling is very real to the sadhaka, and it is not only confined to oneself, but can also be experienced by other people. Swami Satyananda gives the example of passing by the doorway of a cool room on a hot day and experiencing a wave of coolness. For a few moments one feels fresh, then as one continues to walk, the heat is felt again. This is how one has to perceive the divine nature or God as well, the passing grace of a cool breeze.

Upasana

The rituals of upasana aid the aspirant in allowing the subjective experiences to unfold. By using deities and their forms or images as supports, the form or image becomes an external reminder of God. The mind requires a symbol to experience through the senses, something that can be seen and touched, for it cannot hold a subjective concept of the absolute in the initial stages. The aspirant associates the qualities of divinity with the form or image of a deity, and then begins to connect on a more subtle level with that deity through worship. As the worship continues, the connection with the subtle qualities represented by each devi and devata strengthens; the objective, sensual experience lessens as the emotional connection deepens and a subjective experience begins to unfold. Through concentration of mind and emotion towards the deity and its special quality, one establishes intention in action; intention to change and grow, to remove the dross and reveal that same divine quality within.

Any sadhana begins with upasana. Upasana is the clear intention to come closer to the source, the desire to be in the close proximity of God. Upasana is generally translated as ritual, but it actually indicates a sankalpa, an intention and an act. Action without the supportive inclination is not action. When action is linked with inclination, then it has force and power, and can lead one to a destination. However, if the intention is not clear or proper, the action will not give the right result. Thus, intention and action become the upasana aspect of tantra.

In tantric sadhana, the concept of the deity assists the sadhaka in linking intention with action. The divine qualities of God are so innumerable that to aim to achieve all at once is unreasonable. By giving specific attributes

of God to different deities, such as the power to remove obstacles to Ganesha or the quality of nurturing and sustaining to Narayana, one can create an earnest, specific goal, and aim for it accordingly through worship. It is the strength of one's intention, sankalpa, thought, aspiration and goal that leads to the discovery of the source within. Subjective connection with divinity through the deity helps to achieve and nurture a strong sankalpa, as this sankalpa is not born from the senses. It is not born from worldly desires; it is a call from the soul. A strong sankalpa becomes the motivating factor behind one's intentions, thoughts, desires and actions. Through worship of the deity, action becomes conducive and supportive of one's intention and inclination, and both together become a power so great that whatever is performed is bound to give the right result.

Upasana has been classified into two groups: exoteric, the external, and esoteric, the internal. The external rituals prepare and purify the environment for sadhana. These are the ritual offerings given to the image or form: offering water and flowers, lighting a *diya* or lamp, waving incense, chanting mantras, blowing the conch to purify the environment, and ringing bells to dispel dissipations of the mind. These actions charge the environment with the right feeling, the right sankalpa and the right vibrations. This purified environment then becomes conducive for one's spiritual growth.

The internal, esoteric upasana is the method used for removing the dross, for removing the veils from one's inner luminosity. Internal upasana involves always keeping the memory of God or the deity close to the heart. In its highest form, upasana becomes the unbroken, constant awareness of God, like the unbroken awareness a mother has of her child. The continued subjective connection through the *bhava*, the attitude or emotion, is aided by the deity, as the qualities associated with the devi or devata will remind the sadhaka of the greatness and subtleness of the supreme devata. The use of these exoteric and esoteric rituals together with full intention and faith brings one closer to God, and this completes the whole process of upasana, worship.

Experiences of devata

Though devata is a subtle, subjective experience, at times devis and devatas manifest in the objective realm and can be experienced through the senses. An interesting project was undertaken in Scotland in the seventies called the Findhorn Project, and for the first time in the western world people became aware of natural forces called 'spirits'. One community began to worship tree spirits, and as they started farming they discovered that little lights could be seen dancing on the trees and on the produce. These were the spirits that were controlling the growth of the plants, trees and vegetables. This community called these lights 'tree spirit' and 'plant spirit'. Books have been written on this experiment and the experiences of associated people, which clearly indicate that there are subtle forces with which humans can communicate, and these forces can come to our aid and offer help. For instance, the vegetables that were produced on this farm were three times bigger than the normal vegetables produced at other farms.

Prior to this experiment, divinity and deities were limited to mythology or sightings by



psychics and visionaries. When this experiment took place and people actually saw the manifestation of the subtle forces, they realized that humans are indeed governed by forces that are unseen and untouched by the mind. These natural cosmic powers are self-luminous, self-effulgent beings.

I had a similar experience in Manasarovar during the pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in 2012. One night, high in the Himalayas, beyond any town or village, white and yellow lights were seen descending from the night sky and playing on the water of the lake. This was a darshan of the devatas.

Connection with one's personal God

The concept of devata is aimed at realizing the higher power through a tangible medium. During the Islamic rule in India, there was a Hindu minister named Birbal, in the court of Emperor Akbar. The emperor once asked this Hindu minister, "Tell me, why do Hindus worship images, idols, when we don't? Why should we worship idols?" The minister requested a few days to think the question over. After a few days, the Hindu minister informed the king that a painter had come and brought along a portrait of the emperor's father. Akbar saw this oil painting of his esteemed father and was very happy with it. He gave a large reward to the painter and hung the painting on the wall of the court. Everyone admired the painting including Birbal. The next day in the court, Birbal said, "Emperor, my lord, I have the answer that you seek." Emperor Akbar said, "What is the answer?" He said, "My lord, give me an opportunity to practically explain it to you." The emperor said, "Fine." Birbal called one person from the audience. The man came and the minster said, "You see that picture of the emperor's father?" "Yes I see that." "Go and spit on it and stamp on it."

The man from the audience was shocked, "How dare he say such things about this beautiful portrait?" Even the emperor was angry and said, "What do you mean, 'Go and spit on the image of my father?'" The minister said to him, "Sir, as far as I can see, that is only a canvas with some colours on it, in one image, in one form. So what is the harm if somebody goes and spits on the image and stamps on the canvas?" Akbar said, "You must be crazy! Can't you see that is the image of my father? Instead of paying reverence to that image, you want people to go and spit on it and stamp on it?" Birbal replied, "Sir, I hope you now have your answer."

Akbar said, "What do you mean?" Birbal said, "Well, a few days ago you had asked me why Hindus worship idols. You yourself have given the answer. Definitely an idol is a stone or a carving in the wood, and nothing more than that; however, the sentiment that people carry with them when they go to see that idol makes it special, just like this piece of canvas with some colours thrown on it. For an outsider it has no meaning, but for you it is your father. Similarly, for an outsider those images or idols may have no meaning, but for us they are the image of our respectable gods and goddesses, and we honour them. Just as you honour the painting on the wall, we honour them."

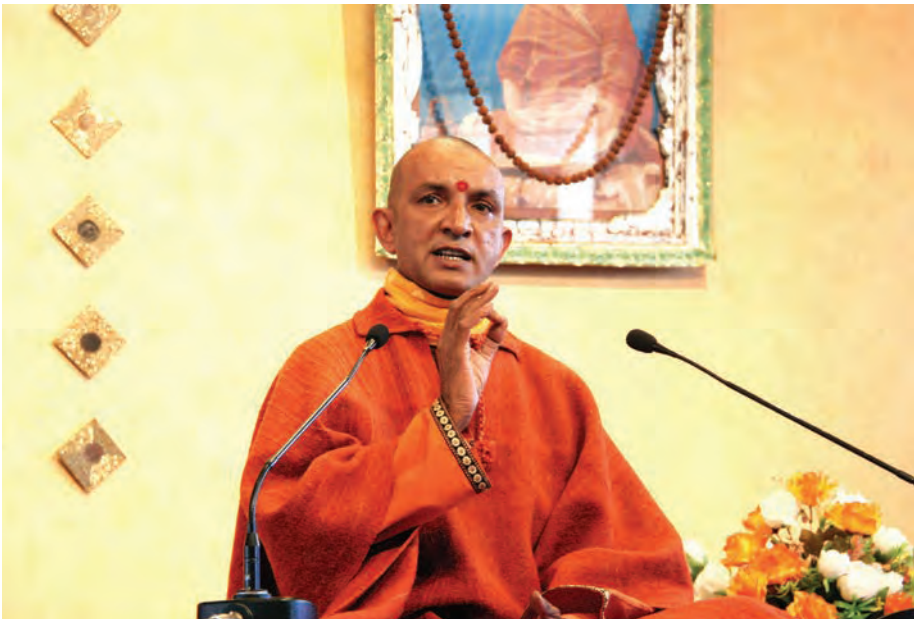
From unmanifest to manifest

The experience of God or the devata is always subjective and can never be objective. Energy in its pure form is also subjective. It can never be objective; however, the evolutes of energy can be observed over a period of time as they become more solid and more defined. This is the concept of *nirakara*, the unmanifest, becoming *sakara*, manifest.

Can one walk across a flowing river? No. If the river is iced over, however, one can easily walk across. The flowing water represents the nirakara tattwa; one cannot hold it, one cannot contain it. It is always flowing. Through upasana, through invocation, when one is giving that flow a definite form and connecting it with a quality and a name, that flow takes a solid form and it manifests. Just as water can become ice, the unmanifest can become manifest. Once the manifest form comes, one can hold it in the hands; it can be experienced. This is the concept of the devata.

5

Mantra



One of the primary tools of tantra is mantra. Mantra is used for synchronizing the mind and for internalizing the awareness in order to achieve pratyahara. It is used as an aid to focus the attention on the object of concentration and to identify with the object of concentration. Mantra allows one to become aware of an inner process of awakening, to develop a higher awareness and to cultivate the ability to hear the subtle vibrations of the inner dimension.

What is mantra?

Mantra is defined as: *Mananat trayate iti mantrah* – "The power through which one can liberate the mind from its obsessions is mantra." According to the tantric theories, mantras are sound vibrations. They are frequencies of sound that belong to a wide spectrum: subsonic, audible and supersonic. Normally, one hears sounds only within a certain range of decibels. Beyond or below that range, the frequencies change and cannot be heard. This is because the human faculty of hearing is limited and is capable of detecting sounds on the gross level only. However, in the causal state of consciousness, one becomes sensitized beyond the limited range of human senses and discovers a whole symphony of sound.

One begins to hear and see many things. What one hears are mantras and what one sees are yantras.

In tantric systems, chanting mantras constitutes a significant part of sadhana. For many people, mantras may not mean anything, simply strange words being chanted. If one were to ask what is being said, it would be the intellect asking questions, but mantra has nothing to do with the intellect; its realm is beyond the range of the lower mind.

Discovery of mantra

Mantras, cosmic sounds, were first discovered by ancient yogis when they explored the different layers of the mind to discover the connection between human beings and the cosmos. These yogis had cultivated their awareness and higher minds to such an extent that they were able to transcend the awareness of body, mind, senses, time and object, and come to an awareness of space. While experiencing the deeper awareness of space, all the different vibrations, frequencies and sounds of the universe were perceived by the yogis. They realized that these sounds were the first subtle manifestations of two great cosmic powers, energy and consciousness. They discovered that the vibrations they were experiencing inside existed outside, as well as in the cosmos. These vibrations were given the name 'mantra'.



When mantras were first discovered, they were realized, and not heard, in a higher state of mind. The vibrations were in equilibrium and in harmony with the mind of the yogi. When the mantras manifested on the material plane, they were heard as sounds. However, their vibrational qualities remained in frequencies undetectable by human ears, exerting a subtle effect on the mental behaviour of the individual. The yogis used the term 'mantra' for these vibrations discovered in meditation, since they had identified each sound frequency as having an effect on a particular psychic centre within the dimensions of the personality.

If one simply makes up some syllables and repeats them, it is not a mantra. One may like to repeat the name of someone or something they cherish; however, that name is merely a sound with an emotional charge, not a mantra charged with prana shakti. Mantras are those syllables or phrases realized by the seers and given to humankind, such as the Gayatri mantra realized by Sage Vishwamitra. When such realized mantras are chanted, the sound waves of the mantras create a synchronicity in the mind and are able to realign and reorganize energy patterns in both body and mind.

Power of mantra

Sound is a form of energy that has frequency, pitch, volume and tone, as well as subtle qualities. Scientifically, sound is vibration at a particular frequency, and it is able to produce physical changes in an organism. Every movement of energy manifests sound, and every sound carries powerful energy in the form of vibration. Some vibrations can be harmful while others are beneficial. Sound can be concentrated to such degrees of intensity that it can shatter and destroy objects. Holes

can be driven into solid metal by using sound alone. Take, for example, the force of an army marching in step. When marching across a bridge, the platoon must break their marching formation of 'left, right, left', as the vibrations created by the repetitive, synchronized steps are powerful enough to damage the structure of the bridge.

Regardless of whether the material may be steel, wood or synthetic, no matter is able to withstand the continuous effect of this vibration energy. It is thought that the great stones of Stonehenge, Easter Island and the Mayan monuments were moved into place using the principles of sound, an accomplishment lost to modern civilization. The science of sound is also the basis of many esoteric systems. The power of mantra and subtle sound frequencies has been known and used down through the ages by ancient civilizations to awaken the inner consciousness and exert an influence upon the external forces of nature.

Another example of the synchronizing effects of vibration can be seen in the experiment conducted with grandfather clocks. In one room, approximately ten to fifteen clocks were placed with pendulums all swinging at random. After a few hours, it was discovered that the pendulums of all the clocks were swinging in unison. At some point, something had happened that synchronized the pendulums. This phenomenon has been explained as the effect of vibration. The pendulum itself is inert, and only continues to move because of its weight. As it swings to and fro, vibrations are generated in the space around it. These vibrations in turn affect the space around the neighbouring clock and influence the movement of its pendulum. After some time, the vibrations generated by all the moving pendulums harmonize and synchronize, and all begin to move in unison.

When mantras are chanted repeatedly and with awareness, the same intense effect of vibrational energy occurs within the human body and mind. The mind becomes synchronized and focused, and the effect of mantra is so strong that the vibrational waves of sound begin to influence the subtle dimensions of consciousness. The influence of synchronized brainwaves on the subtle dimensions of consciousness can be seen in the experience of bhramari pranayama, which involves the focused and sustained humming of a single syllable. The ancient yogis discovered that through the practice of bhramari, they were able to foresee future events. Such abilities are explained and validated in the light of the science of mantra.

The sustained humming of the sound 'mmmmm', which is occurs at the end of mantra *Om*, physically alters the patterns of the brainwaves and transforms the energy fluctuations of the mind from the dissipated state to a more synchronized, unified set of brainwaves. This synchronization of the brainwaves focuses the mind and the senses, allowing for calmness and a state of increased concentration. Furthermore, the resonance of the sustained humming stimulates certain centres of the lower brainstem or primitive brain. These centres, when stimulated, trigger impulses that affect the perceptions of the conscious mind via neural pathways outside of the normal circuitry, and therefore effects are experienced that seem inexplicable and profound, such as visions and clairvoyance. Though these effects may seem miraculous, they are actually a normal part of human life and an outcome of the proper application of mantra; a harmonization, synchronization and integration of the lower and higher mind.

Physical effects of mantra

The first noticeable effect of a mantra is relaxation, a feeling of peace, as well as vibrancy. Mantras have been found to bring deep changes in the human personality, behaviour and physiology. High anxiety states can be reduced, as can the agitations of nerves and muscles. In fact, many doctors and hospitals are beginning to use mantra as a technique to calm patients prior to surgery. When patients enter hospitals for major surgery,

they are often in states of extreme tension and nervousness. This agitated state makes the preparation for surgery difficult for both the patient and the staff, and as the patient is unable to relax and let go, often increased amounts of medication are required to induce a relaxed state.

One particular experiment using mantra was undertaken in a hospital in Barcelona, Spain. The purpose of the experiment was to ascertain whether patient anxiety levels could be reduced prior to surgery using a certain yogic method. When patients arrived for surgery, they were asked to chant the mantra *Om* in the pre-operation room for at least five minutes, in isolation and quiet. While doing so they were being monitored with an EEG. When the brain function was observed, it was found that within five minutes of mantra repetition, the beta waves were greatly reduced and the alpha waves became dominant. These results indicated that the body was responding to mantra with relaxation. The body was releasing and overcoming its stress level. This experiment is one example of how mantra influences the behaviour of the physical systems, whether the nervous system, muscular system, respiratory system, cardiovascular system or the cerebrum.

Spiritual effects of mantra

The main purpose of mantra is to deepen an identification with the spiritual quality within oneself. Mantras carry a high psychic charge and are able to penetrate deep into the psyche. They are able to influence the vijnanamaya and anandamaya koshas, unlike common words that only affect manomaya, pranamaya and annamaya koshas. Mantras do not work at the level of the conscious mind only, but at the level of the deeper mind. Once the experience of harmony begins at deeper levels of consciousness, it penetrates down to both the outer and inner spheres. This is the reason why many people experience a sense of elation, inner strength and inspiration while singing kirtan. When this harmony is felt, one begins to experience the union between the cosmic vibrations of the macro-universe and those of the inner micro-universe.

Sound is the link between the cosmos and the individual. The mind and body are a reflection of the supreme consciousness and supreme energy. This body is energy, it is not matter. It is perceived as matter; however, it is only a gross form of energy. Vibration, which emerges from the interaction between consciousness and energy, also becomes the cause for their union in the individual unit.

Contained within every individual body are psychic energy centres known as *chakras*. When the yogis discovered mantras, they identified each sound with a particular chakra. The mantra *Om*, for example, was identified as the seed sound of ajna chakra, *Ham* of vishuddhi chakra, *Yam* of anahata chakra, *Ram* of manipura chakra, *Vam* of swadhisthana chakra and *Lam* of mooladhara chakra.

In their altered state of observation, the yogis perceived that the chakras are stimulated by chanting a particular sound. The pranas are activated with the chanting of mantras, and the orientation of existing pranic flows are altered or emphasized, so that the mind and perception changes. This is akin to the effect created when a long rope is tied to a tree trunk and shaken: the wave travels from one end of the rope to the other. Similarly, the ripples of vibration reach and activate the psychic centre when the sound of a frequency is repeated audibly or mentally. Therefore, they combined certain sounds in order to create a particular state of consciousness. In this way, mantras such as *Om Namah Shivaya*, *Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya* and others emerged. Mantras became part of spiritual sadhana to awaken different areas of consciousness and develop knowledge and creativity.

Attributes of mantra

Each mantra has two important qualities, known as *varna*, colour, and *akshara*, letter, form or syllable. Every mantra has six parts. First, it has a rishi, who had self-realization through the mantra and gave the mantra to others. Second,

every mantra has a metre. Third, it has an *ishta devata*, a presiding deity. Fourth, it has a *bija*, a seed sound, which is its essence. Fifth, it has its own *shakti*, energy. Sixth, it has a *kilaka*, a pin, which unplugs the *chaitanya*, or consciousness, hidden in the mantra. When the plug is removed by constant and prolonged repetition, the chaitanya is revealed.

Types of mantra

According to the scriptures, there are various types of mantra. The three main groups are the bija mantras for spiritual upliftment and awakening, middle range mantras for connecting the lower mind with the higher mind, and the lower range of mantras, which are used for gaining something and for fulfilling whims and desires. Bija mantras are single-syllable letters, or akshara, falling into the ultra-low frequency range of sound. The word 'akshara' literally means 'imperishable', that which does not change, alter or decay. It has been said that once a mantra is uttered, it becomes a part of the eternal akashic record. Bija mantras represent the transcendental nada, the transcendental sound or vibration. Examples of bija mantras are *Om*, *Hrim*, and the chakra mantras *Lam*, *Vam*, *Ram*, and so forth.

Universal mantras are those well known mantras that can be chanted by everyone and anyone. Examples are the Gayatri mantra for unlocking intuitive reasoning, the Mahamrityunjaya mantra for general health and wellbeing, and the 32 names of Durga, for overcoming distress in life. Though technically a bija mantra, the mantra *Om* also falls into the category of universal mantra, as it is the first primordial sound and continually reverberates throughout the universe.

There are also three categories of mantra used for specific purposes. These are vedic, yogic and tantric mantras. In the vedic group of mantras, the method of dharana is based on the *devas*, or luminous, divine beings. The word 'deva' relates to a quality, tendency or higher state of human personality. It has been derived from the root *div* which means 'self-



illumined' or 'self-resplendent'. In the Vedas, the devas have been divided into three types. One is the earthly group of devas who reside on the earth. Accordingly, different forms of devas are experienced in trees, rivers, water, hills, mountains and oceans. The second group is the celestial devas, which includes the sun, moon, planets, stars, air and space. The third group of devas is the heavenly devas, representing the state of higher consciousness. The vedic mantras have the power to awaken or summon these three groups of devas. Beyond them is the *para* or the Supreme Deva, whose mantra is *Om*, which is the Pranava mantra of the supreme consciousness.

The tantric group of mantras are specially related to the *panchadevas*, the five major deities. These are Shiva, Shakti, Surya, Ganesha and Vishnu. The mantras relate to Shiva in many forms, such as Rudra or Bhairava. Similarly, the mantras for Shakti refer to her various forms, such as the ten forms of Durga, or the mahavidyas. There are also mantras related to Surya, Ganesha and the many

incarnations of Vishnu. The tantric mantras range from the single-letter bija mantras to the universal mantras which encompass a whole phrase. The purpose of these mantras is to provide experience of all the forces related to one's personality and consciousness. These forces are related to the awakening of personality and to the different gross and causal states of consciousness.

Mantra sadhana

Ultimately, beyond influencing the physical systems of the body, mantra prepares one for higher tantric sadhana by increasing the ability for sustained, focused awareness. In the initial stages, *japa* or repetition is vital training to increase the attention span of the mind. One must have absolute awareness of every single syllable of the mantra, without fail. Once one is able to maintain unbroken awareness of the mantra for at least half an hour, the inner experience of mantra begins as the mantra starts to vibrate within. It is for this reason that mantras are always repeated and not simply chanted once or twice. One needs to be able to identify, to feel and to connect with the vibrations of the mantra as much as possible. When one is able to sustain the mantra repetition with total awareness, to identify with the mantra vibration, to feel the mantra vibrating internally and to use the mantra to deepen meditative awareness, the effect is drastically different from mechanical repetition. This is real mantra sadhana.

There are three methods of mantra repetition. These are baikhari, upanshu and manasic. *Baikhari japa* is audible repetition of the mantra. To whisper the sound of the mantra is *upanshu japa*. To repeat the mantra mentally, with full awareness, is *manasic japa*. Apart from these is the state of para or supreme mantra. In para mantra, the help of speech, mind or intellect is not needed. It is the unstruck sound of anahata and the whole personality is pervaded by it.

When mantra is adopted as a system of sadhana, other methods are also added to it. Within mantra sadhana there are three essential aspects: the psychic sound, the psychic breath and the psychic symbol. The sound of the mantra is the psychic sound. The psychic symbol is the symbol given by the guru that the aspirant must focus on while practising mantra japa. Psychic breath means a subtle breath, in the form of ujjayi pranayama.

Importance of mantra initiation

Initiation from a guru is essential to realize the power of a mantra. Recitation of a word or syllable, which has been heard or found in a book, is not enough. A mantra requires correct phonetic pronunciation, intonation, concentration and creation of the associated mental image or form. The mantra's ishta, bija, shakti and kilaka are a matter of realization, and only one who has realized these aspects can effectively impart its power. Therefore, emphasis is placed on initiation. There are, however, universal mantras such as *Om* or Gayatri, which can be used if one has not received a mantra through initiation.

Mantra is the rope upon which one can hold to remain focused and aware on the spiritual journey. The ripples of mantras practised sincerely reach and stimulate the subtle layers of consciousness. When the subtle layers of consciousness are stimulated, dormant centres of the brain are awakened, leading to the awakening of shakti within. This awakening of inherent shakti, liberation of dormant energy, is the first aim of tantra. Mantra is the key, and the primary tantric tool, for accessing the inherent energy lying dormant in the unstimulated centres of the mind and for expanding the limited awareness. Thus, mantra diksha is the first and most important initiation given to spiritual aspirants.

Once mantra sadhana has been mastered and the awareness made subtle and unbroken through regular, sincere practice according to the precise instructions of the guru, the aspirant may be found suitable to advance into yantra, the other significant tool in tantra.

6

Yantra



Once the deeper layers of the consciousness begin to reveal themselves in mantra sadhana, another tool is required to understand the language of the psyche. This tantric tool is yantra. Yantras are considered to be the maps of consciousness. Just as maps are used for guidance and direction in foreign places, yantras are the maps that allow one to access and traverse the unknown and unexplored terrain of the individual psyche.

What is yantra?

Yantra is the transcendental form and shape of mantra. When the ancient yogis were striving to realize the supreme reality, what they heard were mantras, and what they visualized at the same time were *yantras*, geometrical designs and shapes consisting of triangles, circles and squares. Mantra represents the formless, and yantra symbolizes the form of that which has not yet materialized, but exists nonetheless.

A yantra implies many things. According to one meaning, it helps the individual get rid of pain and affliction. According to another definition, the word 'yantra' stems from the word *yana*, which means vehicle. Yantra is the vehicle upon which one travels through the field of consciousness. The atomic universe of subtle experiences is said to be inherent in yantra, and it is through this form that sadhakas can access the subtle dimensions of consciousness.

Samskaras and archetypes

Yantras are the language through which samskaras can be accessed, explored and destroyed. *Samskaras* are deeply-embedded memories and impressions that have been converted into unrecognizable symbols and stored in various layers of the psyche. Yantras are the vehicles and the mediums through which one can bypass the sensorial identification with the self and the world around, and begin to understand the deeper layers of consciousness. Through yantra sadhana, one gains the ability to interpret these archetypes, the unrecognizable imprints of past experiences lying deep within the psyche, and to begin to change the patterns of behaviour and personality.

Yantras have an immediate effect on the unconscious body and are excellent tools for eradicating or lessening the impact of negative experiences, quietly exploding the samskaras before they become deep-rooted problems. The human mind is a composition of innumerable experiences. During the process of evolution of the mind, these archetypes have to be eliminated. The process of elimination is very important for the awakening of shakti. Shakti is dormant in every being. Shakti is creative and primal energy; this is the greatest force that lies dormant within. To awaken this shakti is the ultimate purpose of tantra.



Yantras are the symbolic representations of one's entire existence, just as the seed is the symbolic representation of a plant or a tree. Everything in this world has a subtle geometric form, just as a fruit tree is contained in a tiny seed. If the seed is cut, one will find different elements in a potential state, but one will never see the tree there. Nevertheless, when that seed is put into the ground, it grows into a tree. In the same way, all experiences are immediately transmuted into seed form the moment the brain registers them, and when the situation is right they manifest again. In yoga and tantra, the samskaras, the seeds of past memories and experiences, only resonate and sprout when certain stimuli are applied. For example, when one eats a piece of chocolate, that experience is transferred to the deeper realms of consciousness, not exactly as the tongue tasted it, but in a symbolic form. When any part of that experience is triggered through the senses, the memory of that experience may come clearly to the mind.

Samskaras of repressed memories may be triggered and expressed as a spontaneous emotional reaction in life or in dreams. Often the exact memory that gives rise to an emotional reaction is in its archetypal form and unrecognizable. For instance, passing someone on the street may suddenly trigger an angry reaction, seemingly out of nowhere. In some way, something about that particular person or situation has reminded the psyche of an old experience.

People try to define dreams and visions, but they can only be understood in relation to one's experience, symbolizing the samskaras embedded within the many dimensions of the personality. Another layer of symbols is the dimension of non-verbal symbols that lie out of the range of the senses. They are the building blocks of the personality, the strengths and limitations that one was born into this life with. These samskaras lie deep within the

consciousness, and to access and explode them a powerful stimulus is needed. This is where the science of yantra comes in as, at this level, one cannot know the strengths and limitations until the samskaras are recognized. Yantra becomes the language by which these deeply embedded samskaras can be interpreted and explored.

There was a time when all civilizations had yantras. When these symbols are presented to the mind at different times, they penetrate deep into the consciousness where they explode and awaken certain creative faculties in the individual. There are certain groups of yantras which stimulate the sattwic, rajasic and tamasic body, exploding the samskaras. It is known that the millions of samskaras within the mind can never be destroyed, for every day more are being made. Therefore, why not explode the best? There is no use in fighting with the lower samskaras. However, higher samskaras containing a reservoir of power lie dormant and the yantras are instrumental in awakening this great potentiality in human consciousness. Through yantra sadhana, great service for humanity can be accomplished, beautiful music or inspiring ideals and philosophies can be developed, or one may even become a prophet.

Geometric designs

Yantras are geometric patterns and symbols that represent the movement of energy within consciousness. They are configurations of triangles and circles within the frame of a square. However, every aspect of the yantra is symbolic. The square is the first shape of the yantra. The square that frames the yantra represents the material world, the entire world of creation, with the four directions, north, south, east and west. It represents the world of existence, the world of the senses and sense objects. This world or square has four entrances which are called *dwara*, or portals. The portals represent manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. These four components of the mind are the agents through which one functions and survives in the sensorial world, and all the knowledge, perceptions and experiences of the world are derived from them. They are the gateways with which to experience existence or life.

There are two types of triangles used in yantra, inverted and upright. Each line of the triangle as well as its position has a meaning. The inverted triangle represents the dimension of Shakti, or manifest consciousness, which comprises space, time and object. In the inverted triangle, the horizontal line above represents space, the left line moving downward represents time and the right line moving downward represents object. These three qualities pervade the manifest world. From the horizontal line of the unmanifest or space, time and object descend and become active. Conversely, the upright triangle represents active consciousness, or Shiva. The horizontal line representing space from the base of the triangle, and the lines of time and object move from this line in an ascending direction. These triangles represent the journey of life; the upright journey is towards freedom and the inverted journey is towards bondage and manifestation.

The circle is another component of yantra and represents the wheel of life. In this cycle of life, progression or regression of consciousness and energy is perceived, identified and experienced. In the process of life and death it is the vibrant archetype of yantras that can take one beyond the present state to higher levels of evolution. In this manner, each yantra has to be interpreted. Each triangle represents an attribute of its devata or devi. Each circle represents a chakra of consciousness. Each point, each dot, represents the seat of its devata or devi. The geometrical pattern that is seen externally is a reflection of what is contained within. It is a map of consciousness, and that map of consciousness can only be interpreted by those who have studied the subject, who have performed the sadhana and who have undergone that experience.

Yantra sadhana

In the process of sadhana, the first stage is mantra sadhana, in which there are three

aspects to perfect: the breath, the sound and the symbol. Mantra is the sound and that sound must be connected with the breath. Finally, the sound and the breath have to be connected to the symbol. When the symbol remains constant in chidakasha during meditation, for fifteen minutes or more, then that is an indication that one can move on to the next stage, yantra sadhana. Of course, only the guru can decide when the time is right and provide the sadhaka with the appropriate yantra. This stage itself is an advanced accomplishment.

The ability to concentrate on a symbol is an essential requirement of yantra sadhana, as yantras are themselves symbols. They are the symbols, the maps of the mind and consciousness that can aid the aspirant in understanding the content of their own psyche. Yantras can be simple or complex. Concentration of the mind on a simple symbol, such as a flame or a triangle, does not require much effort or imagination. However, a considerable mental effort is required for seeing and experiencing the complex symbols such as the Sri Yantra, Kali Yantra, Durga Yantra, Ganesha Yantra and Surya Yantra. These yantras symbolize not only the form of the mantras; they also represent the secrets and philosophies of the mantras.

Necessity of guru

The yantra that is used in sadhana is chosen by the guru according to the mindset, trait, and character of the aspirant, and not because aspirants like the Shiva Yantra or the Sri Yantra or they like repeating the Shiva or Devi mantras. There is no link with 'what I like' in the selection of the yantra. Rather, the link has to be with the trait and character of consciousness that has to be cultivated and developed. After some time, yantra changes into mandala, and the mandala is also given by the guru to the aspirant. Receiving a yantra from the guru is a rare occasion, for accomplishing perfection in mantra sadhana is difficult. Yantras are more commonly used in rituals such as pooja, invocation and havan, rather than individually.

Swami Satyananda's experience

In his parivrajaka stage, Swami Satyananda would wander as a mendicant from place to place. One scorching hot summer, he was living in a village where he developed a very high fever. Somebody called a doctor. The village doctor gave him some medicine; however, it did not work. For two full days, Swami Satyananda was unconscious; nothing existed for him. After the third or fourth day, an old man came to know that a swami who had come to the village was sick with fever. He came and looked at Swami Satyananda and went away. He came back with a small piece of copper on which two petals and a circle were inscribed, the symbol of ajna chakra. The old man hung it on Swami Satyananda's neck, and within half an hour the fever was gone. In the evening, he was well enough to leave the village.

This simple yet significant example indicates the influence of a yantra. This influence was not conscious; if it had been, one could say it is a psychological process. It was not a process taking place via the mind; instead, directly into the mind. The yantra does not work through the mind or through faith; one may not believe and still it will work.

As one bypasses and goes beyond the range of the intellect into deeper consciousness, the experiences come in the form of symbols and images. Images and symbols have an overpowering effect on the human mind, as they emerge from the depths of one's consciousness. When one reflects on a meditative experience, one realizes that it was something from out of the world of logic; something that cannot be identified and yet has filled one completely. This is the realm of yantras.

Yantras represent maps of consciousness used by tantric sadhakas to delve into, to experience, and to understand the totality of their nature. They are powerful tools for transforming gross lower tendencies into positive uplifting expressions, to purify emotions and to create a state of mind where connection with the *ishta*, or object of worship, becomes possible.

7

Mandala



After one has progressed through the sequence of mantra and yantra sadhana, mandalas become natural expressions in life. *Yantra* is the geometrical form and shape of mantra, whereas *mandala* is a larger pictorial form of the yantra. Despite this difference, both yantra and mandala influence the mind in the same manner. Mandalas can be seen in Buddhist tantras and in some special Hindu tantras, and were widely used in sadhana in ancient times. Their use, however, has gradually declined in modern times, as few people are able to understand the significance of mandalas. The use of mandalas has become restricted to the higher tantric sadhanas.

In the mandala, a correlation is established between the atomic universe and the greater universe, the microcosmic and macrocosmic realities. Mandalas represent a link between the individual living in the material life, experiencing happiness, pleasure, pain and suffering, nature and environment, the earth, the universe and so forth, with the higher reality. This higher, transcendental

reality is symbolized in the form of a *devata*, male deity, or *devi*, female deity. Gods and goddesses such as Rama, Krishna, Durga or Devi are mandalas. They are pictorial concepts and represent the idea of completeness. Mandalas contain many symbols that signify the individual, the world, and the individual's connection with the world and the divine. Each individual has a unique connection with an *ishta devata*, or personal deity, which links them to the higher reality.

The planets, the sun, the moon, the stars, the universe and the individual are all mandalas representing cosmic creation. They are the manifest and material aspect of the subtle force that is perceived as consciousness. Thus, consciousness and energy are both contained in the mandala. Earth, or *prithvi*, symbolizes the mandala of life that humanity lives in. If humanity sustains and nourishes earth, the mandala of life is sustained and nourished. On the other hand, if humanity destroys earth, the mandala of life is also destroyed. Ultimately, the mandala means the total experience, not the identified or individualistic experience of 'I am this and you are that'; it represents the total experience of 'I am all of this'. A mandala contains the deity, the vehicle, the positive shakti, the negative shakti, and it becomes a broader form of visualization. The whole of life, with all its attributes – the positive, the negative, the neutral, the sattwic, the rajasic, the tamasic, as well as the attributes of one's personality – becomes the mandala of life.



Mandalas in tantric sadhana

Mandala use can be seen throughout the tantric rituals. When havan is conducted, the fire that is being fed with mantra rests upon a yantra drawn with sand and colour. The fire, mantra and yantra form a mandala. As the devi or devata is invoked, the energy of that being comes to reside within the mandala. In Rudrabhisheka, the Shivalingam is believed to be a mandala, the manifest form of Shiva, and in Sri Yantra abhisheka, the manifest form of Shakti is worshipped.

The use of mandala can be seen throughout the Indian culture; the murtis, the symbolic marriage of Tulsi with Shaligram, abhisheka, daily tree pooja, and so on. All these rites and rituals involve mandala, the manifest form encasing the divine. Even the guru is a mandala, a manifest form of divinity, and guru seva is serving the mandala of the divine.

The experience of mandala

In 1977, a few sannyasins were travelling through Tasmania's cities and towns conducting programs. As we drove through the forested areas, absorbing the beauty of nature and its landscape, I glanced at a willow tree beside a body of water. I looked at it as the car went by, and then gazed ahead. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I lost my body awareness. For a few moments I simply became the tree. It was the most uncomfortable experience, for to become a tree is to become part of another life.

I experienced everything the tree was experiencing: the water lapping against its roots, the roots in the mud, the insects and fish crawling along the roots and the trunk, the breeze against the branches and the leaves. It was not awareness of one thing only. I became aware of at least thirty or forty things at the same time; from the leaves to the roots, from the wind to the water, from the insects to a



kite sitting on top of the branch. It was not as pleasant an experience as one might expect it to be. There was no body, only the tree awareness, the tree perception, the tree knowledge, the tree experience. It was totally disconcerting, especially while sitting in a car. The whole experience may have lasted for about twenty or thirty seconds, but it felt like hours. I cannot describe what I felt, but I felt what a tree would feel on a normal day.

Try one thing: in meditation, develop the experience of being a tree. Can you do it? What will be the experience? Will it be of a leaf? Will it be of a twig? Will it be of the trunk? Will it be of the root? Will it be of the flower? Will it be of the fruit? The experience will be something of the tree, therefore that meditation will never be accurate. That is partial awareness in a bigger mosaic. Sometimes, however, a flash comes, and suddenly one can become the tree.

The ultimate experience is the complete awareness of the entire mandala so that one merges with it; the mandala and the individual become one whole unit of experience. Mandala is total identification with everything; it is not partial identification or the awareness focused on one thing. It is the experience of totality. For example, if one can become aware of the entire body in one thought, in one glimpse, one is focusing on a mandala. If one notices only the chest or stomach, then that is not the full experience. Mandalas are able to cast the dissipated and rudimentary mental force into one single force. Therefore, mandala is complete and total awareness of the individual, of nature and the transcendental power. It represents the essential belief of tantra that the life to which one is committed is part of spiritual life, and not removed from spiritual life.

8

Mudra



The use of mudras has been widely mentioned throughout the tantra shastras, in yogic literature, and they have been an integral part of traditional arts and dance for centuries. There are innumerable types and forms of mudras. Different traditions, schools of philosophy and systems of sadhana utilize various groups of mudras to attain specific goals such as physical and mental wellbeing, emotional expression, invocation of deities for worship and altering the deeper layers of consciousness. The use of mudras is a powerful key for linking the material and psychic realms.

Even though every tantric text has its own set of mudras that seek to achieve a particular aim, fundamentally, mudras create a link between the gross body and the psyche, a tool to connect with one's subtle nature. Mudra sensitizes the mind to the experiences of *pranamaya kosha*, the pranic body. In meditation, certain mudras like jnana mudra and chin mudra are used, which are simple and can

be performed by everybody. There are many other mudras that are also used in meditation, in mantra, in anushthanas and worships. Every deity has a mudra for invocation, and even to invoke guru there is a particular mudra. The purpose of mudra is to express the inner experience. By practising mudras, the individual dwells on and tries to experience the indescribable meaning contained within a mudra. In this way, it is possible to call up inner forces which otherwise lie hidden and dormant, and this is what makes mudra a powerful tool of tantra.

What is mudra?

According to *Kularnava Tantra*, the literal meaning of *mudra* is 'that which brings happiness'. The word 'mudra' comes from the root *mudh*, which means pleasant, to be happy, content, and at ease. In this context, mudra becomes that practice which brings a sense of ease and contentment in the body-mind unit. This is achieved by removing all the spikes and dissipations of prana and the corresponding negative states of mind. According to the linguists, the word 'mudra' also includes the word *dravaya*, which means to be compassionate or sympathetic. Thus, mudra implies becoming compassionate through delight or happiness. According to tantra, the *devas*, or gods, become compassionate towards a practitioner of mudra and they fulfil all the wishes and desires of such a sadhaka.

Mudras are the subtle physiological postures adopted by the body to alter the flow of prana within the physical body. In doing so, a link is created with the psyche and a psychological response is created or evoked within the psychic body. In this way, prana is the link between the external, physical body and the internal, psychic body. Mudras are a vital tool for accessing the spiritual realms within. They create a bridge between the external behaviour, function and performance of the body and the internal expression of the higher mind. Mudras can also be described as psychic, emotional, devotional, and aesthetic gestures or attitudes. Just as the physical act of crying is the symbol of unhappiness, and dancing, singing and laughing are the physical expressions of happiness, the inner consciousness also has symbols, and these are mudras.

Mudras are not isolated to one type of technique or practice like asana, pranayama, bandha or kriya. They are a combination of subtle, physical movements that alter the mood, attitude and perception, and deepen one's awareness and concentration. They can be defined in many ways according to their use and purpose. Yoga also considers mudras to be psychosomatic gestures which are used for various purposes within its branches. Hatha yoga uses a set of mudras to rectify the imbalances of prana. Meditation uses a set to induce greater concentration, focus, and awareness. Raja yoga uses mudras to induce deeper, subtler, and altered states of consciousness, where the thoughts and sentiments can be bypassed, and one can reach the state of *shoonyata*, the state of void beyond the mind.

Discovery of mudra

Mudras, as well as mantra and yantra, were realized by the ancient yogis in states of deep meditation. It was noted that while the yogis were in union with the higher mind, their bodies adopted particular poses which correlated to their states of mind. In order to understand the spontaneity and naturalness of these gestures, a comparison between the behaviour of the instinctive and intuitive portion of the human brain can be made. When pain is felt, the response to the pain signal that is generated by the lower mind leads to an involuntary, spontaneous movement of the body away from the source of pain. It is an instinctive, reactive response. However, when a connection or signal from the higher mind is experienced during deep meditation, a spontaneous, involuntary movement of the body also occurs, and this is mudra. It is an intuitive response, an expression of the inner experience, a gesture. As with the discovery of

mantras, the ancient yogis gave the knowledge of these realized postures to aspirants so they could access the higher realms of their minds.

Traditionally, according to tantric texts, it is believed that Lord Shiva was the first exponent of mudras and that he revealed this knowledge to his consort, Parvati. Addressing Goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva says (*Gheranda Samhita*, v. 94–95):

> "O Goddess! I have imparted you the knowledge of mudras. Mere knowledge of these provides siddhis, mastery. Their knowledge provides bliss to yogis. Their knowledge is not easily accessible even to gods. Keep this knowledge always secret."

The declaration that this knowledge is not easily accessible, even to gods, reflects the significance of mudras; these practices should be done with reverence. They should not be undertaken aimlessly. Only competent and deserving practitioners and disciples should try to master them.

Energetic principles of mudra

Mudras are the keys for linking the five koshas. Within every individual are sheaths or layers ranging from the gross and material to the most subtle and transcendental (see Section 1, Chapter 8). At the gross end of the spectrum is *annamaya kosha*, the material body. The second layer is *pranamaya kosha*, or the pranic body. The third layer is *manomaya kosha*, or the mental body, and the fourth is *vijnanamaya kosha*, or the psychic body. These are the four layers most directly influenced by the use of mudra.

The expansion of awareness resulting from mudra prepares one for the realization of the fifth, most subtle kosha, *anandamaya kosha*, or the bliss body. Mudras are the keys that link the five koshas. A mudra, in the form of a particular physiological attitude, posture, or movement, first establishes a connection between annamaya and pranamaya koshas. Once the material and pranic bodies are linked, the subtler sheaths of manomaya kosha and vijnanamaya kosha are influenced. By awakening and regulating *prana shakti*, the dynamic life force, there is a reduction of mental activity and an experience of greater peace, concentration and a broader awareness.

For instance, in shambhavi mudra the eyes focus on the point of *bhrumadhya*, the eyebrow centre. While performing the mudra, tension is required. However, when the mudra is relaxed, a release of tension and energy occurs along the physical nerves and within the pranic channels. Certain brainwaves are also created that induce an altered state of mind. If shambhavi mudra is practised for two minutes whenever one is highly agitated or trembling, one can come to absolute stillness and peace. This example illustrates the law that anything happening in the body happens in the realm of energy as well, indicating the interconnectedness of body, prana and mind. Often what is happening in the body is not understood, yet if the energetic state is managed, the imbalances in the body can also be rectified.

Prana and nadis

Mudras establish the link between the koshas via the *nadis*, or energy channels. According to the tantric and yogic understanding, just as there is a network of arteries and veins in the gross body carrying blood through each and every part, similarly there is a network of psychic channels conducting prana shakti or vital energy throughout the body.

It is known that all types of energy emit an electromagnetic force. Thus, to verify the presence of prana in the body, electromagnetic emissions of energy from the body can be observed. One method of observing the electromagnetic emissions is through the phenomenon of Kirlian photography. When a Kirlian photo of a hand is taken, the outline of the hand can be seen and the hand itself is absolutely black. Extending outwards from the outline are emissions of an electromagnetic current that ranges from a few millimetres to a few centimetres in length. These currents vary in colour and indicate the health of the pranic body. For instance, blue or green indicates a very healthy body, whereas yellow or orange



indicates a sickness on any level, physical or psychological. It has been found that during the times of activity, where one uses more prana shakti, the emission observed through the photography become smaller and smaller until it disappears completely. At this point, one experiences exhaustion and fatigue, followed by the desire to rest and sleep. Thus, it is the depletion of prana shakti that gives the feeling of tiredness, lethargy and dullness.

An experiment using Kirlian photography was conducted using eight people from different professions and lifestyles: construction workers, doctors and a yogi. Kirlian photographs were taken of each person at various intervals during an average day. The findings showed that the emission of prana shakti differed according to the activity that was being performed. Certain practices of pranayama, prana vidya, yoga nidra, mudra and bandha would be performed to test whether the emissions, the prana shakti, could again be raised. These practices were found to be effective in enlarging the emissions from the hands, indicating a regeneration and redirection of the store of prana shakti.

The experiment verified that there is a flow of some power, a current of some force running through the body, called 'prana shakti' by tantra and yoga, and 'chi energy' or 'qi energy' by other traditions. The experiment also indicates a plausible link between the meridians used in acupuncture and acupressure, and the pranic nadis. Through treatment with acupuncture, it has been found that energy movement can be enhanced, imbalances rectified and energetic blocks removed.

The ancient yogis referred to this network of psychic channels as conductors of prana shakti, and also mentioned that prana shakti is being discharged constantly through the extremities of the body. When a mudra is practised, the discharge of prana shakti is halted and redirected back into the body. In this way, different mudras create different effects.

How is the flow of prana regulated in the body? People think that to regulate prana one should practise pranayama, prana vidya or similar techniques that can give an awareness and ability to regulate the pranic flow. However, the same effect can be achieved by the practice of mudra. Pranayama uses breath to direct the flow of prana in the body and to become aware of prana in the body, prana vidya uses mental imagery and chakra visualizations, and mudra actually diverts the flow or current of prana in the channels within the body.

Through the practice of mudra, one is ensuring that the conductors of energy, the wires that conduct the energy in the body, are clear and can handle the load as the intensity and quantity of shakti increases within, as the pranas become awakened. When practised in conjunction with asana and pranayama, the specific body position assumed in a mudra channels the energy produced by the asana and pranayama into various centres, arousing particular states of mind.

Physiology of mudra

To understand what lifts a simple posture, movement or gesture into the realm of mudra requires an awareness of the psychophysiological interaction. The best way to understand this is to look at the brain. In the

process of human evolution, the cortex must be linked with the deep primitive structures of the brain. The focus of the primitive, sensory life needs to be lifted out of the base of the brain back into consciousness, back into the cortex. When the cortex links to the base of the brain, this process is called telencephalization, which means bringing into conscious control what is normally instinctive. When prana falls from manipura into mooladhara, one falls back into instinctual living.

The aim of mudras is to create fixed, repetitive postures, gestures and attitudes, which can snap one out of these old, instinctive habit patterns and bring one back into a more refined state of consciousness. Mudras also have a physical component. They activate glandular functioning and are able to bring about control of the involuntary organs connected with the nerves of the body. A mudra may involve the whole body in a combination of asana, pranayama, bandha and visualization techniques, or it may be a simple hand position.

Mudras in yogic sadhana

Yogic mudras are gestures that aid in the reversal of the prana shakti and in inducing states of concentration and awareness, resulting in physical or mental states through which a sadhaka can succeed in introverting the consciousness. Yogic mudras are practised to bring about a positive transformation in both the physical and mental states.

In hatha yoga, there are mudras that help regulate the flow of prana through the body to eliminate various psychophysiological disorders. There are even mudras that rectify defects in different organs of the body, such as *hridaya mudra*, the heart gesture. It has been noted that when people with heart conditions are experiencing pain or other problems, much relief is felt when they practise hridaya mudra, as energy is redirected to the heart through this mudra.

Mudras in tantric sadhana

As yoga is a part of tantra, yogic mudras are also a part of tantra. Tantra, however, employs



many other mudras for various purposes, and the esoteric tantric sadhanas use a separate set of mudras to induce a different level of awareness. Almost every tantric text has its own list of mudras. There are about one hundred tantric mudras that are performed during meditation, mantra japa, and *purascharana*, an observance consisting of repetition of mantra, and worship. These are meant for keeping the energetic and pranic processes of the body in balance. Prana cannot be seen with the eyes, but it can be experienced as flowing through the body in the form of energy. Mudras are practised in order to accelerate the flow of prana.

In tantra, mudras are used for a number of reasons. They are used to invoke the cosmic power and to regulate the pranic flow in the body. Mudras create a pranic connection between the body and the spirit, as the bridge between body and spirit is that of prana, not of the mind. Once prana merges with the spirit, then the consciousness becomes effulgent. Mudras induce an altered state of mind, an altered state of feelings and emotions, and a sentiment that changes the behaviour of the mind, indicating another use of mudras in tantric sadhana.

A primary purpose of mudras in tantra is to invoke deities. In the nyasa system of tantra, there is profuse use of mudras, along with mantras, to make one aware of different areas of the body, and to recognize the presence of shakti and devata in that particular organ. In the practice of nyasa, before one goes deep into meditation, into devotional prayers and tantric worship, each part of the body is touched by the mind using mudra and a mantra. Fifty-six mantras are used while moving the mind from part to part, as each and every part of the body has a deity and specific mantras, and mudras are required for invoking that particular deity.

Tantric literature states that one can attain the stages of pratyahara and dharana by practising introversion of consciousness through the various mudras. This seems logical when one considers that these practices rebalance the hemispheres of the brain and regulate



their activity so that there is no dissipation, distraction or disturbance in the nerves and nadis. Nervous impulses are electrical in nature. With the balance and adjustment of the nerves and nadis, there is a greater possibility of attaining one-pointed concentration.

Necessity of guru

Mudras have been described in various texts from antiquity to the present day in order to preserve them for posterity. Nevertheless, such references were never detailed or clearly delineated as these techniques were not intended to be learned from a book. Practical instruction from a guru has always been considered a necessary requisite before attempting them, and perfection in mudra and awakening of the shakti through mudra depends upon the initiation of the guru followed by the practice of the sadhaka.

When mudra or any other practice is passed on from the guru to disciple, it is sure to bear fruit when practised, as the guru's words are the shakti which can manifest in concrete form. Once the disciple has chosen the guru and the guru has recognized the disciple, only the meaning and application of the guru's advice and instructions, and the regularity of the practices have utmost importance in the disciple's life.

9

Other Rituals and Practices



The traditions of tantra speak of many esoteric practices and rituals. Most of these are in the form of pooja, to create a connection with the higher force in manifest form. From the perspective of the uninitiated, some of these rituals may seem extreme, but when performed by high-calibre disciples under the instructions of the tantric guru, they can often be the final key to unlock the great vista of the consciousness.

Many of these practices make one encounter, confront, transcend and transform the lower instincts of life. For example, *shmashana sadhana*, sadhana done in graveyards, is to confront the darkest fears. There are other aghora sadhanas or the five makaras of tantra, which are often interpreted to mean indulgence.

The important esoteric sadhanas of tantra include kriya yoga, shava sadhana, pancha-makara or panchatattwa sadhana, kumari pooja, kaya siddhi, pancha upasana, Shakti sadhana, shodashopachara pooja, panchagni sadhana, jala sadhana and chakra pooja.

Kriya yoga

Kriya yoga is an esoteric sadhana that encompasses all forms of yoga. The guru initiates the disciple after examining the state and level of attainment. Other esoteric sadhanas begin only when the sadhaka

overcomes the four basic instincts and transcends the boundaries of the mental state.

Shava sadhana

There are various methods of shava sadhana. One of them is to sit on a *shava*, a dead body, and repeat a mantra. According to tantra, a sadhaka may attain *siddhi*, fulfilment or perfection, in one day through shava sadhana. This sadhana is not easy. The sadhaka goes to the cremation ground on the still, silent and lonely night of *amavasya*, the dark moon, and sits on a corpse while chanting mantra or performing any other sadhana given by the guru. The corpse may start moving, vibrating or performing bhujangasana! Sometimes it is an illusion, and sometimes it actually happens as a result of the influence of the sadhana. An ordinary sadhaka cannot face this situation. A sadhaka with pashu bhava cannot perform this sadhana. Only the sadhakas endowed with veera bhava and divya bhava can perform this type of sadhana.

Various ideas and opinions are prevalent in society about shava sadhana and other sadhanas of this kind. Many think that these sadhanas are bad, vile or wretched, however, one should not think like this. It must be remembered that unless a sadhaka confronts situations that are shocking and challenging, the process of inner transformation cannot be undergone. For initiating inner transformation, the tantric sadhanas may take one to the edge of endurance.

Panchamakara sadhana

Interpretations from different schools of thought have given rise to a multitude of customs, practices, rules and regulations that relate to panchamakara sadhana. While the ways differ, the aim of each path or tradition is essentially the same: to transmute energy and elevate the consciousness. *Panchamakara* are five aspects beginning with the Sanskrit letter 'ma': *mudra* or grains, *mansa* or meat, *maithuna* or sexual union, *matsya* or fish, and *madya* or wine. In tantra it is stated:

Madyam maansam tathaa matsyam mudraa maithunameva cha;
Punah punah saadhayitvaataan poorna yogee vabhoova sah.

Wine, meat, fish, grains and sexual union;
By partaking of these again and again one becomes a full yogi.

According to some traditions, these five substances are merely symbolic and refer to a method of sadhana. When that method is understood, the literal meaning of the word is of no concern. On the other hand, some traditions have taken a more literal approach. Irrespective, tantra makes it clear that it does not sanction the misuse of these elements:

Madyapaanena manujo yadi siddhim labhetavai
Madyapaanaratah sarve siddhim gachchhantu paamaraah;
Maansabhakshana maatrena yadi punyagatirbhavet
Loke maansaashinah sarve punyabhaajobhavanti hi.

The spirit of this sloka is that if the drinking of wine could lead to siddhi, all the drunkards of the world would have become siddhas by now. Similarly, if meat-eating could ensure the attainment of virtue, all meat-eaters would be virtuous.

Madya: *Rudrayamala Tantra* and *Kularnava Tantra* state that madya or wine is produced within the body of man.

Somadhaarah kshared yastu brahmarandhraat varaanane;
Pibantyaanandamayeem taam ya sa eva madyasaadhakah.

That stream of *soma*, wine, secretes from the brahmarandhra, one who drinks it attains bliss. Such a one is known as *madyasadhaka*.

This definition of wine refers to the secretion of a hormone in the medulla oblongata in the centre of the head, in the area of brahmarandhra. This hormone is known in Sanskrit as *amrit*, which means nectar or

ambrosia. Usually it falls from the medulla oblongata into the digestive system, or according to the yogic texts, from bindu visarga to manipura, where it is consumed in the digestive fire and causes the body to decay. Through the perfection of khechari mudra, this stream of nectar is retained at lalana chakra, and immortality is gained. This is the concept of drinking wine. This is the madya theory of tantra.

According to another tradition, one of the rules of tantra dictates that if a sadhaka even smells wine, he should purify himself through pranayama and expelling the impurities of the lungs. Thus, there is a stringent, rigid rule in tantra about drinking alcohol and, as such, tantra does not grant full freedom for drinking alcohol. Madya can, however, be taken in connection with the worship of divinity. The form of madya here is that of *madhutraya*, or the three sweets: milk, sugar and honey. One who drinks a mixture of milk, sugar and honey is said to be taking madya. Instead of wine, one should offer this madhutraya madya to one's object of worship.

In another tradition, panchamakara sadhana has been prescribed only for sadhakas with divya bhava. Unless the mind is restrained or controlled up to a certain stage, the possibility of a downfall from higher consciousness exists. There is a custom that instructs only divya sadhakas to take actual wine, then to practise yoga, enter into meditation and drink the inner nectar. The sadhakas with veera bhava may take milk or coconut water, feeling these as wine, and then practise their sadhana. An attitude of worship must be maintained while partaking of the drink. The pashu sadhakas should not attempt this practice in any form.

According to one tradition, the practice of panchatattwa sadhana or tattwa shuddhi is essential prior to panchamakara sadhana. Through the practice of tattwa shuddhi, the inner impurities are removed and the elements are cleaned and purified. When the guru is assured that the disciple has succeeded in purifying the elements within, then he gives instructions regarding the use of different kinds of wine.

Kularnava Tantra mentions eleven kinds of wine. These are prepared from flowers, fruits and roots and do not cause any kind of intoxication. Today, madya generally refers to wine or alcohol; however, in ancient times a substance named *sura* was prepared from the extract or essence of flowers and put into pitchers that were buried underground for three, nine or eleven days. It was certainly fermented a little and also caused some intoxication, but it was not harmful to health. These preparations are also known as *aushadhi* which means medicine or drug.

Alcohol or wine damage the liver and cause various kinds of diseases, whereas the sura prepared from flowers, fruits and roots was good for the health. It has been said in the *Kularnava Tantra* that the madya prepared from flowers grants siddhis, or psychic powers. The madya prepared from fruits bestows both enjoyment and liberation, madya prepared from roots offers bliss. Drinking this madya does not produce any impurity; on the contrary, impurities are destroyed. Therefore, in tantra, madya or *madira* does not mean wine or alcohol but the extracts or essence of flowers, fruits and roots. A sadhaka is said to gain mastery over the instinct of fear by drinking of madya.

Mansa: Tantra says the following about meat-eating:

> *Mashabdaat rasanaa jneyaa tadamgasam*
> *rasanaa priye;*
> *Sadaa ya bhakshayet devi sa eva maansa*
> *saadhakah.*
>
> The sadhaka who takes the extract of the bird that is in the form of tongue, O' Devi, he is the mansa sadhaka.

The word *ma* refers to the tongue and according to some traditions meat symbolizes silence. One who maintains silence in relation to worldly tricks and frauds is known as a *mansa sadhaka*. Mansa sadhakas are those who can transcend the world and worldly affairs by



controlling their speech and expression. It is an esoteric process. The observance of mouna initially makes the mind restless and unsteady; the mental expression of sentiments and emotions becomes strong. The feelings of lust, anger, jealousy, hatred and attachment manifest violently. Speech is the most important means of expression of mental experiences. If a sadhaka has control over the faculty of speech, it can be understood that the sadhaka has achieved control over all the reactions manifesting in the external world.

In another tradition it is said that one who actually eats meat and then renounces the fruits of his karma is known as a mansa sadhaka. Here, the meat of only aquatic animals is prescribed as they do not have red blood cells. The sadhaka is instructed to take the meat of any aquatic animal and then perform sadhana. Tantra strongly holds that no animal should be killed for serving one's selfish interests; however, eating the meat of aquatic animals for the purpose of sadhana and under the guidance of guru is not wrong. Rather, it destroys many impurities. Renouncing the fruits of karma is the chief characteristic of a mansa sadhaka.

For the veera sadhaka, three things are described as meat: ginger, salt and garlic. It is said that while eating these three things the sadhaka should think, 'I am taking meat.' In another context, the meat of aquatic animals and of aerial creatures is permissible, and only the meat of terrestrial animals has been prohibited. Instruction for sadhana is given after consumption of meat. The sadhaka overcomes the instinct of food through meat-eating.

Matsya: With regard to fish-eating, it has been said:

> *Gangaayamunayormadhye matsyaudvau*
> *charatah sadaa;*
> *Tau matsyau bhakshayet yastu sa bhavet matsya*
> *saadhakah.*
>
> Two fish continue to swim between the Ganga and the Yamuna. One who eats these two fish is known as a matsya sadhaka.

Ganga and Yamuna represent the two nadis, ida and pingala, and the two fish are the two aspects of the breath, *puraka*, inhalation, and *rechaka*, exhalation. The symbology of breathing in and breathing out is represented by fish. Thus, perfection of pranayama, control over inhalation and exhalation, is symbolized by the consumption of fish. Breath control means gradually decreasing the number of breaths required and pranayama implies the

expansion or awakening of prana. Thus, prana is awakened at the time of 'fish-eating' during the practice of pranayama, and through this the sadhaka overcomes the instinct of *nidra* or sleep. In tantra, control over prana and the perfection of pranayama constitute the sadhana of a matsya sadhaka.

In other traditions matsya refers to sattwic jnana. Jnana produced from the elimination of attachment of the senses to sense objects is known as *sattwic jnana*. According to this path, the person who gains control over the senses and then succeeds in linking them to the self is known as a *matsyashi*, or a matsya sadhaka. From the point of view of the senses and the self, this refers to the process of pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The sadhaka has to withdraw the senses gradually from the external objects and take them to the inner world.

According to certain traditions, the pulse of lentils is prescribed for sadhakas with veera bhava and, while taking this pulse, the sadhaka should think that he is eating fish. In other traditions, fish-eating is permitted during matsya sadhana. It is meant neither for filling the stomach nor for self-satisfaction. One piece is put into the mouth and the taste and feeling are observed with full awareness. In this way, the inner impurities are gradually eliminated. It is said that all afflictions are eradicated through matsya sadhana and the path of liberation becomes visible.

Mudra: In tantra, mudra is described as:

Sahasraare mahaapadme karnikaamuditaa charet;
Aatmatattvaiva devaishreeh kevalam paaradopavam.
Sooryakoti prateekaasama chandrakoti susheelatam;
Yasya jnaanodayastatra mudra saadhaka sa uchyate.

Sahasrara is the great lotus or the thousand-petalled lotus. It contains the lotus seed. One who can reach it and whose jnana awakens there, is called a mudra sadhaka. The spirit element is located in the centre of the great lotus of sahasrara chakra. One who attains this element is known as a mudra sadhaka. According to one tradition, mudra means the eradication of internal impurities. It further says that if the chitta is concentrated on the Supreme Self, that is also a mudra, and if the chitta is concentrated on any other centre, that is yoga, not mudra. Thus, mudra relates to an inner feeling.

The main aim of the mudras discussed in yogic and tantric texts is the awakening of kundalini and the evolution of consciousness. In this context, mudras are gestures that are used by sadhakas during worship or sadhana, and through the practice of mudras, efforts are made to still, calm or pacify the mind. If mudras are used in a practical form in one's practice, meditation and worship, the aim remains the same.

Another tradition states that sadhakas with veera bhava should take food grains like rice, wheat and barley. The sattwic feeling and physical purity achieved by taking such food grains is known as a state of mudra, of one-pointedness. It is said that the sadhaka overcomes the instinct of food by mudra sadhana.

Maithuna: According to tantra, the state of maithuna conceptually involves creation and dissolution. It is the experience of the union of Shiva and Shakti, the experience of the awakening of kundalini in sahasrara. Tantra clearly states that merely the contact between a male and female is not maithuna:

Shaktisambhogamaatrena yadi mokshobhavetvai
Sarveti jantavo loke muktaa shivostriyanishevanaat.

If liberation was possible only through the contact between male and female, then all living beings would have attained liberation after this contact.

Tantra describes maithuna as:



Maithunam parama tattvam
srishtisthityantakaaranam;
Maithunaajjaayate siddhih
brahmajnaanamsudurlabham.

Maithuna is the yoga, or union, of creation with the Supreme Element. This yoga or union leads to the attainment of Brahma jnana or the ultimate, supreme knowledge.

In this context, maithuna is similar to samadhi. In that state the sadhaka merges with the form of God. In tantra, maithuna means the union of *atma*, the individual self, with *Paramatma*, the Supreme Self. Its climax is attained when the Shiva element and the Shakti element unite in the process of the sadhana of kundalini yoga. When the difference or duality between the individual self and the Supreme Self, Shakti and Shiva, or Prakriti and Purusha, ceases to exist, then that state is known as maithuna. The union between the two is maithuna. When a sadhaka transcends the experience of the knowledge received through the body, senses and antahkarana, then the state of samadhi, laya, yoga or maithuna is achieved.

The word maithuna has also been used to indicate the path of devotion or self-surrender. The attainment of the ishta is maithuna. If an individual experiences bliss in the sentiment for one's beloved, that is maithuna. This may be one's husband, wife, children, guru or God. What is important is the *bhava*, feeling, of the sadhaka towards the beloved. The bliss experienced in the realm of the Self, as a result of the union of Shiva and Shakti, is a million times more blissful than the pleasure experienced through sexual enjoyment. This *bhava*, feeling or experience is that of the state of samadhi where a sadhaka transcends the bodily experience. Thus, it is said that one should meditate upon the lotus feet of the Devi and repeat the ishta mantra.

There are tantric traditions that accept actual sexual intercourse as maithuna, but even here it is stated that when a sadhaka is involved in sexual activity, he should observe and understand, with proper bhava, the bliss or pleasure experienced at that moment. There should be no loss of semen during intercourse. The *bindu*, semen, must be retained within oneself. If the sadhaka is able to retain the bindu, he is considered to be an adept. This leads to control over passion and the sadhaka achieves mastery over food, sleep, fear and sex,

the four basic instincts. If the semen is not lost, the feeling, passion and attachment related to it are eliminated. In this sadhana, sexual energy is transmuted through will, concentration and intention.

In *Kularnava Tantra*, panchamakara sadhana has been mentioned as panchamakara yoga. Here panchamakara worship becomes a natural part of the daily tantric rites. Just as a yoga sadhaka's daily practice includes asana, pranayama, japa, meditation, prayer, and so on, panchamakara sadhana is a part of the daily rituals of a tantric sadhaka.

Kumari pooja

A relatively common tantric ritual of worship is *kanya pooja*, where the cosmic principle is invoked through mantras into the body of young girls and they become the representative of that cosmic power for the particular period of worship. It is often performed during Navaratri, the nine days of worship during autumn and spring. A grand-scale performance of this ritual is seen in Rikhiapeeth, the tapobhoomi of Swami Satyananda, on the last day of the Sat Chandi Mahayajna with the feeding and pooja of *kanyas*, virgins. This is one form of aradhana. Swami Satyananda says, "The worship of kanyas, kanya poojan, is a very sacred tantric ceremony in which the kanyas are worshipped as the living, breathing manifestation of Devi. They are not Devi, they are the medium of Devi, through whom she manifests and blesses us all. Through worship, the kanyas become the medium for the descent of the refined and luminous energy of Devi and through them we receive her blessings."

Generally, *kumari pooja* is understood to be the worship of a young girl. There is a tradition behind this sadhana. The sadhaka has to visualize a mother form in the girl and then dedicate himself to that form. The sadhana of kumari pooja originates from the goddess Tripura Sundari, who has also been seen as a *bala*, a young girl.

The tantric traditions use several forms of kumari pooja. Different instructions regarding sadhana have been given for the sadhakas with different bhavas. Kumari pooja is strictly prohibited for a sadhaka with pashu bhava.



The worship of the guru, prayers, chanting, bhajans and pranayama have been prescribed for them. The reason for this is very simple. In a sadhaka with pashu bhava, the sexual passion may manifest violently and he may lose his self-control. This lack of self-control may become the cause of mental instability instead of mental evolution.

Kumari pooja is prohibited even for sadhakas with veera bhava, as even a sadhaka with veera bhava has difficulty controlling himself. The yogic path, meditation on the six chakras and Bhairavi pooja has been prescribed for them. These rites are as important as kumari pooja. Only sadhakas with divya bhava have been authorized to perform kumari pooja. Their mind is free from all deception, fraud, hypocrisy, attachment and passion. They are full of divine and sattwic qualities. For these sadhakas, the worship of Shakti is essential before beginning kumari pooja. At the time of Shakti pooja, Shakti is invoked in the body of a kumari, then the chants and mantras related to this pooja are contemplated on.

One can worship a girl of any age. The worship of a girl may begin from the age of one and continue until she attains the age of sixteen. Generally, the custom of the worship of a girl of eight years is most common. An eight-year-old girl is known as *Kubjika*. The girls of different ages have been given different names. These are: one year, Sandhya; two years, Saraswati; three years, Trimurti Swarupa; four years, Kalika; five years, Suryaja; six years, Rohini; seven years, Malini; eight years, Kubjika. A twelve-year-old girl is called Bhairavi. A sixteen-year-old girl is known as Shodashi. Shodashi is another name for Tripura Sundari.

Girls of eight, twelve and sixteen years are usually selected for kumari pooja. They are worshipped according to the prescribed methods. Food, clothes, jewels and ornaments are offered to them and the descent of the Mother form in them is perceived. The bhava generated by this sadhana is *bala swabhava*, the nature of a child. For a tantric sadhaka, it is important to have the nature of a child in divine bhava. The learned, wise people have said that, for the attainment of virtue, a sadhaka should become pure and simple like a child.

Tripura Sundari is seen as a bala, a kumari, and one must have the bhava or feeling that: 'I am dedicating myself to Tripura Sundari who is the Universal Mother.' No sadhana can succeed without this bhava. A child sucks the milk from the breast of its mother with a pure, passionless feeling. There is no negative feeling in the child's mind at that time. Instead, the child feels close to its mother and this generates a sense of security within. The feelings of intimacy, love and affection arise. Such bhavas or feelings are essential in kumari pooja also. Only when a divya sadhaka achieves the state of total dedication in the last stage of sadhana is kumari pooja prescribed. He is expected to offer himself completely to Devi and see Her form in all beings.

Traditionally, kumari pooja should not be performed in the house. It should be performed in a shrine, temple or place of pilgrimage where the environment is spiritual and conducive to the awakening of consciousness. At the time of kumari pooja, one should feel that the effulgence and splendour of both fire and the moon have entered into the girl's body and spirit.

The moon is the mental kalaa, or luminosity, which is seen in the form of Shodashi. The effulgence of fire means heat or a blazing stream of light. When these feelings arise, the kanya is seen in the form of an omniscient Mother or the Universal Goddess, not as an ordinary human girl. The sadhakas worship the great Shakti in that form. Tantra also says that whether a sadhaka is a Shaivite, a Vaishnavite or the devotee of some other god or goddess, divya bhava can be awakened through the sadhana of kumari pooja; however, one should not perform kumari pooja without the guidance of guru.

There is a tradition of the Kanya Kumari in Nepal. A girl is chosen to represent Devi for a certain period of her life. She has to live a regulated and disciplined life, even though she is very young; six, seven, eight or nine years

old. She lives this life until the age of eleven, and for this time she is called Kumari. The Kumari is totally isolated from all her friends, family and society, as she has become the living representative of Cosmic Shakti. If the Kumari gives a benediction, one has received the grace of the Goddess Shakti.

Kaya siddhi

Kaya siddhi is a chemical process through which the body is made free from disease, old age and death. New life is generated in all the organs and cells of the body. Mercury and mica are used in this process. As a result of the practice of kaya siddhi, the poisonous, impure elements of the body are expelled and the internal elements of the body are purified. This, in fact, is a process of tattwa shuddhi.

First of all, mercury and mica are boiled with herbal extracts so the poisonous elements are removed. When the mixture takes the form of pure ash, then it is used for *tattwa shuddhi* or physical purification. This process is known only to tantrics. The sadhaka should prepare the mercury ash as per the instructed method. One should not take ash prepared by anyone else, as the taking of impure ash may cause death.

Tantra mentions the names of eighty-four siddhas who attained immortality through the practice of kaya siddhi; through these rites they overcame disease, old age and death. This tradition was lost after Gaudapadacharya, the paramguru of Shankaracharya. Many people are spoken of as having attained perfection in this practice; however, it is difficult to know whether these examples are real or imagined. In this age, there has not yet been any actual proof of this type of attainment. The purpose behind kaya shuddhi is very high. After the purification of the physical elements, the sadhaka should develop the capacity to merge, at will, his physical elements into the unmanifest elements and also to separate them again. Control or mastery over the pancha tattwas is possible through the process of kaya shuddhi.

Pancha upasana

In tantra, pancha upasana sadhana is a part of the daily rites. *Pancha upasana* means the worship of five gods. These gods are the propounders of the tantric theories. They include Ganesha, Surya, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti. Each and every sadhaka can practise this sadhana. All the five gods may be worshipped in one single sitting.

Either five idols or five yantras are used in this practice. First of all, Ganesha is worshipped. The idol or the yantra is washed with water. Incense, a small lamp and flowers are offered, and a mantra is repeated. Next is the worship of Surya, the sun god. Hymns are chanted and the sun mantra repeated. Then Vishnu and Shiva are worshipped and Shakti is worshipped at the end. A *sankalpa*, resolve, is made and for each deity, a particular mantra is repeated a fixed number of times. This sadhana can be done for forty days or for up to three months. This is the most sattwic sadhana of tantra.

Shakti sadhana

The story goes that Sati or Shakti immolated herself at the *yajna kunda*, sacrificial altar, of her father. This made Shiva wild with anger. He lifted the charred body of Sati on his shoulders and began wandering around the world. This caused tumult all around. The gods started praying to Lord Vishnu for protection. Lord Vishnu cut the body of Sati into pieces with his *sudarshana chakra*, his discus. Different parts of her body and her ornaments fell in various places on earth and each created a *Shaktipeeth*, a seat or place of energy. Temples were later established at these places.

There are different viewpoints with regard to the number of Shaktipeeths. In different books there is mention of one hundred and eight, fifty-one, fifty-four, thirty-four Shaktipeeths. It is said of the Chandisthan temple in Munger that the right eye of Sati fell there. Most of the Shaktipeeths are located in Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The heart of Devi fell at Baidyanath Dham



in Deoghar, and the tradition there is to worship Shakti before the worship of Shiva. The Kamakhya temple of Guwahati in Assam is considered to be an important Shaktipeeth where the vagina of the Devi fell. Similarly, there are many other Shaktipeeths. At these places, one receives a direct experience of the energy or vibration of Shakti. Many sadhakas perform their sadhanas there to attain perfection and siddhis.

In Shakti sadhana, a sadhaka should go to a Shaktipeeth and live there with a sense of detachment. The sadhaka should survive on alms and sleep on the ground. A male sadhaka should wear only a *kaupin*, loin cloth, and a female only a sari. Until mantra siddhi is attained, the sadhaka should devote all their time in performing mantra sadhana. At the same time, all the systems and methods related to Shakti sadhana should be observed.

Shodashopachara pooja

A detailed explanation of shodashopachara pooja is available in *Gayatri Tantra*. There are sixteen rites or methods which comprise shodashopachara pooja. These are avahana, asana, padya, arghya, achamana, snana, vastra arpana, lepana, yajnopavita, pushpa, dhoop, deepa or arati, naivedya or prasad, pradakshina namaskara, mantra pushpa, and shayya.

- *Avahana*: Invoking any deity through mantra.
- *Asana*: Providing a small carpet for the deity being invoked to sit on. From the point of view of a sadhaka, giving an asana to the deity means making a place in one's heart.
- *Padya*: Washing the feet of the deity. From the spiritual viewpoint, this means dedicating oneself to the feet of the deity with devotion.
- *Arghya*: Washing the hands of the deity. It symbolizes offering oneself in the hands of the deity.
- *Achamana*: Offering clean, pure and holy water to the deity for drinking.
- *Snana*: A ritual where the god is bathed in milk, curd, honey, sandalwood, water and sugar.
- *Vastra arpana*: Offering of clothes is also an external part of the ritual where the deity is dressed with new clothes. According to tantra, it means wearing the clothes of the transcendental or supreme knowledge, and living in the mundane world with purity.
- *Lepan*: Painting the idol with fragrant water or sandalwood. It symbolizes the painting of one's ishta with its inner, positive and divine qualities.
- *Yajnopavita*: The deity is also offered the sacred thread, which the sadhaka wears later. It means to fill oneself with a pure, sacred, solemn promise.

- *Pushpa*: Flower offering, meaning offering the flowers of the heart.
- *Dhoop*: Burning of incense, symbolizing burning one's entire negative karmas in the fire of *jnana* or knowledge.
- *Arati*: Lighting the lamp represents the exhaustion of one's karmas.
- *Naivedya*: Offering of food with prayers and mantra. Betel leaf, water and fruits or a mixture of curd, clarified butter, water and honey is offered in this rite. The offering of fruits is the symbol of the four mental states. The offering of one fruit represents the desire for *saroopya*, which means 'Let me become like my deity.' The offering of two fruits is symbolic of the state of *salokya*, meaning 'Let me reside in the abode of my deity.' The offering of three fruits symbolizes the state of *samipya*, 'Let me become a follower of my deity and always remain with him or her.' The offering of four fruits represents the state of *sayujya*, 'Let me merge into or unite with my deity.'
- *Pradakshina namaskara*: In this rite, the whole of creation is seen in the form of one's ishta; the sadhaka walks around the deity from left to right and offers salutation from all directions. During pradakshina, the experience of the omnipresence of God is focused on.
- *Mantra pushpa*: Literally meaning 'mantra flowers', it is offering the results of mantra. The preceding fourteen methods are practised by a sadhaka to achieve an experience of the Self and then, while offering mantra pushpa, one thinks, 'I have experienced the omnipresence of God in the whole of creation. Now let his light spread throughout the whole universe.' Such feelings are not expressed for selfish interests but for the wellbeing and liberation of the whole.
- *Shayya*: This is the last rite. It means sending one's ishta to sleep or rest. The sadhaka prays that the ishta's bed or abode is in one's own heart.

Panchagni sadhana

Panchagni sadhana is both tantric and vedic. It has been discussed in Pashupata tantra, Saurya tantra and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. This system of sadhana has been prescribed only for a perfect yogi sadhaka, who is filled



with divya bhava. Only the sadhaka who has overcome and mastered lust, anger, ego, greed and jealousy can perform this sadhana. Panchagni is perfected only after controlling and transcending these five impurities. After controlling these, the sadhaka is established in *Brahma bhava*, continuous remembrance of God, and thus attains the state of a brahmarishi.

In this sadhana, four fires burn around the sadhaka who sits at the centre of the fires. The sun represents the fifth fire. The sadhana is performed between Makar Sankranti to Karka Sankranti, January to June. While sitting in the centre of these five fires, the sadhaka performs rituals according to the scriptural instructions. Perfection of panchagni bestows Brahmatva or Shivatva, identification with the highest reality. Through this sadhana the sadhaka becomes master of the *pancha mahabhootas*, the five elements.

Jala sadhana

There is also the mention of *jala sadhana* in which the sadhaka stands in waist-deep water in the early morning, in a pond or river, and performs his sadhana. The sadhana is performed during winter and includes repetition of mantra, anushthana and worship of the panchadevas. The purpose is to achieve control over the water element.

From the spiritual point of view, water is the lord of the unconscious elements. There are innumerable currents flowing in water, some slow and some fast. Thoughts, passions, ambitions, feelings and sentiments are experienced even in the unconscious state. These are sometimes experienced in a feeble, dormant form and sometimes in a virulent, violent form. To gain control over them is impossible for an ordinary person. These unconscious currents enslave one and guide and govern the affairs of one's life. In yoga, unconscious elements are related to swadhisthana chakra. To restrain and control the unconscious currents of the water element is the aim of the sadhaka.

Chakra pooja

Chakra pooja is a higher tantric sadhana. In this, a group of sadhakas, both male and female, perform sadhana together. Chakra pooja includes panchamakara, panchadeva, mantra, yantra, meditation and worship. It is a highly esoteric process.

In certain traditions, chakra pooja consists of collective washing of yantras with panchamrita and ensuring personal purity. Then, the deities are invoked through the offering of mantras, lamp, flowers and other oblations. Mantra anushthana is also practised collectively.

In other traditions, sadhakas use panchamakara in chakra pooja. The rules of panchamakara are followed with rigidity and austerity and they attain divine and sacred bhavas. Often, a woman is the guru and presides over the chakra pooja.

Conclusion

Though these important rites and rituals of tantra can be described and explained in some detail, the actual instructions and sequence of performance can only be passed on from the guru to a worthy disciple. This ensures that the powers received from the sadhana are kept in the hands of higher-minded sadhakas and not used indiscriminately. These sadhanas of tantra offer speedy methods of exploding the consciousness and evolving the awareness of the disciple.

By bringing the disciple into situations that evoke the lower instincts, these practices allow him to come face to face with his own nature and to transcend the limiting bonds of the conditioned existence. Unless viewed from a knowledgeable perspective, these sadhanas can be misunderstood. In fact, tantra has been misrepresented in the West as a demonic, licentious, dark art, when actually it transforms the gross to the sublime, and is the highest form of cosmic worship. Therefore, tantra demands secrecy to seek protection from its misrepresentation and misuse, not to hide or cloak its esoteric practices.



Nine Limbs of Tantra

1
Introduction



Tantra believes that spiritual awakening must be a gradual and harmonious progression. As one works with oneself, developing the field of perception, awareness, knowledge, interaction, creativity, the transformation in consciousness is like the gradual opening of a flower bud. When it opens completely to reveal its beauty, the transcendental nature is realized. Similarly, the liberation of energy must be a gradual process. If the force of Shakti is not regulated, burnout can take place; a fuse may blow in the mind and one may lose touch with reality. Therefore, the way to control and guide the consciousness and energy must be realized, and the aspirant must harmonize the inner and outer life. An essential part of this is progressively following the *acharas* of tantra, the codes of conduct.

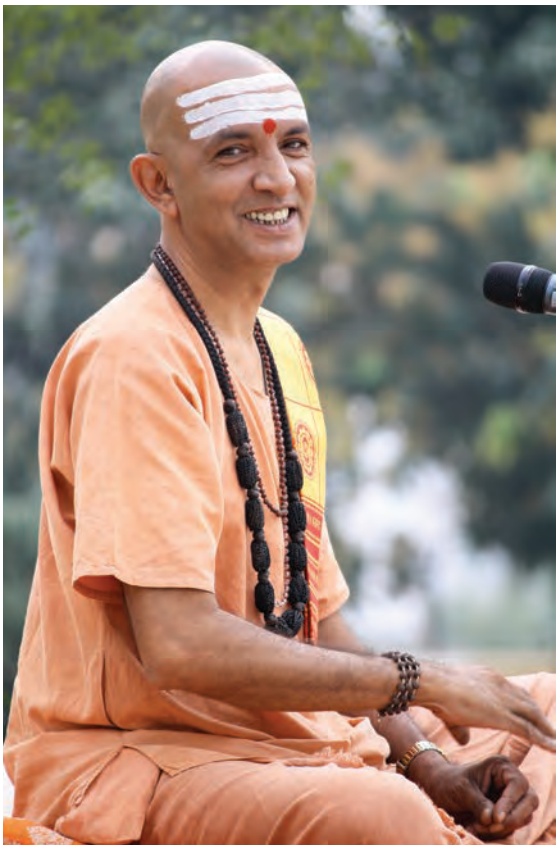
Shift to spiritual life

In the process of sadhana and spiritual evolution, there are obstacles within the personality that must be overcome. The

individual is born not only with a body, mind and spirit, but also with certain traits of character and nature that must be understood. As the traits and character develop and become defined, they begin to assume the *akara*, or form, which is the individual being people identify with, the *ahamkara*, the self-identity of the individual. The character and nature are strengthened by one's involvement in the world through the interaction of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

In this context, ahamkara does not translate as ego. Ego is *ghamanda*, 'that which rotates', and the associated arrogant ego principle. When there is ghamanda, one goes round and round in circles. When the ego is in control, there is a constant search for something or someone that will reinforce its existence. The awareness becomes totally self-oriented and self-centred. When this becomes obsessive it turns into a selfish nature. When ghamanda overpowers the perceptions of the mind, it directs the mind outwards into the realm of the senses and propels one to live a worldly life in society, including having a family or profession, experiencing happiness and suffering, the swings of moods, the stresses, the tensions, the desire to feel free and to be happy; perpetuating the outward search for satisfaction, fulfilment, relaxation, enjoyment and pleasure.

It is this same material personality that suddenly seeks to realize something spiritual in life. The search begins without any experience or training in spiritual life and without the appropriate knowledge needed to successfully withdraw from the world. Thus, the search for the spiritual occurs in the material, sensorial and ego dimension without any modification or alteration from the previous patterns. There may be times when glimpses and flashes of something beautiful are seen within. However, due to the material personality, these moments are rare. In between, one must confront the demons, the negativity of the mind, yet most people try to avoid this experience. People often cease their meditation due to the surge of negativity it causes.



This inability to confront the mind reinforces the external connection with ego, buddhi and manas. Even though there is an ambition to be spiritual, and one practises asana, pranayama, hatha yoga and raja yoga, the mind remains externalized, directed outwards. This material personality seeking spiritual awareness requires restraint, balance, experience and realization. Therefore, tantra maintains that a moment arrives in the life of an aspirant when effort must be applied to the cultivation of an appropriate conduct, expression and behaviour in life, for ultimately it is proper conduct that elevates and refines the personality and the expressions.

Nava acharas

Just as raja yoga is known as *ashtanga yoga*, the eightfold path of yoga, the acharas are

known as *navanga tantra*, the ninefold path of tantra. These nine codes of conducts, or *nava acharas*, represent the entire body of tantra and describe the progressive stages of growth and evolution. The nine sequential stages are: vedachara, vaishnavachara, shaivachara, dakshinachara, vamachara, aghorachara, yogachara, siddhantachara and kaulachara.

In each achara, one specific aspect of awareness has been highlighted. This awareness relates to the cultivation of a specific attitude, type of interaction and the effort that is needed in life to uplift oneself and to overcome limitations and restrictions. In this way, each conduct provides a focus, an aim and a direction to develop in life.

In all the acharas, the prescribed conduct is a complete sadhana in itself. It is not just a tool of mental modification; rather, each achara covers the physical-mental unit and the mental-spiritual unit. The physical-mental aspect is covered by the practical systems of asana, pranayama, pratyahara, mantra, yantra, concentration, dharana, meditation, kriya, kundalini, nada, laya and rituals; all the yogas are included in it. Rituals, both exoteric and esoteric, include yajna, havan and meditation. In meditation, the awareness is gradually moved through different stages of mental states to discover tranquillity and peace within.

To address the mental-spiritual unit, the yamas and niyamas are applied, which are often undervalued in present times. They reflect the conduct of how a spiritual aspirant must live in order to elevate the mind and realize the quality of spirit. By living the yamas and niyamas, one is able to modify and transform the restrictions and limitations inherent within the nature, the personality, the mind and behaviour. This is the most important sadhana. Each achara has a sequence of yama and niyama that one needs to live in order to better the actions, emotions and the mind.

Vedachara, the first achara, aims to create harmony within the environment and family, which in turn creates harmony within oneself. It cultivates an awareness of the actions and behaviours that can be improved. At this stage, one begins to disassociate from ignorant behaviour and to connect instead to wisdom in action. In this way, vedachara is the karma yoga aspect of the tantras.

The second achara, *vaishnavachara*, cultivates faith, purifies the sentiments and sublimates the emotions. The aim is *shuddhi*, purification, of the emotions, mind, speech and lifestyle. The emotions are channelled and transformed in a creative and uplifting way. Vaishnavachara helps to cultivate inner strength to allow one to rise above the struggles in life and approach difficulties as challenges to be overcome. Thus, vaishnavachara indicates union with faith and constitutes the bhakti aspect of the tantras.

Shaivachara is the third achara and represents the jnana yoga aspect of the tantras. Through vedachara, vaishnavachara and shaivachara, a greater awareness is cultivated in life. The focus is on duty, or *dharma*, and appropriate participation in the world. It is through these acharas that the influence of the instincts of life is overcome. The mind is elevated and becomes the *drashta*, witness, of oneself. This leads to the attainment of harmony and purification at every level: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

The next two acharas, *dakshinachara* and *vamachara*, have commonly been translated as the right-hand and left-hand paths of tantra, respectively. However, these are misnomers that create confusion. From the tantric philosophical understanding, *dakshina* means involvement in the world, and *vama* means separation from the world. In dakshinachara, the idea is that one becomes involved in the world after having managed and overcome the *pashu vritti*, all the negative, animalistic patterns and traits of the personality. One consolidates this by living a worldly life and becoming a person of spiritual power and spiritual strength. Once the awareness has been extended to its maximum range and capacity, one becomes established in dakshinachara. In this state, the world does not distract or disturb the peace of such a person. One becomes an inspiration in society by

leading a sattwic, enlightened and harmonious life. During this stage, sadhana continues in order to develop the state of internalization.

From vamachara, the inward journey starts. The aim is overcome the instincts, which pull and divert the awareness and attention. Vamachara is the most misunderstood path of tantra. Many of the modern-day interpreters of tantra are not *sadhakas*, sincere spiritual aspirants. They have not practised tantra, yet offer their own conclusions which are incorrect or misleading. 'Vamachara' means to look in the opposite direction, that is, to look away from the world and towards the spirit. In vamachara, the barriers that hamper the ability to see one's spirit must be realized and eliminated.

Following vamachara is *aghorachara*, which is the fearless state in tantra. *Ghora* means terrible and *aghora* means gentle, that which is not terrible. In aghorachara, the traits of the human personality become virtuous, peaceful, gentle and compassionate, and there is detachment from the senses and sensorial attractions.

From aghorachara one moves into yogachara, the conduct of yoga. *Yogachara* means living the principles of yoga in which the unity of the self is experienced and lived. It denotes an awareness of the higher principle and the endeavour to become one with that higher principle.

With perfection of yogachara, one moves into *siddhantachara*, where the divisions of consciousness in the form of the past, present and future drop away and one becomes a *jivanmukta*, a liberated soul. As an embodiment of wisdom, freedom and knowledge, one enters the final stage of *kaulachara*, where one guides and inspires others towards freedom.

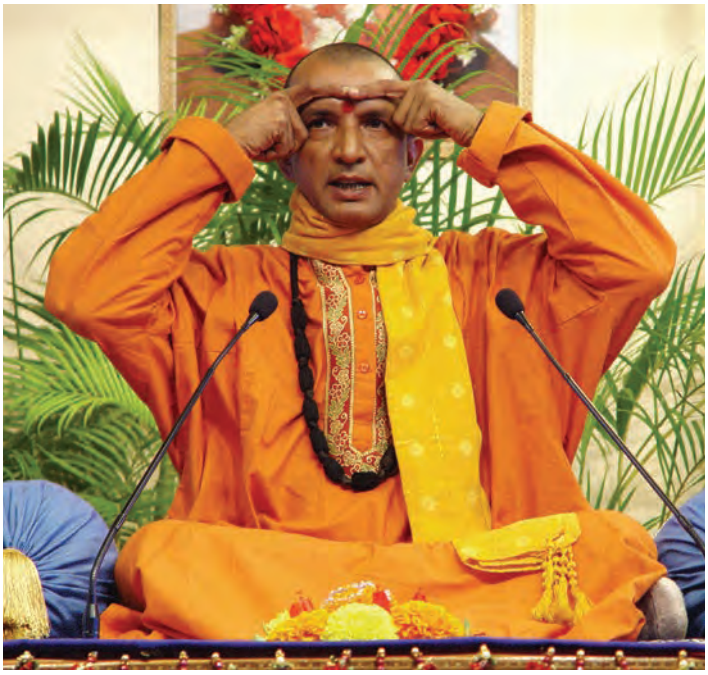
Evolution from gross to sublime

To gain a deeper understanding of the acharas, they have been grouped according to the three bhavas or stages of evolution: *pashu bhava*, the gross, animalistic personality; *veera bhava*, the warrior nature; and *divya bhava*, the divine nature (see Section 1, Chapter 7).

The first three conducts, vedachara, vaishnavachara and shaivachara, relate to pashu bhava. In Sanskrit, the word 'pashu' actually comes from the root word *drish*, which means 'to see', and from drish the word 'pashyanti' is formed. *Pashyanti* means the ability to see, to look, to recognize and perceive. *Pashu* indicates the absence of that ability, a state in which one is blinded by tamasic and sensorial influences and interactions. Animal awareness is defined in tantra as an absence of knowledge. Animalistic tendencies result from the absence of appropriate and correct knowledge, understanding and wisdom in life. This also includes having too much knowledge, which leads to a state of confusion. There is a statement in the *Ishavasya Upanishad* (v. 9): *Andham tamah pravishanti ye avidyamupasate; tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u vidyayam ratah* – "Those who worship *avidya*, ignorance, enter into darkness and those who worship *vidya*, knowledge, enter into still greater darkness." Hence, ignorance leads to darkness, no doubt, yet too much knowledge leads to even greater darkness. This reflects the state of pashu bhava where there is either an absence of knowledge or confusion from too much knowledge.

In society, pashu bhava is the predominant state of mind and it is reflected in the way people communicate with each other. Generally there is no communication in life, only confrontation. This occurs even between friends and family, as people are unable to manage, control and guide their behaviour. People are not able to change their animalistic traits and characters. Both yoga and tantra have stated that doing something physical and external, such as asana and pranayama, will not bring about the necessary transformation. Once one has perfected and come to a point of balance in the physical-mental unit, one must then adopt and live the code of conducts. Living the conducts transforms the mind and perceptions, elevates the consciousness and liberates one's shakti.

In order to overcome the darkness of avidya, ignorance, the first three acharas aim to



develop control. Control denotes overcoming, controlling and managing the tamasic nature, expression and behaviour. A tamasic mind becomes absorbed and stuck in negative states, such as fear, rage, insecurity, indulgence or anxiety. The expression 'control yourself' is aptly used to describe the quality needed to overcome tamas. In the conducts, control is defined as *sanyam*, or restraint. Just as a horse is controlled and guided, in the same manner, life should be controlled and guided by the self so that it moves in a positive and creative direction. The acharas represent a holistic way of regulating life through cultivating restraint in all areas and expressions of life.

The next three conducts, dakshinachara, vamachara and aghorachara, relate to veera bhava, the warrior mentality, which is dynamic, active and subtle, driven by rajoguna. *Veera* means 'brave one' or warrior. The primary function of a soldier or warrior is survival, killing is secondary. In order to survive, the full potential of the awareness needs to be used.

When soldiers are fighting in the jungle, every sound has significance. The flight of a bird may mean the presence of somebody hiding beneath a tree. The crack of a twig may indicate the presence of somebody in the bushes. A glint in the distance may signify sunlight reflecting off the barrel of a gun. For this reason the awareness must be sharp, precise and acute. To survive, a warrior must be totally attentive and observant so nothing escapes the awareness. Any momentary loss of awareness means the possibility of death.

Tantra states that one must develop such qualities of a warrior. The awareness must be extended in all directions so that this faculty of awareness can overtake and control the state of avidya. If one remains free from the traps of ignorance or too much knowledge, the appropriate conduct automatically occurs, as it is the extension and expansion of awareness that allows the personal and limiting traits to be overcome. In the beginning, one is forced out of one's shell, and then awareness is gradually cultivated so that it becomes constant.

The three conducts relating to veera bhava lead to balance. The mind continuously swings between opposites; from pleasure to pain, from joy to suffering, from fear to contentment. Thus, these conducts aim to reduce the swing of mental behaviour and to balance out the rajasic tendencies of the mind.

The final three acharas, yogachara, siddhantachara and kaulachara, relate to divya bhava, the effulgent and divine mind or nature. These acharas cultivate divine qualities within the mind and facilitate transcendental experiences and realizations. As the sattwic nature develops, a different quality of life is experienced. Life becomes more homogeneous, integrated, universal and harmonious.

This ninefold path of tantra is a powerful medium that brings about a total integrated transformation in one's life, sequentially awakening each level of the human personality. The acharas regulate the lifestyle, restrain the hyperactivity of the mind and expand the awareness of one's interaction with the environment, with nature and with the divine. They elevate the mind from the gross dimension and lift it into the higher dimension where the transcendental can be experienced. The nava acharas form a sequence that reflects the evolution of the sadhaka from pashu bhava to divya bhava, from the gross, animal personality to the subtle, illumined personality.

Step by step

The nine acharas systematically outline the path of progress as one's awakening takes place. In spiritual life, the steps must be taken one by one rather than trying to jump many steps at once. Often people try to leap ahead only to discover that no success has been met in their sadhana. People try to awaken the kundalini without any knowledge of basic yoga. They even pay large sums of money for classes, and after bashing and twisting the body for one year, the kundalini is still fast asleep. This is because the process of following a system, suitable to the personality of the aspirant, is necessary for any real progress to occur.

Thus, the codes of conduct are a must, as they represent the steps of growth, progression and evolution. When these steps are followed, one can observe the level of one's attainment, and properly assess how to work on oneself to make further progress. Many people ask, "How do we know we are advancing in spiritual life? How do we know our practices are giving the desired result?" This cannot be identified until one knows the conducts and lives them. If one is able to live the acharas fully, it prepares the sadhaka to ride the waves of spiritual life smoothly.

People often randomly select one achara to follow, according to their interest and inclination. This has led to confusion and many misunderstandings in relation to tantra. In spiritual life, it is crucial to remain on one path, and to follow that path as prescribed by the guru. When a specific conduct has been



lived completely, only then does one move on to the next conduct. In this manner, adherence to the prescribed conducts is an accurate measure of one's progress. It is common for people to believe they are growing spiritually, yet their conduct in life does not reflect this belief. Without following the appropriate achara, despite one's best efforts and best intentions, one remains in the same place.

There is a story about four foolish men. Each was fed up with his wife for nagging him to do something creative and constructive with his life. Together, the four decided to leave. They came up with a plan to escape during the night without being noticed. There was a small rowboat tied to a pier near their village, and on the chosen night they made their escape. They boarded the boat and eagerly rowed the whole night long. At the first light of morning, one fool said to the others, "Everything beside the river looks familiar, even the riverbank and the huts look familiar." The second fool said, "Yes, even the people look familiar. Look, somebody is coming who looks like your wife." The fools had rowed the whole night to escape from their wives, yet they had not untied the boat from the pier.

In the same manner, the boat that carries one through spiritual life often remains tied to the world: to society, family, attachments, desires, expectations, needs and ambitions. Despite one's best efforts and intentions, if the boat remains tethered, one will remain in the same place. The four fools symbolize manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. The corresponding shakti, represented by the wives, is the voice of virtue. However, the fools in their foolhardiness do not listen, and as a result they do not move forward or evolve. The acharas help one to gradually untie the boat.

Beyond the senses

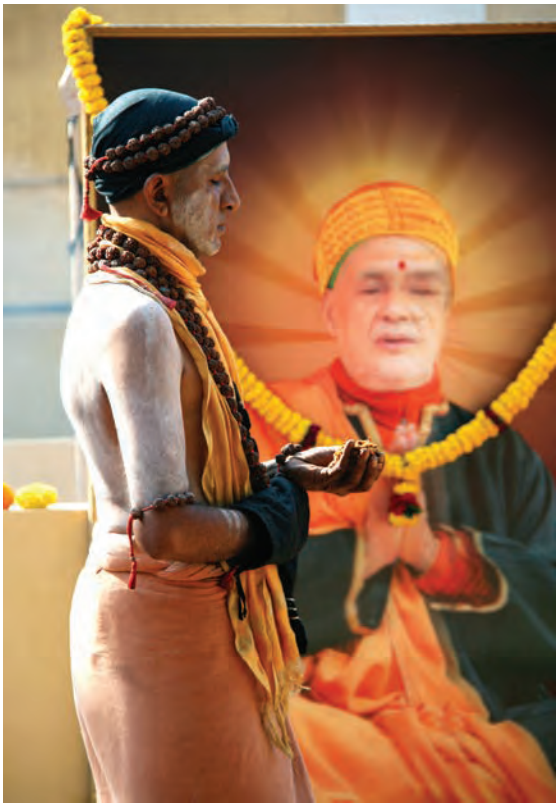
When the acharas are practised in sequence they become a very powerful medium to awaken each level of the human personality. Swami Satyananda speaks of an incident during his days in the Rishikesh ashram. He had a dream in which he saw himself in a big city, with tall, high-rise buildings, as if in New York. It was evening time and the entire city was empty of people and there was no light in the city at all. The next morning he went to Swami Sivananda, described the dream and asked what it meant. Swami Sivananda said a simple thing, "You have seen your own self, your own brain. The brain is like a city. There are many high-rise buildings in that city and each represents an aspect of the brain. Nobody lives there and there is no light, as nobody has access to the switch to light the lamps in the brain that can make one a genius."

What the dream indicates is that there is an immense possibility of experience beyond the limited scope of the senses. In the same way that eyeshades block the peripheral vision of a horse so that it can only look forward, the senses also limit the human experience. Viewing the world through the senses connects the awareness and the mind to the sense object; however, this is not the only perception and perspective. Simultaneously, there ought to be the awareness that one is observing the world with a witnessing attitude, or *drashta bhava*. When a telescope is used to look at the landscape, there is the awareness of this viewing action. In the same manner, when interacting in the world there must be the awareness that the self is looking at the world through the eyes, the self is listening through the ears. This is a philosophy of Vedanta. That self which is observing is the innermost consciousness.

The codes of conduct seek to transform the lower nature through cultivating the awareness of the higher qualities in life, becoming one with the transcendental higher powers that are all-pervasive, existing within and without, beyond the senses. Every spiritual tradition has a code of conduct that links the mind with the spirit, and this is the purpose of the acharas in tantra. By linking the mind with the spirit, the spirit then manifests in the mind. Normally, the mind is looking towards the senses and the material dimension, and the spirit is behind the mind. Various compulsions, such as the ego, family, associations and attachments, hide the presence of the spirit.

People often ask how to develop love and compassion in life, but they never ask how to develop hatred or jealousy. This is because these qualities are already being experienced. In the same manner, love is also a natural expression. Love does not need to be learnt, it is a transcendental quality. People have misunderstood love as something physical and carnal due to the way they identify with the senses; however, love is a transcendental quality. It is a natural quality that emerges once the veils that cover the light are removed. Love is luminosity, not darkness. Compassion is luminosity, not darkness. Wisdom and understanding are luminosity, not darkness. The material world has placed many layers and veils that restrict one's natural luminosity and the radiance of the sattwic, uplifting qualities in life.

The acharas remove the veils, step by step, layer by layer, from the consciousness. They limit the scope of expression of the senses and they inhibit and restrict overindulgence in the material world. They give a focus for the development and expansion of the human nature and consciousness. The acharas provide a positive direction to human expressions so that one can sublimate the consciousness from the gross to the subtle dimension.



Guidance of guru

In each achara of tantra, a combination of tools is used to perfect that path. The appropriate combination is instructed by the guru to the disciple. For most people, it is important to move from one class to another. However, there are also some exceptional people who have gone through certain classes in their past and do not need to repeat the same in this life. They move on to a higher rung. The rung one belongs to is determined by the mentality, nature and personality one is born with, whether tamasic, rajasic, sattwic, instinctive, logical, intellectual, emotional or psychic. According to the personality, the guru prescribes a particular sadhana to the aspirant. The basic beginning classes are the same for all, to prepare the ground. After some perfection has taken place in the effort to prepare the ground, the guru gives individual sadhanas to each one according to their trait. In this manner, life is realized by incorporating the principles and practices of tantra.

Progression from the first to the last limb indicates a refinement and transformation of the human personality from the instinctive nature to the luminous, internally enlightened nature. Through the process, the tamasic patterns of life are transformed into sattwic patterns. There is an awareness of one's obligations, commitments, duties and responsibilities for the upliftment, enlightenment and development of oneself and society. Ultimately, a constructive and positive connection with nature, *prakriti*, is created, and realization of the divine and the transcendental dawns. In this realization of life, one discovers that 'me and my Father are one'.

2

Vedachara



The tantric code of conduct begins with the fundamentals of spiritual life. *Vedachara*, the first achara, literally means 'conduct of the Vedas', and implies living according to the precepts of the Vedas. *Veda* means 'knowledge'. These teachings develop the awareness of interactions and responsibilities in the world. Tantra has generally been regarded as anti-vedic, or at least different from the Vedas, and the question arises, 'Why does vedachara exist in tantric sadhana?'

Tantrics have never considered themselves to be anti-vedic. It is only the traditional, conservative, communal and sectarian priests, scholars and thinkers who have created this distinction. A sadhaka who performs sadhana with the objective of self-study and self-realization does not see any difference between the various systems. Tantra believes that a sadhaka should understand all the gunas and experience the pure tattwas. This is why vedachara is ascribed the first place, for it assigns principal importance to sattwic worship and adoration.

In vedachara, vedic principles and beliefs are accepted and vedic methods of sadhana adopted. The main principle of the Vedas is to know Brahma, who is absolute, formless,

unmanifest and beyond human consciousness. The tantrics have adopted the principle of realization of this formless Brahma, and stated that self-purification can be attained if one proceeds towards the goal through vedic methods. Thus, the practice of vedachara includes repetition of mantra, fire sacrifice, and various types of worship, including both idol and formless worship. The main purpose behind these disciplines is to create a *sattwic*, positive and harmonious, feeling that transforms the way of thinking, behaviour and karmas. Over time, the way of life also changes. Adopting a sattwic way of life, in which the yamas and niyamas are an integral part, has been termed 'vedachara'. It means living a life in which all aspects of life are improved, and includes the daily routine, work, interaction with society and ways to manage the mind. By following this conduct, life in the material world becomes balanced and integrated.

Origin and purpose of vedachara

The idea of vedachara developed many thousands of years ago. At that time, two predominant schools of thought pervaded India, vedic and tantric. In those times, people lived in tribes as wandering nomads or as agrarian communities. Their life evolved in a social manner; villages were formed and social systems expounding various rules and disciplines were established and maintained. The lifestyle of the people living in communities became regulated.

At the time, within the community, were a group of people called *rishis*, seers. The rishis were visionaries who could see the future based on current events, see the outcome of actions. They developed the evolving social structures. They questioned how life could be regulated to maintain social order and to support a materially prosperous life, which simultaneously allowed one to remain true to one's inner aspirations. They considered how to lead a constructive and creative life, balancing the material and social involvement with the spiritual aspirations and the journey of discovering 'Who am I?'

In those ancient times no religion of any kind existed. Instead, the concern was how to live a refined life so that one was not destructive to oneself or to other people. The focus was on how to lead a virtuous, pious and pure life while remaining true to one's duties and obligations externally, or socially, and internally, or personally. The aim was to experience the fullness and completeness of life and to inspire others to experience the same. For the rishis, the eternal duty or *sanatana dharma* of an individual did not lie in organized religion. Rather, eternal dharma was said to be comprised of the three precepts of dharma: *satkarma*, appropriate action; *satvichara*, appropriate thinking, and *satvyavahara*, appropriate behaviour. Through cultivation of appropriate thinking, action and behaviour, the character and personality was refined. In this culture, the positive and uplifting qualities of life were inculcated and the eternal dharma was to live a life of harmony, purity, virtue and a life full of sattwa.

Over the years, spiritual masters, saints and sages have taken certain components from this eternal dharma and made it applicable according to the needs of that particular society. For example *ahimsa*, non-violence, was not a new philosophy created by Buddha. He propagated non-violence, the philosophy of ahimsa, for at that time small kingdoms were at war with each other, and people used to die in large numbers. It made sense for Buddha to disseminate the practice of ahimsa as the highest dharma of life. However, that does not make ahimsa the original thought of Buddhism. The philosophy of ahimsa emerged from this human belief, the sanatana dharma, as a way to improve one's nature. In the same manner, Christ has taken certain components and made them applicable to the society of that period. To be a good Samaritan is not to become a religious person; rather, it is the cultivation of the pious, virtuous, benevolent and pure nature within oneself. Other masters have done the same.

In order to change the mindset of a particular society, dictates were given that

guided the development of the society for a number of years. In this manner, most of the organized religions have taken components from the eternal sources. These organized religions are *yuga dharmas*, or religions that are applicable only for specific periods of time. The ultimate form of religion cultivates a pure and creative human nature in which actions are appropriate and not limiting or harmful to anyone; thinking is appropriate and not limiting, belittling or harmful; behaviour is appropriate and there is no manipulation, power struggle or game being played; instead, there is proper interaction and communication that allow for a greater understanding to develop. The cultivation of positive *samskaras*, or impressions, and a positive way of life is the dharma that is recognized as the human religion. The word religion, derived from the root word 'religare', means to come close, to unite or to join with, and the aim of human life is to unite with the Self. That is the human religion and the vedachara aspect of tantra.

While the rishis were trying to live this kind of life, they identified with nature and saw the universal spirit in nature. This is what the so-called modern logicians call pagan thoughts, traditions, and beliefs. They are not pagan; they represent an experience of life in which people could feel the power of nature in thunder, in storms, in lightning. They gave an image and an identity to those experiences in the form of gods: the Norse gods, the Roman gods, Indian gods. Many such images exist: Thor, Zeus, Isis, Horus, Lakshmi, Narayana, Indra, Varuna, and so on.

These images were born out of the realization that each and every aspect of creation is nothing but an emanation of the highest force, and it was the ancestors' way of appreciating their connection with nature and with the divine. In the divine connection, respect, faith, conviction and dignity are cultivated so as to live properly, offering one's best. Vedachara, the guidelines for living in accordance with the Vedas, emerged out of these ideas. This first code of conduct emphasizes to initially learn the appropriate way of living life, to structure and regulate life. At this stage, the aim is to know one's abilities and limitations and to remain true to the *kartavya*, the duties and obligations, with a clear mind.

Four compartments of life

When the rishis observed how people lived, they discovered that in the course of life, people go through various stages of mental and emotional maturity. At first, one becomes more and more involved in the world and after a certain stage in life, one begins to isolate more and more from the world. As a result of these observations, the vedic precepts divided life into four compartments, along with a specific focus to achieve in each stage of life. Thus, in this first achara of tantra, awareness of obligations, duties, commitments and responsibilities develops as one passes through the different stages of life.

Brahmacharya ashrama: The first compartment of life is brahmacharya ashrama, the stage of the novice. It is a period of





creative learning, imbibing and studentship. In this stage, skills, traits, knowledge and understanding are developed in order to survive in the material world. The mandate during this state of studentship, while acquiring an education, is also to learn to restrain one's mind. *Sanyam*, or restraint, is the focus, since when sanyam of mind is acquired, learning takes place rapidly.

Brahmacharya does not mean celibacy. Brahmacharya refers to a stage of learning, realizing and knowing. It includes knowing one's aspirations in life and working towards them with the right tools and the right application of those tools, with restraint of the senses, emotions and mind. Thus, *brahmacharya* simply means a restraint in the performance of the senses and the expression of emotions and conditions of the mind. If there is no restraint in one's life, then celibacy erroneously becomes the definition of brahmacharya. Restraint of the mind allows the mental forces to be steered in a particular direction. The mind is restrained just as one rides a horse using a bridle. As long as the reins are used, the horse will be under the rider's command. It will go to the left or right, and will trot, walk or gallop according to the rider's wishes; however, if the reins are not being used, the horse will take the rider wherever it chooses. The reins are there to control the wild nature and behaviour of the horse. In the same way, restraint is applied in one's life to control the wild behaviour of one's own mind, passions, emotions, senses, desires, expectations and ambitions.

The wild behaviour has to be restrained, and for this purpose sanyam becomes the primary focus of vedachara. The vedic code of conduct takes the form of restraint of the senses; restraint of speech; and restraint of the mind. These constitute the three sanyams one has to perfect in the practices of vedachara during brahmacharya. This is the period of life when the mind can be trained and guided, and the wild tendencies removed. Discipline and restraint develops one's focus, which can be seen in learning. When one's awareness and attention are dissipated, there is only a partial remembrance of what has been studied, regardless of how much effort has been applied. However, the capacity of the brain is not limited to this partial remembrance. In fact, the human brain has the capacity to recall pages from a book in photographic detail. Photographic memory is not a rare thing; it is a potential of a brain that has developed focus through discipline and restraint, a potential that has not yet been widely explored.

Thus, restraint is the first *shiksha*, or education, of a student. After developing restraint, one acquires focus, concentration, a sense of purpose and an aspiration for life. Once these qualities have been cultivated, one then becomes involved in life and prepares for the future. This process has to be applied in vedachara.

Grihastha ashrama: The second compartment or stage of life is that of grihastha ashrama, the householder life. The rishis observed that after the education stage when one is equipped with the knowledge, skills, traits and wisdom to survive in society, a natural growth and progression happens. One begins to engage in social activity, in a trade, in a profession,

in raising a family, and establishes himself or herself in life. At this stage, one becomes a useful contributor to society. This includes looking after one's own family and preparing the new generation for the future so they may also contribute to the development of society. In order to fulfil this role, the individual has to perform certain duties and obligations towards society, family, oneself and one's higher aspirations. Thus, in the grihastha stage, one learns to perform duties efficiently, objectively and creatively. In turn, this develops the maturity of mind.

For the householder committed to the society, family, profession or job, the mandate is to cultivate non-attachment, *anasakti bhava*. The idea of non-attachment is to live in the world, yet remain free from its impositions, influences, attractions, cravings and desires. It is living in the ocean of attachment yet being totally unattached, just like the lotus flower that lives and grows in water, yet remains unaffected by the drops of water falling on its leaf. Cultivating non-attachment allows one to be peaceful in the world and in life. In the stage of grihastha, there is a natural inclination towards developing attachment. The attachment that develops in this stage is gross, physical, sensorial, social and familial.

The attachment to sense objects, which are external in nature, becomes the cause of strife in life. This results in the appearance of tension, frustration, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure and other peripheral problems. One has to learn how to manage the obsessive mentality of attachment. Therefore, the emphasis in this achara is on knowing one's duties, obligations and commitments and performing these duties with clarity, objectivity and with concern, care and sympathy for all. One learns to care and be concerned without becoming attached. Attachment develops the obsessive quality of mind. It intensifies and strengthens desire, which further strengthens the attachment, and the vicious cycle continues.

There is a story during Swami Satyananda's early days that illustrates non-attachment. At that time he was living with his guru, Swami Sivananda, whose ashram was in Rishikesh. One day, Swami Sivananda inspected Swami Satyananda's room to find nothing inside, except one dhoti on the floor. He questioned him, "Where is the bed, where is the mosquito net, blanket, pillows, table, paper and pen? It



is an empty room." Swami Satyananda replied that he did not need those things and he had renounced them. Swami Sivananda looked at him and shook his head. He told him that an empty room is not renunciation, and walked out. One hour later, three swamis came, their arms loaded with mattresses, blankets, pillow, pillow cases, bed sheets, quilts, a stove, glasses, tea, sugar, milk and a tin of biscuits; everything. When his guru brothers told him that Swami Sivananda had sent all that for his room, Swami Satyananda told them he did not need any of it. However, his guru brothers took no notice and put the things in the room as instructed.

Swami Satyananda sat there for some time when there was another knock at the door. The person checked to see the room was prepared and informed him that Swami Sivananda would come to inspect it. Hastily, Swami Satyananda organized everything, and after about fifteen minutes Swami Sivananda came. He asked, "Satyam, did you receive everything?" Swami Satyananda replied, "Yes, Swamiji, I received everything, but why did you send all this for me?" Swami Sivananda said, "That is your misconception. I did not send those things for you; I sent them for the room. These things will be kept here. You can use them, but they don't belong to you, they belong to the room. Practise non-attachment in this manner with the idea that, 'Nothing belongs to me, everything belongs to the room'." Swami Satyananda then asked, "What about the tea and the stove? Does the room drink tea?" Swami Sivananda replied, "No, that is for your guests. You may not use them. If an elderly man comes to you and is feeling cold, you should offer him something to warm himself with."

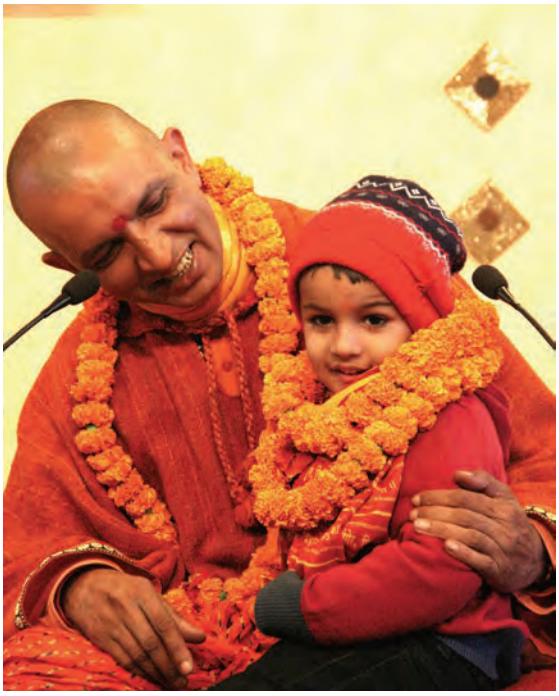
In this way, Swami Sivananda imparted a lesson on non-attachment and *tyaga*, renunciation: accept everything, yet without assuming ownership or desiring anything. Keep certain items and use them appropriately and properly when the need arises. Non-attachment is as simple as that. Attachment becomes a problem when a sense of ownership, a craving or a possessive attitude creeps in gradually or when there is some expectation or demand that needs to be fulfilled. The moment one becomes entangled, life will not follow a specific achara, a code of conduct. Therefore, the rishis held that for the grihastha ashrama, the focus is to cultivate non-attachment. One should continue in life, raise a family, follow one's duty, dharma and kartavya, while remaining unattached.

Vanaprastha ashrama: The third compartment is known as vanaprastha ashrama, the retired life. The rishis noticed that after a certain age, the body and brain lose their strength. At this stage, one is not able to contribute effectively in society. The external, social and material involvement of the individual comes to a natural conclusion. One gradually withdraws so the new generation can come forward and take up the reign in society.

What becomes the duty, the dharma and the karma when one retires from the frontline of one's social identity? The rishis said the retired life is when the journey of inner discovery begins. This means involving oneself in knowing the deeper meaning of mind, nature, creation, God and oneself. Self-analysis, self-observation, reflection, self-study, and understanding become the hallmarks of this third stage of life. There is a move away from the tamasic and rajasic patterns that have been present in the first two compartments of life into a sattwic state. Thus, an introduction to the sattwic state takes place in the vanaprastha stage.

The focus is now on educating the younger generation in a positive and creative way, based on life experience. It is a time for reflecting on what was done right and what was done wrong, and sharing these experiences with others to inspire and to keep them focused on their aims and aspirations. It is the time to become a thinker, a writer and an inspiration to the larger community, expanding beyond the family. Upon retirement, the aim is to divert one's energy towards something beneficial, creative and constructive.

Sannyasa ashrama: Due to the changing priorities, situations and environments that develop in life, one gradually becomes isolated



from society. At this stage of life, one is not dependent on anybody for survival. One becomes independent and begins to live a life of dignity and of spiritual luminosity as a sannyasin. That was called the fourth ashrama by the rishis, in which an attempt is made to discover the real nature of the Self, not what one perceives to be the Self, but what the Self truly is. In this context, however, sannyasa is not only used in the sense of renunciation, but also in the sense of using one's abilities, resources and strengths for the welfare of all.

Developing positive samskaras

In brahmacharya and grihastha ashramas, the resources and strengths are used for selfish purposes, whereas in vanaprastha and sannyasa they are used for selfless purposes. In this manner, in vedachara one can shift from the selfish condition of mind to a selfless condition of mind. The rishis saw the growth and development of human life externally as well as spiritually, making use of every moment to cultivate the virtuous nature, the sattwic, positive nature. Thus, by following the vedic code of conduct from brahmacharya to grihastha, to vanaprastha and to sannyasa, a different set of samskaras is cultivated.

Samskaras are latent impressions in the consciousness. Just as a passport is a record of travel, samskaras are a record of the soul's travel through life. They are impressions of life on the pages of consciousness. There are many impressions that are imprinted on the consciousness, both destructive and constructive. However, it is mostly the impressions related to destruction that remain, such as situations or events that have injured or caused harm.

If one has been harmed in the past, one still carries that impression of the person who caused harm. One may not carry the impression of those who have nurtured, loved and cared, but one holds and carries the impression of those people who have caused harm. This is quite easy to understand. It takes many years to construct something, yet it takes only a second to destroy it. Destruction is what people identify with, and very few people identify with construction and the beauty of life. Samskaras dictate one's behaviour and force one to wear different masks at different times according to the situation, circumstances, events and people. Therefore, one has to work through these samskaras and cultivate a new set of samskaras.

In the brahmacharya stage of vedachara, there are practices, including certain yogic practices, which are outlined to specifically instil positive samskaras relevant for this stage of life. These samskaras become the positive habits and behaviours in life. Thus, the creation of new samskaras is a part of vedachara. The aims of vedachara that are applicable at all four stages of life are to know oneself, to overcome and transform the limiting and the destructive conditions, and to generate a new set of impressions that uplift one's energy and consciousness.

Link between dharma and karma

In vedachara, *karma*, action, and *dharma*, duty, must be understood and linked together so



that the personal philosophy of the individual becomes integral to their behaviour and action. Swami Satyananda has said that in modern times, a split has occurred between one's actions and personal beliefs, philosophy, understanding, knowledge and wisdom. A yogi is one whose wisdom is connected with action so these are not two isolated events in one's life.

Awareness of dharma and karma is difficult. Most people are not aware of either. Generally, karma is used to achieve a good result, which is also the expectation. However, if there is an association and understanding of one's dharma, karma is simply a medium to express that dharma. In normal life, karma is predominant and dharma is relegated to the background. Predominance of karma binds the consciousness and the mind to the senses and sense objects. This disturbs the state of inner tranquillity and gives birth to craving, expectation and tension in life.

Many individuals also find ways to avoid karma. For example, people often talk about human rights yet they do not want responsibility. Right without responsibility is destructive. If one seeks responsibility, then rights are inherent in the responsibility. This is the interrelationship between dharma and karma.

Isolated karma reflects personal needs, desires, expectations and demands. This results in elation, joy, happiness and contentment or discontentment, frustration, anxiety and anger. One must understand the nature of karma and dharma in each stage of life and live according to it. The mind needs to be adjusted so that it is free from bondage, free from the knots of karma. The tools that are used to keep oneself free are sanyam and anasakti bhava, restraint and non-attachment.

Guru and belief in oneself

The vedachara system emphasizes the importance of following the instructions of the master or guru, cultivating faith in the higher reality and developing belief in oneself. Belief in oneself creates strength. If there is no belief, strength will not emerge. Many individuals do not believe that they can be something or do something. Strength comes from knowing that one has come into this world with all the possibilities and potentials that God has given equally to everyone. Everyone is born with the same potential; however, the majority of people have failed to realize their potential.

Luminaries such as Swami Sivananda, Jesus Christ, Rama, Krishna and Mohammed were able to develop that potential to its fullest. Therefore, belief in oneself, cultivation of faith in the higher reality and adherence to the instructions and guidelines of the guru are emphasized in vedachara. These aspects help one to progress through the stage of vedachara and to be a creative participant in fulfilling one's duties, obligations and commitments, thereby harmonizing the inner and outer life.

3

Vaishnavachara



As a result of attaining the qualities of restraint, harmony and detachment while in vedachara, one's life becomes more organized, thus through this first achara the foundation is laid to move into the next achara, which is vaishnavachara.

From vaishnavachara onwards, effort is needed to transform the nature, personality, mental and emotional behaviour with the goal of attaining purity. The term *vaishnavachara* means to follow the conduct of Narayana, the symbol of purity and bhakti. In vaishnavachara, the effort involves the cultivation of faith, purification of sentiments and emotions, and the proper management of the emotions in order to utilize their power, their *shakti*, and dive deeper into the subtle dimensions where one's strengths lie hidden. The catalyst to bring out the inner strength is faith and conviction.

Developing purity

The attainment of *shuddhi*, purity, is the first step of spiritual life. Without cultivating purity, one cannot progress along the spiritual

path. Even in pranayama, the first practice taught is nadi shodhana, purification of the pranic channels. Introduction into pranayama commences with the clearing of the pranic channels. Similarly, pratyahara is practised in preparation for meditation. Pratyahara refines the awareness and clears the mind so the mind can become free to enter a state of meditation. Sweeping the mind clean is pratyahara, and arranging the mind, placing the right things in the right places is dharana. Lying down comfortably on a sofa and enjoying life is meditation. Going to sleep on your sofa in total bliss is samadhi. In this way, throughout spiritual life, shuddhi is always the first step.

In vaishnavachara, general cleanliness to purify the environment forms a part of the routine of life. Bhakti yoga purifies the emotions, pranayama purifies the pranas and meditation cleans the thoughts. Meditation gets rid of any specks of dust, or negative vrittis, so that one achieves *shuchita*, or cleanliness, of thought. With various practices, purity of body, mind and speech have to be acquired.

Purification requires restraining the negative tendencies of the mind, abstaining from unregulated passionate behaviour, avoiding injury and harm to other people, animals and insects, and cultivating *bhakti*, or channelling and transforming the emotions in a creative and uplifting way. In order to maintain the mental and emotional purity, one often has to follow certain abstinences in vaishnavachara. These abstinences can take the form of different *tapasyas*, austerities, and *sanyams*, restraints. One begins to observe and work through the factors that limit one's creative expression, by balancing and altering one's lifestyle. Sometimes, for householders, even sexual restrictions have to be followed in order to withdraw the attention from the sensorial world.

In every situation, both the external and the internal factors have to be taken into account to attain balance. A diabetic patient will not be helped only by taking tablets or insulin injections. To manage the condition properly, a diabetic must also regulate the diet. In the same manner, tantra states that along with the external practices, one must work internally with the mind. Both the outer and inner, the exoteric and esoteric, processes must merge together.

To develop purity, one must cultivate an identity with one's pure nature. In meditation, one should mentally repeat, 'I am not this body



or the experiences connected or associated with this body. I am not this mind or the experiences associated and connected with this mind. I am the luminous self, the untainted and the pure'. Identify with that internal purity and develop that feeling of purity to the maximum extent possible. For some people the maximum effort may be five percent, for others twenty percent. Even if one percent of purity is attained, it creates the first step in realizing the transcendental.

This effort begins by realizing that the transcendental nature is contained in everything, in oneself and in others. One needs to recognize each individual, not as an independent physical person, but as a spiritual person. One should be able to recognize and perceive in each individual the spiritual strength and not the material mindset. As the ability to visualize the spiritual nature in all develops, so does the ability to perceive the divine trait within all, and this is also the aim and philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, cultivating the ability to see oneself in others, to feel that all are one, not strangers. This is vaishnavachara: the attainment of purity in thought, in mind, in character, in behaviour; the attainment of creativity in action; and the identification with the spiritual nature in oneself and others, realizing that all are one in spirit. The shape, size and colour may be different, but the spirit which is luminous in each and every one is the same.

Bhakti yoga

People sometimes think of bhakti as a religious activity or religious process; however, when the word 'yoga' is added to 'bhakti', it changes the meaning completely. It becomes a process of inner psychological transformation, and not the path of adoration, worship and devotion. Thus, bhakti can be understood in two ways: as bhakti yoga, and as the ritual path of bhakti. In vaishnavachara it is not the ritualistic aspect of bhakti which is the focus, it is bhakti yoga. The aim is to positively transform the emotions and sublimate those emotions to experience the true self, the true nature.

Bhakti yoga means sublimation of the emotional forces, and emotion means energy in motion. Motion refers to something that is moving, something that is active, and emotion is felt inside. Emotion is not received from the outside; it is felt within and then projected and expressed outwardly. Energy is expressed in many ways, aggressively, gently, lovingly, compassionately, crudely, and so on. These emotions occur when association of consciousness with the senses and sense objects takes place. If consciousness is disconnected from the senses and sense objects, emotions will not surface. The link of consciousness with sense objects brings forth the emotional expression.

When one looks at a child, for example, a response of affection or love surfaces. When a connection is made, an emotion is instantly felt; however, if there is no physical connection or connection based on memories, then there is no emotion. When direct perception or perception based on memories occurs, a connection takes place, identification takes place, and an emotion manifests. When money is seen on the ground, a connection takes place and greed is experienced; when one sees or remembers a friend or a lover, affection or passion arises in the mind.

In this manner, emotions are energy expressions that flow outwards from the individual when consciousness is linked to a particular object through perception or memory. This happens naturally, spontaneously, automatically and unconsciously. Generally, there is no voluntary control over emotions. Emotions that affect the mind are tamasic emotions. Tamasic emotions jolt the mind into aggressive and dynamic activity, or *rajas*. Sattwic emotions, on the other hand, are subtle and do not disturb the mind. Thus, instructions on bhakti yoga have been given to manage emotions. In bhakti yoga, emotion is directed inwards and towards discovery of the Self. In this way, emotion linked with the Supreme Self takes the form of devotion, or bhakti.

Nine aspects of bhakti yoga

Swami Satyananda says that bhakti is simply an emotion, comprising love, faith and conviction. These are the three aspects of bhakti. How does one develop transcendental love? How does one develop faith and conviction? To cultivate these qualities of bhakti, the vaishnavachara system of tantra describes a beautiful progression which has nine *angas*, or limbs.

1. *Satsang*: In vaishnavachara, the first form of bhakti is satsang. Satsang is used to change the mental attitude and behaviour, and to make it more positive and constructive. Not satsang in the sense of discussion, lecture or debate. Satsang does not mean a speech. Satsang means to be in company of truth. How can one be in the company of the truth? By choosing the right association, including choosing the right husband or wife, and the right friends. This means choosing to associate with people who can inspire one to do good things, who uplift, encourage and are a positive influence in one's life. The company of virtuous, good, gentle, pious and sattwic people elevates the mind and energy.

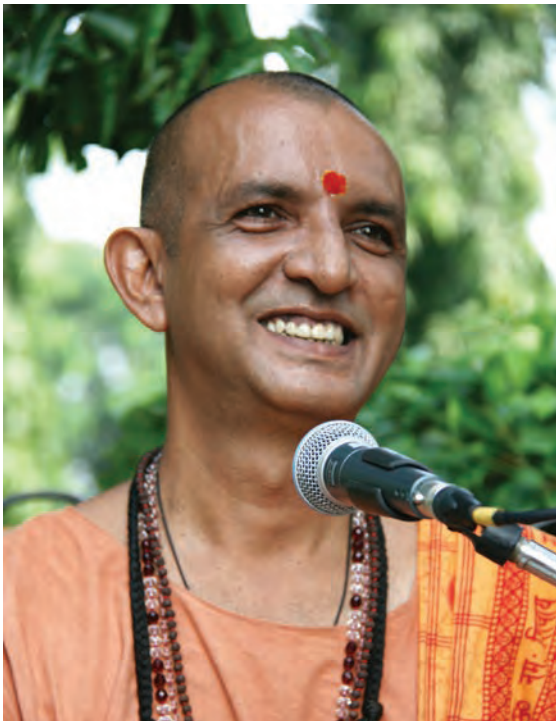
In contrast, one is advised to reject associations with people who gossip and criticize, and who do not inspire one to live a sattwic life. Association with the negative, bad and destructive depletes one's energy and positive nature. People who are a destructive and negative influence should be shunned, rejected, ignored and avoided. This has been stated in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali (1:33):

> *Maitree karunaa muditopekshaanaam sukha dukha punyaa punya vishayaanaam bhaavanaatashchitta prasaadanam.*
>
> Be friendly with those who are content. Be compassionate towards those who are in pain. Be happy for those who are virtuous. Practise indifference to the crooked. Cultivate these attitudes and the mind becomes purified and peaceful.

Ignore the crooked, look at the flower and not the thorn. In this way, an outer act of separation from negative influences brings one closer to a sense of happiness, joy and positivity. Positive associations will give birth to positive expressions, and destructive associations will give birth to destructive expressions. Choosing the right person to associate with is satsang. Satsang means to be in the company of the pious, the positive, the virtuous and the truthful. It means to be in the presence of acceptance, rather than criticism and hypocrisy.

In the company of a hypercritical mind, one's own mind begins to take the same shape. Associating or connecting with negative behaviour or thinking generates negativity in the form of limited and restricted attitudes, responses and perceptions. Similarly, connecting with the positive transforms the mind and the expression becomes positive. The rishis throughout the ages have stated that strength and courage must be cultivated to negate destructive and negative influences, even if this includes family members. Most people are willing to sacrifice their own peace rather than hurt someone's feelings; however, this is not in alignment with yogic thought. Each individual is responsible for their own mind, their own life, their own karma and their own dharma. Therefore, learn to live an appropriate life, one that is full of inner strength and inner qualities of creativity, compassion, love and service. Cultivate a life that seeks to benefit and uplift all. This quality of life is what Swami Sivananda used to call 'the divine life'.

2. *Positivity*: The second aspect of bhakti yoga is to always maintain positivity and to have a positive outlook in life. The quality of outlook that one possesses is reflected in the answer to the question: 'Is the glass half-empty or half-full?' When the answer is 'half-empty', the awareness is associated with the absence, and there is a lack of appreciation for what is there. When the answer is 'half-full', the awareness is associated with the presence and not the absence. In this manner, for everything, for every situation, the advice is to always cultivate a positive outlook. To maintain that positive nature of the mind is an intense and difficult



thing to do. It requires great inner spiritual strength. It is the most difficult sadhana of bhakti yoga. Nonetheless, if one becomes an instrument for the divine, if one cultivates the philosophy 'Make me an instrument of Thy will and let Thy will be done', then it becomes easy to maintain optimism and positivity in life. Alternatively, if the philosophy is 'Let my will be done and let my will predominate', then negativity will set in.

Positivity has to become the nature of the mind, not merely an experience of the mind. Actors say when they are acting it is very easy to enact the role of a bad character, as it is natural. To perform the role of a good person is difficult, as the mind has to be applied continuously to act in that manner. Thus, to cultivate and maintain a positive attitude, positive thoughts and positive behaviour constantly and continuously, without allowing the mind to sleep, is the second aspect of bhakti. An important aspect of positive behaviour is the presence of sanyam, or restraint, in speech. In speech, always cultivate constructive communication, rather than critical and negative communication.

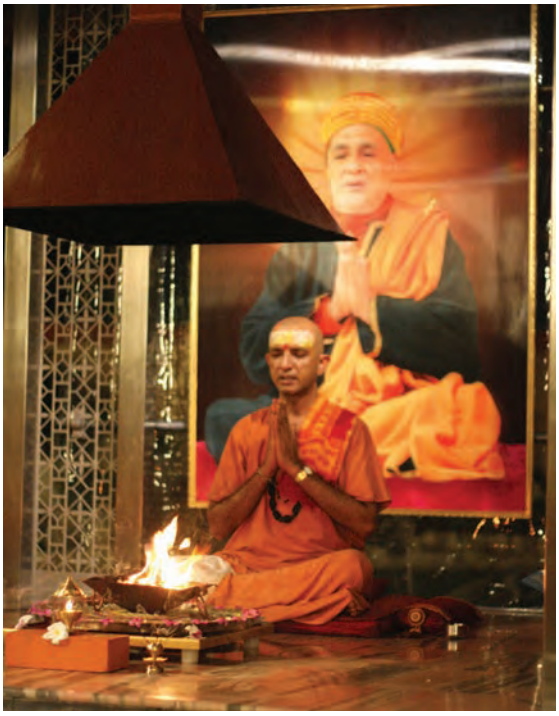
There is a story of an astrologer who was asked by the king to read his chart. When he made the chart, this great astrologer was aghast. The king asked him, "What do you see in my chart?" The astrologer replied, "I only see death and destruction; your entire family, your entire clan, your entire kingdom will be wiped out. Nobody will survive." The king became furious and threw the astrologer in jail. The astrologer's son was also an astrologer and decided to try his luck. He came to the king and said, "Look, I am also an astrologer. Let me see your chart." He also saw the deadly chart, however, he considered the best way to convey the news to the king. Finally, he said, "King, you have one of the best charts I have ever seen. You are going to outlive all your relatives. You are going to outlive even your kingdom." When the king heard this he was happy, and he gave the astrologer's son a reward. The same information was conveyed, yet one emphasized the negative and the other the positive. In the same manner, controlled speech has to develop in the deeper aspect of bhakti.

3. *Humility*: The third aspect of bhakti yoga is the development of humility. Become humble like a blade of grass which moves with the wind, rather than stiff like a tree which can break into two in a storm. Nothing can injure or hurt humility. On the other hand, arrogance can be hit, arrogance can be targeted and arrogance can be hurt. Arrogance becomes like a wall ,whereas humility becomes like air. When one is humble, there is total surrender and one becomes transparent.

4. *Atmabhava*: The fourth aspect is to cultivate atmabhava, the ability to see oneself in others. Atmabhava is to also see the divine and luminous nature in everything and everyone. It is to see the essence within others, rather than the physical, social, sensorial or material identity. Atmabhava is to have the same intensity of feeling for all as one has for one's family.

There once was a poet-saint in India named Eknath who embarked on a pilgrimage. In accordance with tradition, he had to carry water from Gangotri, the birthplace of the Ganga, to the temple of Rameshwaram situated at the southern tip of India. It was at this temple that Eknath intended to offer Ganga water to the Shivalingam. The pilgrimage was an act of worship, a part of an *anushthana*, a period of sadhana. Eknath began his journey in Gangotri with a pitcher full of Ganga water and travelled the entire length of the country by foot. He finally reached the destination and stood before the temple, feeling deeply satisfied. He was happy that his sankalpa, the offering of water from Gangotri, was going to be fulfilled.

While he was waiting outside the temple, he saw a donkey lying on the ground dying of thirst. Seeing the donkey's plight, he prayed: 'Lord, I have brought water for you and I see that here, outside the temple, you are dying of thirst. Please take this water.' With that thought in mind, he poured the water into the donkey's mouth to revive him. That was his act of worship. He saw God in the dying donkey, such was the level of his atmabhava. Swami Satyananda has said many times that when someone is sick, God inside that person is sick; when someone is happy, God inside that person is happy; when a person is distressed, hungry or thirsty, God inside that person is distressed, hungry, or thirsty. When one suffers, God also suffers. This is atmabhava, the ability to see divinity in each and every one. Humility and atmabhava are qualities that have to be cultivated in bhakti yoga. However, when atmabhava develops, arrogance may also surface. The ego may become dangerous, leading one to believe one has become illuminated or enlightened, and therefore superior to everyone else.



There is a story of a sadhaka who longed for self-realization, so he went to a guru. The guru refused him initially, but as the sadhaka was pestering him relentlessly, the guru decided to give him a mantra for meditation. After a long period of meditation with his mantra, the sadhaka started to see divinity everywhere; he saw a golden orb around everyone and everything. He believed he had become enlightened. In this state of total bliss, he went to the marketplace. When he reached the market there was a stampede. He wondered what had happened. He stopped someone and asked: "What is happening? Why is everybody running away?" The person replied: "Run! Run! Mad elephant! Mad elephant!" and continued running. Intoxicated by the idea of the golden orb of the elephant, the sadhaka did not heed the wise advice. He arrogantly approached the elephant and was quickly thrown to the ground and trampled. Similarly, the guru's advice may also be ignored if the ego and arrogance arise with atmabhava, which halts spiritual progress. These ideas may sound simple, however, in order to live them, one must be continuously aware of the actions, behaviours, feelings and experiences.

5. *Remembrance of God and guru*: The fifth aspect of bhakti is remembering that God is

the focus and the guru is the path leading one towards that focus. Reminding oneself that 'this is the direction to walk' is known as remembrance. Remembrance must be constant so that one does not deviate from the path. It is a continuous reminder that keeps one connected with the aim and path. The effort in this aspect of bhakti yoga is to keep the inspiration alive by remembrance that 'this is my direction, this is my goal, and this is my destiny'.

6. *Contentment*: The sixth aspect of bhakti yoga is learning to be content from moment to moment. Contentment has to become the natural state of mind and the primary expression in life. When there is contentment, serenity also emerges. Thus, serenity and contentment go together. Without serenity, contentment is only a fleeting gust of happy, soothing air. When desires, wants and needs arise, the mind becomes distracted and begins to look outwards; however, when contentment is cultivated, the desires, aspirations and ambitions are managed in a better way. They cease to overpower the mind, the intention, the focus and the actions.

Cultivation of contentment is the antidote for influences of desires and infatuations. Contentment puts a stop to the emergence of desires that make one dance from one thing to another, without having a focus or a goal and without achieving a positive outcome or result. There is a saying in Hindi: 'Every kind of wealth in the world – gold, money, credit card, investments and property – becomes dust when you receive the jewel of contentment'. Contentment is the highest expression of the mind, denoting fullness, completeness, wholeness.

7. *No hypocrisy*: The seventh aspect of bhakti is the negation of hypocrisy in life, becoming free from all hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means putting on a mask to hide the true self, putting on the mask of falsity. Generally people are habituated to falseness, and effort is needed to remove pretension and hypocrisy from life, to live with utmost clarity and purity.

8. *Acceptance of everything*: The eighth aspect of bhakti is acceptance of everything and to not find fault or mistake in anything. When involved in some work or activity, one must endeavour to accomplish everything in the best possible manner and to be as accurate as possible. To worry or get neurotic about the mistakes or shortcomings of others should cease, as this will not help the situation; one must simply focus on what needs to be done. One should avoid looking at other people and making comparisons: 'The other person has this and that, but I don't have it. The other person is being smiled at and I'm being frowned at. The other person gets a pat on the back, I'm getting slaps on my back.' These types of thoughts belittle and downgrade oneself. Self-esteem, self-image and self-awareness are diminished when such comparisons are made. This attitude also fosters hypocrisy. Therefore, do not see fault in anything and do not be a hypocrite. Instead, cultivate acceptance.

9. *Absolute surrender*: The ninth and final aspect of bhakti is absolute surrender, with the attitude 'Let Thy will be done'.

The ninefold devotional path in Srimad Bhagavatam

The *Srimad Bhagavatam*, an important vaishnavachara text eulogizing Narayana, describes the ninefold path of devotion as:

1. *Shravana*: Listening to the qualities and stories of God.
2. *Kirtan*: Singing the name and qualities of God.
3. *Smarana*: Continuous remembrance of the name and mantra of God.
4. *Pada seva*: Merging oneself into the service of God.
5. *Archana*: A form of ritual, rite or external worship, such as burning incense, a candle, doing arati, and so on.
6. *Vandana*: Mental worship.
7. *Dasya bhava*: Seeing oneself as a sevak or servant.
8. *Sakhya bhava*: Seeing oneself as a friend of God.

9. *Atmanivedana*: Total surrender of oneself.

With the total experience of this ninefold devotional path in life, all the external afflictions and sorrows cease to exist. After this, a pure, conscious state is awakened in which there is no deception or pretension. This state is directly related to absolute faith and complete surrender.

Many thinkers believe that there is no place for faith in vaishnavachara; however, to live life without faith and conviction is a vortex of struggle. If one is endowed with faith, any struggle becomes a challenge to overcome and succeed. Belief itself has two forms, faith and superstition. While faith is something internal, emerging from within, superstition is a mental idea. The dropping of superstition, or mental belief, is essential in vaishnavachara. Faith in oneself and in the Supreme Power is generated after gaining control over the fluctuations of the mind, and leads one to adopt a sattwic way of life.

Therefore, the code of conduct, according to the Vaishnava tradition, is to withdraw oneself from sensual and sensorial participation in the world, and to cultivate faith and conviction by following the path of devotion to realize the omnipresence of the divine nature. Once this realization takes place, the behaviour also changes. Just as the behaviour changes when one is being watched as compared to when one is in solitude, similarly, one behaves differently in a club than in a temple or a church. There is a difference in the appropriateness of behaviour depending on perception, location and place.

If one considers this entire world to be one temple or one big church, a sense of respect, reverence, dignity, conviction, awareness, and alertness is automatically fostered in one's life. In perceiving this world as a temple of the divine power lies the opportunity to excel and become better, to experience the fullness of life and not just hanker after transitory pleasures. Naturally the mind changes and one is connected with faith. The *Mundaka Upanishad* states, "Spiritual life is like walking on a razor's edge." You cannot run on that path. You can only walk very slowly. If you miss a step, you will bleed. In the same manner, Swami Satyananda says, "Slow and steady wins the race." Therefore, in vaishnavachara, one walks steadily and slowly on the path of bhakti yoga to gradually purify the actions, emotions and mind, paving the way to a connection with the divine spark existing within all of life's creation.



4

Shaivachara



The third code of conduct is *shaivachara*, the conduct of consciousness. This achara relates to realizing and experiencing the consciousness ,which is symbolized by Shiva. In vedachara, actions are transformed through awareness of the relationship between karma and dharma. In vaishnavachara, impurities of the mind are removed, emotions and sentiments are sublimated, and a state of surrender emerges. *Shraddha*, or faith and devotion, results through leading a sattwic way of life based on yamas and niyamas. Thus, in shaivachara, the development of consciousness continues and a combination of devotion, faith, shakti and jnana develops.

Devotion, faith, sadhana and the knowledge of the Supreme Element are the different aspects of shaivachara. There are many types of sadhanas in shaivachara. Although there are no definite rules in relation to them, they are to be practised under the guidance of the guru, and not wilfully or arbitrarily chosen by the sadhaka. The guru prescribes the sadhana according to the state and readiness of the sadhaka. To follow and practise the sadhana as instructed is the sadhaka's sacred duty.

In shaivachara, there is a shift in focus from external expressions and behaviours of consciousness to an internal realization of the deeper layers of consciousness. Thus, to dis-identify with the body, mind and senses and to re-identify with consciousness is this path of knowledge. In shaivachara, the ultimate



aim is to realize the real nature within, the true self, rather than identifying with various roles, abilities and capabilities as the reality. This realization is reflected in the words of the kirtan: "Soham, Soham, Soham Shivoham, Soham Shivoham, Soham Shivoham. I am not this body, I am not this mind, I am not the senses, immortal Self am I." The practices of yoga and tools of tantra give access to this realization of consciousness.

Tools of shaivachara

The meditation practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana are the tools used in shaivachara that allow access to the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious dimensions. As the different layers of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious experiences are revealed, a realization dawns that 'what I live in this life is not my real nature'. The final realization of shaivachara is conveyed by the mantra *Shivoham*, which means 'I am Shiva' or 'I am consciousness.' To come to this point of realization, one must start with moment-to-moment awareness and cultivation of the positive expressions of the mind. In the practice of pratyahara, the first step is to develop an awareness of the sensorial interaction and identification with the world. The awareness is guided to the body, to the sounds and to other sensations. This is called 'extension of awareness' which precedes the state of *pratyahara*, the withdrawal of the mind from the senses. Once the awareness has been projected outwards in this way, the process of pratyahara then begins. Once disconnection from the body, mind and senses occurs, connection with the eternal Self experience and *jnana*, wisdom, is developed.

To develop awareness of energy and consciousness, the tantras have devised a way to map consciousness and to realize consciousness. This map is known as a *yantra* and every yantra represents a particular state of consciousness (see Section 2, Chapter 6). In shaivachara, yantra sadhana takes the prominent seat. Through yantra sadhana, one can delve into the deeper nature of the mind and again come out from that deep state without losing one's way. Meditation is not the path of enlightenment, it is the path of self-discovery and, according to tantra, one must not lose mental balance. Therefore, sadhakas must know the route that allows entry into the deeper layers of consciousness and the return of the awareness back to normal consciousness.

Layers of consciousness

The divine and transcendental consciousness within is realized in the form of the waking state, dreaming state, sleeping state and *turiya*, superconsciousness (See Section 1, Chapter 6). In the waking state, the consciousness is dissipated and distracted. The consciousness is not seen as one experience but fragmented experiences put together. In the dreaming state, when the awareness is cut off from the world and the senses, the projections of consciousness take place within the mind and they are perceived in the form of dreams. In the deep sleep state, there is an experience of peace and relaxation. In the turiya state, there is the realization of bliss and purity. In the process of evolution, gradually the awareness of these different states of consciousness becomes homogeneous and unified.

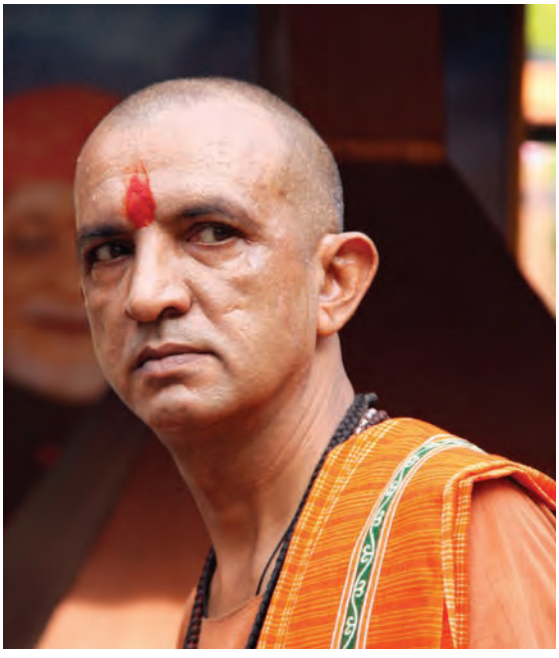
In shaivachara, the aim is to discover the gross, the subtle, the causal and the transcendental effects of consciousness and of the greater mind. The fragmented consciousness creates attachment to the world and the unified consciousness connects the individual with the cosmos. The discovery of consciousness with the application of mantras, yantras and meditation has become the hallmark of shaivachara. Shaivachara does not refer to the mere acquisition of knowledge; it is connecting with and living the knowledge. The knowledge has to become part of the human expression. It is the cultivation of mental awareness so that an understanding of viveka and vairagya is gained. This leads to *sankalpashakti*, an inner determination that is guided by belief, faith and an understanding of dharma.

Restraining the pashu

Swami Sivananda says for a seed to sprout and to grow, the tough shell of the seed must break. Vedachara, vaishnavachara and shaivachara aim to do this; to break the *pashu vrittis*, animal tendencies and the patterns of mind, and to allow the *veera vrittis*, the warrior patterns, to emerge. They deal with karma, bhava and jnana respectively and aim to overcome the animal tendencies in life, to bring one out of the darkness of avidya and into the light of vidya. Vedachara is the karma yoga aspect of the tantras, vaishnavachara is the bhakti yoga component of the tantra, and shaivachara is the jnana yoga aspect of the tantras.

In each of these three stages, the focus is on duty and appropriate participation in the world. By overcoming the influence of the instincts in life and elevating the mind to become the drashta of oneself, one can develop a greater awareness and understanding through attaining harmony and purification at every level: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual.

These three conducts are prescribed for the pashu sadhaka. In these three acharas, the highlighted sadhana is *sanyam*, restraint and control. Such control denotes overcoming and managing the tamasic nature, expression, and behaviour. Control is always related to the tamasic character. Once sanyam is mastered, balance becomes the primary aim in the next three acharas, which relate to the rajas nature, the *veera bhava*, warrior nature.



5

Dakshinachara



Dakshinachara is commonly referred to as the right-hand path of tantra. From the tantric philosophical understanding, *dakshina* means involvement in the world. Thus in *dakshinachara*, the code of conduct relates to one's participation in the world. When the range of awareness is extended to its maximum capacity, one becomes established in dakshinachara.

In the previous code of conduct of shaivachara, one was working with consciousness. In dakshinachara, the mind and the external influences are bypassed. The attainments of the previous three acharas are consolidated here and one becomes a perfected person in society. One becomes the ideal person, the inspirer for all, by leading a pious, balanced, harmonious life. This is the idea of dakshinachara; to re-enter the world after having managed and overcome the pashu vritti, and to live in the world while understanding and developing one's mind, consciousness and energy. In dakshinachara, one continues to perform the sadhanas to develop an internalized state, yet one integrates with the world as a virtuous, positive, sattwic,

enlightened person who has overcome all the negative traits of personality.

Kundalini shakti

To come to this point, one directly explores *kundalini shakti*, the cosmic energy, and awakens the energy field. The previous three conducts prepare the sadhaka by developing a certain level of purity, balance, harmony and concentration, and now with practices such as kundalini yoga, kriya yoga and nada yoga, it is possible to awaken the dormant faculties of shakti, which raises the consciousness to a higher dimension. The focus of dakshinachara is to cultivate mystical experiences through the awakening of the chakras. Liberation of energy forms a vital part of dakshinachara so that energetic experiences can be explored, understood and transcended. Ultimately, kundalini shakti is awakened and raised through the chakras, from mooladhara to sahasrara, where the union of Shiva and Shakti takes place.

All the practices found within the various branches of yoga, such as hatha yoga, raja yoga and bhakti yoga, are considered essential for all-round development and are complementary in nature. Purity of body, observance of the yamas and niyamas, practices of pratyahara and dharana, and knowledge of the subtle and causal bodies related to kundalini yoga are included within dakshinachara. An orderly and systematic approach is emphasized throughout.

Taming the wild mind

The main practices of dakshinachara are the meditative practices, techniques that develop *dharana*, or concentration. These practices increase one's ability to hold the mind still at one point and to resist the dissipation and distractions of the mind that divert the attention from the internal journey. Thus, in this code of conduct one learns how to meditate, how to deal with the mind and how to make friends with the mind, thereby bringing it under one's control so that, ultimately, one can bypass the mind altogether.

The swings of the mind enforce one's connection with the world through *raga* and *dwesha*, like and dislike, driven by the force of rajas. Through the practice of meditation, one becomes disconnected from the attractions and the influences of the senses and sense objects so that pleasure and pain become only fleeting experiences, like in a dream. In this way, negative tamas is transformed into the positive, and the limiting aspect of rajas is transformed into creativity. Over time, *sattwa*, or balance and luminosity, is realized in life through the management of ahamkara, manas, buddhi and chitta.

There is a story that illustrates how to befriend the mind and progress in meditation. Once upon a time, there lived a king who had four beautiful Arabian horses that were wild and untamed. He made a proclamation throughout his kingdom that a reward would be given to anyone who could tame them. Many people came forward and, with their eyes fixed on the reward, forcefully tried to tame and ride the horses. However, the horses rebelled against this force and threw the riders off, breaking their arms and legs. Nobody in his kingdom was able to train them. The king sent a message to the surrounding kingdoms promising a reward for the taming of his horses. Many people came, yet none could train and tame the wild horses. Finally, the king gave up all hope.

One day, a young man came to the palace and asked the king if he could train the infamous horses. The king was not convinced, yet obligingly gave him the permission to try. The young man put forward one condition: he would train them in secret for one year, away from the royal palace, and after one year he would bring them back fully trained. The king agreed and the young man took the horses away. Weeks and months went by. The year passed. Naturally, the king began to wonder what had happened to his horses and the young man. Then, one morning, on the road leading to the palace, he saw four horses approaching in a perfect line, in perfect obedience. Mounted on the front horse was the young man.

The young man came to the king, apologized for his delay, and returned the trained horses to the king. The king asked how he had managed to tame them, especially as so many had failed in the attempt. The young man replied that he did not do anything. He had simply allowed them to roam around as freely as they wished, in forests, mountains and over streams. As they did so, he followed them everywhere. When they ran, he ran with them. When they drank water, he drank. When they ate grass, he ate his meals, and when they slept, he slept. He became the fifth horse. Gradually, they recognized him as their companion and not as somebody who was trying to touch, cajole or ride them; they became friends with him.

After a friendship had formed, he started to touch the horses. Although at first they did not like it, they soon became accustomed to his touch. He started to speak to them, and at first they did not understand his language, but through repeated interactions they began to understand his indications. One day, he tried to put a blanket on top of one the horses; it did not like the weight of it and threw it off, but the young man continued to try every day and gradually they became accustomed to it. Next, he tried to saddle them. They resisted the tightening of the saddle on their stomach, yet they adapted to this as well. Finally, he put a bridle on them and after some time they accepted this, too. In this way, he befriended and tamed the four beautiful wild horses and rode them back to the king.



The four horses represent the untamed and wild mind which constitutes manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. To become friends with these four aspects, with the aim of balancing and controlling the mind, is the process of meditation. There are many forms of meditation used in dakshinachara, such as *Pranava sadhana*, meditation on the mantra *Om* or *Aum*. According to *Mandukya Upanishad*, the separate sounds of A, U and M, represent the three states of consciousness known as: *vaishwanara*, *jagrat* or waking; *tejas* or dreaming; and *prajna*, deep sleep (see Section 1, Chapter 6). They symbolize the trinity represented by the tridevas, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and their female counterparts, the three mahashaktis of Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati. Mantra and yantra are utilized in the practice of dharana and dhyana on the three essential forces that pervade life. These forces are responsible for creation, sustainment and destruction, and are represented by the three gods and the three goddesses. Mantra and yantra pertaining to these aspects are utilized to develop concentration and to transcend the three gunas of nature, tamas, rajas and sattwa.

Living in society with spiritual awareness

In dakshinachara, the aim is to live as an enlightened being while functioning in society. At this stage, creativity, clarity of mind and a deeper, greater spiritual awareness is brought into the material dimension. The enlightened being lives in society, interacting and

performing all necessary duties; however, their way of thinking and perception differentiates them from everyone else. King Janaka, father of Sita, was a liberated and enlightened being, yet he was a king, fulfilling all his duties to the empire. One day, a young sannyasi was sent to him to receive instructions on spiritual life. Inwardly, this young sannyasi questioned how this king, who was surrounded by all the trappings of pleasure and comfort, could give him lessons on spirituality. Nevertheless, as it was an order from his father and guru, he went to the court of the king and asked if he would teach him the lessons of spiritual awareness.

At that time, the king was busy with affairs of the state and told the young sannyasi to enjoy the wonders of his city for a few days. The young sannyasi agreed and the king imposed one condition: the sannyasi should take a pot filled to the brim with water, and if any water was spilt from the pot, he would be beheaded by the king's bodyguards. The sannyasi walked around the whole city with the container filled with water, and the two bodyguards with their bare swords followed behind him. After four or five hours, he returned back to the court and the king asked him whether he had enjoyed the city. The sannyasi replied, "What city? My entire focus was on the water, on this container. I was so alert and aware that not a single drop should fall, I did not see any of the sights or wonders of the city." The king replied, "Well, you have received your lesson."

The young sannyasi could not understand what the king meant and asked him to explain. King Janaka took him to his throne and there, above the throne, were many swords and spears, each hanging by a single hair from a horse's mane. He asked the king why he sat underneath, knowing that he could be killed at anytime. The king replied that it reminded him that life is short, and this constant reminder impelled him to do the best he could at every moment, to never leave anything for later. The sannyasi instantly realized why he was called the 'liberated one'. Although the king was running his empire and performing all his kingly duties,



he was absolutely focused on his inner self, and that made him a remarkable person. The young sannyasi realized that in every moment, by never leaving anything pending, King Janaka endeavoured to remove suffering and to bring happiness into the lives of people with the reminder of death always close by.

This was the lesson learnt by the young sannyasi who was Shukadeva, son of Rishi Vyasa, and this is the lesson of dakshinachara: to integrate completely in society whilst holding a separate spiritual identity, and to identify with that spiritual identity rather than the outer identity, identifying with the spiritual self and not with the ego. In dakshinachara, it is this principle that has to be cultivated. One must maintain the simplicity and innocence of the mind and heart by integrating completely in the world and, simultaneously, maintain one's own spiritual identity by remaining separate from the world. Only then does one gain balance between the swings of mind, the play of rajoguna.

Through the process of internalization and meditation in dakshinachara, one overcomes all the negative traits of the personality and develops perfection in life, integrating with the world as a positive, sattwic, enlightened person.

6
Vamachara



The fifth conduct is *vamachara* and is commonly known as the left-hand path of tantra or the path of non-indulgence and introversion, and it is the most misunderstood path of tantra. The Sanskrit word *vama* means reverse or opposite, and in vamachara there is a shift from the external world to the inner world. There is separation from the world rather than indulgence, which is the common misperception. It is also known as *nivritti marga*, literally the 'path without vrittis'.

From the perspective of the tantras, vamachara is looking away from the world into the dimension of the spirit. In the conduct of dakshinachara, one was integrating in the world with the full faculty of awareness and the use of positive virtues and qualities in life. Initially, the shift to vamachara poses one of the greatest challenges in the process of turning towards the spirit, as the lower instincts must be overcome, thus going against the way people have been taught to live. The senses and instincts have not only been the source of connection to the world, they have also been habitually used for gratification and pleasure.

Instinctual behaviour

Vamachara defines the way to change the deep-rooted habits of the body and mind by isolating the senses from the world. Its aim is to have

absolute and perfect control over the mind and the behaviours of the mind. Through the practices of vamachara, the four basic instincts of life must be controlled, managed and regulated: *ahara*, craving, desiring or wanting; *nidra*, sleep or disconnection, shutting off or withdrawing; *bhaya*, fear and insecurity, fear of losing one's comfort zone; and *maithuna*, obtaining pleasure, whether sensual, sexual, emotional or mental. These are the four basic conditionings and experiences in human life that pose a great stumbling block and challenge to realizing the spirit. These conditions must be observed in a practical way and transformed through vamachara.

To know the grip of these instincts on the nature and character, and to determine whether one is able to become free from the attractions of the instincts, certain practices are permitted. They are practised not for indulgence, instead as a means to disconnect from that experience and from that state of mind. In this context, the most obvious, gross experiences are used as a medium of sublimation. For example, sexual interaction: tantra does not deny it; rather, it advises one to be free from the obsessive desire. Brahmacharya is not the avoidance of the opposite sex or sexual needs, it is freedom from continuously thinking about them so that they do not overpower the functions of the mind.

There is a story that illustrates the obsessive nature of the mind. There were two brahmacharis walking along a riverbank beside a gentle stream. They came across a young damsel who needed help in crossing to the other side. Without delay, one of the young men lifted her up in his arms and carried her across the stream. On the other side, he put her down, said goodbye, and together with his friend he continued on towards their ashram. As they continued walking, the friend kept thinking about his lost opportunity and became jealous and angry. He worked himself up into such a state that when they reached their ashram he informed the guru of this behaviour, saying that the other man had broken the rules by carrying the girl across the water, and should be punished. The guru replied, "I wonder whether he should be punished or you should be punished. He left the girl on the other side of the water and you are still carrying her in your mind and reacting because of that impression, that memory, that image, that drive, that feeling, that motivation, that desire." Out of the two, the one who left the girl on the other side of the stream and forgot about her should be commended. The one who was carrying her in the mind was expressing his obsession in his normal behaviour as well as thinking.

It is human nature to continue brooding, thinking and feeling sorry for oneself. Despite one's best efforts to manage the mind, intelligence, sentiments and emotions, when the instinctive behaviour kicks in, one falls back in the same trap – just like a parrot. Parrots have such an excellent memory that they can be taught many things. They can recite the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Bible or any other scripture; however, all the teaching comes to naught when the parrot sees a cat. At that time, it forgets every scriptural idea and says, "I tink I saw a puddytat!" With all the knowledge that one can fit into the brain of the little parrot, at the end when the cat is seen, it says, "I think I saw a pussycat" and forgets that it is the immortal self and the immortal spirit; instinct kicks in. This happens in life too; instincts take hold and cloud the vision and wisdom.

The aim of vamachara is to gain control over the instinctive behaviour. In order to know the grip of these instincts on one's nature and character, and to determine whether one is able to gain freedom from the attractions of the instincts, specific practices are permitted to make one confront the inner self. The sadhana in vamachara aims to sever attachments to sensorial pleasures and to sublimate the basic instincts.

Panchamakara

Panchamakara refers to the sadhana that relates to five substances beginning with 'M': *mudra*, grains; *mansa*, meat; *maithuna*,

sexual union; *matsya*, fish; and *madya*, wine (see Section 2, Chapter 9). This particular sadhana has been grossly misunderstood and has resulted in an erroneous belief that tantra sanctions everything in life: indulging in alcohol, meat and sex. However, a distorted life of overindulgence is not the teaching of vamachara, and tantra does not give license to having a free time in life. What it says is that one must cultivate spiritual awareness in each and every moment and lead a regulated lifestyle in which the activities are balanced, harmonious and restrained.

Kularnava Tantra states very clearly that if by eating fish it is possible to attain enlightenment, then all people who eat fish would be enlightened. If by drinking wine it is possible to attain enlightenment, then all the drunkards would be enlightened. If by eating meat it is possible to attain enlightenment, all the non-vegetarians would have more opportunity than the vegetarian people to be enlightened. If by cohabitation it is possible to attain enlightenment, sannyasins would be the last ones.

At this stage of the acharas, one is working with balancing rajoguna, extending the awareness into every sphere of life and developing the *veera bhava*, the warrior mentality. Vamachara has described the meaning of each and every natural act that a human being performs in life and has given it a spiritual dimension. A sadhana has been given in relation to each act in order to fulfil the aspirations of the tantras. Vamachara works with the energy systems to awaken kundalini and the chakras, which develop extrasensorial perceptions.



Vamachara is an extreme type of tantra, for it is a test. The mind has to be brought under control, the koshas have to be purified and every act that one performs is for sublimating the awareness, the consciousness. In the first four conducts, vedachara, vaishnavachara, shaivachara and dakshinachara, a certain level of restraint and control over the faculties is acquired. In vamachara, the deep-rooted samskaras and instincts are encountered, confronted and managed.

In order to regulate an instinct, the power of that instinct has to first be awakened. For example, in order to overcome fear, one must know what fear is. To awaken and face fear, tantrics have been known to visit graveyards at night to meditate. When one can meditate in the graveyard at night with the spirits floating all around, and manage to control the rising fear and panic, with the same ease that one can meditate in the quietness and solitude at home, then one can say the vritti of fear has been overcome. The real test of concentration, awareness and restraint occurs when the mind is exposed to situations where it is bound to react in its original pattern. Hence, there are many practices of tantra designed to confront the instincts. When fear is overcome, one becomes a *vamachari*.

Similarly, when sleep is mastered, one becomes a vamachari. Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, did not sleep for fourteen years. In the daytime he was in the service of Rama and Sita, and at night he stood guard in the forest. There are many people who live in society and do not sleep. They believe sleeplessness is a disease or an illness and seek advice from their

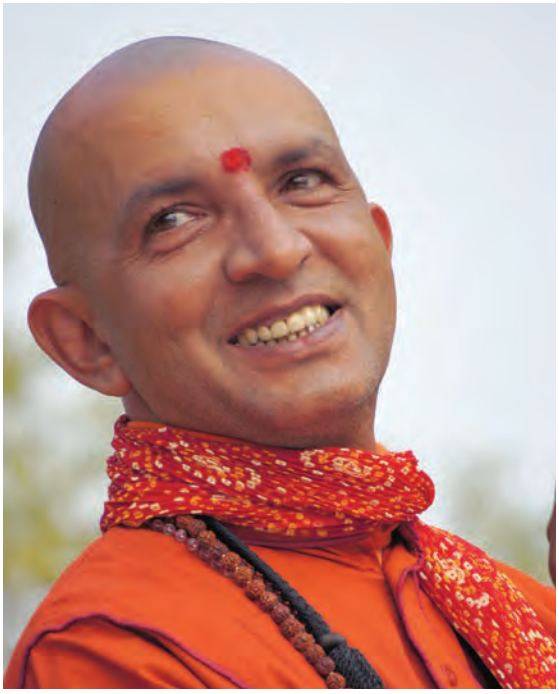
doctor or psychiatrist. They do not know how to manage that state of mind, a life in which sleeplessness is possible.

People have generally associated the concept of vamachara with sexuality. Sexuality does play a role in it, yet it is not the final authority of vamachara. There are strict guidelines and rules for sadhanas that manage such instincts and raise this energy and power. Sexual intercourse is an expression of the instinct of maithuna. It follows the desire for pleasure or progeny, and nothing beyond that. It is a natural behaviour of every householder and is an expression of an instinct that is natural in all forms of life, responsible for giving birth and creating life. Nevertheless, for the spiritual aspirant in the pursuit of freedom, sexual desire leads to attachment and gives birth to possessiveness, jealousy, anger, and other binding emotions. Tantra seeks to sublimate that power and aims to harness and raise the sexual energy, which is usually discharged through intercourse, to sahasrara chakra. For a tantric, pleasure and progeny are not the aim of sexual activity; rather, sublimation of energy is the aim.

Love and sexual intercourse are two different things. Love is the opening of the heart; it is the channelling of a pure energy. Generally, the only way people can express their love is either through sensual or sexual activities, and that purity of energy is converted into something gross, physical and material, which is not love. Love has no part in the practice of vamachara. Vamachara is the restraint of sexuality and sensuality. This ensures the sublimation of energy can take place, which frees one from all bondages, attachments and instincts.

Pravritti to nivritti

Due to the problems and challenges faced during the management of the powerful human instincts, the yogis have stated that vamachara can be completed in three stages. It begins with the idea to accept life as it is and apply restraint. Restraint should be practised in all spheres of life, especially family life, to develop an awareness of the areas of weakness



and strength within the personality. In the first stage, practices such as japa are used to centre the mind, and homa to connect one with the divine power. These aspects constitute the first stage of vamachara.

In the next stage of vamachara, one should become immersed in meditation and continue to apply restraint in life. In this intermediary stage, or *madhyama*, the sadhanas of panchamakara and pancha tattwa are performed. *Pancha tattwa* refers to the five elements inherent in nature: earth, water, fire, air and ether. In *uttama*, the highest stage, the sadhana of madya, mudra and maithuna is practised. It should be noted that the forms of the panchamakara and pancha tattwa sadhanas vary according to the stage and bhava of the aspirant.

In the final stage of vamachara, one has to use the power of the pravritti path to move into the nivritti path. Tantra believes that as long as one is subject to the forces of pravritti, one walks the path of self-destruction. *Pravritti* means integration and association with the world, based

on the desires of the world. Pravritti leads to the destruction of the mind and consciousness, and to the dissipation of energy. *Nivritti* means freedom from the world, and the purpose of vamachara is to turn away from pravritti and towards nivritti. The ability to perceive the role and influence of divinity within all of life is cultivated and the sensorial world is viewed as an emanation of the divine. This leads to the realization of a guiding force in life. This highest stage is beyond duality and distinction.

The three stages of vamachara seek to purify the mind and overcome the limiting traits which create obsessions in the mind. An attempt is made to overcome the destructive qualities of life such as *moha*, infatuation; *krodha*, anxiety; *lajja*, shyness; *sheela*, limiting traits; *varna*, identity of one's group, tribe or caste; and *dharma*, identity with a specific school of thought. The first four conducts – vedachara, vaishnavachara, shaivachara and dakshinachara – help regulate the dual vision of life between oneself and others, moving one from the plurality in pashu bhava to duality in veera bhava. In vamachara, this duality ends, and singular awareness with a singular vision of life develops.



From attachment to detachment

Vamachara culminates in the disconnection from the world and connection to the spirit. Vamachara takes one away from the path of attachment and towards the path of detachment. In this stage, there is no scope for indulgence, whether sensual, sensorial, sexual, mental or emotional. It has been clearly stated in *Kularnava Tantra* that only sadhakas who can give up the path of attachment and follow that of detachment, according to the guidance of the guru, should practise vamachara, otherwise its consequences are dangerous. The path of attachment relates to the mundane activities in life which include desires, cravings, lust, passion, and so on. From this perspective, one's whole life needs to be observed and understood fully. One must know the function and role of attachments, and whether they assist or inhibit progress and growth in life. Non-attachment requires a different state of mind, and for most it is difficult to sever attachments.

In light of this, Swami Satyananda advises people to first dilute attachments by connecting and associating with more and more people. In time, when the grip of attachment is reduced, a new connection and association can be made with something or someone that inspires and uplifts. For sannyasins, the attachment to guru cultivates the strength and inspiration needed to make the U-turn away from the world of the senses, sense objects and indulgence. Only then is one ready to launch into the path of detachment using the two wings of *vairagya*, non-attachment, and *viveka*, discrimination. Once the instincts have been overcome, one crosses beyond vamachara to aghorachara.

7
Aghorachara



Aghorachara is tantric conduct that connects one with the gentleness of the spirit. In order to connect in such a way, one has to rise above the dualities of life. In normal life, the force of *raga* and *dwesha*, like and dislike, is felt constantly due to the effect of rajoguna. In aghorachara, the idea of right and wrong or good and bad dissolves until only an experience remains. In this state there is perfect harmony.

Ghora means terrible and 'a' is a prefix indicating negation, therefore the literal meaning of the word *aghora* is 'gentle', or 'that which is not terrible'. Aghora means to become light, innocent and gentle, free from the burdens and bondages created by limited thinking. The aghora state indicates transformation and transmutation of the basic nature of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. When the traits of the human personality have become absolutely gentle, full of love, compassion and virtue, detached from the senses and the sensorial attractions, then one becomes an aghora, the peaceful one.

The peaceful ones

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the guru of Swami Vivekananda was an aghora. People would call him a madman, but he was a *siddha*, an enlightened being. It is written in his autobiography that once, when he was practising his aghora sadhana, somebody brought him *kheer*, a sweet rice pudding. He thought to himself, 'If I eat this plate of kheer, my mind will be distracted, it will begin to enjoy the taste of the food and it will be distracted from what I am trying to achieve.' What he did would be difficult for most people to digest, but it indicates the mind, attitude, conviction and strength of an aghora. He placed the plate of kheer on one side and a plate of human excrement on another side. One spoonful of this and one spoonful of that - equal taste. For Ramakrishna the human waste was just as tasty as the rice pudding.

For most people, the idea of eating human excrement evokes pure revulsion, while the idea of eating a sweet dish makes the mouth water in anticipation. Such is the force of raga and dwesha, like and dislike. However, for Ramakrishna, such dualities simply did not exist and the stillness of his mind remained completely unaffected. For a person who has come to that level, there is no identification of good or bad. They are at ease in any situation.

Lord Buddha was an aghora; he became the peaceful one. Lord Mahavira was an aghora, he became the peaceful one. There have been many other examples in history of aghoras who have not publicly displayed their *siddhis* or powers, yet who have connected with the gentleness of the human spirit, such as Ramana Maharshi. The sadhus and enlightened beings become aghoras at the end of their life because they have overcome everything. Aghoras do not see any difference or perceive any duality. There is no reaction of tamas, rajas, or sattwa, and the peace that descends shines like a torch. Anyone who comes within the energy field of an aghora, a person liberated from the influences of the world, attains peace himself.

Like moths to a flame

Aghoras are masters of energy and the mind. Through sadhana, austerity and purification, they become the master of shakti and the master of the mind. For them, there is no wrong or right and nothing in life is labelled ugly or beautiful. They maintain a state of equipoise in which their nature becomes luminous by itself. They become the light. In aghora sadhana, the vestige of every negative trait needs to be destroyed. To label something as 'wrong' or 'bad' is unconstructive. Such ideas and beliefs that limit and create bondage in life must be totally cut from the root. When the last trace of negativity has been cut, one is free from the clutches of the mind. In this state, one becomes an aghora, one with the divine.

An aghora attains perfect balance in *veera bhava*, the warrior nature, the perfect balance of rajas. As an aghora, the density and solidity of the objective world loses its hold and there is absolute harmony between the individual, nature and the divine. At this stage, *divya bhava*, the virtuous, transcendental and divine nature becomes the experience.

Masters of aghorachara become people of great spiritual power and inadvertently draw people to them, as people are seeking some kind of divine intervention to help them end their misery and suffering. The only person who can help is a realized being, so people flock to them. To remain away from the harassment and disturbance of people, aghoras are often forced to live in environments where regular people would not dare enter, such as cremation grounds. Often the masses will not allow saints to live their life as they may; there is always interference and imposition. Therefore, when aghoras want to shun the company of people and take to solitude, they are forced to live in areas people avoid. However, if regular people would allow them to live their life, aghoras would live in society and not in cremation grounds. If aghoras were to remain undisturbed, they could be beacons of light in society itself. Too many moths around the flame can also

diminish the radiance of the flame. For the light of the flame to spread far and wide, there should be freedom from this situation.

Blessings from an aghori

Swami Satyananda speaks of an encounter with Baba Nityananda, the guru of Swami Muktananda. Baba Nityananda, an aghora, used to live high up in the mountains, naked. He would not allow anybody to come up for his darshan. When people would come to see him, he would throw rocks and stones at them and shout, "Get out of here!" Nevertheless, the throwing of rocks and stones by Baba came to be regarded as his blessings, and people used to go to him only to be hit by a rock. They would think, 'If I am hit by Baba Nityananda, my problems will be solved.'

If some unrealized, everyday person behaved like Baba Nityananda, they would end up in prison. Thus, an aghora is a person who is at peace, free from the influences and controls of the world, and who sees no duality or difference. An aghora is in constant union with the Higher Self.

Victory of the warrior

Through pashu bhava, veera bhava and the six conducts, the behaviour of the gross, non-transcendental mind is modified and its receptivity to recognize, acknowledge, accept, imbibe, and live the higher qualities of life is cultivated. After having perfected the first set of three conducts and overcoming the pashu nature, one consolidates the transformation in dakshinachara by living in the world and becoming a person of spiritual power and spiritual strength, undisturbed by the influences of the world. From vamachara, the journey moves within to overcome the instincts that pull and divert the awareness and attention, to then become gentle, peaceful and luminous.

Thus, dakshinachara, vamachara and aghorachara represent the journey of a warrior, from externalized interaction in the world to gradual withdrawal and attaining gentleness after overcoming the tamasic, instinctive nature. Certain traditions replace aghorachara with yogachara, the next code of conduct. However, this decision is made by the guru according to the needs of the aspirant.



8

Yogachara

From the completion of the journey of the warrior, yogachara forms the first of the acharas related to *divya bhava*, the illuminated, transcendental nature and consciousness. In pashu bhava, control was the focus; in veera bhava, balance was the aim; and in divyabhava, the goal is to experience realization. This realization is linked with the *sattwa* nature, luminosity and harmony. In yogachara and the next two acharas, sattwa is the quality being cultivated and imbibed to better oneself. In this betterment, higher qualities and virtues are acquired and one experiences a different quality of life that is more homogeneous, integrated, universal and harmonious.

As the eighth conduct of tantra, yogachara is the conduct of the perfection of the yogas. *Yogachara* means living the principles of yoga in which the unity of the self is experienced and lived. It denotes an awareness of the higher principle and the endeavour to become one with that higher principle. Yogachara goes beyond the actual practices of yoga, such as hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga or jnana yoga. Instead, it refers to a state of mind. Meditation, samadhi and the experience of union become part of the yogic experience that is developed in yogachara.

The prerequisite for union is perfect equilibrium of mind, senses and consciousness, which has been established by the journey of transformation through the previous acharas. *Samadhi* refers to the stable state of mind in which the knowledge, intelligence and personality are unwavering and beyond dissipation. *Sama* means equal, *dhi* indicates knowledge or intelligence. The state of samadhi has been defined in the *Bhagavad Gita* by Sri Krishna in answer to Arjuna's question, "How does a realized being live?" Sri Krishna answers that the realized being lives in this world just like an ordinary person. Superficially, there is no distinction or differentiation, and as such people are so soft and gentle, they will often go unnoticed. However, according to Sri Krishna, there is one particular trait that identifies them: their disconnection from the body. This state is known as *dehadhyasa*, in which any sensory interaction with the world does not affect or alter the thoughts, mind or energy.

In this state, one is totally disconnected from the world and its influences, and one's mind does not roam in worldly thoughts or experiences. One's awareness is always of spirit and the higher nature. In such realized people there is humility, simplicity and innocence. They do not project themselves as being great. Thus, people often do not recognize their true nature. Such realized beings cannot also be found if one looks around, as they are experts at hiding themselves. This is the idea that one has to live in yogachara. The world assists spiritual growth up to a certain point, and beyond that it becomes a deterrent. Yogachara indicates the continuous awareness and act of connecting with the higher nature so that harmony and equanimity are stabilized and the higher nature becomes a constant state of mind. The culmination of every kind of yoga is lived in yogachara: perfect bhakti, perfect jnana, perfect karma and perfect life.

9

Siddhantachara



After yogachara, when the nature has been harmonized and is established in total equilibrium, one moves into siddhantachara. Siddhanta is composed of two words, *siddha*, perfect, and *anta*, end or culmination. Thus, *siddhanta* means the perfect culmination. Siddhanta has been simply translated as an idea or philosophy; however, in this context siddhanta indicates the knowledge that leads one to the perfect, final culmination. At this stage, all the knowledge that has been acquired by undergoing the process of transformation through the acharas is applied consciously in life. The conduct reflects a realized being living a completely principled, harmonious and balanced life. This leads to the final and perfect conclusion where one becomes a *jivanmukta*, one who is liberated from life.

In siddhantachara, the divisions of consciousness in the form of the past, present and future drop away. With the practice of siddhantachara, consciousness is experienced

as one continuous stream of perception. In this state, consciousness does not link one with the past or the future, and it does not hold one in the present; rather, it is a continuous stream of perception. In that continuous stream of thought, everything is known. The nature of one's self and being is omniscience. By knowing that and having overcome the divisions of time in the field of consciousness, one becomes a jivanmukta.

For the six-year period, from 2004 to 2009, Swami Satyananda lived the life of a jivanmukta, liberated from the body and the world. He had exhausted and finished all his karmas; there was nothing pending and nothing held in his memory. Many times he would say, "Listen to what I am saying carefully, because this is the first and the last time I will say it. Afterwards I will erase it from my memory. I am not retaining anything now. I am clearing myself of everything. I am wiping my blackboard clean so that nothing will be written on it. If I say something, remember it, because that will be the only one time I will ever say it." Over this period, he cleared his mind of everything. There was not a single strand from the world that held or anchored him. He was a jivanmukta, living that experience of freedom continuously and constantly. This is siddhantachara, to be that experience, to become that.

There is a story often told by Swami Satyananda that conveys this state of mind. There once was a doll made out of salt. One day it decided to find out how deep the ocean was and dived in. It is not known whether the doll discovered the depth of the ocean, but it is known that the doll of salt became one with the waters of the ocean. Siddhantachara is when the individual consciousness dissolves into the cosmic consciousness. The *Bhagavad Gita* likens the experience to a river that flows into and becomes part of the ocean, and loses its identity as a river. In siddhantachara, when the individual becomes the Higher Self, the lower self ceases to exist. That final union and merger of the individual with the Higher Self is the *siddha anta*, perfect ending. The attainment of the *Shiva tattwa*, or cosmic consciousness, and retention of the realization that 'I am That' is the goal of siddhantachara.



10
Kaulachara



Kaulachara is the final state and the ultimate aim of tantra. Kaulachara implies *moksha avastha*, the state of liberation. In kaulachara, a full circle is completed. After attaining the state of a *jivanmukta*, liberated soul, now wisdom and knowledge are shared to help and inspire others. One becomes a master and an embodiment of the teachings.

'Kaula' is derived from the root *kula*, which is normally interpreted as clan. Therefore, kaulachara has often been translated as the traditions of a clan, whether a clan of sannyasins or a clan of the family. This is a gross understanding and does not indicate the calibre of a sadhaka or the quality of mind that represents the mastery of kaulachara. 'Kula' refers to Shakti and 'akula' refers to Shiva, thus in kaulachara one becomes part of the Shiva family, with cosmic consciousness as Father and cosmic energy as Mother. In this context, *kaulachara* refers to the experience and realization of one's cosmic identity in this life.

In the *Ramacharitamanas*, there are several examples that convey this idea. The most famous and popular among them is: *Siyarama maya saba jaga jani karahun pranama jori juga pani* – "I see and experience the presence of Sita and Ram, Shiva and Shakti in the entire creation." In the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, a *kaulachari* has been defined as one who

experiences the existence of the supreme God or the presence of Shakti in the manifest world.

Swami Satyananda was the epitome of kaulachara. He performed many sadhanas and austerities until the achievement of the ultimate goal, liberation. In 2003, he concluded his sadhana, and from 2004 to 2009 he lived as a true sadhaka, in constant union with the higher reality, Shiva and Shakti. He was totally free from all karmic bondage, from all instinctive trappings and from all divisions of time in the field of consciousness. This can be seen simply in Swami Satyananda's uncanny ability to know what would happen, where it would happen and what the solution would be for it, despite not having access to newspapers, TV or radio when he was doing his sadhana. Nobody was allowed to visit him, yet he knew what was happening in many countries including China, Russia, Japan, Europe, the US and India; not only the political scene, but what was happening with individuals. He even had an awareness of strangers in rural and remote areas that had no contact or association with the ashram; such was the level of his cosmic identification.

Swami Satyananda lived all the conducts of the tantras from vedachara to kaulachara with absolute perfection. That was his attainment, siddhi and realization. He ceaselessly imparted the wisdom and knowledge that he had gained. Through tantric diksha, he transmitted cosmic energy to disciples and sadhakas in order to awaken their inner vision and the experience of Shiva and Shakti. As a jivanmukta and kaulachara, Swami Satyananda inspired people to strive for perfection, to expand the consciousness, and to express shakti constructively and creatively in life.

Thus, in the final three acharas of tantra, one becomes established in sattwa to experience the true Self. Through the systematic progression and the process of transformation from pashu to veera to divya bhava, the higher qualities of life are attained and realized through experience, releasing the noose of maya and merging with the highest consciousness.





Tantric Traditions

1
Introduction



In ancient times, tantra was simply tantra without any subdivisions. Then, as civilization evolved and spiritual needs began to vary, tantra adapted in order to continue to suit the needs of aspirants. With Shiva, Shakti, Narayana, Ganesha and Surya being different symbols of the luminous nature, and the concept of deity so fundamental to tantra, these main deities each became a symbol for a different branch of tantra. In each branch, the image of the presiding deity was used as a tool by tantrics to identify with the special spiritual quality representing the aspiration of the individual, radiated forth by that particular deity. Thus, over the course of time, five traditions of tantra came into being. These were: Shaiva tantra, Shakta tantra, Ganesha tantra, Saurya tantra and Pancharatra tantra (Narayana tantra). Of these original five, two are now lost: Saurya and Ganesha tantra. The other three continue to have a vibrant tradition even today.

Propagation of tantra

The five deities are historical personas. They were the *rishis* or seers, gurus, masters or preceptors who propagated and developed the subject of tantra in ancient times. Shiva

imparted an understanding of tantra that started with the development of consciousness. In the exposition of the tantras given by Shiva, the focus was on the realization of the pure consciousness, the Shiva principle, with Shakti being used as a stepping stone to attain that purity of self. When Shakti propagated tantra, the aim was still attainment of the pure consciousness, but now the process involved realizing the various aspects and forms of Shakti, and using the potential and power of Shakti to attain that highest consciousness. When tantra was propagated by Ganesha, the focus was more on the bhakti aspect: how to connect mentally, emotionally and spiritually with the higher tattwa using both the Shiva and Shakti components together. Rather than a sadhana, it became more of an *aradhana* or invocation and worship. In the Narayana or Vaishnava tantra, the focus was likewise on bhakti, and in Saurya or solar tantra, once again on Shakti.

These different ideas developed according to the communities or groups of people to whom the tantra was being taught, as well as the times. During certain periods in the world, the path of bhakti may be more important and at other times, the path of jnana or karma yoga. For example, in the time of Buddha, the social and the political climate of India was full of upheaval and turmoil; therefore, while he was a fully-realized spiritual master able to give many different teachings to the world, his main emphasis was on *ahimsa*, non-violence, and *karuna*, compassion, so as to bring peace to society. These two precepts were in accordance with the time in which he lived, and what was most applicable to society. The same applies to Mahavira, another powerful spiritual leader, whose message of ahimsa and karuna became the foundation stone for the sect of Jainism, just like the teachings of Buddha became the basis for the development of Buddhism. Similarly, in present times, Swami Satyananda is a spiritual master; however, what he has presented to society is yoga, as that is the need of today.

In different times, different masters who have walked upon the earth have given a selection of teachings from the spiritual philosophies. They have extracted a few ideas and highlighted them as applicable to society and life at that particular time. However, the spiritual precepts remain the same and whether it is Buddha, Mahavira, or the more recent preceptors, all the masters still refer to the spiritual traditions to emphasize what they are propagating. This principle also applies to the development of tantra. The body of tantra was created by Shiva, Shakti, Ganesha, Surya and Narayana, yet over a period of time, as the subject was propagated and more and more people adopted the tantric systems, the coming together of different mindsets, different characters and different mentalities led to different experiences as well, giving rise to different schools of thought.

Division of tantra according to the human personality

In psychology, the human personality is defined in four broad divisions: the dynamic personality,



the emotional personality, the intellectual personality and the psychic personality. All four types of personalities and characters are present in all people; however, one trait is highlighted. One person will be highly intellectual, perhaps eighty-five percent, and five percent emotional, five percent psychic and five percent dynamic. Similarly, any of the other personality types may be predominant in other people. Thus, even though there are different permutations and combinations, four types of personalities can be identified.

Each personality type will have a different experience, even if they are practising the same technique. The same meditation or practice will evoke a different response and give a different experience to all four types of people according to the trait that is predominant in their nature and personality. If a group of meditators with a psychic personality come together and practise some sadhana, their realization and experiences will be much more internalized and consciousness-oriented than those of an emotional group expressing their emotions and sentiments in aradhana. The 'emotional' group would emphasize the aradhana aspect, which corresponds to their thoughts, ideas and attractions, while the 'intellectual' and 'psychic' groups, who focus on their mind, would follow the path of sadhana. The tantric systems were automatically divided over many centuries according to the basic types of human nature, with one group discovering their mind, one group expressing their sentiments, one group living a balanced, natural, and spiritual life in society, and so on. Subsequently, according to the respective realizations and experiences, certain ideas and thoughts began to be formulated, and became part of the philosophical structures of tantra.

For example, an emotionally-inclined person is meditating on Shakti. Suddenly, from the depth of his mind appears an image, which that person identifies as Kali. This image or symbol appears again and again, as it represents something that the person is experiencing and undergoing within. He identifies with that symbol, therefore his focus is the symbol of Kali, while the person sitting nearby may be experiencing Durga, and a third person doing the same sadhana may be experiencing the shakti of Saraswati. Therefore, in this group, one person will speak of Kali, one of Durga, one of Saraswati, and so on. While the path of sadhana may be the same for different people, one's experiences and the link that one is creating, which evokes a particular response from the depth of one's consciousness, will connect the practitioner with the higher reality in a unique manner.

Over a period of centuries, the basic systems of tantra bifurcated into four different groups, catering to the emotionally-oriented people and the dynamic people in the form of aradhana, and to the psychically-oriented people and the intellectual people in the form of sadhana. As societies developed and grew, there would be some person in each of these groups who attained enlightenment and became the master of that school. While the basic structure of tantra philosophy remained the same, the process which that person had gone through was added to these basic teachings, and the people who then followed the process of this enlightened being became the followers of a tradition or a sect. In this manner, divisions gradually took place.

Emergence of different schools of tantra

In Shaiva tantra, there are eight major schools of thought, each representing a sect, a tradition, a system or path. The two highest and most powerful forms of Shaiva tantra today are the Kashmir Shaivism, which is prevalent in the North, and the Shaiva Siddhanta, widely practised in the South. Kashmir Shaivism, also known as Trika, speaks of consciousness, the mind, energy, the experiences that occur as one encounters altered states of consciousness, and the science of vibration. It is a beautiful, pure Shaiva philosophy, oriented towards sadhana. The Shaiva Siddhanta of the South is another exquisite system of Shaiva tantra that lays emphasis on lifestyle, on incorporating the

spiritual disciplines in normal, mundane life, and living a balanced life in society, in family, following the path of aradhana as well as the path of sadhana.

The development of Veera Shaivism, one of the eight schools, shows that sects can also come about as a result of social and political circumstances. In the past, there used to be lot of fighting among different religions; just as religious intolerance became a social phenomenon in the West at a particular time in history, India also had its own religious conflicts. When different kings belonging to different groups or religious affiliations would attack another kingdom and conquer it, they would not only rule it politically but also superimpose their belief on the people of the conquered territory. Once, the king of Gujarat, a north-western state of India, attacked Karnataka in the South-East. The people of Karnataka were Shaivas, and the aggressors were Jains. When the Jains won and started to oppress the Shaivas, the minister of the Jain king Vijjal, whose name was Vasava and who was a Shaiva himself, inspired a non-violent but powerful revolt: in defiance to the Jain rule, people started wearing a small symbol of the Shivalingam on their body. The lingam meant life itself to the bearer and its loss was considered equal to death. Those who wore this symbol, over the centuries, gave rise to a particular sect known as Veera Shaivism, from *veera*, brave. Therefore, this sect, named after the Shaiva soldiers of Karnataka, was known as 'the brave followers of Shiva'. Even today, many people in the region adhere to this sect and wear the Shivalingam around their neck; they are called *Lingayats*.

While this sect started as an idea to join different groups of people in a rebellious movement to fight for a cause, in the course of time it become a religious sect with its own philosophy, practices and sadhana taken from the tantras. This shows that some schools of thought have come about as a response to a social situation, environment or need. Sometimes they have arisen naturally, sometimes they have begun as a reaction to some social event, and at other times, in their natural dissemination, different groups have adopted an idea, sets of practices, and developed them. Thus, today we know of eight schools of Shaivism.

In the Shakta tantra, divisions took place in a different manner. In this system, Shakti is visualized in the form of ten cosmic powers known as the *dasha mahavidyas*, which constitute the tantra of Shakti. All these different manifestations of Shakti represent a behaviour and expression of the Shakti within, which when awakened, manifests and brings an altered state of mind. Nevertheless, over time, complete sets of imagery, philosophy, worship and sadhana were developed around each mahavidya, giving rise to ten distinct cults. There are many areas in India where the different manifestations of the Cosmic Shakti are worshipped each in its own right. For example, in the southern part of India, it is Tripura Sundari or Sri Vidya that finds prominence. In the far North and North-West, as well as in Tibet, Tara is widely worshipped. In the East, especially Bengal, the cult of Kali is widespread. These three forms of Shakti are popular, whereas the other mahavidyas do not have such extensive following; however, a complete system of sadhana has been devised for each of them, and any of them can propitiated by the followers of Shakta tantra. In this manner, the ten great paths of knowledge or the *mahavidyas*, instead of remaining at the level of philosophy only, have developed into ten different cults.

Vaishnavism arose as a spiritual system based on devotion rather than on intense austerities or complex rituals codified by the Vedas. Originally not differing much from the vedic sacrificial systems, with Hari or Vasudeva as the supreme deity, it took a definite shape with the advent of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a direct revelation of Vasudeva, in the form of Krishna, to Arjuna. In the course of time, it became a sect in the form of Pancharatra. Vaishnavism can be seen as a revolt against the dry moralism of those

times, as well as against the generally-accepted notion that in order to pursue spiritual life one has to retire to a forest or a cave. At the same time, the atmosphere of the time was pregnant with the ideas of righteousness and non-violence, which later gave shape to the religions of Buddhism and Jainism, and which form an integral part of Vaishnavism as well. When one looks at the gradual establishment of the Vaishnava system, as well as other major systems, one can see a pattern wherein various ideas and beliefs of different groups and tribes gradually coalesce into a homogeneous whole. For instance, Vasudeva, Narayana, Hari and Vishnu initially came from different traditions and later became identified with each other. In this manner, ten major and numerous minor divine personalities, such as Vamana, Rama, Krishna, and so on, have been included in Vaishnavism as *avataras* or manifestations of the Supreme Spirit, giving rise to many different systems of worship and schools of thought, and especially acting as objects of adoration for their devotees, which is the main thrust of the Vaishnava system.

The origins of the Ganapatya system are also multifarious. In the Vedas there are mentions of *vinayakas*, malevolent spirits that put obstacles into people's lives and hamper all their endeavours. They gradually merged into the image of the god Vinayaka who was to be worshipped to remove these obstacles. At the same time, Vinayaka was later identified with Ganapati, which is one of the names of the vedic guru of gods, Brihaspati, and thus he became an embodiment of wisdom and learning as well. Over time, different attributes were assigned to him, such as the elephant head and his divine parentage, and complete systems of worship and sadhana were developed by his followers who exalted him to the position of supreme divinity, making him the first god to be worshipped in any ritual. Ultimately, Ganapatya tantra was conceived with a comprehensive set of imagery, lifestyles and practices whereby Ganesha is propitiated to lead the aspirant towards the highest goal.



The Saurya tantra traces its origins to two major sources. On the one hand, there is the propitiation of the sun as a god, which is seen as an integral part of the earliest systems of worship, not only in the vedic period in India but in all ancient cultures worldwide. This is the source, for example, of the practice of *sandhya vandana* where water is offered to the sun, as well as of the association of the sun god with the Gayatri mantra. Over time, this ancient cult of the sun lost its popularity, to be revived much later through the influence of Magas, a class of priests from Persia (present Iran) who, according to legend, were introduced to India by Samba, the son of Krishna. The Magas were adept at sun worship and brought with them a specific imagery of the sun as well as the custom of constructing sun temples. Many such temples were erected, especially in western and northern India, but also elsewhere, signifying that sun worship was once widespread. There are no distinct schools or sects within the Saurya system and today it survives mostly in the form of rituals and therapeutic practices.

2
Shaiva Tantra



Shiva is the central inspiration of Shaiva tantra. Shiva represents the cosmic consciousness, and Shiva was also an embodied human form who once lived, breathed and roamed the planet, inspiring people in yoga and spiritual life. Stories can be found in many scriptures about his life, teachings and philosophy. The Shaiva philosophy has existed in India for over five thousand years and is a living tradition practised today. Shiva is the embodiment of the highest realizations of yoga and tantra, thus many were motivated to follow him and adopt the precepts he personified.

Shiva gave the teachings of tantra to his consort Parvati, the Cosmic Mother. These original teachings were called Pashupata tantra and became the foundation of Shaiva tantra. Over the course of centuries, they evolved into different branches: in Kashmir as the Pratyabhijna tradition, in the South as Veera Shaiva, in the West as Lakulisha tantra. Hence, all the different branches of Shaiva tantra around the country have originated from Pashupata tantra.

Eight schools of Shaiva tantra

There are eight main recognized schools of Shaiva tantra; each school represents a sect, a tradition, a system, a path. The highest forms and most powerful Shaiva tantra traditions existing today are two: Shaiva Siddhanta of the South, and Kashmir Shaivism, the tantra of the North. The eight schools are the following:

1. Pashupata Siddhanta
2. Shaiva Siddhanta or Dvaitavada Shaiva Siddhanta
3. Advaitavada Shaiva Siddhanta or Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta
4. Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta or Dvaitadvaita
5. Vishishta Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta
6. Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta
7. Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanta
8. Raseshwara Shaiva Siddhanta

Siddhanta here means a philosophy or doctrine based on conclusive evidence. Shiva as the propounder of tantra is said to be known as *Panchanana Shiva*, which means 'Shiva with five faces'. He is also known as *Panchavaktra* or the *Panchamukhi Shankara*, which means 'Shiva with five mouths'. It is from his five mouths and faces that the science of tantra is said to have originated and developed. The five faces of Lord Shiva represent five different states of experience.

It is believed that Shiva gave the teachings of advaita tantra with one mouth and dvaita advaita tantra with another two mouths. Each of his five mouths are known by different names. The name of one is Ishan, which represents *chittashakti* or consciousness. The second is called Tatpurusha, and represents the attainment and realization of bliss. The third face is called Sadyojyoti, which represents the attainment of *jnana* or knowledge. The fourth and fifth faces are known as Vamadeva and Aghora, related to *iccha*, desire, and *kriya*, action, respectively. Thus, these faces are the sources of dvaita, dvaitadvaita and advaita tantra.

Although there are naturally many similarities and overlap between the schools, the general philosophy and characteristics of each school will be presented here separately.

1. PASHUPATA SIDDHANTA

Pashupata Siddhanta is the source of all tantric thoughts and philosophies, and thus is considered to be the oldest Shaiva Siddhanta; it is not a philosophy or a system of thought, but a method of sadhana and a spiritual practice. Pashupata tantra evolved as a sect of yogis and not as an organized system, for yogis are wanderers. As they say, *Ramata jogi bahata pani* – "The wandering yogi and flowing water are alike." In the days of yore, Pashupata tantra was the method of sadhana of yogis and never an organized philosophy. The yogi would do his sadhana, go wherever his wanderings would take him, and teach to and share with others on these travels.

Subsequently, no texts that discuss this philosophy are available anywhere today, nor can anything be said about its antiquity. Nevertheless, it has greatly influenced the Indian philosophies. Many thinkers hold the opinion that Nyaya and Vaisheshika, two branches of the six main systems of Indian philosophy, are amongst those influenced by the Pashupata Siddhanta and include some of its thoughts. Detailed information is not available regarding the philosophical thoughts of Pashupata Siddhanta, but its core philosophy has been pointed out by thinkers and commentators such as Rajashekhara and Hari Bhadra Suri.

According to these sources, in Pashupata Siddhanta, *Shiva tattwa* or pati is considered the essential, inherent cause of existence, and *Shakti tattwa*, the physical, material cause. The two are considered to be different and separate from each other. In fact, the subject of *dvaitavada* or dualism begins with the separation of these two causes. According to other schools of thought, the essential cause of existence and the physical, material cause are the same; they are not separate or different, the idea constituting *advaita* philosophy or monism. From the advaita

point of view, if any element is regarded to be the essential cause, then it must be accepted that the states of knowledge, action and energy are inherent in that element, not separate from it. In Pashupata Siddhanta, however, manifestation or the inherent physical capacity is different from the original, root cause, with action accepted in the form of energy. It is perhaps due to their separate, different states, that Shiva tattwa and Shakti tattwa have the potential to merge with each other and become one united, inseparable or integral tattwa, which is the state of advaita, oneness. In that state of unity, suffering is overcome. Thus, here in the original tantra, elements of both dvaita and advaita can be seen.

Five main divisions of Pashupata Siddhanta

Lord Shiva explained Pashupata Siddhanta to Mother Shakti or Sati and said the subject matter of this philosophy comes under five headings. They are: *kaarana*, cause; *karya*, action; *yoga*, union, unity or merger; *vidhi*, method; and *duhkhanta*, end of suffering. Kaarana is related to the pati or Shiva tattwa, karya is related to Shakti, and yoga implies the unity, the merger of the two. In addition, there has to be vidhi, a method or some means to attain the state of unity, to unite the two separate elements. The suffering, *duhkha*, comes to an end with the unity of the two elements. It may also be accepted that the state of duhkhanta is the state of *moksha* or liberation and final emancipation.

From this point of view, the Samkhya philosophy is also a supporter of dualism. Samkhya says that one has to undergo three types of sufferings and the ultimate goal is to overcome these. In the state of dvaita, duality, suffering or affliction is produced due to the differences between the two elements of Shiva and Shakti. Sometimes there will be discord, dissension or aversion between them, as the nature of one is quiet and tranquil, and of the other active and restless. Hence, harmony can never be established between the states of peace and tranquillity, and mobility and activity, as they are separate. Harmony is only possible if there is mobility and activity in the state of peace, and tranquillity and peace in the state of mobility and activity. Where these differences occur, the production of a third element is a natural occurrence. This third element has been identified as suffering, trouble, turmoil and affliction, and the goal of Pashupata Siddhanta is to overcome this suffering.

The Pashupata philosophy has first explained what suffering is. According to traditional commentators, there are three types of suffering: *adhibhautika*, includes those caused by natural calamities, over which humans have no control; *adhidaivika* means whatever is happening is because of God's will in which, again, humans have no control over, and; *adhyatmika*, which can be either mental or physical diseases. The traditional scriptures have talked of these three types of suffering; however, the Shaiva agamas identify five other types of suffering: 1. restriction of the womb, suffering here like a *mudha*, a fool 2. extreme pain of birth 3. degeneration in old age 4. anguish of death, and 5. ignorance, where the jiva forgets the reality and identifies with what is false. These five types of suffering take away the inner wealth, *aishwarya*, of the jiva. The term 'aishwarya', which is discussed in the tantra agamas, means a balanced and controlled state of mind, whereby the mind is awakened and intuitive. When the mind is peaceful and discriminative, free from pride and arrogance, when the light of sattwa comes to the mind, then the mind becomes still. In that stillness, the mind attains all the divine qualities.

In the five divisions, the reference to 'yoga' does not mean yogic practices; it refers to the state of unity or merger between suffering and its cause or between suffering and action. Yoga means the unity of action, Shakti, and cause, Shiva, whose interaction is the cause of suffering. For the understanding of the union of Shiva and Shakti, an analysis and explanation of the vidhi, the method, has been introduced. Physical, mental and spiritual disciplines have been included in vidhi**.** Since

maya or Shakti has been accepted here as the main, predominant physical or material cause, it has been given the name of 'action'. Between the *pradhana*, the original element, and *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element, the states of origin, evolution and bondage are found. *Maya* is the state of illusion and bondage, and in Shakti one encounters different manifestations of maya. Thus there is only one original element.

Atma, or soul, is considered to be inseparable from, and integral to, both Shakti and Shiva. Earlier, it was stated that Shiva and Shakti are separate, different, and that the functional areas of each of them are also separate. The the Shiva tattwa and Shakti tattwa, however, coexist in the atma. There is a curtain, a veil between them and due to this veil, Shiva tattwa and Shakti tattwa do not recognize each other. The reason behind this is that the atma is only aware of the manifestations of prithvi tattwa, the earth element, from the pradhana state and these manifestations are only secondary, minor causes. Due to this transformation from the original form, the primary cause, the original nature is forgotten. As a result, the atma is covered with a veil of karmas that come between Shiva and Shakti. Efforts have to be made to remove this veil by a method, by practising physical, mental and spiritual disciplines, and the moment this veil is removed the state of yoga is attained.

Shiva yoga

The main topic of this philosophy is yoga: *Atmeshvara samyogo yogah* - "The union of the atma with Paramatma is yoga." According to tantra, the yoga is the union of atma as the limited self, with *Paramatma*, the transcendental Self. Pashupata philosophy maintains that this is the correct definition of yoga, as the jiva, who is now bound, attains Paramatma through this path. In Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, it is defined as (1:2): *Chitta vritti nirodhah* – "The cessation of mental modifications is yoga." However, in Pashupata darshan it is said that stopping the vrittis and diverting them fully to God or the Higher Self is yoga.



The yoga that is described in Pashupata tantra is neither hatha yoga nor raja yoga, but a yoga which can be named 'Shiva yoga': *Shivena saha yoga*, *Shiva yogah* – "The teachings of yoga as associated with Shiva will be called Shiva yoga." Shiva yoga has four parts: hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga and karma yoga. These four yogas are for the jiva. When one comes to the world as a jiva, one is under the bondage of *karma maya*, which means getting attached to karmas. Karma yoga is needed to break out of this bondage, as through karma yoga one eliminates the karmas. Eliminating the karmas means renouncing the fruit of actions. The expectations of the results of actions must be eliminated and there should be a focus only on the actions. What will happen, what will not happen and one's expectations about the result ought not to be in the mind. When the expectations from the karmas are removed, they will become complete and creative, and the results will be good, auspicious and beneficial.

Pashupata darshan has seen bhakti yoga as an *anushthana* or spiritual act. While giving the teachings of raja yoga, Shiva says that the



mind can be focused through this practice and thereafter one can turn away from the objects of the world and focus on God. One can awaken the pranas through the practices of hatha yoga and raja yoga. In this way, Shiva yoga combines the four yogas and this is how the path of Pashupata has defined the means of sadhana.

Two types of yogas are also discussed here, one kriyatmaka, and the other kriya parama. *Kriyatmaka* yoga includes the practices of hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga. Japa, dhyana, mantra, pratyahara, dharana, bhakti yoga, that is, all the systematic and organized forms of yoga are under the kriyatmaka category. When one perfects these yogas and becomes established in the state of yoga, that is then called *kriya parama* yoga. Here, all the actions or practices end and there is no need to do these practices, as one is then established in yoga.

2. SHAIVA SIDDHANTA (DVAITAVADA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA)

After Pashupata Siddhanta, the second of the eight main schools of thought is the Shaiva Siddhanta or dvaitavada, doctrine of dualism. Its originator, Maharshi Sadyojyoti, was the first to use the term 'siddhanta' to denote a Shaiva philosophy. Sadyojyoti was a thinker who tried to explain *vikara* or *mala*, impurities evolved from a previous source, and *bandhan*, bondage, and the differences between them from the psychological point of view.

According to Shaiva Siddhanta, waves arise in one's life, in the *antahkarana*, the instrument of the mind, and in the thinking process. Due to these waves, one forgets everything about the subtle aspects of life and is attracted to the gross state and gross enjoyments. These waves are impurities that transform a particular state so it does not appear in its true form. Individuals make use of their legs to walk on land, yet cannot use them to walk on water. One has to swim in water, one cannot walk on it in a standing position; the action of the arms and legs change while swimming in water. Similarly, the *tattwas* or elements are pure; however, when they come under the influence of maya in the world, they become impure. These impurities are known as mala and vikara.

It is conjectured that Sadyojyoti propounded and developed the Shaiva Siddhanta or dvaitavada during his lifetime. Shaiva Siddhanta was further developed by eminent disciples of Sadyojyoti: Vrihaspati, Shankar Nandan and Devabala. Sadyojyoti was a contemporary of Abhinava Gupta (990–1050 AD), another famous Shaiva thinker. Abhinava Gupta was critical of Sadyojyoti's views and ideas on mala, and clearly expressed his criticism in his work entitled *Tantraloka*. It is his works that mention of Sadyojyoti and his disciples, therefore it is presumed they were contemporaries.

The influence of this Shaiva Siddhanta can also be seen in Kashmir where two clear trends of tantric thought were developed, that of Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta (discussed next) and the Dvaita Shaiva Siddhanta itself. Thus, both dvaita and advaita ideas emerged here. The siddhanta of Sadyojyoti accepts the concepts of Pashupata Siddhanta: *pashu* as the animal or instinctive tendencies of human beings; *pati* as lord or master, referring to Shiva; and *pasha*

translated as bondage, or literally 'a noose'. It also accepts ten Shaiva agamas and eighteen Rudra agamas, sacred scriptures that are considered to be authoritative basis of Shaiva philosophy.

3. ADVAITAVADA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA (KASHMIR SHAIVA SIDDHANTA)

The foundation of the Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta, is *Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini*, an important book written by Abhinava Gupta. Presented in it is a detailed explanation of the philosophy expounded by Utpalacharya, author of *Ishwara Pratyabhijna Karika*. The book, *Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini*, has been accepted as the basis of Advaita Shaiva philosophy. It is difficult to say anything about the antiquity of advaita darshana, as this philosophy is not accredited to any one particular person; therefore, the exact date of its origin cannot be established on this basis. Different thinkers have expressed their opinion in relation to this philosophy at different points in time; however, all of them have developed it further on the basis of Abhinava Gupta's book.

Main features

The main feature of Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta is that it considers the levels of consciousness and experience to be different. Consciousness is Shiva tattwa and, at the same time, it is also a result of the combination of Shakti and Shiva. Therefore, the states of unmanifest and manifest conscious experience are different. Efforts have been made to explain these different levels of experience and states of consciousness. Another characteristic of this philosophy is that it does not present spirituality in the traditional, philosophical and classical way; rather, it tries to present it in a practical and psychological form. As a result, one may come to know how one can experience spiritual life and spiritual states at the level of individual consciousness in the daily activities of life, including the familial and social areas.

The Kashmir Shaiva philosophy was prevalent particularly during the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries. At that time, Buddhism was also powerfully influencing the mentality of people and this is why in Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta one finds discussion on, and the inclusion of, some Buddhist thoughts as well as the repudiation of others.

Utpalacharya states in the *Ishwara Pratyabhijna Karika* that 'the knowledge of the Supreme Element is just a vision, a reflection or a glimpse.' Many thinkers of Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta have tried to explain the path of devotion through a discussion on the concept of 'vision, reflection or glimpse'. In the path of devotion, the ninefold path of bhakti has been particularly emphasized with special attention on the three attitudes of *dasya*, *sakhya* and *atmanivedana*, attitude of a servant, friend, and total surrender to God, respectively. Besides devotion, the importance of *anugraha*, grace, has also been highlighted. Anugraha finds a special and important place in the discussions on all eight Shaiva philosophies; it is the basic 'mantra', the essence of tantra. One can make efforts in various ways: one may adopt the path of devotion, yoga, meditation or self-contemplation, but anugraha has been given the most vital and significant place. Whatever the extent of effort or drive on the part of the sadhaka, it is impossible to attain the higher states or the state of moksha without anugraha. While clarifying the principle of devotion and anugraha, five aspects of the concept of vision or reflection have been explained: 1. *poorva avastha*, initial state 2. *tarka*, argument 3. *udaharana*, example 4. *prayoga*, application, and 5. *nishkarsha*, conclusion. Shiva tattwa can only be understood after passing through these states.

Special reference has also been made to the broad, expansive consciousness, implying cosmic or Shiva consciousness, and which is of two types: higher or *vishvottirna*, and manifest or *vishvamaya*. Vishvottirna consciousness has been explained in the context of spirituality and vishvamaya explained on a psychological level. Vishvamaya is the psychology of life; it is

a psychological state in which the sadhaka can experience the various levels of consciousness through awareness, glimpse, vision or reflection. In every state of consciousness, karmas happen on the basis of experience and they may happen either to the body, mind, one's family or society.

Vishvottirna consciousness has been explained by relating it to the spirit, as transcendental, as a state beyond Prakriti, Maya and Shakti. It is completely untainted or unblemished. To comprehend the vishvottirna consciousess, it is essential to understand the concept of glimpse or vision or reflection, in a subtle way. Vishvottirna is consciousness itself but is not conscious, whereas vishvamaya is not consciousness but is conscious. Vishvottirna as transcendental consciousness manifests its independent, unmanifest, omnipotent and omniscient state in the forms of jnanashakti, smriti and apohana. *Jnanashakti* is the aspect of inherent knowledge, *smriti* is the field of memory and *apohana* is differentiation.

When a sadhaka experiences jnanashakti, smriti and apohana in his life, then there is union or disunion in the states of glimpse or vision; connections are established and broken. For example, when clouds are seen in the sky, a union with the state of glimpse or vision takes place. Upon seeing the clouds, one has a vision as to whether it will rain or not. Clouds of all types are made of the same matter, yet when a particular type of cloud is seen, one can guess that it will rain and if another type of cloud is seen, one can guess it will not. A third type of cloud may indicate the possibility of an impending rainstorm or hailstorm. This is the union of jnanashakti, smriti and apohana, and leads to the attainment of direct experience or direct knowledge. One acquires the knowledge of object and subject on account of union or disunion in the states of glimpse or vision; this knowledge is essential for karmas and their emergence or creation.

The Kashmir Shaiva school interprets and presents the Shaiva philosophy through practical, theoretical and psychological methods. It differentiates between body and mind; the mind cannot be considered to be the body. Just as the body and mind are different, jnana and karma are also different from each other. Furthermore, if there is a difference experienced between jnana and karma, there also must be a difference between the states of omniscience and omnipotence. In some sects and philosophies, the states of omniscience and omnipotence have been accepted as the main qualities of the divine or Ishwara. However, the followers of the Kashmir Shaiva school do not believe in such ideas, maintaining that omnipotence is the main quality of Ishwara, as omnipotence implies that the capacity to acquire omniscience is inherent in him. Omniscience, therefore, is the consequence of omnipotence.

One can perceive karma more clearly than jnana. However, the concept of karma is not based on external objects and things alone. Karma succeeds only if there is a subjective grip over it, which implies personal understanding and contemplation. Karma succeeds only if one properly understands the process of karma in the realm of jnana, contemplates it, analyzes it and then acts. What does it mean to 'get a grip over karma'? It means that if one plans out a situation after thinking about it in the realm of jnana, then the whole process of karma will be quite clearly visible. What generally happens, however, is that when one looks at a certain situation, one experiences the reaction in one's inner consciousness and this reaction is then carried out externally. One never sits quietly and thinks along the lines of, 'I have to do this type of karma, therefore I should adopt this type of system or follow that type of system.' Here, the sequence emphasized is first contemplation, then reaction, and thereafter karma. All these have to be experienced separately. A vibration is generated within before the commencement of a karma. That vibration is a desire. One has to be motivated to perform karma by one's inner vibration. If one can be aware of this inner vibration, one will be able to see in it an essence of consciousness;



however, in the absence of this awareness, one will only see the essence of the basic instinct in it.

Pratyabhijna is the last salient point of the Kashmir Shaiva Siddhanta. *Pratyabhijna* means *pramana* or correct knowledge. Thus Ishwara pratyabhijna can be also called 'Ishwara pramana'. The attempt here is to know Ishwara pramana through practical logic and by understanding the different, separate forms of karma, jnana and consciousness. The purpose is to ultimately recognize one's original, real form through a vision, a glimpse or a reflection rather than through jnana.

4. LAKULISHA PASHUPATA SIDDHANTA (DVAITADVAITA)

The fourth important Shaiva Siddhanta is the Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta or *dvaitadvaita*, a philosophy beyond monism and dualism. Lakulisha was a thinker of the 2nd century AD. According to the *Vayu Purana* and the *Linga Purana*, Lakulisha was born in the Karavan area of the Baroda state where, as the last incarnation of Maheshwara, he lived and propounded this siddhanta. The Pashupata school of thought was the most prominent of that age and it was explained by Lakulisha in great detail, thus his philosophy became known as Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta. There are a few important texts that clearly describe the ideas and approaches of Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta. One of them is the *Pashupata Sutra*, written by Lakulisha himself. Other major texts on this siddhanta include *Ganakarika*, *Yama Prakarana*, *Karana Padartha* and *Atma Samarpana*. These texts are considered to be the foundation of Lakulisha Siddhanta as are, to a degree, the *Krishna Yajurveda* and the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*. It is possible that Lakulisha provided a new direction to the tantric theory in light of vedic thought, prevalent at that time. Therefore, in his siddhanta, a confluence of both vedic and tantric ideas are apparent from the use of words such as 'Brahma' and 'Brahman' in his tantric works.

Sayana, a leading exponent of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, has explained the tantric theories while elucidating the different aspects of the aranyaka. In the discussion on the aranyaka, Sayana talks about the *Panchavaktra Mahadeva* or five-faced form of Shiva, and the method of his worship that is in accordance with the tantric system. Thus, Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta is a vedic tantra. It has also adopted vedic terms like bheda-abhedavada in their original forms from the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* while, conversely, the tantric prayer of *Panchavaktra Mahadeva* was taken from Lakulisha's *Pashupata Sutras* and included in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*.

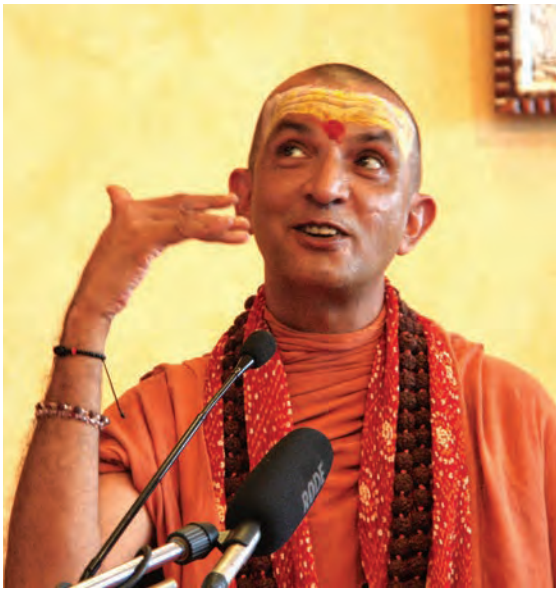
Five divisions of Lakulisha Pashupata

In the same manner as Pashupata Siddhanta, Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta has the same five divisions of kaarana, karya, yoga, vidhi, and duhkhanta:

- Kaarana, cause, is related to pati, Shiva or Shiva tattwa.
- Karya, action, is related to the fruits, Shakti or maya.
- Yoga, union or unity. The higher state attained after the union of Shiva and Shakti is the state of yoga.
- Vidhi, the methods through which the aspirant attains the state of yoga.
- Duhkhanta, the end of suffering is the goal.

Kaarana

According to this philosophy, the state of duhkhanta or moksha, liberation, is not only the end of suffering, but also emancipation from all problems. It is a state of fullness and completeness. The experience of fullness or completeness in life is possible only if there is no difference or separation between jnanashakti, the power of knowledge, and *kriyashakti*, the power of action. If jnanashakti and kriyashakti are separate, there will be a beginning and an end; however, the state of *abheda* or unity includes both jnanashakti and kriyashakti together. Shakti and the pati, Shiva, are perceived as united within the same form, and this is symbolized in the figure of *Ardhanarishwara*, where the form is half-male and half-female contained within one body. In one half of the body, Shiva or the purusha tattwa, consciousness, is experienced, while in the other half, the Shakti tattwa, prakriti, is inherent, symbolizing the experience of yoga, fullness and completeness. In Ardhanarishwara, the Purusha, Shiva, is jnanashakti and Shakti as Prakriti is kriyashakti.



Another characteristic of this siddhanta is that, in the same manner as Pashupata Siddhanta, it regards the Shiva tattwa and karya, Shakti or maya as separate from each other. Karya includes *vidya*, knowledge; *kalaa*, the limiting aspect of energy; and pashu. Shakti controls the subtle and gross, intellectual and pure vidyas. On the external level, kalaa includes visible forms of objects or matter, and internally in a subtle form, the *pancha bhootas*, the five gross elements and the *tanmatras*, the subtle states of the five gross elements (see Section 1, Chapter 4). All the manifestations of kalaa have been viewed in the form of the actions of Shakti. Pashu has been referred to as *vidyeshwara*, liberated soul in bondage; atma, soul in bondage; or *jivatma*, individual soul. All the qualities of the instinctive animal level, experienced in the form of bonds, have been viewed in the form of the actions of Shakti.

Other theories, thoughts and philosophies state that an external base is essential for action and no action can be performed without a base or without another element. In this siddhanta, however, the capacity for action is seen as a different thing and there is no need for a base to perform an action. Thus, the form of Shiva consciousness is that of a witness, an inactive seer, while Shakti is a different element, an independent power, and is active.

The methods adopted for one's evolution and development take one to the state of experiencing divinity. The experience of divinity implies one views oneself in the form of light. However, even in the state where the Self is viewed in the form of light, one aspect of individuality continues to remain; it is not destroyed, it is not dissolved. Only, all the

bonds of consciousness are broken and one experiences oneself in the form of light, in the form of the conscious, awakened atma. In many texts and philosophies it has been said that through austerity and sacrifices, one will attain *swargaloka*, the heavenly plane. One will become a *deva*, a luminous or divine being, and go to the higher lokas beyond the swargaloka. These are the different levels or states of divinity. By following the prescribed method, the state of *Shiva samipya*, proximity or closeness to Shiva, is attained. It is stated there is no question of downfall from this state. In this way, the concept of moksha is explained and clarified.

The definition of moksha is the attainment of the eternal truth, the eternal state; it is the state that has no beginning or end. It has no origin; it is infinite, endless, limitless and all-pervading. It is auspicious, it is real, and it is the truth. Where duhkha ends, moksha is attained. All the facts and ideas related to moksha are concerned with the level of jivatma, individual soul. Who experiences pleasure and pain? Shiva certainly does not have such experiences. Only the atma goes through these experiences. It is not that atma in the form of vidyeshwara. Pleasure and pain are experienced only by the atma bound by the human body, that being the jivatma. In this state, kriyashakti and jnanashakti are covered with a veil and it is when one goes beyond these experiences and attains a state that is without pleasure and pain, only then does one have the experience of moksha.

Rarely does anybody attain Shiva tattwa, for Shiva, pati, or the cause is true and existent; it is not unreal or non-existent. Its state and experience are different even from the state of moksha. One can experience moksha during one's lifetime, even while retaining a body, mind and senses; however pati, the cause, or Shiva, is beyond birth and death. It is not contained within any kind of boundary or bonds. Its essence is present in every atma in the form of jnana as the witness or seer. Shiva controls the action and the fruits of action as a witness or seer. This is why he is *akaala*, that which is not within the limit of a periphery, perimeter or zone, which is beyond time. Conversely, *sakaala*, the present time; *pralayakaala*, the time of dissolution; and *vijnanakaala*, the time of higher knowledge, belong to the realm of maya or Shakti.

On the basis of the previous discussion, one may conclude the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy differentiates between action and cause, cause being related to pati or Shiva and action to maya or Shakti.

2. Karya

Karya or action, has been divided into three aspects: vidya, kalaa and pashu.

Vidya: Vidya has been further divided into two: *bodhaswa bhava* and *abodhaswa bhava*, sense of perception and sense of non-perception, respectively. They can also be called 'perceptive nature' and 'non-perceptive nature'. The original tendency or fundamental state of vidya is this sense of non-perception. If vidya is clean or purified in itself, then in the form of *guna*, qualities of creation, it is the state of non-perception, abodhaswa bhava. Where vidya is in the form of perceptive nature or sense perception, there is also the presence of *viveka shakti*, or rational, discriminating power.

Vidya is light in itself. It is not illumined or made to manifest, and the sense of perception is generated when matter or objects are illumined by vidya. If a person standing in front of one's own eyes can be recognized, this is called bodhaswa bhava or sense of perception. The knowledge, vidya, of the aspirant has come into contact with someone or something and this has awakened one's state of consciousness. When vidya comes into contact with any element, matter or object, then the latter is seen and recognized in the framework of a name and quality. It does not mean, however, that the object is non-existent when vidya is not in contact with that matter or element. This knowledge itself amounts to the awakening of vidya.

Having knowledge in the conscious state is the state of perception. The perceptive

nature of vidya has been further divided into *viveka pravritti* and *aviveka pravritti*, wise or discriminative tendency, and unwise or indiscriminative tendency, respectively. The difference between pravritti and vritti is that vritti is an altered state of antahkarana, mind, and in pravritti change is inherent as potential. Vritti means seeing a mental condition in a particular form; seeing a process or a state of mind in a limited form. For example, if there is a boil or an abscess in any part of the body, that is the affected part of the body. This symbolizes the relationship between antahkarana and vritti: antahkarana is the body in this example, and vritti is the boil or abscess. Pravritti is a state in which the possibility of transformation is inherent; it is not a transformed or solidified state.

Vidya is the source of discriminative and indiscriminative pravrittis. One will sometimes have right knowledge and sometimes wrong knowledge. For example, upon seeing the sun, it is recognized as the sun. This is a discriminative tendency. If it is believed that the size of the sun is the same as it appears through the naked eyes, this will be an indiscriminative tendency. Vidya is self-illumined knowledge, while *avidya*, ignorance, is the absence of vidya.

Viveka, discriminative knowledge, prudence or wisdom, is different from vidya, self-illumined knowledge or wisdom; it is the external manifestation of vidya. In the example above, vidya takes the form of the recognition of the sun. This knowledge exists within; it is already there. Take another example. Imagine that one has never seen the ocean. If one happens to be on its shore for the first time, one is wonderstruck for some time, yet soon one accepts the unlimited vastness and depth of the ocean. Thus, vidya is an internal experience that already exists within, and viveka is the external manifestation that is real. There is an absence of vidya in avidya, and of viveka in aviveka.

It may be said in the sense of non-perception, vidya is not in contact with any element or expression; vidya does not develop in the form of any expression. Rather, it develops in the form of a quality, a samskara, *dharma* or *adharma*, duty or non-duty respectively, truth and untruth, reality and non-reality. Duty, non-duty and samskara have been seen as different aspects of the non-perceptive state. In life, this non-perceptive philosophy, vidya, is in its original form as light. After coming into contact with the intellect, one comes to know what duty is and what non-duty is. The intellect is influenced by the external environment, social context, thinking of the family members, culture, and such like, all of which become the accepted sources of perception of duty and non-duty. With their help, different expressions of life come about.

Samskaras are subtle results of either the known or the 'would-be-experienced' karmas. Known karmas are those that one has had the actual experience of in life, while 'would-be-experienced' karmas indicate the possibility of experiences that may be within one's reach, whether gross, subtle or causal. Samskaras are the fruits of karmas in these areas, as one is not always aware of the karmas taking place in the gross, subtle and causal states. The individual is also ignorant of the samskaras that are the results of karmas and exist within in the form of an effect.

Kalaa: The second of the three aspects of karya, has been viewed in two forms. The first form is karya, or action based on experience and the other is *karana*, instrument or means based on experience. As stated earlier, karmas based on experience are related to tanmatras, the qualities of the pancha mahabhootas and the associated five senses. After all, the original creation is made up of the pancha mahabhootas and the tanmatras.

The first thing that comes into existence in creation is a collection of the basic elements and their qualities. In the realm of kalaa, a relationship is established between the subtle tanmatras and the pancha mahabhootas. This relationship comes under the division of karya. Under karana are included the



karmendriyas, organs of action; *jnanendriyas*, organs of sense perception; and antahkarana, mind. Thus karana consists of fourteen items: five jnanendriyas, five karmendriyas and the four components of antahkarana. With the help of these fourteen external, physical and gross means, one can understand the subtle expressions and actions of kalaa.

Pashu: There are two categories of pashu, niranjana and sanjana. The pashus of the first category, *niranjana* or pure and untainted, are beyond the bonds and limitations of matter, senses and antahkarana. This is a higher state of the pashu, also named 'vidyeshwara' or liberated soul. Another category of pashu is *sanjana* or 'with anjana', with impurities or limitations. This is a state influenced by matter, senses and antahkarana; it is a worldly, physical, material and earthly state. Every human or living being is sanjana as they are under the influence of matter, senses and antahkarana.

The sanjana category has three further subdivisions, each progressively higher and purer than the previous one. The first one is called *samhrita pashu*, a state of atma that continues to exist after the time of dissolution or death of the physical body. This state of samhrita atma is attained when the bonds of external, physical matter, senses and antahkarana are cut off after death. Samhrita atma can take rebirth again and again, therefore the samhrita state is beyond matter and the senses.

Purer than samhrita is the state of *kaivalyagata pashu*, a state free from the limitations of kalaa or prakriti. After attaining this state, the bonds of prakriti and kalaa, karya and karana and both forms of vidya are automatically dissolved. The third state of sanjana pashu is the *nishthayogayukta pashu*, also called *yoganishtha pashu*. It means a pashu united with or established in yoga. This is a state of *Shiva sayujya*, unity with or merger into Supreme Consciousness or Shiva.

Five kinds of impurities of the pashu

Mala or impurities have been perceived in the form of a vikara, or imperfection. There are five kinds of impurities in the life of a pashu: 1. false knowledge 2. unrighteous behaviour 3. state of attachment 4. *chyuti* or downfall, and 5. impurities of being a pashu. False knowledge means knowledge caused by illusion. Unrighteous behaviour is self-explanatory. The state of attachment means impurities caused by Shakti. Chyuti refers to downfall, bondage, undeveloped state or obstacle in the evolution of consciousness. Impurities of being a pashu relates to self-oriented or selfish thinking.



These impurities comprise both imperfections and conditions.

Characteristics of the pashu

The fourteen characteristics of the pashu and an explanation of some of the characteristics, according to Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta, are as follows:

- Absence of omniscience
- Absence of energy
- Absence of willpower
- Limited knowledge
- Lack of knowledge and working capacity
- Absence of controlling power
- Absence of expansiveness
- Discrepancy between vital force and body
- Influence of fear
- Old age
- Disease
- Death and rebirth
- Limited power of action
- Lack of capacity to rule.
- Human beings can never become omniscient; if one becomes omniscient, one will no longer remain a pashu.
- There is lack of energy or capacity as well as willpower and determination. One is unable to have control over, and faith in, oneself.
- There is limited knowledge.
- Any action or work is performed according to the programming once made in the consciousness of an individual. Even when one wants to act, one is surrounded by ignorance or aggression and work is not performed properly.
- Humans in the pashu state lack the capacity for self-control and self-restraint.
- Expansiveness does not imply cosmic consciousness; rather, it means expansive consciousness. Human consciousness is not expansive, it is limited.

There are two bases of human consciousness: vitality and desire. Despite their difference from each other, they are inseparable, and also integral to the body. Vitality is experienced by the body and desire by antahkarana. Simultaneously, vitality is experienced by antahkarana and desire by the body. These are all interrelated, yet they are seen and considered separately, as individuals cannot understand their interrelatedness. From a practical point of view, they are all united. Vitality and desire are not separate from the body, body and desire are not separate from vitality, and vitality and body are not different from desire.

Fear or the sense of insecurity in life is a vritti or internal obstruction. It is the reason why an individual is attracted again and again to pleasure and enjoyment. If fear or the sense of insecurity could be removed from the mind, the aspirant would overcome one of the main impediments on the path of sadhana. Food, sleep, fear and sexuality are the four basic instincts of life. If only fear could be understood, one significant impurity of life would be left behind and one would find oneself purer and better than before.

Old age and sickness are the consequences of physical development. The body is not the basic element; it is a consequence, a result, a product of creation. The decay of the body starts right from the time of conception. In the beginning, the body had only one stage; however, now this has changed and is transformed. Decay and disease do not imply getting old; rather, they imply physical transformation from the first stage to the second, from the second to the third, and from the third to the fourth stage.

Death has been called the end of the physical body. In a gross form, one can experience *pashutwa*, animality, only until the time of death; thereafter one will experience pashutwa in the form of a samskara. Now birth, life, death and rebirth are experienced in the form of sanjana. The pashu has limited kriyashakti, power behind action.

The lack of capacity to rule is the last characteristic of the pashu. Here, 'rule' means self-control or self-restraint, a quality lacking in the state of pashu. This is why the first sutra of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* says: *Atha yoganushasanam* – "Yoga is a form of discipline." All these are the characteristics of the state of the pashu, the state human beings exist in.

Instructions for removal of mala

In the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, some specific instructions are mentioned for the removal of mala from the pashu, which are related to the life, conduct, behaviour, education and philosophy of the individual. These include:

- Guru-disciple relationship
- *Charya*, method, means or instruments
- *Japa*, mantra repetition, and meditation
- Continuous, unbroken remembrance of Rudra
- *Prasad* or anugraha, grace
- *Desha* or place.

Guru-disciple relationship: The guru-disciple relationship has been recognized as the proximity or nearness of the disciple to the guru. In the initial stage, one cannot make intellectual, internal and spiritual progress without proper, appropriate directions and instructions. Only a capable teacher or guru can provide these. This does not mean classroom education; rather, it is a uniting relationship established between two individuals. By knowing and understanding the state of evolution, mental state and personality of the aspirant, the guru gives proper instructions, useful for an aspirant's sadhana.

If an aspirant selects a path for himself, it may be the result of personal desires, weaknesses and prejudices. The aspirant thinks the chosen path is appropriate and beneficial, and will lead to *siddhis*, supernatural accomplishments, and fullness. These ideas emerge from the intellect and are produced by *pashumala*, impurities of the animal state, influenced by the gunas. Appropriate sadhanas and daily routines are prescribed by the guru for tamasic, rajasic and sattwic aspirants. In order to be successful in sadhana, an internal, intimate relationship between guru and disciple is essential.

Charya: One finds another set of instructions with regard to the method. Charya means leading a disciplined life from the physical, mental, spiritual and worldly points of view. Seen from the yogic perspective, charya actually includes yama and niyama. The practices of yama and niyama enable one to discipline and balance one's personal and social life. Through these practices, one tries to purify oneself and the thinking, to remove the vikaras and to concentrate on a point or a symbol.

Other methods related to charya include *daan*, selfless giving; *vrata*, ritual related to an occasion; and *tapa*, austerity. Daan does not mean giving money, property or other things to the poor, but implies that all activities are performed selflessly and are positive and useful. To imbibe and practise physical, mental and spiritual discipline in one's life is the meaning of tapa. Generally, vrata is understood as performing a particular type of ritual on the occasion of some special festival, including worship, fasting and other rituals. However, vrata

here implies strong personal determination. Its purpose is to sharpen and centre the mental faculties in order to awaken one's potential, energy and determination, which then become helpful in the process of purification.

Japa and meditation: The following sadhanas are included in japa and meditation: methods of mental one-pointedness and introversion, the practices of dharana and dhyana, concentration on a symbol, awareness of mantra. It is stated there is programming within the human consciousness and personality that forms the basis of thinking, reflection and action, and the purpose behind the practices of concentration taught by yoga and tantra is to change this programming. The idea accepted here is that the human mind is only capable of working in a limited area. When an attempt is made to bring the mind out of this limited area, performance is hampered because the mind is not trained in that manner.

One cannot introduce another program on a computer unless the current programming is completed. In the same way, a change or transformation is brought about in all the constituents of the antahkarana by the practices of pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and mantra. This is a process that takes time; the previous programming has to be eliminated slowly and gradually, and new input and programming conducive to the evolution, progress and development of the human personality has to be introduced.

Continuous remembrance of Rudra: This is the fourth instruction. It can be understood in the form of *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrender to the divine will. Faith, trust and reverence are awakened through Ishwara pranidhana to generate confidence in life. One should not become pessimistic; one needs to be optimistic and have faith. In the absence of faith and self-confidence, direction and balance are lost. One must proceed with the idea that 'I am just a medium, an agent; someone else is the cause behind all that I am doing. It is only He who knows how He is getting it done, and what the consequence will be'. When this idea is awakened, the struggles of life come to an end. As long as there is pessimism in life, the struggle with one's own capabilities and incapabilities will continue.

Prasad, anugraha or grace: Grace is attained through devotion and surrender, for with the awakening of devotion and surrender, the ego dissolves. One then experiences grace as the flow of divine energy. The three means by which one may attain the great kingdom of grace are surrender, simplicity and devotion.

Desha or place: Selection of a proper place is essential for self-development. There are places where the environment is conducive to spiritual development, where people come with a purpose and create a positive atmosphere. People go to temples as they like the environment and experience peace there. They forget their problems for some time and pray to God for the removal of their problems. In an ashram also one can find a special, sublime environment with a spiritual purpose.

Caves too provide a special environment where one may live a solitary and secluded life and practise introspection or self-observation, away from the din and bustle of social and worldly life. In the cremation ground, one may almost continuously experience the transitory nature of material life. As a result of such an environment, asceticism is developed and attachment is slowly and gradually eliminated. It is in this context that such places have been mentioned in tantra, where one may live for a period to acquire an understanding of the futility of the transient world and discover the eternal element within.

Five states of consciousness

Lakulisha Pashupata also describes the states of consciousness or *avasthas* experienced by aspirants who follow the instructions stated previously. There are five such states: *vyakta*, manifest; *avyakta*, unmanifest; *jaya*, victory; *chheda*, separation or renunciation; and *nishtha*, being established in a state or liberation.

Vyakta avastha: This means the adoption of all the manifest aspects of a tradition or system



and the related features or characteristics of sadhana. For example, Shaiva sadhakas adopt the Shaiva tradition, Shaiva system and characteristics of Shaiva sadhana. Vaishnava sadhakas adopt the Vaishnava tradition, Vaishnava system and characteristics of Vaishnava sadhana. Similarly, Shakta sadhakas adopt the Shakta tradition, Shakta system and characteristics of Shakta sadhana. Sannyasins follow the tradition and system of sannyasa sadhana.

The different systems remind the sadhakas of their respective goals in life. Adoption of an external symbol initiates a process of transformation in one's thinking, conduct and behaviour, in one's whole personality. However, this transformation is only possible if there is reverence for, and trust and faith in that system and tradition. The state of strong, unbreakable trust, faith and reverence is called the vyakta avastha. Every sadhaka and sannyasin should have reverence for and faith in one's own self, in one's own tradition and system.

Avyakta avastha: This is the second state in which the external symbols become irrelevant. In this state, despite the relinquishment of the external symbols, the same state of awareness, feeling, faith and devotion continue to be present.

Jaya avastha: This is the state of victory, the third state. 'Jaya' here implies overcoming the desire for sensual enjoyment and sensual passion.

Chheda avastha: This is the fourth state, after jaya, signifying the renunciation of everything, the world and all worldly enjoyment. In this state of total renunciation, all wishes, desires, expectations and passions, as well as all karmas and actions related to them, cease to exist. This is the state of a paramahamsa.

Nishtha avastha: The ultimate result of all the above is liberation, expressed here as the fifth and the last state, the state of nishtha.

States of purity as a measure of progress

In the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, one will also find the description of five states of purity a sadhaka experiences while passing through the five avasthas. These are: 1. *avidya lopa*, end of ignorance 2. *adharma lopa*, end of disharmonious conduct 3. *asakti lopa*, end of attachment 4. end of unsteadiness or restlessness of antahkarana, and 5. *pashutwa lopa*, end of animal tendencies or impurities. These pure states are indicators to assess the extent to which a sadhaka has attained a particular state of consciousness. For this, either the guru or specific guidance is essential.

Through self-observation and introspection, a sadhaka can know whether avidya, ignorance, adharma, unrighteous action, and *asakti*, attachment, have been eliminated from one's life or not. If through reflection, contemplation and sadhana, a sadhaka comes to the conclusion that one has eliminated narrowness from one's life and restlessness from one's antahkarana, then it can be accepted that one has attained a pure state. In a way, these pure states serve as milestones along the path of evolution, through which one can gauge the distance covered.

Five kinds of motivating powers for evolution

The Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy describes five kinds of energy, motivation, force or strength that take the sadhaka further on the



evolutionary path. These include: 1. force of *gurubhakti*, devotion to guru 2. freedom from *vasana*, desire 3. *samabhava*, equanimity 4. *dharmacharana*, virtuous conduct, and 5. *satyacharana*, conduct based on truth and righteousness.

Gurubhakti: The extent and intensity of reverence and devotion to the guru or guide is the greatest strength of a sadhaka. If a feeling of identification and unity is established with the guru, then there is no place for any kind of pessimism in the life of a disciple. The guru is said to have two forms: external and internal. Externally, he helps the sadhaka in uplifting the physical, intellectual and emotional life; through satsang, sadhana and *upadesha*, instructions or guidance, the guru shows the sadhaka the right path and provides motivation to proceed on it. These external forms of the guru constitute the base that provides support to the sadhaka while treading the spiritual path. Another form of guru is the internal one. When a sadhaka or disciple develops inner faith and devotion for the guru, internal awareness is generated. With continuous and uninterrupted inner awareness of the guru, the guru himself becomes the force behind all the actions of the sadhaka. That force motivates the sadhaka to move further on the path.

Freedom from vasana or desire: Elimination of subtle desire is the second force or strength gained during the period of sadhana. As long as the sadhaka does not recognize and remove the imperfections and deficiencies of the personality through sadhana, subtle desires cannot be removed. However, the external desires are gradually enfeebled when samskaras are dissolved, tamoguna is terminated and sattwaguna is increased in the process of sadhana.

Samabhava or equanimity: The third force is equanimity, which is related to conduct, action and reaction. Normally, one does not act in life; one always reacts. Struggle is almost continuously going on with the familial and social situations and problems of life, and reaction is at the root of this entire struggle. Action over reaction begins only when struggle is eliminated from life. This is known as equanimity. It is the state of inner restraint and balance. This is the greatest siddhi, fulfilment and strength. However, it is difficult to achieve this state, as negative thinking and ill feelings continue to motivate one's thoughts, actions and life.

If one observes one's own life, one can evaluate the extent to which negative and inauspicious thinking, feelings and actions are present compared to positive ones. Negative karmas are not only related to others, but also to oneself. If a realistic view is adopted, one will find that negative elements far outweigh positive ones in one's life.

If the aspirant wants to increase and strengthen the positive elements in life, the negative elements should not be suppressed. If suppressed, they become stronger and take the form of a volcanic eruption. In yoga and tantra, suppression is regarded as unscientific. The approach towards the elimination of negative elements should be that of self-restraint.

Dharmacharana or virtuous conduct: This constitutes the fourth force. Virtuous conduct balances one's spiritual life and quietens the

karmic expressions and reactions. Normally, one remains under the influence of one's samskaras and karmic expressions, reactions and actions. The purpose behind the system of virtuous conduct and education is to reduce or eliminate the karmic defects in life.

A pertinent question arises here: what is dharma and what is adharma? Today dharma is defined on the basis of an organized religious concept encompassing symbols, a particular thinking, rites and rituals, worship, systems of knowledge, and places of worship such as temples and churches. However, the real definition of the word 'dharma' is different. Dharma refers to the positive qualities one adopts to follow right conduct and duty. The strength of duty is dharma. This has been known as *sanatana dharma*, the eternal dharma.

For a sadhaka who is trying to understand the mind, the observance of duty proves useful. By observing one's duty, one can recognize the basic element, the 'soul element' and eliminate the bonds, limitations and impurities. It is essential to have mental and inner clarity for that, however. Dharmacharana or virtuous conduct is not possible until it becomes clear how to observe dharma in life, and dharma has different definitions for different people. Conduct, behaviour, karma and desires are different in different areas of life, according to age and stage of life; therefore, the definition of dharma will depend on such factors. It will have a different definition for a student, a householder, a retiree and a recluse. Virtuous conduct then implies making use of all factors for one's own evolution after having acquired the right understanding. In other words, virtuous conduct means to act according to the understanding and knowledge of oneself or one's personality.

Satyacharana or conduct based on truth and righteousness: This fifth force is the most difficult to practise. There is a story in the *Mahabharata*. In the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, Dronacharya, the accomplished preceptor of the most eminent warriors on both sides, took the side of the Kauravas. Invincible as he was, he could supposedly be killed only if he deliberately dropped his arms. In order to achieve this, the Pandavas sent one of their leaders, Yudhishthira, known for never uttering falsehood, into Dronacharya's proximity to exclaim: *Ashwatthama hato*, *naro va kunjaro va* – "Ashwatthama was killed, but whether the man or the elephant, I cannot say." The trick was that the first part of the sentence was called out loudly and the second part quietly so that it was not heard by anyone. Ashwatthama was the name of Dronacharya's son, who was really alive, and one of the war elephants by the same name had been killed. Since Dronacharya could only hear the first part, he dropped his arms in grief and was subsequently killed by his opponents. This was a confusing sentence, a mixture of both truth and untruth. What was its consequence? In addition to Dronacharya's death, for Yudhishthira this partially false utterance resulted in losing his thumb and going to hell.

There is a famous Sanskrit saying: *Satyam bruyat priyam bruyat*, *na bruyat satyamapriyam* "Speak the truth that is pleasant; do not speak the truth that is unpleasant." Thus, even in truth there are two categories: pleasant and unpleasant. Why is this? Truth is known to be intransient and unchanging, as something that is real will always remain real. Yet here, on the one hand, an instruction is given to observe the conduct based on truth and, on the other hand, it is said truth is both pleasant and unpleasant. How can it be possible to only speak the pleasant truth?

When one acquires the capacity to speak the truth, it never means that one should speak out whatever comes to the mind in its crude form. The given situation, context and environment constitute the basis of truth. For correct, proper understanding of the truth, the sadhaka needs to broaden the mind, make it expansive and free. A narrow mindset and thinking cannot form the basis for speaking the truth; in this case, the truth will become unpleasant and inauspicious. If the mind and heart are understanding and expansive, then speaking

the truth becomes auspicious. Therefore, the ability to speak the truth in an auspicious manner will depend on one's state of self-observation, self-analysis and understanding.

Once a woman came to Lord Buddha with her dead child and pleaded with him to bring it back to life. Lord Buddha could have easily said it is not possible, however, he did not. Instead, he told her, "I will certainly bring your child back to life, but you will have to fulfil one condition: you must bring a handful of mustard from any house where death has not occurred." The woman continued to wander throughout the day, from house to house and door to door without success. Nobody was able to give her a handful of mustard after listening to her condition; she could not find any house or family where death had never occurred. She came back to Lord Buddha and making obeisance to him said, "Lord, now I understand that every living being is destined to die." Had Lord Buddha directly told her, "Your child cannot be brought back to life", this would have made her desperate, disappointed, hopeless and sorrowful. In such a depressed state of mind, it would not have been possible for her to understand the truth about life and death. However, when the same idea was conveyed to her with wisdom and understanding, she experienced the truth. This is the appropriate method of conveying the truth.

There are many people in the world who think that some siddha or realized person should put his hand on their head so that all their problems are solved immediately; however, this is a false notion. When the truth is conveyed in the right way, the person worthy of it receives it properly. When it is conveyed wrongly, this does not happen. That is why truth is said to be of two types: pleasant and unpleasant. It is very difficult to understand truth or the conduct based on truth. For this understanding, a special type of guru and a special type of disciple are essential. Tantra says the truth is based on the given situation and on the eligibility of the person concerned.

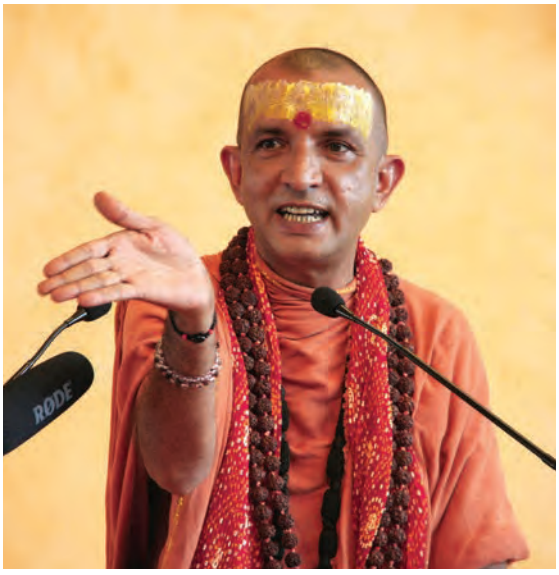
Diksha

One attains these five conducts through *diksha* or initiation. Some matter, object or basis is essential for diksha. According to tantra, the whole of life is diksha; sadhana, self-study, living with the guru, and devotion and service, all come under the ambit of diksha. Its basis is knowledge, and knowledge here means self-awareness. A sadhaka can make progress in life only by cultivating awareness of what he is doing or going to do and also through the instructions received from the guru. In this way, every moment of life becomes full of awareness. Where there is no awareness, there can be no knowledge, diksha, sadhana or karma. Diksha, therefore, implies enhancement in knowledge, consciousness and awareness.

If there is an enhancement in the level of awareness, knowledge and consciousness when the guru-disciple connection is established; if the consciousness of the disciple is transformed after receiving the mantra; if wearing the geru cloth and leading a disciplined life brings about a change in consciousness, one has received diksha.

The root of the Sanskrit word 'diksha' is *diksh*, which here means surrender. When an aspirant starts proceeding on a directed, settled path after surrendering to the guru and adopts a clear goal, intention and thinking, this can be considered diksha. However, since the majority of people lack clarity of goal, intention and thinking, it becomes essential to have a basis; the mantra given by the guru forms that basis. Faith in the guru and the mantra then generates a feeling of surrender. This implies that the meaning and consequence of diksha are the same.

Diksha leads to the enhancement of knowledge, expansion of consciousness and attainment of the state of *nityatva*, continuity, or dharana. The terms nityatva and dharana imply constant, continuous and uninterrupted concentration and an awakened state of consciousness or clarity of consciousness. This leads to the engrossed state of dhyana. The meditator, the process of meditation



and the object of meditation are experienced simultaneously in *dhyana*, whereas in the state of nityatva or dharana, the sadhaka tries to understand them separately. In dhyana, the seer, the seeing and the seen do not exist separately; they merge into one. This experience of final merger or unity results in fulfilment and liberation.

3. Yoga

In the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, the description of yoga follows kaarana and karya, cause and action. This philosophy includes the well known *ashtanga yoga*, Sage Patanjali's eightfold yogic path, consisting of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. It is believed that by following ashtanga yoga, balance and awareness are enhanced in social, practical and personal life.

There are two aspects of yoga: philosophical and practical. According to the philosophical aspect, the aim of yoga is to attain final unity or merger with Shiva. In this state, the individual consciousness is completely united with the Shiva consciousness and all dualities of life cease to exist. One attains the state of detachment and becomes the seer of the past and future by transcending the limitations and the boundaries of time, space and object. To attain this state, yoga practices are essential. The aim of the practical aspects of yoga is to liberate human beings from the bonds of desire. This is why yogic practices have been divided into two groups: *bahya* or external yoga, also called *kriya lakshana yoga*, yoga requiring physical action; and *antarika* or internal yoga, also called *kriya parama lakshana yoga*, yoga involving deep concentration.

During the practice of kriya lakshana or external yoga, the yamas and niyamas are observed in their physical, practical and social forms. These codes of conduct strengthen the mental state of the aspirant, as well as the family and social situations. It is not possible to free oneself from the worldly bindings, attachments and limitations immediately. Thus, the transcendental state should be awakened gradually. In this way, the sadhaka can cultivate the sense of detachment, equanimity and renunciation. As long as the ways of thinking and methods of action, conduct and behaviour are not transformed, it is not possible to attain the state of self-purification. Yet, conversely, the thinking, actions and behaviour of the sadhaka do become positive after attaining self-purification.

Asanas have been prescribed for gaining control over the body. When the body is free from disease and impurities, it can play a positive role in the development of the personality. Pranayama is practised to attain control over the subtle states of mind, to make it calm, quiet, pure and one-pointed, and to remove mental restlessness. *Pratyahara* means to have the capacity to become introverted. This has been accepted as a capacity or a state of mind. It is natural for one to be extroverted rather than introverted. With the help of yama, niyama, asana and pranayama one achieves transformation in thinking, conduct and action; one removes physical obstructions and quietens mental dissipation. This leads to introversion. The moment one becomes introverted, the grip of desire is transcended.

The practices of internal yoga begin when the grip of desire ends. In the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, this stage has been given the name kriya parama lakshana yoga and includes three practices that comprise the last three limbs of yoga: dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The philosophy states clearly that as long as the external yoga is not accomplished, the sadhaka should not enter into the realm of dharana and dhyana.

4. Vidhi

Vidhi is the fourth division of the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy. Although the discussion on each state includes a description of methods or vidhi pertaining to that state, the philosophy also includes a separate presentation of vidhis or means that the sadhaka needs to adopt. The three essential aspects of vidhi are: an ascetic and austere life, pre-eminence of the path of devotion, and restraint of the senses.

An ascetic or austere life is one that is detached and full of virtues. If one has to relinquish everything, then what is the use of money, family and clothes? If one leads a requirement-based life, then what is the purpose of accumulating wealth? Why have property? To feed one's selfishness and for the enhancement of desires? The meaning of an ascetic life is that one should keep oneself away from attachments.

Devotion should be pre-eminent in the life of an ascetic. Faith and surrender to God are the essential requirements to attain the state of perfect devotion. The feeling of *Naham karta*, *Hari karta*, *Hari karta hi kevalam* – "I am not the doer; only He is the doer of all" should be constantly present.

Restraint of the senses has also been emphasized. The control over the fourteen senses – five of action, five of knowledge and the four components of antahkarana – is essential to attain a state of restraint and harmony in life.

5. Duhkhanta: end of suffering

Duhkhanta is the fifth and last division of the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy. It is not possible to attain this state through practice and sadhana; preparation may be possible; however, duhkhanta can only come about through anugraha, grace. Grace comes after the elimination of vikaras, imperfections, and attainment of the pure state. Grace is said to be a glimpse or vision of the divine power. Dynamism, drive and hard work can take one only so far on the path. Beyond that, an invisible divine power holds one's hands and takes one along the transcendental path.

Duhkhanta does not imply the attainment of knowledge, non-attachment and renunciation only; it means the end of all afflictions. In Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, the state of duhkhanta has been divided into two categories: anatmaka avastha and satmaka avastha. *Anatmaka avastha* is the elimination of afflictions and *satmaka avastha* is the attainment of knowledge and *karmashakti*, the power of action. Anatmaka avastha is the state of void and satmaka avastha a state of light or illumination. Yoga takes the sadhaka to the state of illumination, while other philosophies



and methods lead to the experience of void. In tantra, the state of *sayujya*, merger or identification also known as 'yoga', is a satmaka state or a state of illumination.

In the anatmaka state, the sadhaka becomes free from bindings and limitations, but the force of the Self is not yet awakened, whereby one may become the master of the forces. Freedom from external forces has been achieved, yet there is no control over the forces of the Self. One finds oneself in an empty, middle state of void. One school of thought maintains that when a sadhaka goes beyond the state of void, there is entrapment in the bindings of invisible and subtle forces of that realm, and one will have to act under their influence, either at a subtle or a gross level. One will have to act in conformity with the force, capability or state attained there. Again one will be influenced by karmas. Yet, on the basis of this viewpoint, the advocates of the anatmaka state hold that this is the best state, as here the sadhaka is not influenced by the manifestation of any type of forces, situations or modifications of individual consciousness.

Another viewpoint is that one cannot identify oneself with God while in a state of void, as the separate identity continues to be there, different from the existence of Brahman, God or the Higher Self. There is absence of omniscience in this state and there is also lack of strength, creativity and transformation. After attaining this unfulfilled, incomplete state, the evolution of consciousness remains confined to its boundary and does not go beyond that. There is no doubt that compared to the gross, material or physical existence, the state of void is a high state; however, the union of consciousness and energy cannot take place here. As long as these do not unite, one cannot realize divinity; one cannot become a deva or god. One becomes a god only after attaining the state of illumination. When both jnanashakti and karmashakti are acquired, one attains divine realization. One no longer remains a human; one becomes divine. This is the path of light, of illumination, satmaka.

5. VISHISHTA ADVAITA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA

Vishishta Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta encompasses a philosophy that is both dualistic and non-dualistic, like 'dvaitadvaita' discussed in relation to Lakulisha Pashupata. However, it is based on Vaishnava rather than Shaiva thought. It will be seen shortly how this term came to be associated with a Shaiva philosophy.

Preceptors

Vishishta Advaita Siddhanta was developed by Srikanta, a disciple of and successor to Utpalacharya. Utpalacharya lived in the 10th century AD and wrote the treatise *Ishwara Pratyabhijna Karika*, which is considered one of the main texts of Kashmir Shaivism. It includes the description and analysis of advaita. The great thinker and exponent of tantra, Abhinava Gupta, wrote a commentary on it, titled *Vimarshini*. Srikanta presented the pure advaita philosophy of his guru in a new form with certain additions. This came to be known as Vishishta Advaita Siddhanta. A contemporary of Srikanta was Ramanuja. He defined the Vishishta Advaita Siddhanta from the angle of Vaishnava thought and theory, while the Shaiva point of view was put forward by Srikanta. This is the reason why, at different points, a combination of Vaishnava and Shaiva thoughts are found within this system.

Philosophy of unity and duality

In the Vishishta Advaita philosophy, it is believed individuals cannot experience both unity and separateness on the same level of life. The inner capability, perception of mind and consciousness that enable one to understand or experience unity is one aspect. For understanding the experience of diversity, differences and duality, a different state of consciousness is required. Several exponents of the Shaiva and Vaishnava theories believed that there is not much difference between dvaita and advaita. Ultimately, the state of dvaita is transformed into the state of advaita;

diversity is changed into unity. Pashu and pati, jiva and maya are the expressions of dvaita, duality or diversity, which ultimately become unified in the state of advaita, in the form of Shiva. These thinkers believe that the receptivity of consciousness has to be different in order to understand each of these two states, and accordingly, efforts should be made to understand the dvaita, duality and diversity at one level and the state of advaita and unity at another.

Thus, the exponents and followers of Vishishta Advaita believe in unity in duality. They say that although the atma, soul, resides in the body and the antahkarana is experienced in the body, their existence and experience is different from the body. Neither soul nor antahkarana can be said to be the body, nor can the body be accepted as soul or antahkarana. Although all three are within the same form and boundary, they are said to have separate existences.

Every form of matter has its special qualities. A sadhaka perceives matter and its qualities separately. If matter is observed without regarding its qualities, knowledge will remain incomplete. Just as there is no separation between matter and its qualities, similarly pashu, pasha and pati are not separate in the state of unity or *advaita avastha*. However, due to their actions, qualities and states, they are experienced separately.

In the sixteenth century, there lived a saint named Appaya Dikshitar. While analyzing the thoughts and ideas explained above, he came to the conclusion that Srikanta was basically an advaita thinker, yet in order to explain matter and its qualities as well as the qualities of and differences between body and soul, he chose the path of Vishishta Advaita. Many thinkers used to believe, and still believe, that the Vedas and the agamas or tantras are opposed to each other; however, Srikanta did not agree. On the basis of excerpts and quotations from the *Atharvashirsha Upanishad*, *Kalagnirudra Upanishad* and *Brihajjabala Upanishad*, he could clearly demonstrate that Shaiva symbols and Shaiva sadhanas were described in these original vedic texts. Thus, he proved that the Vedas and the Shaiva agamas are not opposed to each other.

This siddhanta also includes some thoughts of the Lakulisha Pashupata and Kashmir Shaiva philosophies. It accepts the three main causes of the Lakulisha Pashupata philosophy, namely pashu, pati and pasha, as well as the thirty-six secondary or minor causes and the two malas (pashutwa mala and karma mala) of Kashmir Shaivism.

Moksha, according to this philosophy, implies Shiva sayujya or *Shiva saroopya*, in other words, merging into supreme consciousness, Shiva, or becoming similar to Him. In the bondless and limitless state of moksha, the sadhaka becomes the master of the unmanifest and subtle forces of the cosmos and consciousness, and attains the highest divine state. Shakti or maya is then considered the chief guna, quality or characteristic of Shiva tattwa.

Shiva is regarded as the greatest as he is free from all bonds, boundaries and limitations. Paramshakti or Adyashakti, his consort, is the cause of the experience-based creation or differences. Experience-based creation means all manifest creation including inanimate life as well as animate life forms such as animals, birds, insects, moths, humans, and others. Paramshakti is the creator of the whole cosmos and world comprising the gross, visible, animate and inanimate, manifest and experiential creations. All are the manifestations of the subtle experiences or states inherent in the Shiva tattwa. Thus, the entire universe is the manifestation of the subtle thoughts or desire of the Shiva tattwa.

The experience of dualities, disunities or differences is not considered an illusion, but rather, quite real. Vedanta says: *Brahma satyam jagat mitthya* – "Brahma is real, the world is unreal." However, in the Vishishta Advaita Shaiva it is declared: *Shiva satya jagat satya* – "Shiva is real and so is the world." The creation is not to be viewed as an illusion or non-reality. The relationship between matter



and its qualities, the sun and sunlight, body and soul, is the same as the relationship between Shiva and the whole manifest creation. Despite all apparent dualities and differences, Shiva is inseparable from Shakti.

Shiva as Brahman

According to this siddhanta, Shiva is Brahman, expansive, all-inclusive and infinite. Shiva is called *Brahmanatwat*; he is worth knowing, therefore he is Brahman. He is auspicious; he can never become the cause of anything inauspicious. Shiva is also *panchakriti* or *panchakarma*, the 'doer of five kinds of actions'. The five actions include: *srishti*, creation; *palana*, maintenance; *samhar*, dissolution; *nirodha*, obstruction, restriction or prevention; and anugraha, grace. Just as the waves and foam of the ocean are part of it and not separate from it, similarly the experience of Shiva is inherent in every matter, whether animate or inanimate, despite the appearance of duality and differences. It is not only related to the form. Name, form and object may be transformed by Shakti. However, the *moola tattwa*, the original element, the original qualities of name, form and object do not change. This is the Shiva tattwa. Hence, on the basis of seeing the external name, form, manifestation, duality or diversity, one cannot assume that Shiva is also subject to transformation or change, as he is not. Cosmic consciousness is unchanging; cosmic energy is continuously changing.

Some commentators state that if Shakti is an integral part of Shiva, then any type of transformation in Shakti would also mean a transformation in the state of Shiva. The question arises, "How can Shiva remain unchanged?" According to the followers of the Vishishta Advaita Siddhanta, the answer is that unity here does not mean complete or absolute unity. Both Shiva and Shakti live together, move together, are influenced by each other's thoughts, obey each other's instructions or directions, but they do not form one united whole. Full or absolute unity means the one supreme existence, but unity or integration means an intimate relationship between separate entities. An example often cited to clarify the meaning of unity is that of clay and claypots. They are not different from each other; the medium of the pots is clay, only the name given to the object and form of the clay has changed. One form, a lump of clay, has changed into another one, a pot, yet the basic element remains the same.

Dissolution

This philosophy states that when material creation ends, names, forms and objects cease

to exist. The names and forms of the soul and the gross causes also come to an end. The boundary line of experiential knowledge is also obliterated. After their dissolution, pashu and pasha go beyond what had been the boundary of experiential knowledge; however, pashu and pasha, jiva and maya do not cease to exist in this state. Only the gross cause ends; the subtle cause continues to exist.

The siddhanta further says the jiva is related to the body, prana and senses only because of pashutwa, animality. If pashutwa were absent, the jiva would not have any contact with the body, prana and senses; it would exist as a unit in the form of atma. As long as the jiva depends on the physical body, it is influenced by external karmas and experiences, and has to take birth again and again. It has always been said the karmas of human beings become the cause of rebirth. It is due to karmas that the jiva acquires and leaves countless bodies. It forgets its real form due to maya, and acquires an unreal, illusory identity of its own existence. Atma, the soul, is the basic existence, but it recognizes itself as jivatma.



Moksha

With regard to moksha, the Vishishta Advaita Shaiva philosophy refers to the ritualistic aspect of vedic thinking, where it is believed that forty types of rituals, methods and *yajnas*, sacrifices, are essential for the attainment of moksha. All these assist the sadhaka in attaining the goal of moksha. The rituals, methods and yajnas begin at the physical level, but the last oblation or offering takes place in the *atmayajna* or yajna of the soul. The external rituals and methods make the antahkarana and consciousness sensitive and receptive, as they generate a particular type of feeling and create a specific kind of state. Physical actions or methods help in eradicating the shortcomings and impurities of the external or physical state and thus help in the attainment of a purer state. The last yajna, atmayajna as discovery of the soul, is experienced after having attained the pure state. In the process of atmayajna, only anugraha can establish the sadhaka on the highway to liberation.

6. VISHESHA ADVAITA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA

Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta is also known as 'Veera Shaiva Siddhanta'. These days it is prevalent in South India, and those who follow it are known as the Lingayat sect. As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, according to historians the propounder of Veera Shaiva Siddhanta was Vasava, a brahmin minister of King Vijjal. Vijjal was originally the commander-in-chief of the king of the Chalukya empire in the twelfth century, in which period the power of the Chalukya dynasty had waned. Taking advantage of the king's weakness, Vijjal declared himself to be

the sovereign and took over larger parts of the empire. Being a follower of the Jain sect, when he became a king he wanted to spread Jainism throughout the areas that were under his control. At that time, the Shaiva sect was the prevalent system of the kingdom, so he started a war against it.

The followers of the Shaiva sect were tortured and put behind bars without reason; efforts were also made to enforce conversion. Ultimately the people rose in a religious revolt. This was not, however, an armed rebellion; it was an ideological and non-violent protest. In defiance, the Shaiva people started wearing a small Shivalingam either around their neck or on their head. To them, the Shivalingam actually meant their life; the removal or breaking of it was synonymous to death. Due to the strength of this feeling during the rebellion, this sect also came to be known as *Veeramata* or the sect of heroes. The inspirer of this revolution was Vijjal's minister Vasava, which is why he is regarded as the modern founder of the Veera Shaiva sect.

Preceptors of the Veera Shaiva sect

Revanarya, Revana Siddha, Marul, Ekoram, Sripati and Panditaradhya were the *acharyas*, or preceptors, of the Veera Shaiva sect and presented its philosophy in the form of a clear, distinct school of thought. It is difficult to say anything exactly about the time period of the life and works of these acharyas, but it is believed they lived between the ninth and thirteenth centuries and spread the Veera Shaiva philosophy during this period. The tradition and the scriptures regard Maharshi Agastya and his wife Renuka as the original founders and exponents of the Vishesha Advaita Shaiva philosophy. From the point of antiquity, it may be said this philosophy has been practised since the days of Maharshi Agastya; however, there must have been some rise and fall in its popularity over the course of time.

Sripati, who wrote a number of commentaries on this philosophy, is considered to be its greatest preceptor. Some of his most important works are *Sripati Bhashya* and *Jivan Mukhya Lingayat*. It is the *Jeevan Mukhya Lingayat* that instructed followers of the sect to wear the Shivalingam and to regard it as life itself: 'So long as you are alive, never remove the Shivalingam from your body.'

This Shaiva philosophy has a number of thought currents, of which the three most important include: samanya, mishra and shuddha. While the followers of samanya and mishra worship both Vishnu and Shiva and regard them as their favourite gods, the adherents of the shuddha sect worship Shiva alone. The shuddha sect also includes Veeramata. Devotion is the path of the Lingayats; anybody wearing a lingam becomes like Lord Shiva. They do not believe in caste divisions, which is why one does not find amongst them castes like *brahmin*, priestly caste; *kshatriya*, warrior caste; *vaishya*, trading caste; and *shudra*, services caste. They accept only one caste and that is Lingayat. The Veera Shaiva philosophy accepts all the twenty-eight important Shaiva agamas.

Names and characteristics

Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta has many names. Given below is a brief description of the names and the corresponding characteristics.

Shuddha Dvaita Advaita: Devotion is predominant in Shuddha Dvaita Advaita, and the path of devotion here is a path to attain merger into Shiva. It has been said that in devotion, one finds two types of feelings: dvaita and advaita. This means the devotee and the object of devotion, which are two, as well as all knowledge and feelings related to them, ultimately become one. One moves from duality to unity. The devotee transforms into the object of devotion. Just as the identity of a river is completely lost when it mingles with the ocean, similarly, the sadhaka surrenders the individual self and loses the personal identity; the identity of the one to whom one surrenders is adopted.

Saheshwara Advaita: The word 'saheshwara' is formed from the prefix *saha*, which means 'with', and Ishwara. In this philosophy, Ishwara,

or pati, is the root cause of creation. The process of creation emanates from the pati and ultimately merges back into it. There are visible dualities, disunities or differences in creation. The seed germinates and its sprout finally takes the form of a tree with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. These are all subject to decay and eventually destroyed. The fruit produces the seed and the same process starts again. In the same way, Shiva is both the beginning and the end. The same experience of Ishwara pervades the entire creation. Hence, the name 'Saheshwara Advaita'.

Vishesha Advaita: The followers of Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta are opposed to Shankaracharya's idea of Nirvishesha Advaita. *Vishesha* implies that which is true and real, while *nirvishesha advaita* means untrue or imaginary advaita. The followers of this philosophy uphold the idea of *saguna brahmavada*, the doctrine of Brahman with qualities, as opposed to Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta and the idea of *nirguna brahmavada* or the doctrine of unqualified Brahman advaita. They disagree with the idea that the world is unreal and imaginary. They argue that if the world were unreal then the seed, Brahman, that produced the tree, the world, would also have to be unreal. According to them, the existence of the seed can never be separate from that of the tree. If the separation between the seed and the tree is accepted, then the following can be said: *Brahma satyam jagat mithya* – "Brahma is real and the world is unreal." However, if the tree is accepted as a transformation of the seed, it is wrong to say the world is unreal and imaginary.

Another point of opposition is related to the difference between practical truth and supreme truth. While practical truth implies the process, ideas and direct experiences related to life and creation, the supreme truth is the experience of the unmanifest, transcendental world. Vedanta regards these two truths as separate and different from each other; the followers of Vishesha Advaita oppose this difference. To them, the practical and the supreme truth are one and inseparable, but experienced at different levels, which they call *shuddha dvaita* and *shuddha advaita*, pure duality and pure non-duality, respectively. To experience shuddha dvaita and shuddha advaita, different types of consciousness are essential, as these states cannot be experienced with the same kind of consciousness.

It is said the sadhaka should first understand the shuddha dvaita and thereafter try to understand the shuddha advaita, for the methods of understanding the two will be different. It is difficult, or rather impossible, to understand even the shuddha dvaita with the average state of the intellect, ideas, thinking and consciousness. Therefore, understanding shuddha advaita is a remote possibility. One may think of jiva and Shiva to be in the same form, but in the states of shuddha dvaita and shuddha advaita a different perception occurs. Fundamentally there is no difference between atma and Shiva tattwa, but atma is atomic and Shiva tattwa is vast and expansive.

In atma, jnanashakti and karmashakti are limited; however, in the form of Shiva, omniscience and omnipotence are experienced. Thus, there are two dimensions of experience: one is limited and the other is unlimited and infinite. Therefore, one should first try to understand dvaita through the medium of devotion, and thereafter enter into the realm of advaita and infinity.

Shiva Advaita: The names Shiva Advaita and Saheshwara Advaita are similar; the main difference being that Shiva Advaita clearly asserts that Shiva is the ultimate reality. There may be many intermediate truths, but Shiva is the supreme, the ultimate truth. Life and jiva are the consequences of the *icchashakti*, creative force or desire, kriyashakti and jnanashakti of Shiva. It is stated that if the icchashakti, kriyashakti and jnanashakti had not emerged in Shiva, he would have always remained established in his eternal nature and there would have been no experience of life and jiva. Therefore, pashu and maya are nothing; only Shiva is the one, the ultimate truth.

Sarvashrutisara Mata: The fifth name of Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta is Sarvashrutisara Mata. This philosophy includes the basic principles of all texts and philosophies.

Shakti Vishishta Advaita: In this siddhanta, Shiva is the cause behind creation and Shakti is the cause of the visible and experiential world. Shiva is the cause of creation in its original or seed form, and Shakti is the cause of the manifest world, likened to the form of a tree with its branches, leaves and fruits.

The followers of this philosophy believe that, as a result of attaining self-realization in the last state, the difference between name, form and object ceases to exist. However, the difference between real and formal, probable and material aspects continues to exist. Probable and material moments of fullness are experienced in Shiva tattwa, and Shakti tattwa includes the fullness of real and formal moments. This is the reason Shiva has been accepted as the cause of creation and Shakti as the visible or manifest cause.

Veera Shaivism: This name is related to the sect of Lingayats discussed earlier. The historical and modern cause behind this name begins with Vasava; however, its ancient tradition actually starts with the dialogue between Maharshi Agastya and his wife Renuka. A reference to this dialogue can be found in a text *Siddhanta Shiromani*. According to this text, *vee* refers to 'vidya', knowledge, in this case meaning the knowledge of unity between jiva and Shiva. According to another text, *Kriyasara*, 'vee' implies doubt or confusion and 'ra' means 'without'. Thus, the text states that Shiva bhakti or Shiva darshan ought to be without doubt or confusion, and with full reverence and faith.

Philosophical considerations

Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta accepts three main causes: pashu, pasha and pati. Within pasha, the impurities consist of pashutwa or animality, maya and karma. The word 'maya' and its explanation have been much emphasized, probably to highlight the



similarities between vedic thought and the Shaiva tantric thought.

Like other Shaiva theories, this one also accepts the thirty-six causes of creation. Of them, five are considered pure: Shiva, Shakti, Sadashiva, Ishwara and shuddha vidya. The ideas related to Shiva and Shakti were discussed earlier. Sadashiva is related to vidyeshwara, Ishwara is related to atma, and shuddha vidya to the fully pure states of jnanashakti, kriyashakti and icchashakti.

Next come the seven shuddha-ashuddha causes, which are a mixture of *shuddha*, pure, and *ashuddha*, impure: maya, kalaa, niyati, kaala, vidya, raga and purusha. *Purusha*, the jivatma or individual soul, acts under the control of the other six shuddha-ashuddha causes.

These are followed by twenty-four minor causes that include: manifest nature, *prakriti*; the three gunas of nature: sattwa, rajas and tamas; the five gross elements, *mahabhootas*; the five subtle elements, tanmatras; the five sense organs, jnanendriyas; and the five organs of action, karmendriyas. According to the Vishesha Advaita Shaiva philosophy, Shakti has three forms: pure form or Shakti, intermediate form or maya, and impure form



or prakriti, nature. In its pure, unmanifest and nirguna state, Shakti is similar to Shiva tattwa. In the state of transformation, or when Shakti is evolving from the unmanifest to the manifest state, she takes the form of maya, and when in the manifest state, her form is that of prakriti. The various objects, forms and gunas experienced during the period of evolution are the forms of nature and include the antahkarana comprised of the rational mind or *manas*, intellect or *buddhi*, *chitta* or individual consciousness, and *ahamkara* or ego.

When comparing the pashu and the state of moksha, this philosophy says that the pashu is entirely different from pati. If the pashu were not different from Shiva, there would be no need of sadhana to return back to the source. The directions and instructions given by the scriptures, gurus, saints and sages imply that Shiva cannot be experienced by the pashu, for the experience of that conscious, unmanifest and invisible entity is not possible through the human body or mind. This is why it is essential to adopt the methods of karma, jnana and *upasana*, worship, to attain the Ishwara tattwa or Shiva sayujya. All the philosophies and schools of thought talk about karma, jnana and upasana. The attainment of Shiva is not possible unless individuals pass through these three processes.

Four states of moksha

According to Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta, there are four states of moksha: salokya, samipya, samya, and yoga or sayujya. *Salokya* means the attainment of a *loka*, state or environment, *samipya* is proximity or nearness, *samya* implies adoption of qualities, and the fourth state is that of yoga or sayujya, unity with or merging into supreme consciousness.

Salokya is attained through effort, action and sadhana. For example, when outsiders come and stay in the ashram, that is salokya for them. They are in a different state from what they were in; it is a different environment for them. Salokya is the first state of mukti. Next is samipya. It means coming closer to the centre through the experience or inspiration of salokya; samipya is a state that, due to close proximity, allows the qualities of the divine to be received, a process referred to as samya. After the adoption of qualities, the awareness of 'I'-ness gradually lessens, and the state of sayujya, merger into the supreme consciousness is attained.

Six states of yoga

Six states of yoga are mentioned in Vishesha Advaita Shaiva Siddhanta and together are known as 'shatka': 1. varna 2. pada 3. mantra 4. kalaa 5. bhuvana, and 6. tattwa. In the last stage of moksha, sayujya, one has to pass through these six yogic states.

Varna here does not mean distinction pertaining to caste, but it is the recognition of atma at the level of kaarana, cause. The aspects of atma such as sakala, akala, and niranjana have already been mentioned; however, one should know the characteristics of kaarana; that is, what is the state the individual attains? If one has already attained the state of sayujya, then what is the meaning of these six states of yoga? One should remember that gross effort

has a limitation. Through gross effort, one tries to move from the state of body awareness to the state of awareness of one's own nature. Then the subtle efforts start. Subtle efforts are made in the state of shuddha-ashuddha; they fall in the realm between maya and purusha. In the state of purusha, the sadhaka transcends raga, niyati, kalaa and other causes and then arrives at the state of shuddha vidya, regarded as one of the main causes.

The attainment of shuddha vidya is also one of the states of sayujya. Yet, one has to go deeper. There is a system of returning back to the ultimate source, and the sequence of return includes the five shuddha kaaranas: shuddha vidya, Ishwara, Sadashiva, Shakti and Shiva. It is in this process of return that one experiences the six yogic states of shatka. Varna and pada are experienced within shuddha vidya. *Padas* are the levels of attainment of Shakti and varna is the recognition of atma at the level of kaarana. After varna and pada are experienced, mantra becomes the means to experience the state of Ishwara. Thereafter, in the state of Sadashiva, one is believed to gain control over all the kalaas and the state of purity is attained. *Bhuvana* means universe, cosmos, creation or the manifest worlds, which implies identification with the Shakti tattwa and the attainment of Adyashakti. The experience of 'I have acquired the form of Shakti Herself' takes place. In the sixth yogic state, *tattwa* means the attainment of the Shiva tattwa. Thus, the subtle distinctions of the ultimate state of sayujya have been clarified here.

Anugraha

Anugraha, grace, is also of six types: 1. shravana, manana, nididhyasana 2. Sadashiva tattwa sakshatkara 3. Shiva-Shakti yoga 4. paroksha darshana 5. kalyana vibhooti, and 6. turiya avastha.

As a result of *shravana*, that which is heard or revealed through scripture; *manana*, or contemplation; and *nididhyasana*, profound and deep meditation, changes take place in the intellect, emotions and the internal mind. This is helpful in building a foundation for devotion and also helps in gaining control over mental, emotional and thinking processes. They are transformed in such a way that the impurities of vikara and mala are removed. Therefore, these three together are considered to be a state of anugraha.

The second state of anugraha, Sadashiva tattwa sakshatkara, may be explained as the illumination of 'I' and 'He' together. 'I' involves *purushartha*, strong drive or effort. Once the experience begins that 'He is luminous and I want to attain Him', then begin the efforts to bring oneself to that level. The feeling that 'I should also become pure, sacred and as luminous as He is' becomes strong. In worldly life, this is possible through *shaktipat*, an energy or experience transmitted by the guru to a worthy disciple. When a sadhaka or disciple is ready, the guru awakens the light within the sadhaka; he unveils the light and the experience of the Self begins to occur in the form of 'I and He are one.'

Shiva-Shakti yoga is the third state of anugraha. One needs to looks at Shiva-Shakti yoga not as an abstract or subtle form, rather in its pragmatic form. In this context, *shatchakra bhedan* or piercing of the six chakras is discussed, which means the consciousness should be raised from mooladhara to sahasrara, where the Shakti of mooladhara merges into Shiva established in sahasrara. This Shiva-Shakti yoga has been seen as a form of anugraha. To attain this, one has to make effort and practise the sadhana of kundalini yoga.

The fourth anugraha is *paroksha darshan*, which implies going into and coming out of different levels and states of consciousness effortlessly. Through willpower, the sadhaka moves through the gross or subtle levels of consciousness, whether it is the level of a chakra or a realm above the chakras. This may also be described as control over the capacity of the mind and consciousness, only possible after Shiva-Shakti yoga, for in Shiva-Shakti yoga Shakti has already been awakened, raised up to sahasrara and merged into Shiva.

Kalyana vibhooti is the fifth anugraha. *Vibhooti* means power, ability or siddhi, perfection. *Kalyana* means beautiful, good, auspicious and virtuous. Therefore, *kalyana vibhooti* implies capacity or power to do good. One is in the state of kalyana vibhooti when one can do good for others and bring happiness to others.

The sixth and the last anugraha is *turiya avastha*, the attainment of moksha, transcendence and liberation. Thus, in these six states of anugraha, insight is offered into the process the sadhaka has to go through when progressing from social and worldly life to the life of a siddha, and finally reaching the state of a liberated soul.

Shravana, manana, nididhyasana refer to the practical and social life of the individual. The illumination of 'I' and 'He', the grace of the guru and Shiva-Shakti yoga constitute the life that is undergoing the process of sadhana, known as *sadhanatmaka jivana*. Paroksha darshan implies control over the subtle states of sadhanatmaka jivana. Kalyana vibhooti and turiya avastha are the attainments respectively of *siddhatwa*, fulfilment, and moksha, liberation.

7. NANDIKESHWARA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA

Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanta is the seventh important siddhanta of the Shaiva Siddhantas. Nandikeshwara was a rishi and believed to be a contemporary of Sages Panini, Patanjali and Vasishtha. There is a story that says once Panini, Patanjali, Vasishtha, Nandikeshwara and one or two other rishis were sitting together and discussing some aspects of Sanskrit. As they were unable to clarify some of the rules, they sat in meditation and concentrated on Maheshwara. He appeared before them, listened to their question, played his *damaru*, hand drum, and disappeared. The sound of the damaru was in the form of *nada* or *shruti*, subtle sound vibration that reveals sacred knowledge. Panini gave this nada or sound the form of vowels and consonants, known as the *Maheshwara Sutra*. Panini, however, still could not understand some relevant points and so he continued to discuss the same with Nandikeshwara who explained to him the entire Sanskrit grammar and Shaiva Siddhanta in only twenty-six sutras. These sutras form a part of the text titled *Nandikeshwara Koshika*. This text, classified as part of the Advaitavada Shaiva darshan, the monistic Shaiva philosophy, is considered to be the original text on Sanskrit grammar.

The incident indicates the science of transmission, that is, to explain something in a subtle or seed form. Seeing a seed, one can imagine the development of the tree from it. It is in this sutra form that Sanskrit was taught to Panini by Nandikeshwara. Although only the first two of the twenty-six sutras of Nandikeshwara are related to Sanskrit grammar, Panini was able to create the entire *Maheshwara Sutras* on the basis of these two sutras, which are today known as *pratyaharas*. Nandikeshwara was perhaps the first founder and propounder of advaitavada and his work had great impact on the monistic philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, which includes many of his advaita sutras and thoughts on Shaivism. Similarly, Lakulisha Pashupata Siddhanta and Vishishta Advaita Siddhanta all developed after Nandikeshwara.

The only available commentary on the *Nandikeshwara Koshika* was written by Upamanyu ,who lived in the tenth or eleventh century. He wrote a commentary on the twenty-six sutras of *Nandikeshwara Koshika* and it was entitled *Tattwa Vimarshini*. This commentary of Upamanyu had a great impact on the Kashmir Shaiva philosophy. On the basis of these sutras, the important propounders, exponents, thinkers and scholars of Kashmir Shaivism such as Kshemaraja, Utpalacharya, Abhinava Gupta and Somananda further developed the philosophy of advaitavada. Their ideas are contained in works like *Trika* and *Spandakarika*.

Main considerations

There are three main currents of Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanata, which are



similar to the three general characteristics of spirituality: one, spiritual life and spiritual sadhana lead to the attainment of the ultimate spiritual truth; two, the sadhaka experiences the truth; three, reverence or faith with devotion forms the foundation of sadhana. Thus, spiritual life, spiritual sadhana and *shraddha* or faith, have been declared as the three main currents of Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanata, as well as characteristics of spirituality.

Spiritual life and spiritual sadhana are not limited to human beings only; each and every object, whether animate or inanimate, has a spiritual 'field'. Animals, birds and plants also have the experience of a spiritual state. The invisible, unmanifest Shiva is the cause behind the creation of everything. When the cause of creation is one, its essence will certainly be experienced or observable in some way, whether the created form is animate or inanimate. The essence of that truth is present even in the consciousness hidden in a stone as well as in animals, birds and plants; every living being and every object has a spiritual life, a spiritual field that is related to Shiva.

Whoever is ready to tread the spiritual path, to lead the spiritual life and to practise spiritual sadhana, will certainly attain the truth. The method consists of effort. The adoption of a path, a system of life and a sadhana are the indications of karma and purushartha. No sadhaka adopts spiritual life without karma and purushartha. Shraddha, faith or reverence, is another necessary aspect. Shraddha is the starting point and the foundation of sadhana. Only shraddha will create the motivation to move further. Shraddha rests on four cornerstones: self-confidence; the connection between guru and disciple; sadhana; and Ishwara or God Himself.

Advaitavada as Sanskrit sutras

In its description of advaitavada, both the terms 'Shiva' and 'Brahman' are used to denote the one, absolute reality. Therefore, it can be said this philosophy has been presented in a universally acceptable manner; a Vaishnava can see the supreme power in the form of Vishnu and a Shaiva in that of Shiva.

The advaita or monism of this siddhanta is presented in the form of a sutra or formula 'a-i-u'. In Sanskrit, 'a' is the first vowel. It is, in a sense, omnipresent because it is inherent in all consonants, as the presence of 'a' is essential for the pronunciation of any letter. Just as 'a' is omnipresent, so too is Brahman or Shiva tattwa omnipresent. There is no experience or time in life when Ishwara or Shiva is not present, or the experience of his existence is lacking. He is omnipresent, his form is light; he is luminous and all-pervading.

The letter 'i' represents *chitkalaa*, it is Brahmashakti, the supreme power and is completely free, fully liberated. Another name for it is *chitti*. Chitti and chitkalaa, Brahmashakti and Shivashakti are different names for the same Shakti. This Shakti is independent of Brahman or Shiva. Looking at Sanskrit letters or words, it is seen that 'i' is not used as much as 'a'. It is seldom used; 'a' is replaced with 'i' only if a particular form has to be given to a letter. Thus, just for expressing the existence or experience of Brahman, his real form is replaced with the form of Shakti. If 'i' is added to 'ka', it is pronounced 'ki' and not 'ka-i'. Here 'a' has disappeared, become subtle,



and 'i' manifested itself. Thus the manifest experience in this world is always of the Shakti, not of Brahman.

The ruler, the controller of chitkalaa or Shakti, or the form of God that can be experienced in the manifest state is represented by the letter 'u'; 'u' is the pati, the master of Shakti. Thus, these are three main categories, kinds, divisions and causes, which taken together, constitute the first Sanskrit pratyahara sutra, namely 'a-i-u-na'.

Next come 'ri' and 'lri' which indicate mind and action, respectively. Generally, mind, intellect and chitta are considered to be the divisions of prakriti. Mind is the form of Brahman and action is Shakti. The realm of mind is subtle and unmanifest. No one can have the manifest experience of mind; it is the action, the function of the mind that is experienced. When a thought or a particular emotion is observed, one cannot say this thought or emotion is the mind itself; the mind is a subtle world. This is why the mind and action are considered to be Brahman and Shakti, respectively. The external form of karya or action is called maya, where maya is only a manovritti or tendency of mind. *Manovrittis* include all kinds of functions or actions: gross, subtle and causal karmas are all under the control of maya. *Raga*, attachment and *niyati*, destiny, are nothing but an extension of the karmas of the individual. Destiny is karma. There can be neither destiny nor attachment without karma. Thus, the relationship between Brahman and mind, maya and karma is inherent in the sutra 'ri, lri, ka'.

8. RASESHWARA SHAIVA SIDDHANTA

Raseshwara Shaiva Siddhanta is not actually a philosophy; it is a science. It is a form of applied chemistry that makes the body pure and immortal. Its followers believe in the relationship between soul and Maheshwara or supreme consciousness. They maintain that liberation in life depends upon the body and good physical health. It is stated that as long as the body is not healthy, attainment of liberation is impossible. Therefore, efforts are made to make the body free from disease, old age and death.

In ancient times, spiritual aspirants often suffered from physical ailments and some of them even died untimely deaths. This generated some frustration in the minds of sadhakas. They felt that with a diseased body, one could not perform one's sadhana. Moreover, the ailments and diseases caused an obstruction in the system of their sadhana. Thus, in order to prevent ailments from interfering, they started experimenting with various methods for maintaining their physical health. Eventually, they adopted a combination of yoga and the science of alchemy.

Use of mercury and mica

This science became prevalent as complementary to yogic practices. The basic theory behind it was that if the body of the sadhaka was pure and healthy, one would be able to perform any practice quite easily, and attain perfection in the practice without any obstruction. It was found that the medicinal use of purified mercury and mica makes the body pure and completely free from diseases; it attains immortality. As a result of the efforts of sadhakas over the ages, the medicinal use of mercury and mica actually started.

There is a belief that mica and mercury were produced from the bodies of Shakti and Shiva,

respectively. According to legend, once upon a time, Agni, the fire god, set out with the semen of Lord Shiva and it became so hot and heavy that Agni could not hold it. Three-fourths of it fell into water and one-fourth on land. Skanda was born out of the portion that fell into the water. He became the army commander of the gods. To obtain the semen that fell on land, the gods then had to dig very deep. Accordingly, mercury is actually found about twenty-five thousand feet below the surface of ground.

Mercury itself is a poison; it causes death if taken even in a small quantity. It is impossible to take it in crude form, therefore it is must be purified. The method of purification of mercury is described, for example, in the mantras of the famous stotra, *Sri Suktam*. Mercury is processed first by heating at a particular temperature for a certain period of time and from this, mercury ash is prepared. Next, this is mixed either with gold ash or silver ash and the mixture is administered for years in a minute quantity: one dose is the amount that could be raised on the point of a needle. Buddhists have also been using mercury, and in Buddhist philosophy a description of the science of mercury or alchemy is found. Nagarjuna, a Buddhist thinker, is said to have brought mercury from Egypt, then purified and perfected it. He is regarded as a *rasa siddha*, one who has attained perfection through the practice of the Raseshwara system.

There are many texts in Vaishnava philosophy referring to the Raseshwara system, such as *Parada Vijnana* and *Rasa Upanishad*. This subject has been discussed in tantric texts, too. It is found in the Puranas, including the *Shiva Purana*. In the Upanishads also there is a discussion about eighty-four siddhas, all of whom were rasa siddhas. Rasa siddha means that these siddhas, or perfected beings, attained immortality with the use of mercury. Gaudapadacharya, paramguru of Adi Shankaracharya, was also a siddha who did research on mercury.

A number of texts suggest that purified mercury has two characteristics: lauha siddhi and deha siddhi. *Lauha siddhi* means purified mercury can transform iron into gold when the two are brought together. Many tantrics claim even today that they can convert iron into gold, and this claim is not imaginary; it is factual. Siddhas can do this. The process has been explained in some Upanishads and tantric texts. Lauha siddhi is followed by the description of *deha siddhi*, the capacity of purified mercury to give immortality to the human body. The nature of its success has been mentioned in the *Vagbhatta Samhita*, a text where a list of twenty-seven rasa siddhas is given. The description of the methods for attaining lauha siddhi and deha siddhi are also found in other texts such as *Prasarnava Tantra*, *Prashna Upanishad* and *Rasamahodadhi*.

The texts say the use of *rasayana*, a term used for this science as one of the eight systems of ayurveda, first of all, makes the body healthy and free from disease. Thereafter, if the sadhaka attains moksha in this life through sadhana, he may become immortal and attain Shiva sayujya while in the physical body. However, if one's destiny, fate or karma is such that they do not allow one to attain moksha in this life, upon death the body will dissolve and disintegrate completely, without even a single hair left behind. Nobody would be able to know where the body has disappeared to; it will vanish in space. Thus a rasa sadhaka experiences a different type of death, not an ordinary death in which the soul departs from the body, leaving it empty and useless. The body of Sant Kabir, also one of the rasa siddhas, turned into flowers upon his death.

According to religious belief, there is a provision for a rasa siddha or rasa sadhaka to worship a *rasalingam* or Shivalingam made of mercury. In this type of sadhana, the sadhaka wears the Shivalingam and repeats a Vaishnava mantra dedicated to Lakshmi, not to Shiva. There is also provision for rasa diksha. The guru provides rasa diksha to the disciple; the guru gives the disciple the Lakshmi bija mantra and explains the system of worship. The system of worship includes all the provisions for the

worship of the rasalingam pooja, abhisheka, mantra, japa, and other practices. After passing through these processes of sadhana, the sadhaka attains Ishwara. The propounders of this theory hold that whoever adopts this type of sadhana will certainly attain moksha.

There is no text on the Raseshwara philosophy that expounds its theories and processes systematically and clearly. It was not a philosophy, but a process that was prevalent among the exponents of dualism. In the text *Rasarnava*, one finds mention of shaktipat, grace, pasha, isha, Sadashiva and more. The thinking and philosophy of dvaitavada has been followed in these contexts.

When talking about Ishwara, the statement of the rasa sadhaka is: *Sarvajnah sarvakarta cha sukshmarupo niranjanah*, *icchaya kurute srishti icchaya samharet jagat* – "Ishwara is omniscience. The Doer of all that is done has a subtle form, is spotless or free from defects, creates and destroys the universe as per His will." Another mantra, *Yasmin sarvam yatah sarvam yah sarvam sarvatashchayah*, expresses an idea similar to the famous shanti mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*: *Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate*, each expressing the indivisibility of the ultimate reality. Yet one more mantra, *Veshcha yashcha sarvasya mayonityam tasmai sarvatmane namah*, means that whatever is manifest has emanated from the *sarva*, all or wholeness, merges into the sarva, and only sarva is sarva. The essence of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is clearly visible in these mantras related to the discussion on Ishwara.

The propounders of the theory declare that yoga and the system of sadhana is the medium of liberation. Their philosophy is that of dualism and the religious system of worship is rasalingam pooja. Their view of liberation is expressed in the mantra: *Ajaramara dehasya Shivatadatmyavedanam*, *jivanamuktirmahadevi devanamapi durlabham* – "Liberation in life is attained when the body is made ever young and immortal and the knowledge of being alike to Shiva is gained; this state is difficult to attain even by the gods." The view that is presented here is of being like Shiva, it is not 'acquiring the form of Shiva'. The feeling is 'I am not Shiva, but I am alike Shiva', which makes the dvaita, duality, of this philosophy clearly evident.

In summary

Although there are other schools of thought within Shaiva tantra, the schools presented here constitute the eight main schools of thought in Shaivism. As can be seen, in many regards there are fundamental similarities about the nature of suffering, the current condition of the pasha, methods to liberate the pashu from the bindings, the grace required, and the ultimate merger with Shiva, cosmic consciousness. There are also significant differences between the systems and their philosophies, which add depth and richness towards understanding the nature of cosmic consciousness and the means to attain it.



3

Shakta Tantra



All philosophies of tantra strive towards the same goal. Whether Shaiva or Shakta tantra, Ganapatya or Saurya tantra, each one of them has the same aim: the realization and experience of one's true, original form, achieved through the process of fully understanding one's life and eradicating the impurities from it.

The various sects and philosophies have prescribed different methods and systems for attaining this goal. Shaiva tantra, for example, talks about three main *kaaranas* or causes: pashu, pasha and pati. The *pashu*, a person living at the instinctive animal level, makes every effort to realize the *pati*, lord or master, by removing *pasha*, bondage. Shiva is the pati.

In Shaiva tantra, the Shiva tattwa is the most important aspect. All the methods, rites and yogic systems followed in Shaiva tantra have only one goal: as a result of passing through the different stages of sadhana, the sadhaka should ultimately attain the eternal state of Shiva. In this process, one must become aware of, but not stop at, the intermediate states characterized by the different levels of involvement of Shakti. Therefore, in Shaiva tantra the reference to Shakti is only contextual; the aim is to acquire the form of Vidyeshwara by awakening the Shakti

and ultimately attaining the state of Shiva.

In Shakta tantra, Shakti is considered the most important factor, for she is the one who leads the individual soul to Shiva. It is only through the awakening and *anugraha*, grace, of Shakti that the sadhaka can become capable of attaining the anugraha of Shiva. As long as the sadhaka does not understand Shakti, as long as Shakti is not awakened, the aspirant will continue to remain bound and unable to proceed further. This is why Shakti has been given primary importance in the Shakta philosophy.

The discussions in the various Shaiva systems do not clearly explain the different forms of Shakti. Only pati and his various states and forms have been discussed. Shakti has been referred to merely as his maya or energy that has to act according to the wishes and desires of Shiva. The main element in Shaiva philosophies is the pashu, which undergoes various kinds of afflictions, performs karma, and enjoys the fruits thereof.

The Mother form

According to the propounders and thinkers of Shakta philosophies, the realization of the Shakti tattwa is easier because Shakti represents the mother. If the Shiva tattwa and Shakti tattwa are viewed as father and mother respectively, then certainly it is in the mother that one finds the greater degree of softness, affection, fondness, compassion and love. The concept of father in one's life is that of a teacher or guardian who guides and disciplines his offspring, punishing them for any faults or wrongdoings. Generally, one would not expect motherly fondness, affection, compassion and love from the father. While intellect is the dominant element in the father, it is the mother who is full of emotion and sentiment.

The Shakta thinkers developed this motherly form after a great deal of thinking and contemplation, concluding that reverence, faith, devotion and surrender are essential for realizing the fondness, love and affection of the Divine Mother. A father can neglect or abandon his children, but a mother can never do so.

Upanishadic and tantric definitions

The Upanishads have interpreted Shakti in the form of Maya. It has been said that Shakti herself creates Maya, and then wanders in the realm of maya in the form of Maya. In her manifest state, she becomes visible in the form of nature. The form of Shakti, however, undergoes a radical change when she withdraws her maya. Maya, or the manifest state with her innumerable forms, is the play of Shakti. Her original form is quiet, beautiful and auspicious. According to the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, the three qualities of *bala*, *kriya* and *jnana*, or force, action and knowledge respectively, are naturally inherent in Shakti. The word *iccha*, desire, which is usually mentioned together with kriya and jnana when discussing the three qualities of Shakti, has not been used here; instead, the word 'bala' has been used.

The Upanishads have attributed the aspect of iccha to Brahman, as it was due to his desire that Shakti took the form of Prakriti or Maya and created the manifest world. It is quite clear that the form Shakti takes in this situation is that of kriya or action, therefore kriya cannot be considered to be different or separate from Shakti. Another form of Shakti is that of jnana. Jnana must be present, whether in a conscious or unconscious, gross or subtle form, as jnana is the cause of kriya. Force or bala is the third quality of Shakti. It is related neither to physical strength nor mental determination, willpower or drive. Bala implies an internal capacity, capability or initiative. In the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, Shakti has been defined as: *Svabhaviki jnana balah kriya* – "Jnana, bala and kriya are naturally inherent in Shakti."

The description of Shakti in Shakta tantra can be exemplified by the following Sanskrit verses:

Tvam shaktireva jagataam akhila prabhavaa.

You are the power of this universe that is capable of creating and dissolving the entire creation or cosmos.

Tvam nimittam cha sakalam khalu bhaava maatram.

You are the efficient cause, *nimitta kaarana*. Shakti is the efficient cause of creation, its pre-eminent aspect.

Tvam kreedasi nija vinirmita moha jaale.

You are playing in the network of illusion created by yourself, and take the manifest form from the unmanifest one. The network of illusion or *maya*, experienced by the individual soul, has been created by you, and it is you who is experiencing it.

Naatye yathaa viharate svakrite natou vai.

Just as a rope dancer demonstrates his show, similarly, you are also showing your play and making others dance, too.

These mantras explain the concept of Shakti, including all her forms and actions, and also denote that Shakti herself is a part of the dimension she has created.

Background of the ten mahavidyas

In the Shaiva tantras, Lord Shiva is the guru and Mother Parvati is his disciple. In the Shakta tantras, Shakti is the guru and Shiva is her disciple. Not only is their guru-disciple relationship reversed, but their forms are also curious and peculiar: while the Shiva form is beautiful, quiet and auspicious, the Shakti form is wrathful and angry. Sometimes this form of Shakti becomes so violent that it causes fear even in Shiva.



These manifestations of Shakti have collectively been called 'the ten mahavidyas'. The word *maha* is translated as great. *Vidya* has been derived from the Sanskrit root *vid*, which means to know, to understand. The meaning of *mahavidya*, therefore, is supreme or higher knowledge. There are two forms of vidya: apara and para. *Apara vidya* or lower worldly knowledge, which can be acquired through the senses, prana, the rational mind, intellect, chitta and ego. *Para vidya* or higher transcendental knowledge cannot be attained in this same way. Para vidya is a state of self-realization, a state of achievement and accomplishment. In Shakta tantra, this higher knowledge of para vidya has been explained in the form of the ten mahavidyas.

The spiritual science of the ten mahavidyas is very deep and awe-inspiring. There are many stories related to the origin of the ten mahavidyas, but one of them stands out as the most popular. Once, Lord Shankara (another name for Shiva) became displeased with Mother Parvati and set out for another place. As Shiva started off for his journey, the Mother changed her form and stood on his path, obstructing his way. Shiva changed his path and direction, but again the Mother stood before him in yet another form. Lord Shiva tried to go in ten different directions, yet found Mother Parvati standing always before him in a new form, preventing him from proceeding onward. Ultimately, Shiva became despondent and gave up. Thus, the ten mahavidyas or forms of the Mother were born.

Ten original forms of Shakti

The following are the ten mahavidyas, the ten original forms of Shakti and ten basic systems of sadhana:

1. Kali
2. Tara
3. Shodashi, also known as Srividya, Sridevi, Tripura Sundari or Kameshwari
4. Bhuvaneshwari
5. Bhairavi
6. Chhinnamasta
7. Dhumavati
8. Vagala or Bagala
9. Matangi
10. Kamala

Each of these forms or vidyas has a different guna or quality that is symbolic in nature: Kali is the first vidya and she is seen as a fierce, furious, terrible power. Tara, the second vidya, represents the power of speech; Tripura Sundari is the third vidya and she represents realization of beauty and bliss; Bhuvaneshwari, the fourth, represents the power of sight, and Chhinnamasta is the power of dissolution or destruction as the fifth vidya. Dhumavati, the sixth vidya, represents the power of ignorance or inconscience; Bagalamukhi is seventh and is seen as the power of obstruction or hindrance; Bhairavi is eighth and represents the power of restraint, while Matangi, the ninth, represents the power of playfulness. Kamala is the tenth and last vidya, representing virtuous power. These ten vidyas are related to the ten senses and ten types of internal receptivity.

There is a mantra in the Samkhya philosophy: *Ajamekam lohita shukla krishnam*. *Ajaa* stands for Prakriti, *Aja* for Purusha, and the remaining words indicate the colours red, white and black, representing the three gunas of Prakriti. The one, original nature has expressed itself in red, white and black forms. This idea is reflected in the ten mahavidyas as well. Amongst the first three vidyas, Kali is *krishna*, black; Tara is *shukla*, white; Sridevi is *lohita*, red. For acquiring an understanding of the ten mahavidyas, the secrets pertaining to the three gunas of Prakriti have been explained through a description of the first three vidyas. This knowledge is *sadhanatmaka*, or experienceable through sadhana, rather than philosophical.



Manifestations of higher consciousness

All the mahavidyas are the different manifestations and qualities of higher consciousness through which creation becomes possible. In fact, every vidya is a symbol of one dimension of *Brahmavidya* or spiritual science, therefore each vidya is complete in itself. According to tantra, it is essential to study and practice each one until fulfilment is achieved in that vidya, for this is the only way to fully understand the many dimensions of Brahmavidya.

It is necessary to understand the vidyas in all their aspects. To recognize a person, for instance, it is not enough to observe only one trait or quality; one must see and understand the conduct and behaviour. By observing someone's behaviour and thoughts in action, one can judge whether the person is irritable or unruffled, hot-tempered or serene, licentious or virtuous, an extrovert or an introvert, talkative or moderate in speech, social or a lover of solitude. Just as one can understand a person by observing the different expressions of the personality, these ten powers are also the different expressions or manifestations of the higher consciousness. This is why it has been said that a sadhaka should, first of all, understand one of the mahavidyas fully and

only then enter into the realm of another. Tantric philosophy has made it quite clear that as a sadhaka passes from one state of consciousness to another, a relationship is gradually established with the consciousness and its internal manifestations.

Three categories of the mahavidyas

The ten mahavidyas are divided into three categories or sects: Kaula or Shakta, Mishra and Samaya.

Kaula: The word 'kaula' is derived from its Sanskrit root *kula*, which means Shakti. Thus, the idea of Shakti forms the basic definition of the word *kaula* in this context and does not simply imply 'tradition' or 'heredity' as is most often understood. Followers of the Kaula system and those who perform Kaula sadhana are known as Kaulas. They are also called Shaktas.

Acharya Allaka and Bhalaratna are regarded as the main exponents of the Kaula path. Historically speaking, it is difficult to say when these two men lived. It is also not known, or possible to establish, whether they were actually two people or the same person with two different names. Various Kaula sects hold different views in this regard. One theory is that the Kaula philosophy developed at the same time as the development of the Pashupata Shaiva Siddhanta. Allaka was a disciple of Vishwarupa, the preceptor of the Pashupata philosophy, and it is for this reason that some thinkers hold the opinion that Allaka propagated the Kaula sect in order to gain social recognition for the Pashupata darshana, and also to highlight the importance of the form of Mother Shakti. This is one possible reason for the many similarities between the Kaula sect and the Pashupata theories.

There are about fifty-four tantric texts and *samhitas*, collections of hymns, related to the Kaula sect, the most important of which include: *Kaula Nirnaya*, *Kaula Tantra* and *Kularnava Tantra*. Kaula literature also includes Arnava, Yamala, Nirnaya and other various samhitas and texts. Some people maintain that the total number of Kaula texts is sixty-four and there are many others who suggest that the number is more than one hundred.

Mishra: The Mishra sect has special importance in Shakta tantra. Here, the sadhanas are related to Kali, Tara and Tripura Sundari. In this sect, the Shakti vidyas have been divided into three parts, known as Kadi vidya, Sadi vidya and Hadi vidya, which correspond to Kali, Tara and Tripura Sundari, respectively.

The name of each of these three parts originates from the *bija* or seed mantras of the deity to which it corresponds. The bija mantras of Kali are *Ka*, *E*, *I*, *La* and *Hreem*, and the name *Kadi* simply means 'that which begins with ka'. The names Hadi and Sadi are derived in the same way from 'ha' and 'sa', respectively. Hadi vidya relates to Tripura Sundari or Sridevi, which has the bija mantras of *Ha*, *Sa*, *Ka*, *La*, *Hreem*, and Sadi vidya relates to Tara which has the bija mantras *Sa*, *Ka*, *Ha*, *La*, *Hreem*.

The three mantra systems together are known as the *uttaramnaya* mantra and they became prevalent in the regions of Bengal, Mithila and Kashmir, as well as in Kerala and Tibet. There is not much difference between the three vidyas insofar as the system of worship is concerned; however, differences do lie in the distinctions between the devis, their mantras, yantras and methods of meditation.

Samaya: This is the third category of the Shakta philosophy. It is a tantric system combined with brahmanical or vedic rites and practices. This sect has five important samhitas: *Vasishtha Samhita*, *Shuka Samhita*, *Sanata Samhita*, *Sanandan Samhita* and *Sanatkumar Samhita*. The principle text is *Shubhagama Panchaka* and the followers of this sect worship *Adyashakti*, the primordial power.

This sect is full of rites and observances and is concerned with *sattwic*, balanced or harmonious, sadhana. Presumably, this sect was propounded to combine Shakta tantra with aspects of the vedic tradition in order to make the Shakta philosophy congruent with the vedic tenets, as its development occurred at a time

when other tantric philosophies such as Shaiva, Saurya, and so on were on the decline.

The basis of this sect includes devotion and worship, the observance of yama and niyama and the practices of meditation, japa and austerity. The philosophical concepts of this sect are based not on Shiva and Shakti, but on Brahman and Maya, where they have accepted Brahman as the eternal power and Maya as Bhagavati or Adyashakti. Methods and practices are prescribed for the attainment of the Brahma tattwa through the worship of Bhagavati.

Connecting with gods and goddesses

In tantra there are three categories of gods and goddesses: lower, intermediate, and higher. The gods and goddesses of the lower category place obstructions on the path of spiritual aspirants. Their aim is to maintain Nature and sustain creation, therefore they obstruct the path of the sadhakas who want to transcend the realm of Nature or creation. This function could be compared to that of speed bumps for slowing down road traffic. These energies or 'spirits', often identified as ghosts, demons or evil spirits, are the gods and goddesses of the lower category. A sadhaka cannot make spiritual progress by controlling them or seeking help from them.

Gods and goddesses of the intermediate or middle category can cause both the rise and fall of a sadhaka; both these capacities are inherent in them. They observe or discover the intentions, feelings and sentiments of a sadhaka. If one wants to use them or have their cooperation, then one must come to know them. Gods and goddesses of this category motivate the sadhaka to ask for a boon, gift, favour or blessing. They catch his wishes and desires. If the wishes and desires of a sadhaka are holy, pure and pious, they ensure his upward movement and spiritual development. If, however, his desires are impure, they cause his decline and spiritual downfall.

Gods and goddesses of the higher category occupy the highest realms of Brahmavidya and the ten forms of Shakti belong to this group. The sadhanas related to the gods and goddesses of lower, intermediate and higher categories are respectively known as lower, apara and para sadhanas. The mahavidyas are related to *para* sadhana, the sadhana that leads to transcendence. If a sadhaka is able to establish contact with a particular mahavidya, then this contact becomes so deep and abiding that he always finds himself under her protection. All physical, mental and material desires of the sadhaka cease to exist.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a tantric devotee and his relationship with Kali was very deep and abiding. She was his mother; he used to talk to her. Sheer remembrance was so intoxicating for him that the moment he remembered her, he would lose all awareness of the material world. He received jnana, higher knowledge, from the Mother and all his material desires came to an end.

When a higher relationship is established between a sadhaka and a god or goddess, the body and *siddhis*, attainments, become meaningless. The entire physical or material life loses its hold. In India, many saints and sages like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have been born who have had the experience of Shakti in their lives. Both Ramprasad and the famous aghori tantric from Bengal, Vama Khepa, attained direct experience of Shakti in their lives.

The aim of tantra is to establish contact with the higher category of gods and goddesses, thereby attaining higher states. Tantra never permits a sadhaka to have contact with the lower or intermediate categories of gods and goddesses; in fact, it is strongly opposed to such contacts.

FIRST MAHAVIDYA: KALI

Kali is the highest among the ten mahavidyas. Reference to her is found in the *Rigveda* where she is seen as being the goddess of the night, the Ratri Devi. In this form, Kali brings darkness, dissolves every form and produces fear. Both auspicious and beastly activities take

place in darkness. Ratri Devi is referred to as the sister of Usha Devi, the goddess of the dawn. Night is followed by dawn. The Vedas, therefore, view these two as sisters who always live together and follow each other. When the tantric image or vision of Kali came forth, the concept and philosophy of Ratri Devi was incorporated within it.

Kali and Kaala

Kaala means time. Shiva is considered to be the form of kaala, the *Mahakaala*, meaning great or endless time, and Kali is considered to be the power of time, or *kaalashakti*.

How then does Shiva, the Supreme Element, the Mahakaala, transform Himself from the unmanifest state into a manifest form? How can this action be comprehended or understood? The transformation of the Supreme Element from the eternal and formless into a limited form can be understood through a series of events having motion and action.

If one supposes that as the first action, the first motion of creation, Shakti transformed herself from an unmanifest state into the form of an element, then this transformation can be called an event. The series of events, actions and transformations that results in the manifestation of a conscious life form, are experienced within the realm of kaala, time. Should the element of kaala or time be ignored or removed from an event or action, the latter would lose its importance, for in the manifest dimension, time becomes the reference point that gives meaning to anything. As humans are bound by time, and with every moment of life having been given a particular quantity of time, the only way to understand a concept is by placing it within the reference, the boundary, the limits of time.

The expression 'some event took place' means that this event has occurred in the past, for only after its occurrence has the reference point in time become relevant. It is only on the basis of this theory or concept of kaala that one can observe subjective awareness or theory changing into objective experience. Kali is the shakti or power of kaala.



The three stages or steps of kaala are past, present and future, and they are experienced in all creation, whether animate or inanimate. They make the wheel of time that keeps moving eternally. This wheel of time is experienced in creation through a series of transformations that are continuously being experienced. For example, the body transforms itself over the span of life; it has one form at the time of birth, another in young age, and still another in old age. This is the principle of creation: no one is ever born with the aged body of an elderly person, and no elderly person has ever been seen to become young again. If it were so, the system of time, discipline and development would not exist. The future becomes the present and the present becomes the past. When a new life is created, whether that of a plant, an animal or a human being, it comes with a limit, a boundary, which is its lifespan. The kaalashakti is experienced within the process of this lifespan, and it is known as Kali.

Kaalashakti is the most important power in life as evolution, development and transformation become possible only with its help. On the basis of past, present and future, and in accordance with the development of consciousness, kaalashakti decides the amount of experience and knowledge sufficient for a given body. To acquire more experience and knowledge will require another body and form. Kali is the *shakti* or power of this concept or aspect of time; she is the controlling power, the power of restraint and retention.

Due to this controlling power of time, kaala is also identified with death. *Yama*, the name given to the god of death, means restraint, control or retention. The wheel of time is eternal and cannot be stopped or started by anybody, yet within it, Yama controls the manifest creation: the humans, animals, birds, trees and plants. In other words, Yama controls the limitation and extension of creation within the wheel of time. Therefore, any notion about a dreadful and terrible form of Yama is unfounded. Yama is a psychological or philosophical concept that rules over creation by controlling the concept of time, and his association with death is through his role in either limiting or extending the transformation that occurs in all dimensions of manifest life.

In the realm of kaala, an eternal, immortal and permanent life is not possible. It is not possible, for instance, to wish for a particular tree existing in the present to exist until the end of creation, as nobody has any control over kaala and lifespan. On the other hand, the realm of the unmanifest is eternal and perpetually in motion; at the time of dissolution it assumes another form. It is for the understanding of this eternal, unmanifest and transcendental *kaala siddhanta*, theory of time, that tantra provides a system or method of Kali worship. To have the experience of kaalashakti is the first sadhana and discipline pertaining to the mahavidyas.



Eight forms of Kali

There are various aspects and names of Kali, eight of which are considered important: 1. Sparshamani Kali 2. Chintamani Kali 3. Santatiprada Kali 4. Siddhida Kali 5. Guhya Kali 6. Hamsa Kali 7. Dakshina Kali, and 8. Bhadra Kali.

Sparshamani Kali literally means 'Kali who is the philosopher's stone', an element that can transform any other matter, element or thing brought into contact with it. For example, if a piece of iron comes into contact with a philosopher's stone, the former is transformed into gold. Likewise, the sadhaka becomes a jewel with the touch of Sparshamani Kali. This is known as anugraha, kripa or grace. *Chintamani Kali* means that sheer thinking, reflection or remembrance of the devi transforms the life of a sadhaka. *Santatiprada Kali* does not mean devi as the giver of progeny, the literal meaning of the name; rather, she is the devi who takes the sadhaka from one state to another, thus providing him with a new life. *Siddhida Kali* confers all types of siddhis, accomplishments, and mastery over past, present and future. *Guhya Kali* is the invisible, unmanifest and mysterious form of Shakti, viewed as the cause behind the spiritual development or downfall of a sadhaka. She can uplift him or send him back to the wheel of time in accordance with the development of his consciousness. *Hamsa Kali* confers the capacity to see the difference between good and bad, to understand and discriminate between them. *Dakshina Kali* confers victory over all directions. *Bhadra Kali* is auspicious and ensures the sadhaka's prosperity and wellbeing.

Nine aspects of Kali

The entire imagery of Kali is summarized in the following mantra composed of the various names of Kali:

Shavaarudhaam mahaabheemaam
ghoradamshtraam hasanmukheem.

Chaturbhujaam khadgamunda
varaabhayakaraam shivaam.
Mundamaalaadharaam deveem lalajjihvaam
digambaraam. Evam samchitayet kaaleem
shmashaanaalayavaasineem

Shavarudha: According to this mantra, the first form of Kali is *shavarudha* or one who is mounted on a corpse. The corpse is a symbol of the transitory nature and destructibility of creation. Tantra views the entire creation as *mahashmashan* or the great cremation ground, as all created beings are invariably heading towards death. Thus, the whole of creation is seen in the form of a *shava*, dead body, and Shakti is mounted on that shava.

There is a traditional story in this context. Mother Parvati manifested in her ferocious form of Kali in order to vanquish the demon Durgama. However, even after she had accomplished her task, her anger did not subside and she went on with her process of destruction. As no one was able to stop her, Lord Shankara himself lay down on her path and only upon mounting his body was she able to realize what she was doing. The symbolic meaning of this story is that while *icchashakti*, willpower, awakens in the Shiva tattwa, the function of Kali is the suppression, restraint or retention of that icchashakti. This indicates that transformation of consciousness is controlled by Shakti, the ruler of the manifest consciousness, and she ensures its evolution. This is why Shakti is said to be mounted on consciousness or the Shiva tattwa.

Why is Shiva likened to a corpse here? The word 'Shiva' is based on the word 'shava' to which the vowel 'i' has been added. As seen in the discussion on Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanta (see Section 4, Chapter 2), the letter 'a' or represents the omnipresent consciousness or Brahman, which is the inactive shava, whereas 'i' is the symbol of Shakti or Maya, which is active. Hence if 'i' is added to the word shava, it becomes Shiva and if it is removed, then only shava remains. This illustrates that the existence of Shiva without Shakti is only that of a shava, a dead body.

What knowledge does one receive from the form of a shava? The dead body is symbolic of the material universe composed of the five elements. Each element exists in the body in a form that is different from the form it has by itself. This is the concept of the five elements found in different manifest and unmanifest forms. All the five elements are under the control of Kaalashakti, their presiding deity. This is the meaning behind shavarudha, the first form of Kali.

Mahabhimam: This is another name of Kali. *Bhima* means a very big form. This form of Shakti cannot remain limited to a particular realm or area. She is within each and every atom of the entire universe. One might even consider that the entire universe is just like an atom for her. She is not subject to any limitations; she is infinite and endless.

Ghoradamshtra: The word *ghoradamshtra* means one with the dreadful teeth. Teeth are used for eating and chewing. It is this form of Kali that performs the function of eating and digesting in the whole universe. No person, thing or matter of the universe can ever remain outside the process of eating and digesting; this process is unavoidable. The original form of food changes after passing through the process of eating and digestion. The differences between rice, pulse, bread and vegetables cease to exist. Kali in the form of Ghoradamshtra is the power of eating and digestion; however, at the universal level, she eliminates all the differences existing in the universe.

Hasanmukhi: This form of Kali refers to the smiling face of the devi, indicating happiness, joy and bliss. Happiness and bliss are experienced in the state of inner contentment or when a desire is fulfilled. This experience is bestowed by Hasanmukhi.

Chaturbhuja khadga mundavarabhayakara shivaa: Kali has four hands, *chaturbhuja*. In one hand she wields a sword, in another a severed human head, the third hand is in *vara mudra*, the gesture bestowing blessings, and her fourth hand is in *abhaya mudra*, the gesture bestowing fearlessness.

The *khadga*, a special sword, is used for cutting the throat. It is used for destroying the individual life and ego, for eliminating the present existence, identity and personality, transforming the system of creation. In the second of Kali's hands is a severed human head, symbolizing the separation between the soul and the ego.

From the elemental point of view, there is no difference between the water of a river and the water contained in a small cup. Differences are experienced due to variations in places and containers, but water remains water. Similarly, the real form of self or soul is the same whether we call it *jivatma*, individual self, or *Paramatma*, Supreme Self. The human head in Kali's hand is a symbol of individuality or being a separate unit; it represents the jivatma.

The third and fourth hands of Kali are in vara and abhaya mudras. She is assuring the sadhakas, "Oh my children, be fearless; I am here to ensure your happiness and welfare."

Mundamaladhara Devi: This form of Kali wears a garland of human heads. According to tantric texts, this is a garland of eighty-four human heads. These eighty-four heads are a symbol of eighty-four lakh *yonis* or wombs that the individual soul has to pass through in the course of its evolution through the class of animate beings. This image of the devi represents her self-luminous shakti or power.

Lalajjihva: The word *lalajjihva* means 'glittering tongue' which can be seen lolling down Kali's mouth. All kinds of functions are performed with this tongue. It acts as a pasha, a noose or bond, and is also used to roar. The tongue of Kali is related to the sound and power of mantra, and roaring is associated with her bija mantra, considered omnipotent in itself.

Digambara Devi: Kali is without a covering. She does not wear a sari or ornaments like other devis; she is the Shakti that has no cover around her body. Clothes envelop or hide the original, real form; however, Kali is *digambara*, naked or sky-clad, which means that Kaalashakti has and is experienced in only one form, one state.

Shmashaanaalaya: *Alaya* means home or place of residence, and *shmashana* means cremation ground; hence this name indicates that Kali resides in the cremation ground. Due to its transient nature, this entire universe is considered a cremation ground and Kali is inherent in the whole creation; this is her home, her place of residence. The mantra concludes by stating that we should worship this omnipotent Shakti and practise contemplation and reflection upon her form.

Two main forms of Kali

Of the various names and forms of Kali described here, two are considered foremost: Dakshina Kali and Bhadra Kali. Dakshina Kali is shavarudha, or the form of Kali mounted on a corpse. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a worshipper of Dakshina Kali, and it is for this reason that the temple near Kolkata where Ramakrishna lived and performed his sadhanas is known as Dakshineshwar.

The word *bhadra* means beautiful, gracious, auspicious and gentle. Despite her horrible, terrible, stern, harsh, wrathful and violent form, there is softness, gentleness and auspiciousness in Bhadra Kali, which helps the sadhaka in proceeding towards the Shiva tattwa. This is why tantrics keep images of Bhadra Kali in their houses. While Dakshina Kali is shavarudha, mounted on the corpse, Bhadra Kali stands on the ground.

Kali and kundalini

The kundalini shakti of yoga is a symbol or ingredient of Kaalashakti. Kundalini is depicted as a serpent sleeping in mooladhara chakra, coiled three-and-a-half times. It is regarded as the serpent of time. When it awakens, it uncoils and ascends through the sushumna nadi up to sahasrara, piercing all the chakras on its way. The systematic piercing of chakras implies the dissolution of one state after another. In yoga and tantra, the process of transformation, of moving from one state to another and of dissolution, is regarded as a process of the manifestation of Kali.



Mantra

Kleem is the bija mantra of Kali. According to the tradition, the teaching and initiation of this mantra vidya can be received only from a yogini. Kali also has a longer mantra, *Aim Hreem Shreem Kleem Kaalike Aim Hreem Shreem Kleem*.

Yantra

In the Kali yantra, there are five inverted triangles, one inside the other. There is a point in the centre of the innermost triangle. There are three circles around the triangle and an eight-petalled lotus around the circle. There is one circle around the lotus and a square around this last circle.

Sadhana

Tantric texts state very clearly that *Nayam atma balahinena labhyah* – "A person devoid of self-confidence and willpower cannot perform a sadhana such as that of Kali." A sadhaka who is frustrated, perplexed, restless and dissatisfied, and being under the influence of the four basic instincts of food, sleep, fear and sexuality, cannot perform this sadhana.

Tantra refers to three types of sadhakas according to their predominant temperament or *bhava*: pashu meaning animal or instinctive nature, *veera* or heroic nature, and *divya* or divine nature. This sadhana of Kali should be performed only by sadhakas imbued with veera bhava and not by others. If others perform it they will suffer the negative consequences. A sadhaka has to confront inner fear. Only a fearless, veera bhava sadhaka can achieve siddhis or accomplishments through this sadhana.

A veera sadhaka needs seclusion and privacy during Kali sadhana. This sadhana of the first vidya is generally performed in the cremation ground. When Shakti awakens in the form of Kali, the whole universe takes the form of a cremation ground. A cremation ground here does not mean a place where dead bodies are burnt or buried; rather, it refers to a place where the transient nature or mortality is actively dancing and where immortality has no place.

Tantra prescribes a sadhana practice known as *shava sadhana*, in which the sadhaka sits

on a dead body and performs mantra japa, meditation and worship of the devi. What would the state of an ordinary person be if he were to sit on a dead body? Most likely, he himself would become like the one under him! The aim of a shava sadhaka is to confront and completely overcome fear. Fear is an aspect of kaala that is present in everybody in seed form, ready to manifest in different ways. From the viewpoint of common logic, a corpse is lifeless and cannot do any harm; yet the courage of the sadhaka is gone the moment he looks at a corpse, let alone sitting on it. His mind becomes restless and, even if normally fearless, he becomes so petrified that any little sound is enough to almost stop his heartbeat. When this happens, the sadhaka either faints or runs away. This sadhana, therefore, is prohibited for sadhakas other than the veera sadhakas.

Texts

There are about thirty authentic texts related to Kali. The most important of them is *Mahakaala Samhita* which is divided into two parts: 'Kama Kala Khanda' and 'Guhya Kali Khanda'. *Kama kala* here does not have a sexual connotation; it means that the sadhaka should observe and understand the seeds of his inner desires and remove them, thus becoming pure and virtuous. The 'Guhya Kali Khanda' then teaches how to recognize the Kali tattwa in its original, real form.

SECOND MAHAVIDYA: TARA

While Kaalashakti or Kali is the symbol of transformation, ripeness and the ultimate state of evolution, Tara Mahavidya is the symbol of spiritual achievement, auspiciousness, eternal knowledge and realization. *Tara*, meaning saviour, is the Shakti of Akshobhya, which is another epithet of Lord Shiva.

According to a mythological story, the entire universe became disturbed due to the poison that emerged during the churning of the ocean of milk by gods and demons. It was only Lord Shiva who did not lose his balance and, prompted by his consort Tara, eliminated the poison by swallowing it. This made his throat turn blue, and the *neelkantha* or blue-throated form of Lord Shiva is known as Akshobhya, the one who never becomes perplexed, unbalanced or angry.

Shiva is also a *rishi*, a seer or witness. Tara is his Shakti. When one does not become perplexed in the hubbub of life and acquires a state of witnessing, then the achievements are certainly spiritual. One's thoughts are auspicious; one does not bear any ill-will towards anybody. Jnana awakens within him. Tara is the symbol of this jnana.

In the Buddhist tradition, the name Akshobhya is also used for Lord Buddha. Prior to his attainment of nirvana under the bodhi tree, many demons appeared before Lord Buddha, symbolic of desires, ambitions, passions and attachments. Although they were mighty and terrible, he continued to meditate undisturbed. This is why he has also been called Akshobhya.

Tara, whose name is found in both Hindu and Buddhist tantras, has been called



prajnaparamita, one who takes the sadhaka across the ocean of worldly existence. Tara is the devi by whose power and grace a sadhaka can easily cross the tumultuous, turbulent ocean of life. Along with this figurative meaning there is also a literal one; Tara is regarded as the goddess of the water element and was worshipped by sailors prior to embarking on their voyages. She also rids one of the fear of snakes, elephants, tigers, leopards, thieves, assassins and water in all its forms.

The word 'tara' is derived from the Sanskrit root *tri*, which means to remove sins or to take across. The aim of Tara is to ensure that one removes one's ignorance, achieves jnana and becomes free. Tara also means star, and the stars of the sky may be used in the same way; by seeing and recognizing the stars, one can acquire the knowledge about different directions and find one's path.

The Vedas identify Tara with *vak*, speech, or *vakshakti*, the power of speech. When one wants to speak, to express ideas and communicate one's knowledge, one takes the help of speech. Therefore, speech is considered an organ, an ingredient of jnana. Tara is the symbol of this vakshakti. This is an important aspect of Tara.

According to Indian philosophy, the process of creation begins with the desire of the Supreme Consciousness. From this desire, a vibration known as *nada* is produced, and from nada emerge various sound waves and more vibrations. This is the first step in the process of creation. The Vedas proclaim: *Artha srishteh purvam shabda srishtih* – "*Shabda* or *nada*, the vibration of sound, is created prior to the creation of the elements, tanmatras and the objects of the material world." The syllable *Aum*, also called *Pranava* or the primal sound vibration, is the first nada and the bija mantra of Tara. *Aum* is also known as taraka mantra: *Tarakanama smaranam tapatraya samharanam* – "When the taraka mantra is remembered, the three forms of suffering are destroyed."

After acquiring the siddhi of Pranava, one can cross the turbulent ocean of worldliness. The experience of this nada is regarded as the attainment of complete knowledge. The intellectual knowledge acquired in the material world or the knowledge received through the rational mind, intellect, memory and ego, is only partial knowledge relating to the manifest and gross states of consciousness. When the same jnana is experienced or received equally in all the states of consciousness: conscious, subconscious and unconscious, it is known as complete knowledge or *sampurna jnana*. When knowledge is received without any break in consciousness, it is the awakened consciousness or awakened knowledge. This is why the Pranava mantra finds an important place in the Vedas, Upanishads and all tantric texts. According to the *Mandukya Upanishad*, the three syllables of A-U-M imply the three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and sleeping, or conscious, subconscious and unconscious.

The Tara of tantra is the Vakshakti of the Vedas, Pranavashakti of the Upanishads and Gauri of the Puranas. The original nada or vibration is the source of both vidya and *vani*, speech. Speech in this sense means the capacity for expression, which requires a combination of intellect and the organ of speech. This is a physical necessity; however, saints, sages, renunciates and realized people are also able to express vidya through silence. Their capacity for expression is not related to the tongue or the intellect. It is a talent of their evolved personality, an awakened state of consciousness. This silent expression is also related to Tara Mahavidya.

The worship of Tara is especially prevalent in Tibet, Mithila, Bengal, Assam and Kashmir. As a consequence of its prevalence in these areas, this vidya has been viewed as part of *vama marga*, the left-hand path within the Kaula sect.

Six forms of Tara

In tantra are mentioned six forms of Tara: Ugratara, Neela Saraswati, Ekajata, Shukla Tara, Neela Tara and Chitra.

Ugratara: Ugratara is the vibration produced in the primordial stillness and that vibration or nada is complete in itself. Ugratara, the fierce

aspect of Tara, is mounted on a dead body in a similar manner to Kali, and is wearing a garland of fifty human heads from which blood is dripping. These fifty heads symbolize the fifty types of sounds that have been mentioned in the Sanskrit alphabet. The combined number of petals for all the chakras from mooladhara up to ajna chakra is fifty. On each petal is inscribed a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, and that is the bija mantra of that particular petal. Ugratara is wearing this garland of fifty human heads or mantras.

Ajna chakra is the location of the taraka mantra *Aum*, the original nada. This mantra is also known as *pashyanti vak*, a seer or a witness, indicating that *Aum* is the witnessing nada that continues to be one and indivisible despite being divided into many parts. It is known as *anujnakshara*, command letter, as the process of expansion or manifestation begins from it. The first manifestation in the eternal stillness is that of the nada, the Pranava. When the sadhana of Pranava comes to its fulfilment, ignorance is removed and knowledge is received, death is dissolved and immortality is attained. The bija mantra of Ugratara is *Aum Hreem Streem Hoom Phat*.

Neela Saraswati: She is Tara with the capacity to understand and speak, to receive and express. Saraswati is the devi of knowledge and speech, and she is Tara. In tantra, this devi is known as Neela Saraswati. *Neela*, blue, is the symbol of sky or space, the *akasha* element, thus Neela Saraswati represents the vibratory knowledge in or from space which is the medium for the transmission of sounds, waves and vibrations. Sound waves have no limits. They may be within, below or above the range of hearing, but sound or nada will always be experienced in space. In the form of Neela Saraswati, Tara is the light of knowledge ripping through the deep and dreadful darkness of ignorance. The bija mantra of Neela Saraswati is *Hreem Streem Hoom*.

Ekajata: This is the third form of Tara. In this form her hair is not loose or untied, but braided and falling down her back like a tail. This signifies that Tara has taken upon herself all kinds of powers and forces in the form of sound waves. The concept is that all types of waves, sounds and alphabets emerge from the Pranava mantra or nada, and when they disappear, they again merge back into this mantra or nada. They are not deflected, dissipated or scattered; they merge back into their own source like the loose hair of Tara joining into a single braid. Thus Ekajata is the art, law and discipline of emerging from and merging back into the source. She is the controlling force or power from which everything emerges and into which everything also merges. The bija mantra of Ekajata is *Hreem Streem Hoom Phat*.

Shukla Tara: The original, faultless, unstained and eternal form of the goddess is in this form of Shukla, or white, Tara. The quality of the first vibration in its original form is visible in this aspect of Tara. When she descends into the womb of creation, she turns dark blue, neela, and takes the form of Neela Tara. When she manifests herself in all the diverse colours and forms of creation, she takes the form of Chitra.

Neela Tara: This aspect of Tara implies that in the transition of Shakti from the unmanifest to the manifest state, Shakti has now entered the womb of the latter. Shweta or Shukla Tara is its original unmanifest state.

Chitra: In its Chitra form, Tara is present in every object in the form of the power of sound.

In the Buddhist tradition, Tara has been described in twenty-one forms. Her gross qualities find clear expression in Buddhism. In sanatana tantra, however, one finds the description of the six forms as discussed above.

Mantra

Aum is the bija mantra of Tara Mahavidya; either by itself or as part of a longer mantra, *Om Hreem Streem Hoom Phat*.

Yantra

In the centre of the Tara yantra is an upward-pointing triangle surrounded by a circle. The circle is within an eight-petalled lotus

and around this lotus is a square with four doors, one on each side. The upward-pointing triangle of the Tara yantra is the symbol of consciousness. The circle around this triangle is the symbol of *Brahmanda*, 'the egg of Brahma', the universe or cosmos, and signifies that Brahman or the Supreme Element is experienced in all objects and states: animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, and in the *para*, higher, and *apara*, lower, states.

Five petals of the eight-petalled lotus represent the five *koshas*, the sheaths or realms of existence: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya.

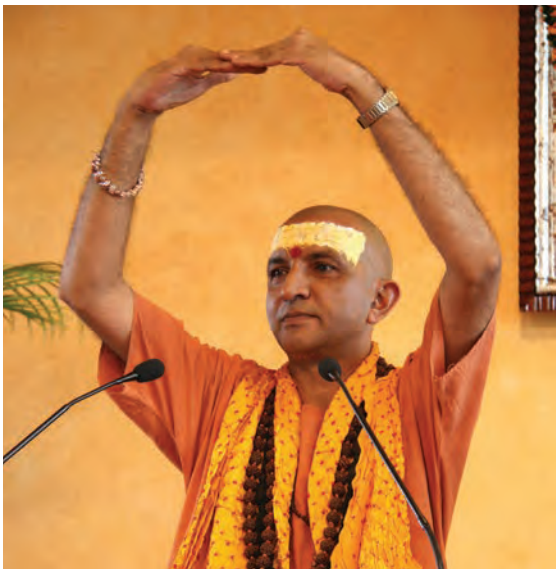
The remaining three petals of the lotus symbolize the three states of nada or sound: *vaikhari*, gross; *upanshu* or *madhyama*, subtle or intermediate; and *pashyanti* or causal. Gross, subtle and causal sound waves are produced in all the koshas, and their experience is the experience of Tara. These three kinds of sound or vibrations are also inherent in all visible and invisible objects of the universe.

Sadhana

There are no special rules for the sadhana of Tara Mahavidya. The japa and worship related to her can be performed anywhere and at any time, as these sadhanas are simple, not requiring any rules or restrictions. Mental japa and even audible repetition of the taraka mantra *Aum* can be done while performing any activity.

To determine or fix certain rules or disciplines for oneself and follow it consistently is the rule for a sadhaka. The observance of yama, social codes of conduct, and niyama, personal codes of conduct, is essential for a sadhaka of the taraka mantra so that physical, mental and emotional purity and self-restraint may be achieved. A sadhaka of the taraka mantra or Tara sadhana should always speak the truth. Telling lies or using negative words blocks the internal development and the sadhaka falls back into bondage.

Mouna vrata or vow of silence should be observed during the period of sadhana. Tara



sadhana is a secret sadhana and it should be performed secretly. The instruction regarding mouna is related not only to speech, but also to the fruits of sadhana. If the sadhana starts bearing fruit, one should not speak about it to others, nor should any fruit be expected from it. Mantras should be carefully studied and analyzed as they influence the personality through the sound waves they create.

Maintaining equanimity is the last instruction pertaining to sadhana. Maintain balance in the situations of pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, so that internal harmony and self-restraint may be achieved. The higher states of concentration, absorption and meditation are experienced with the achievement of restraint and balance. If a sadhaka cannot maintain internal balance in the experience of opposites, the concentration in the sadhana will be broken and the state of dhyana will not be achieved. Yoga clearly states that during Pranava sadhana, one should try to remain uninfluenced by external as well as internal changes.

Texts

There are about twenty-six texts or treatises and codes related to this mahavidya.

THIRD MAHAVIDYA: TRIPURA SUNDARI

The third mahavidya has many names, including Tripura Sundari, Shodashi and Kameshwari. In tantra, the Supreme Element has been viewed as *prakasha*, light, and its counterpart *vimarsha*, differentiation, desire or the aspect of prakasha by which it knows itself. When the process of creation starts by the will of the Creator, the state of vimarsha is entered. Vimarsha implies the differentiation or transformation of the original state of light. To begin with, vimarsha takes the form of desire, which has been given the name of *kama* and also *kamana*.

The kamana of the Supreme Element is loving and auspicious. He performs the function of creation with the feeling of love and auspiciousness towards all the living beings that emanate from it. The desire emerges from these two feelings and the creation begins. When creation begins to take place, the Shakti produced from kamana is known as Kameshwari.



Kamana is related to the movement of kaala, time, and it is the movement of kaala that is transformed into kamana. No kamana or desire can be produced without the concept of time. A desire produced within an individual does not remain a desire forever. Desire is followed by action, which in turn produces some result and the feeling of achievement emerges. This sequential evolution of desire is influenced by time. The supreme will is also known as *kamakala*, indicating transformation or manifestation from kamana to *kalaa*, or from desire to action. In tantra, this kamakala, willpower or kamanashakti is known as Kameshwari, Shodashi or Tripura Sundari.

Kameshwari is the Shakti of Kameshwara, an aspect of Shiva whose name, kama + ishwara, indicates that from Supreme Consciousness, Ishwara, emerges deliberation or reflection, vimarsha, and from vimarsha arises desire, kamana, which is then followed by action. Kameshwari is the loving, auspicious result of kamana or desire and is the original form of Tripura Sundari. As soon as the action for creation begins, she takes the form of Tripura Sundari. *Tri* means three, *pura* means city and *sundari* means an image of extraordinary beauty. She is the most beautiful in all the three cities, representing the three worlds or planes – the gross, subtle and causal – and contains the feeling of completeness.

The element awakened in kamana is the seed of antahkarana, the sense of 'I-ness' of the absolute principle, *aham* or ego: *Sokamayat bahusyam prajayayiti* – "May I become many; may I create subjects." This ego principle or *ahamkara* is experienced in the gross, subtle and causal states as the seed of kamana or desire, spoken of in the Vedas and Upanishads. The seed, which is causal, is gradually transformed into subtle and gross forms. In its original, subtle and gross states, it is under the influence of sattwa, rajas and tamas, respectively.

The lokas

The Shakti of Tripura Sundari resides in all the three *lokas* or planes of existence as the qualities of desire, will and achievement. In tantra, the Brahman has been presented in the form of Shiva or Supreme Consciousness and Maya as the different forms of Shakti. Each and every form of Maya has an aim, purpose and cause. A sadhaka can have different experiences in each state, which have been explained in tantra as gross, subtle and causal states. In the Vedas, this concept is explained by the three physical and three spiritual lokas. *Bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *swah* have been described as the physical lokas and symbolize the gross, subtle and causal states in the manifest world. *Janah*, *tapah* and *satya* lokas have been described as the spiritual lokas representing the gross, subtle and causal states in the unmanifest dimension. These two sets of lokas are connected by the intermediate loka, *mahah*, where all the three states are experienced simultaneously.

According to tantra, all three types of experience, gross, subtle and causal, are inherent within each individual state, meaning that within each state there is a permutation of the gross, subtle and causal, similar to the permutations of the gunas within each individual. This applies even to the transcendental state of turiya. In the causal state, the experiences of gross-causal, subtle-causal and causal-causal exist. In the subtle state, there exist the gross-subtle, subtle-subtle and causal-subtle experiences. Similarly, in the gross state there are gross-gross, subtle-gross and causal-gross experiences. In the state of turiya as well, there are the three varying experiences of gross-turiya, subtle-turiya and causal-turiya. The supreme turiya is experienced after transcending all these states. This is how the different states have been classified in tantra. All of them have been divided into sets of three. Bhu loka comes in the beginning, maha loka is in the middle and satya loka is the last, the supreme loka.

These three states are in the realms of *sat*, truth or existence, *chit*, consciousness, and *ananda*, bliss: sat in the gross, chit in the subtle and ananda in the causal state. In turiya they become one: satchidananda. As tantra does not negate the reality of the manifest world, the idea of sat comes in the gross area. The world is considered real, as one experiences the body; having a physical body is not an illusion. Pain, disease, old age and death are experienced by the body. The individual and his consciousness are influenced by them. All types of sadhana, achievements and development are obstructed and ultimately come to an end due to the influence of these factors. This is why the material world is accepted as a reality and not an illusion.

While the gross state has been identified as sat, the subtle is called chit. In the subtle realm, efforts are made to understand and control the mind and the internal senses. These are the instruments of acquiring experience and knowledge of the world and the self. The form of chit here is that of a witness.

The causal realm is recognized as the state of ananda or bliss. There is no erroneous knowledge of the body in this state. All attachments to the world and the body cease to exist. The mind becomes free from attachments. In yogic terminology this is called *anandamaya kosha*, the blissful body or, according to the *Yoga Sutras*, *ananda samadhi*. There is one more state after ananda samadhi and that is called *ritambhara prajna*. In this state sat, chit and ananda are united; they become one and awaken the experience of satchidananda. Tripura Sundari is the greatest power in all these three realms.

The experience of creation is the consequence of the expansion of supreme desire. It is produced from vibration that is concentrated and takes the form of a *bindu* or point. The original point again divides itself into three points that become the three apexes of an inverted triangle, which represents yoni, the original source or point of origin; the cosmic womb. This inverted triangle is the form of the creative power consisting of the three gunas. This Shakti is inherent in the three

gunas, the three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping or the conscious, subconscious and unconscious states, the three lokas or planes of existence, as well as in knowledge, the knower and the known. Beyond and different from all these is the Shakti in her original form who keeps all the three states under her control; in which all the forms ultimately merge.

The devi who rules all these triads is known as Tripura Sundari and her three aspects are called Bala, Sundari and Tripura Bhairavi. As Bala, a child, she gives expression to simplicity, the simple nature of the sattwic state. As Sundari, beauty, she rules over rajoguna and as Bhairavi, her fierce aspect, she controls tamoguna. These three forms of the devi all converge in the form of Tripura Sundari.

Form

Tripura Sundari is seen dressed in red clothes and standing in space. Red cloth is the symbol of rajoguna. The process of creation begins with rajoguna. Sattwaguna is the state of light, rajoguna is the state of vimarsha or differentiation, and tamoguna represents the state of manifestation or the outcome.

The devi has four hands. In one hand she holds a noose, in the second a bow, in the third a goad and in her fourth hand are five arrows. She has three eyes. In a stotra praising Tripura Sundari, she is described in the following way:

> *Baalaarkamandalaabhaasam chaturbaahum trilochanam.*
> *Paashaankushasharaam shchaapam dhaarayanteem shivaam bhaje.*
>
> The devi wears red garments, has three eyes, four hands, and in each of the four hands she holds a weapon: a noose, a goad, a sugarcane bow, and five flower arrows.

The famous hymn *Lalita Sahasranama* in praise of Tripura Sundari mentions her attributes. Pasha, or noose, is the bond with which she binds the three lokas, keeping them within a limit or boundary. That bond is of attachment, affection, love and desire, *ragaswarupapashadhya*, and therefore, the sadhaka attains moksha when he overcomes his desires and thus gets rid of this pasha of the devi. The kamana that is in the form of love and affection in the higher dimension, takes various forms in the gross realm. The primary form of kamana within every individual is the desire for satisfaction. Individuals desire satisfaction, happiness, love and achievement in familial, social, material and spiritual situations and conditions of life. In the material world, the experience of love, etc. does bring satisfaction, but it has both positive and negative effects.

While pasha signifies attachment and implies desire and love, the goad or *ankusha* implies anger, wrath or violence. These, however, are to be seen in a positive manner. The mantra that describes this goad is *krodhakarankushojjvala*, identifying the goad both with anger, *krodha*, and worldly knowledge, *akara*. Unlike the anger of an ordinary man, the expression of which is always negative, the 'violence' of Devi is seen as a controlling and restraining power. The goad is a tool used to control unruly animals and guide them in the right direction. In the hands of the goddess, it is a symbol of the discipline of life; it is with the help of Devi's guidance that one is able to control and restrain oneself.

The mantra *manoroopekshu kodanda* means that her bow, *kodanda*, symbolizes the mind, *manas*. The mind that directs an individual is personal, limited and atomic, while the mind of the universal or cosmic consciousness is *mahat* or greater mind. It is the mahat tattwa that is being represented in the form of the bow. Along with this bow of sugarcane, the devi also holds five arrows representing the five *tanmatras* or subtle elements. According to the mantra, *panchatanmatra sayaka*, "Creation takes place when the arrows of tanmatras are mounted on the bow of mahat."

The devi has three eyes. While the two eyes of an individual can see the external scenes, there is a need to open the third eye to see within. Shakti, however, does not need two or three eyes for looking within or without. The

three eyes of the devi perform different actions and functions; they are each meant for the three lokas of which she is the witness or seer.

Mantra and sadhana

The mantra and sadhana of Tripura Sundari is that of the Sri Vidya. *Sri* means auspicious and vidya means perceptive knowledge, inner experience, inner awakening or the perception of awakened inner consciousness. With the practice of mantra, the consciousness of the sadhaka awakens and evolves. As a result, inner spiritual development becomes possible. Thus, Sri Vidya is an auspicious vidya, and tantra claims: *Shrividya jnanamatrena sarva siddhih prajayate* – "All the siddhis can be acquired with the knowledge of Sri Vidya alone."

Tantrics have visualized the mantras in the form of pyramids called *kutas* or peaks. The base of a pyramid is capacious and expanded, and all its corners meet in a point at the apex. Tripura Sundari also has a pyramid in which her bija mantra is inherent and it is in the base where one experiences her infinite, unlimited powers. As a comparison, all the experiences of the past, present and future related to Kali, kaalashakti or kaala begin from the base of the kuta and ultimately converge in a point forming the apex of the bija mantra of Kali kuta.

Tripura Sundari has three kutas: vagbhava, kamaraja, and shakti. *Vagbhava kuta* is related to the head region of Tripura Sundari, and this kuta is the centre of the original sound or the first vibration from where the process of creation, maintenance and dissolution begins. This process ultimately ends with the return to the centre. The part of the body between the neck and waist of the devi is known as *kamaraja kuta*. This is the symbol of the first manifestation of the first desire and will to manifest. The third peak, the *shakti kuta*, comprises the whole body from the top to the bottom and is the symbol of *kriyashakti* or the power of action. The bija mantras of the vagbhava, kamaraja and shakti kutas are *Aim*, *Kleem* and *Sauh*, respectively. They further evolve into a fifteen-lettered or *panchadashi*



mantra used for the worship or sadhana of the devi. When one secret bija mantra is added to this panchadashi mantra, it becomes a *shodashi*, or sixteen-lettered mantra.

Shodashi mantra is divided into three mantras known as Hadi mantra, Kadi mantra and Sadi mantra, according to the letter with which these mantras begin. The form of the devi exists in all three kutas, for she is the presiding deity of the three lokas: bhuh, bhuvah and swah lokas, or past, present and future; gross, subtle and causal; and three stages of nada yoga: vaikhari, madhyama and pashyanti. The three kutas have been described to express the power, experience and awakening of Shakti in these three lokas and states.

Yantra

Sri Yantra is the yantra of Tripura Sundari. The yantra is the body of the devi, and more precisely, her abode is the bindu or point in the centre of the yantra. Just as brahmarandhra is the abode of the soul within the physical body, the bindu in the body of the yantra is the abode of the devi. This point is the symbol of the first vibration, the first desire as well as symbol of kriyashakti. The yantra is

the centre of the devi's unlimited power, talent and personality.

The Sri Yantra appears to be quite complex, however it is actually very simple. It consists of nine triangles, five of Shakti and four of Shiva, and the point in the centre where the abode of Shakti is located. Each Shakti triangle stands for one of the five tanmatras, five jnanendriyas, five karmendriyas and the five pranas. The four Shiva triangles, which are superimposed on the Shakti triangles, symbolize the different states of consciousness: conscious, subconscious, unconscious and superconscious or waking, dreaming, sleeping and turiya. Different lokas are created with the combination of these nine triangles.

The interlaced triangles are within a circle surrounded by an eight-petalled lotus. The eight petals represent the five tanmatras and the three forces of attraction, repulsion and equanimity. This eight-petalled lotus is known as *sarvasankshobhana chakra*. Surrounding this lotus is a sixteen-petalled lotus representing the five tattwas, five karmendriyas, five jnanendriyas and the antahkarana. The process of creation begins with the five tattwas, while the functions of creation are performed with the aid of the ten indriyas. The antahkarana acts as a contact, a link between the manifest existence and the unmanifest existence.



The sixteen-petalled lotus is surrounded by a square with four doors, known as *trailokya mohana chakra*, meaning that it has the capacity to attract or captivate the three lokas. Here, attraction or captivity implies keeping others under its control, in its bond or within its area of influence. When the sadhaka enters into this trailokya mohana chakra, he is entering into the subtle cosmic world. If he comes out through any of the four doors, it means he has eliminated attachment and delusion. The three bija mantras used in this yantra are *Aim Kleem Sauh*.

The square around the yantra is also known as *chintamani griha*, literally 'the house of the wish-fulfilling gem'. All one's desires are fulfilled merely by being in proximity of this yantra. Simply thinking of and contemplating upon the chintamani griha fulfils one's desires and ambitions. Together with her in the confines of the chintamani griha are the panchadevas and panchapretas. The *panchadevas* or five gods within the yantra include: Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Ishana and Sadashiva. Brahma is the creative power of consciousness and Vishnu is the sustaining or maintaining power of consciousness.

The name Rudra is derived from two roots: rudana and raudra. *Rudana* means wailing or sorrow, while *raudra* means dreadful or wrathful. This form of Rudra is seen as wrathful, while also weeping and wailing. Rudana means transformation within a state. When transformation takes place and the process of destruction and dissolution occurs, these two actions of rudana and raudra come into force. This is the power of dissolution of the purusha tattwa.

While Rudra is the terrifying form of the Shiva tattwa, Ishana is its subtle form. He is the form of consciousness that is inherent in the entire universe, in all the ten directions and in both gross and subtle dimensions.

Next comes the form of Shiva himself. *Shiva* means auspiciousness and the prefix *sada*

implies constancy. Therefore, *Sadashiva* is one who is ever auspicious in all states, conditions, situations and times. This state of Sadashiva is inseparable from the state of Shakti. These five gods reside in the chintamani griha of the Sri Yantra, and on Tripura Sundari's command, perform the functions of creation, maintenance, dissolution, illusion and grace.

Panchapretas are the five spirits that pervade the universe. They are the pancha tattwas or the five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. Each of them has its own separate state and thus has been given the form of *preta* or spirit. The functions of these pretas are determined by the panchadevas or the devi herself. In each context of creation, one tattwa will be predominant; however, each variation of form existing within creation is a result of the permutation and combination of the patterns of these pretas.

Shiva and Shakti reside in the Sri Yantra in the form of Kameshwara and Kameshwari. While Kameshwara is the consciousness that has some kamana or desire, Kameshwari is the Shakti that implements it. In the first mantra of *Saundarya Lahari*, one finds mention of the combination of Shiva and Shakti: *Shivah shaktyayukto yadi bhavati shaktah prabhavitum* – "Shiva, when united with Shakti, has the power to create, sustain and destroy the entire universe." When they unite into a single state, their forms are that of Kameshwara and Kameshwari.

For the sadhana of Sri Vidya, the yantra known as *navayoni chakra* is also used in addition to the Sri Yantra. It is a shorter, 'abridged' version of the Sri Yantra with two Shakti triangles and one Shiva triangle interlaced.

Sun and moon, prana and mind

According to tantra, the sun is a symbolic form of the Supreme Element in this creation. It is related to jnana or light. Fire or effulgence is the symbol of the manifest active power or activity of the Supreme Element. The moon symbolizes the desire or will of the Supreme Element. In tantra, the Upanishads and yoga, all mental activity has been viewed as an action of the moon. The moon sheds its light on any form or object in the darkness; however, that light does not fully illuminate it. Forms and objects can be seen in the moonlight; however, their colours are not apparent.

When one sees a flower with the eyes, for instance, one can clearly see its size, colour, shape and petals. However, after some time, it will not be possible to recall the exact form of the flower in the mind; the exact image of that flower in all its detail cannot be visualized. A process occurs that takes the experience from the conscious to the subconscious to the unconscious mind, then brings it back from the unconscious to the subconscious and finally to the conscious mind at some other time. This recalled knowledge or experience is not as clear or sharp as the original one, for this type of vision appears in the darkness of the unconscious or in the mist of the subconscious.

The subconscious mind is an expression of the lunar energy or *chittashakti*, and is associated with the function of ida nadi, the pranic channel related with the internal activity of the senses. Pingala is the solar energy or *pranashakti*, regulating the external expressions of the senses. The *Prashna Upanishad* states that Prajapati, the creator, first of all created the sun, or prana, and then the moon, or mind. Consequently, both desire and willpower have been associated with the symbol of the moon.

Manifestation of different kalaas

Tripura Sundari takes the form of fifteen Shaktis, powers, within the limit of time. The fifteen *kalaas*, rays or different manifestations of the moon's energy during the bright half of the lunar month, are represented by the letters or individual mantras of the panchadashi, the fifteen-syllable mantra of the devi. These fifteen kalaas are the different forms and names of Tripura Sundari, called *Nityashaktis* or eternal powers. *Amavasya*, the night with no moon, is symbolic of the first form of the devi known as Kameshwari Nitya, while the kalaa of full moon

night is called Adya Nitya. 'Nitya' at the end of each name signifies Nityashakti. The different names of the devi with every kalaa of the moon are as follows:

0.	Amavasya	Kameshwari Nitya
1.	Prathama	Bhagamalini Nitya
2.	Dvitiya	Nitya Klinna Nitya
3.	Tritiya	Bherunda Nitya
4.	Chatusthi	Vahnivasini Nitya
5.	Panchami	Mahabajreshwari Nitya
6.	Shashthi	Duti Nitya
7.	Saptami	Twarita Nitya
8.	Ashtami	Kulasundari Nitya
9.	Navami	Nitya Nitya
10.	Dashami	Nilapattika Nitya
11.	Ekadashi	Vijaya Nitya
12.	Dvadashi	Sarvamangala Nitya
13.	Trayodashi	Jwalamalini Nitya
14.	Poornima	Adya Nitya

The moon increases or decreases every day during each fortnight of the lunar month. On Amavasya, the moon cannot be seen at all. It is visible in its entirety on Poornima, and its partial forms are visible on each of the remaining nights. These partial forms, however, do not indicate a lack of fullness, just as there is no real increase or decrease in the moon due to its waxing and waning. Similarly, in her Poornima form, Tripura Sundari manifests in her full glory, in perfect effulgence, while on Amavasya she remains concealed. The Nityashaktis or partial manifestations appear to be so only because of the partial knowledge of the seer. In reality, every Nityashakti is full, absolute knowledge, yet a sadhaka can acquire only a part of that knowledge.

Each and every kalaa of the moon is the symbol of kamana or desire. It also has a form, a mantra, a yantra, a devi and a quality. In the sadhana of Tripura Sundari, a form of the devi is worshipped with a mantra and yantra according to the lunar dates. In fifteen days, fifteen types of mantras, yantras and devis are used. These are the sadhanas of external worship of Tripura Sundari.

Internal sadhana

Along with the external worship of the devi, there are also provisions for internal sadhana. In this method of sadhana, the sadhaka concentrates on the ajna chakra, where the union of Shiva and Shakti is partial, and sahasrara chakra where their merging is complete. In all the chakras below ajna, the Shiva and Shakti elements exist separately. In ajna and sahasrara chakras, Kameshwara and Kameshwari are worshipped with mantra and yantra.

The yamas and niyamas are to be observed in this sadhana. Of these, *santosha*, contentment, *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrender to God, and *atmavishwasa*, self-confidence, are particularly emphasized. Contentment is the most essential quality, for as long as the sadhaka is not satisfied, wishes, desires and passions will continue to drag him towards worldly pleasures and external objects. If there is contentment, there will be no attraction towards these. While surrendering to God or Devi, one should have the feeling that the Mother is capable of fulfilling all one's wishes and desires. There should be complete reverence and faith in *matrishakti*, power of the Mother form. Finally, there should also be the self-confidence that 'I am capable of performing this sadhana and will succeed in receiving grace, *kripa* or anugraha.'

Texts

There are about forty tantric texts related to the sadhana of Tripura Sundari. Each of the three vidyas, Kadi, Hadi and Sadi, has a separate set of texts. The main texts for Kadi vidya include *Tripura Upanishad* and *Bhavana Upanishad*. The use of the name 'Upanishad' signifies that some aspects of the Vaishnava or vedic systems have been combined with the practices of this tantric system. There are no Upanishads in classical tantra. Hadi vidya is similarly a mixed tantric vidya, related to the *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*. Amongst the three vidyas, Sadi is the pure tantric vidya system. Its main texts include *Tantraraja Tantra*, *Matrikarnava Tantra*, *Yogini Hridaya Tantra*



and *Tripurarnava Tantra*. Thus, Sadi vidya is the pure tantric path, whereas Kadi and Hadi vidyas are the mixed tantras.

FOURTH MAHAVIDYA: BHUVANESHWARI

Kali, Tara and Tripura Sundari have been discussed respectively as kaalashakti, the power of time; tarakashakti, the guiding power; and kamanashakti, the power of desire. Bhuvaneshwari is the fourth mahavidya, regarded as *jnanashakti* or the power of wisdom.

Tantrics have seen the *Paramtattwa*, the Supreme Element or the Ultimate Truth in the form of prakasha, the primordial light of jnana or knowledge. That Supreme Element is luminous in itself and removes *ajnana* or *avidya*, darkness and ignorance, with the expansion of its light. The akasha tattwa or ether element that emerges from this expansion is represented by Bhuvaneshwari. The akasha, the supreme or infinite element, is experienced with the transformation of light.

The prefix 'aa' in Sanskrit denotes a boundary, a limited field or area; hence, the limitless prakasha becomes limited space, akasha (aakasha). This limitation is that of vision, as it is the range of one's vision that gives an idea of the extent of space. Another way in which space can be seen as limited is when it is viewed as a container for all creation that springs from it; the entire universe with its planets and stars is located in akasha. Creation is said to begin with vision, which the Upanishads refer to as *tadaikshat*, 'that saw'. When the Supreme Element looked about with a desire to create, it saw or experienced itself all around.

Where is it possible to see form or matter? If there is no akasha, there will be no form; matter is experienced within the ambit of akasha tattwa. This idea is an analysis of expansion. If there is a desire within the One to become many, then this process of becoming many takes place as an expansion into all directions: right, left, above, below, in front and behind. All forms that thus become visible are seen as different from the original substance and are situated in the akasha tattwa.

What is called akasha is nothing but a boundary, a limit of a one's own vision; however,

as the field of vision expands, a more extensive akasha is gradually experienced. If one were to stand on the ground and look around, one would see only a limited area. A much bigger area would be seen if one were to stand on the rooftop of a multistorey building, and greater still if one rotated their vision in different directions while flying in an aeroplane. As the consciousness of an individual expands in the akasha element, the dimension of his physical state is reduced. Ultimately, the very existence of the physical state comes to an end. This is why the tantrics say that one experiences esoteric knowledge and spiritual consciousness in the akasha tattwa.

The word 'Bhuvaneshwari' is derived from the word *bhuvana*, which means the world or the universe. According to tantra, bhuvana implies that which has attained its manifest form and loka. Loka here means that which is experienced. Matter that has attained form and is experienced within the realm or boundary of akasha is called bhuvana. This world is a bhuvana and so are human beings. All living beings in the universe are bhuvanas, as they have acquired a form and experience their bodies and themselves. One sees others and experiences them. One sees animals, birds, plants, trees and stones and experiences their existence. The loka or realm where this experience is gained is known as bhuvana. Bhuvaneshwari is the Shakti of bhuvana, the universe; everything is inherent within her in the form of akasha, the tattwa that creates the universe. She is also called *Jagaddhatri*, one who sustains the universe, or *Jaganmata*, the mother of the universe. In this form of Jaganmata she maintains, sustains and protects the world.



In vedic terminology, the Supreme Element has been described as satyam, ritam and brihat. *Satyam* means the real, original, primordial form of consciousness. When this transcendental consciousness or satyam organizes and systematizes itself for positive manifestation, thus beginning the process of active creation, then it is known as *ritam*. Ritam is the form of manifest experience that is hidden in the effort of regulation, adjustment and organization. *Brihat*, pervasiveness or expansion, lies between satyam and ritam. The transformation from satyam to ritam occurs in the state of brihat, therefore brihat is known as *param vyoma* or the supreme space. It is also described as the vast, pervasive consciousness that becomes a means for the transformation of satyam. In tantra it is given the form of Bhuvaneshwari. Satyam, brihat and ritam are the three stages of evolution.

The vedic counterpart of Bhuvaneshwari is the mother of the devas, Aditi. The name *Aditi* denotes large, pervasive or vast, conscious element. Aditi is derived from the Sanskrit root *ad*, which means eating or swallowing. Living beings eat food and assimilate it within themselves. Similarly, the akasha element has swallowed up, engulfed the whole universe and assimilated it within itself. This concept of swallowing or eating is related to Aditi. In this manner, the entire creation is inherent in the

akasha tattwa; without akasha there can be no creation.

The Upanishads say that Aditi is *antariksha*, vast infinite consciousness. Here antariksha means the intermediate space or *madhya akasha*. In the unmanifest element of satyam, akasha is inherent; in the intermediate stage of madhya akasha or brihat, change and transformation occurs; and in the state of ritam, akasha is manifest. A human being experiences the manifest akasha: the perceivable cosmos, knowledge, time, action and all matter. Name and form are experienced in the akasha element only due to the manifestation and expansion of the Supreme Element therein.

According to the Puranas, Aditi is the wife of Maharshi Kashyapa. The name *Kashyapa* means the seer: *Pashyati iti kashyapah* – "One who sees is kashyapa." Therefore, while Kashyapa is the observer, his Shakti, Aditi, is the power of vision and the capacity to assimilate experience gained through vision. In other words, Aditi is the experiential power that pervades space and, at the same time, is inherent in it.

Bhuvaneshwari is also called maya, generally translated as illusion. Tantra, however, views maya from two different perspectives. It can be either understood as *brahmandiya*, the cosmic or universal form, or as *bhrantipurna anubhava jnana*, illusive, experiential knowledge. Maya comes from the root *ma*, to measure, and Mayashakti in her cosmic form, measures or extends over the whole creation, then assimilates it within herself and keeps it under her control. She measures the unlimited element, the infinite form, and makes it definite, knowable and limited.

The second form of maya, the illusive, experiential knowledge, is related to the visible world where knowledge is acquired through the senses and the antahkarana. However, this illusive nature of experiential knowledge does not imply that the world is unreal, as is stated by some schools of thought. According to them, one cannot measure that which is unlimited or infinite; therefore, any attempt to measure it is not real, but illusory.

Tantrics, on the contrary, maintain that the Shakti of the widespread, infinite consciousness adopts innumerable names and forms for itself, and each name and form is then recognized in a particular way. Any manifestation in space or akasha tattwa, whether of name or form, has a limit and a boundary and it is an idea that originates in the mind. Prior to that, the idea of limitation did not exist; it was not in the consciousness. However, when that idea takes form it will have a beginning and an end. Every action and reaction has a beginning and an end, and the process or method of measuring the lifespan from its beginning to the end is the power of maya. This power of the universe is seen in the form of Bhuvaneshwari.

The Prakriti of Samkhya is the Bhuvaneshwari of tantra. The *Param Purusha*, Supreme Soul, is the Seer and Enjoyer of all the forms and actions of the creative qualities and the dynamic nature of manifestation of the universe. It is not capable of manifesting itself in the absence of Bhuvaneshwari, akasha tattwa or maya. Bhuvaneshwari becomes the medium. She forms the basis on which Param Purusha can express itself.

Kali and Bhuvaneshwari pervade the entire universe in the form of time and space, kaala and akasha. While Kali determines the time and the process, Bhuvaneshwari determines actions and creation. These two Shaktis always go together; without Kali, Bhuvaneshwari remains inactive in the form of unmanifest akasha, and without Bhuvaneshwari, Kali cannot create time, systems and processes. Akasha tattwa is essential for the management or regulation of the cycle of time.

Tripura Sundari is the presiding deity of all the three lokas. She is inherent in the three lokas and at the same time she transcends them. Bhuvaneshwari, on the other hand, is seen as pervading the three lokas; however, not extending beyond them. Bhuvaneshwari permeates the entire field of perception, experience and awareness; she is inherent in the microcosmos as well as the macrocosmos.

Form

Bhuvaneshwari is dressed in red clothes and is standing in space. She has three eyes and four hands. In one hand is a pasha or noose, and in another is an ankusha, a goad. The third hand is in abhaya mudra, dispelling fear and the fourth in varada mudra, granting boons.

The red clothes of Bhuvaneshwari are the symbol of rajoguna. It is through rajoguna that action begins in the vast, infinite space. The three eyes of the devi see the three lokas. The akasha is experienced, not only in the gross world of senses, but also in the subtle and causal worlds. Thus, this Shakti is inherent in all the three lokas.

Ankusha or the goad symbolizes control over the akasha tattwa. Bhuvaneshwari controls the universal law and order, ensuring that the planets, stars and galaxies do not deviate from their respective paths. The capacity to maintain order or discipline has been symbolized in the form of the ankusha. Pasha, the noose, is the symbol of bondage and as it pertains to Bhuvaneshwari, it represents the delimitation of an area, a boundary and the bondage of creation.

With the abhaya mudra, she directs or instructs her devotees to be fearless. Abhaya mudra is very important from the spiritual point of view. When a sadhaka progresses on the path of sadhana and gains control over the mind, he enters into a state of void. In the *Yoga Sutras*, this state of void has been called *pratyaya-rahita avastha*. In this state of void, all perception, feeling or experience of personality ceases to exist. At that time, the sadhaka has the experience of akasha tattwa or all-pervading consciousness within his inner awareness. The devi is directing the sadhaka not to be afraid of this experience; she instructs her devotee to experience the void and accept it.

Varada mudra symbolizes the shakti or capacity to give. This is the mudra of giving. It is a boon from the devi, a message to the sadhaka, "Through sadhana you can acquire the capacity to reach my source. I bestow this capacity upon you."

Mantra

Hreem is the bija mantra of Bhuvaneshwari. As *Aum* is the pranava of the Vedas, *Hreem* is the pranava of the tantras. It is also called *hrillekha*, derived from *hrit*, heart and *lekha*, line. Thus, *hrillekha* means a line originating from the heart. This idea is to be understood in the context of the *brihat akasha*, the infinite space, a transcendental state. When consciousness is established in the *hridayakasha*, the space of the spiritual heart, it evolves straight towards the infinite; straight towards the brihat akasha. The ensuing vibration, sound or nada produced by entrance into the brihat akasha has no form; it is in a state of continuous evolution and expansion and there is no return. This is why the mantra is considered *pranava*, an infinite vibration. This state takes the sadhaka from the realm of a limited experience to the realm of a vast experience. In this process of evolution, from the finite to the infinite state, the sadhaka transcends the gross, subtle and causal states.

Another word with which the mantra *Hreem* is associated is *hree*, meaning shyness. The mantra *Hreem*, therefore, represents the infinite Shakti or energy concealed by shyness, a state where full manifestation is not possible. Yet, in the state of shyness, the possibility of vast expansion is inherent. In other words, Bhuvaneshwari represents the entire creation not as fully manifest, but with the potential to evolve. In Bhuvaneshwari there is the possibility of unlimited, infinite evolution. Bhuvaneshwari is also worshipped with the mantra *Aim Hreem Shreem*.

Yantra

The Bhuvaneshwari yantra resembles some of the imagery depicting the anahata chakra. In both the anahata chakra and Bhuvaneshwari yantra, there are two interlaced triangles representing Shiva and Shakti. There is a circle around these triangles and an eight-petalled lotus around the circle. Around this lotus is another circle, again surrounded by an eight-petalled lotus. Of the two triangles in the centre of the yantra, the Shiva triangle is vertical or

upright and the Shakti triangle is inverted. The interlaced triangles symbolize the merger of Shiva and Shakti in creation, as creation is the form of energy and is also infused with consciousness. As akasha is pervaded by both Paramtattwa and Paramshakti, it is the centre for the merger of Shiva and Shakti.

As mentioned, on each of the two circles surrounding these interlaced triangles, there is an eight-petalled lotus. The first or outermost of the two eight-petalled lotuses represents the mundane, gross, worldly creation while the second, innermost of the two eight-petalled lotuses symbolizes transcendental creation, a creation that is beyond the gross dimension of perception. In each of the lotuses, five of the petals represent the tanmatras and the remaining three symbolize the different actions performed by the three gunas of prakriti: acceptable functions, negative or destructive functions, and functions of sustenance or maintenance.

Sadhana

The Bhuvaneshwari sadhana results in *ekagrata*, one-pointedness; *shanti*, peace; and *atmashakti*, inner strength. These three form the basis of progress on the spiritual path and are essential for the accomplishment of Bhuvaneshwari vidya. The sadhana for the expansion of the realm of consciousness includes the techniques of pratyahara and dharana, of which akashi dharana is the most important.

There are many types of akashi dharana; however, three of them are important: daharakasha dharana, hridayakasha dharana and chidakasha dharana. *Daharakasha* refers to the deep space encompassing mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura chakras. Hridayakasha refers to the psychic space of the heart centre and is experienced between manipura and vishuddhi chakras. *Chidakasha* refers to the inner space visualized behind the closed eyes in the region of ajna chakra. Daharakasha, hridayakasha and chidakasha are three 'spaces' one can locate within the physical framework, representing the *akasha tattwa*, space element, in the subtle body. Through concentration on them, it is possible to reach subtle states of consciousness, the basis of Bhuvaneshwari vidya. In yoga, the awakening of *anahata chakra*, the psychic centre in the region of the heart, is seen as the accomplishment of Bhuvaneshwari. This is because it is in anahata chakra, that the completeness, the saturation of the space element is seen. The inner experiences related to akasha tattwa that occur in anahata may take the form of gross emotions and the aim of Bhuvaneshwari sadhana is to go beyond these experiences.

Texts

There are four important texts related to Bhuvaneshwari vidya: *Bhuvaneshwari Rahasya*, *Bhuvaneshwari Stotra*, *Bhuvaneshwari* and *Bhuvaneshwari Parijata*.

FIFTH MAHAVIDYA: TRIPURA BHAIRAVI

Tripura Bhairavi is the fifth mahavidya. She represents the kriyashakti or functional power of God and is related to *tapas* or austerity. The word 'tapas' is derived from the Sanskrit root *tap*, to burn, and denotes the action or function meant for transforming a particular state.



It is written in the Upanishads that austerity was practised by the Supreme before creation took place: *Sa tapotapyata*. The first creation of the Supreme was *hiranyagarbha*, the universe, through this austerity. It is through austerity that *purusha*, the individual soul, is born of the universe or hiranyagarbha. The birth of purusha means the birth of living, sentient beings.

What is the nature of this austerity? When the self-consciousness of the Supreme is concentrated at one point and takes the form of kriyashakti, then that becomes the form of austerity. There are two important aspects here. The first aspect is the concentration of the Supreme's awareness of itself at one point; this concentration then becomes a state of one-pointedness. Second, when this awareness becomes one-pointed, there is an experience of kriyashakti. This demonstrates that kriyashakti can be achieved through one-pointedness and, being a consequence of one-pointedness, is synonymous with tapas.

Names

There is no difference between the concepts of fire and tapas. Fire has the capacity to burn, to change and transform. Fire is also called *chidagni*, the fire that burns within the consciousness in the form of kriyashakti. It is burning within each and every living being. Agnishakti, the power of fire, is known as Tripura Bhairavi. Another of her names is Durga, the goddess who came into being out of the combined splendour or effulgence of all the devas. The form of that effulgence is seen as fire, thus Durga is said to possess the form of fire. It implies that her body is similar to fire; it is ablaze with flames emanating from it. Durga is also known as Tapasa Jvalanti, meaning she is burning with the effulgence of tapas. Yet another name given to Durga is *Vairochani*, the force of light. She is not different from Tripura Bhairavi.



Kundalini shakti

In yoga, Tripura Bhairavi is known as kundalini shakti. Her two forms are described as *sushupta rupa*, a sleeping, dormant form, and *jagrita rupa*, a waking form. The sleeping, dormant kundalini is a quiet, inactive energy, the calmness arising from the one-pointed state of penance or austerity. When aroused, she becomes the agitated, stimulated or awakened shakti of penance, known as dynamic energy or the dynamic, active concept of austerity. Her tranquillity, stagnation and sleep are due to her *ekatattwa dharana*, concentration on a single element, the earth element, in mooladhara chakra. It is a state of complete one-pointedness. Kundalini shakti is so thoroughly one-pointed that it is difficult to break or disturb that concentration. When her concentration is broken, however, she raises her head and begins to rise with a hissing sound.

The *Lalita Sahasranama* mentions that Tripura Bhairavi is also known as *trikonantara deepika*, one who shines within a triangle. This refers to the triangle of mooladhara chakra where she resides in the form of light. Another name mentioned in the *Lalita Sahasranama* is *chidagni kunda sambhoota*, one who is born of *agni kunda*, the fire pit of consciousness. It is yet another name symbolizing the presence of Devi in mooladhara.

The kundalini energy is said to be dormant and asleep; however, it is actually in a state of complete concentration, fully centred in one element. This centred or concentrated state of energy nevertheless produces the experience of dissipation or deflection in the tattwas and in different states of consciousness. This state of dissipation is not to be understood as the unstable state of mind experienced by a sadhaka or aspirant in life. Here it indicates a lack of balance in the tattwas that determines the qualities of the tattwas, consciousness or concentration. This centred and concentrated state of energy is essential for creation to manifest.

When one's consciousness is centred in one point, one begins to lose awareness of the environment and activities taking place in the surroundings. In a state of one-pointedness, only one-pointedness itself is experienced, to the exclusion of all other states, and this absence of experience of other states is the basic, original form of avidya or ignorance. Avidya is normally defined as *vidyayah abhavah*, the total absence of knowledge. However, this avidya is of a divine nature and therefore should not be understood as an absence of knowledge, as by definition there cannot be an absence of knowledge in God, the omniscient being. Instead, this divine avidya is referring to that quality of unconsciousness expressed by the primal, transcendental energy due to its *tapasya* or practice of austerity. In this state of one-pointedness, God's energy is so focused on one aspect that everything else is disregarded.

Thus, two forms of tapas are defined. The first is *chaitanyata* and *ekagrata*, pertaining to consciousness and concentration, and the second is *achaitanyata*, unconsciousness resulting in avidya. It may be said that while the avidya or unconsciousness expressed by God is the consequence of His concentration or one-pointedness, in the individual its effect is reflected quite differently.

Fear, depression and afflictions are generated within due to avidya. Such avidya is related to the *trigunatmika prakriti* or nature composed of the three gunas. When this unconsciousness is related to the three gunas, a feeling or idea of duality is generated, and fear, depression and other afflictions are created. *Parashakti*, the transcendental energy, is beyond the influence of the three gunas, therefore the generation of a state of fear or depression and afflictions do not arise in her. There is only the state of unconsciousness, which may be said to be the state of sleep, dormancy or unconscious awareness.

The individual's state of consciousness is limited and influenced by the gunas and this is the reason for the experience of duality. According to the yogic texts, duality is first of all experienced in the prithvi tattwa or mooladhara chakra, producing a sense of insecurity, inner hurdles, fear, feelings of inferiority and superiority, and other psychological imbalances.

If a sadhaka wants to change his nature that is influenced by the gunas, action takes place in two areas. First, change happens in the realm of kundalini shakti, which is centred in one element and is beyond the gunas. Second, due to the efforts to change one's nature within the realm of the gunas, changes begin to take place in different states of consciousness that are also in the realm of the gunas. At the time of kundalini awakening, the gunas of tamas, rajas and sattwa begin to manifest from within. One begins to have the experience of the inner tamasic, rajasic and sattwic gunas as well as the states of sorrow, depression and affliction. This influences the sadhaka's antahkarana or manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, or the sadhaka himself. These are the reasons for the fear related to the gunas.

Avidya dissolves only when kundalini transcends the states of the three gunas. The feeling of 'I am different', partial knowledge of oneself or *ardhajnana*, is the form of avidya in the realm of human consciousness. Man does not recognize his real, original form, instead instead relates himself to his body and the desires, ambitions and passions. This avidya, caused by the non-recognition of oneself, dissolves after the awakening of kundalini.

It has been said *Dvitiyat vai bhayam bhavati* – "Where there is duality there is fear."

The feeling of duality generates the states of fear, depression, frustration, sorrow and other afflictions, as these states can only arise when one perceives oneself as different from one's environment and thus feels threatened by it. This is why Devi, who is known as fire, kriyashakti or Tripura Bhairavi, manifests herself in the form of fear and avidya in the gross realm. In the subtle state, she takes the form of the sleeping kundalini shakti, a snake lying in an unconscious state. When she awakens, she dissolves all differences and dualities.

Bhairavi means dreadful, fearful or terrible. The question arises, why is this devi called Bhairavi, the terrible one? If she is the kundalini shakti, the shakti of tapas or the benevolent goddess, Durga, then what does this dreadful aspect mean? For whom, in what form and why is she dreadful? She is frightful for those who identify themselves with dual consciousness, who are under the control of conscious or subconscious passions, and who feel enjoyment amid unrest, anxiety, confusion and perplexity.

A sincere sadhaka does not consider the form of Bhairavi dreadful as, while advancing on the road of spiritual life, he experiences the peace of inner transformation as well as the inner turmoil that accompanies it. Bhairavi is not dreadful for those sadhakas who have transcended inner duality and have established themselves in the state of unity. For them she is the bestower of boons and happiness.

The similarity in the names of Tripura Bhairavi and Tripura Sundari indicates that they are two forms of the same Shakti. In the form of Sundari, she is unmanifest and in the form of Bhairavi, she is manifest. They are both 'tripura', meaning that both of them reside in the three lokas. Bhairavi is the devi of prithvi tattwa and resides in the mooladhara chakra, while Sundari is the parashakti residing in sahasrara. It is Bhairavi who, when awakened, ascends and pierces through all the states and ultimately merges with the Paramtattwa or the Shiva tattwa in the ocean of nectar. In ekatattwa dharana, centred in one element, her form is that of Bhairavi, with one-pointedness as her positive aspect and avidya as her negative aspect. Possessing a naturalness, awareness and one-pointedness in all states and at all times is the form of Sundari. The form of equanimity in all elements is the form of Sundari, and the forgetfulness caused by immersion in one single element is the form of Bhairavi.

Paravak form

Tripura Bhairavi is also seen in the form of *paravak*, the original, primal word or vibration, which later on takes the form of pashyanti vak, the causal sound. Pashyanti vak was mentioned in the discussion on Tara Mahavidya as being the form of Tara; the vibration that becomes the seer. Grosser than pashyanti vak is *madhyama vak*, the vibration that establishes itself in the antahkarana, followed by *vaikhari vak*, that which is expressed through speech. Tripura Bhairavi is considered to be in the form of paravak. She is the Adishakti or primal force centred in one point and who thus maintains her original existence. This original existence can be attained through penance or austerity.

Form

The form of Tripura Bhairavi is effulgent, like light. It is the effulgence of penance. When a sadhaka, through penance, overcomes his body and senses, his impurities or defects are removed and his body becomes effulgent.

In the same way as Kali, Bhairavi also wears a garland of eighty-four human heads representing the eighty-four lakh yonis. The human heads adorning the neck of the devi represent the overcoming of the sadhaka over the cycle of birth and death.'

Tripura Bhairavi wears a red garment, symbolizing kriyashakti or rajoguna. Kriyashakti implies the beginning of kriya or action and in this state the sadhaka is dominated by rajoguna. The only aim behind any action and austerity is to achieve success or victory; it is the idea related to rajoguna.

Tripura Bhairavi has three eyes. She resides in, and is the seer of all three lokas. She wears a crown of the moon representing mental experiences, and is the symbol of all the conscious, subconscious and unconscious experiences of the mental field. The symbology of the moon, as seen in the discussion on Tripura Sundari, is related to the tantric concept of chittashakti, the mental force that exists side-by-side with pranashakti, the vital force. Pranashakti is related to the body and the senses. The faculties of vision, taste, hearing, touch and smell experienced by the sense organs of eyes, tongue, ears, skin and nose, are all governed by pranashakti. Form and colour are recognized through the medium of prana.

Chittashakti is the energy of the unmanifest realm. Various colours are perceived in the manifest world, but in the unmanifest realm there is the perception of only one colour, just as one may recognize the form and figures of objects illuminated by moonlight, yet they appear to be of the same colour. The mental realm itself cannot be seen by anybody; it is based on experience. One can understand one's mind only through one's own experience. No one can tell what form or colour another person's mind will take. Experience has no colour.

According to tantra and the Vedas, experience is two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional and is comparable to chittashakti. Therefore, the devi who is beyond the mind instead of under the control of it, who rules over all the mental states, and who determines the path of progress, evolution and transformation in consciousness through the mind, wears the crown of the moon.

Bhairavi has four hands. In one of them she holds a mala, a tool used to concentrate the dissipated states of mind on one point and to induce introversion. For a sadhaka, it is a symbol of sadhana, the medium through which one evolves. According to Swami Satyananda, there are three states of sadhana: external, mental and internal. The body and mind both constitute the basis of external sadhana;



however, only the mind, the antahkarana, forms the basis of mental sadhana. Internal sadhana is that which goes beyond the mind and is practised after transcending the mind. The basis of internal sadhana is the state of knowledge of the self. The mental and internal sadhana are also another implication of the moon-crown of the devi.

Bhairavi is performing abhaya mudra, the gesture of fearlessness, with another of her hands, telling the sadhaka not to be afraid of sadhana or austerity as it will ensure his progress and auspiciousness. Her third hand is in *samrakshana mudra*, the gesture of divine protection; letting her devotees know that she will protect them from external attachments, influences and the environment. Once a sadhaka is absorbed in the sadhana or worship of this devi, he cannot undergo any sorrow, suffering, damage or deprivation in any of the three lokas. No external power



can bring him down. The fourth hand of the devi is in *vidya mudra*, the gesture of bestowing knowledge upon the sadhaka. The expansion of consciousness is related to the increase in jnana or knowledge. The dimension of knowledge becomes wider and wider with the expansion of consciousness. In this context, the acquisition of vidya means the experience of knowledge that occurs as one's consciousness expands through sadhana.

Mantra

Just like Tripura Sundari, Tripura Bhairavi also has three kutas and there are three bija mantras: *hsraim*, *hsklrim* and *hsshrauh*. Each of the mantras pertains to one of the three *granthis* or psychic knots, which are blocks that prevent the ascent of kundalini shakti. The kutas of tantra are termed granthis in yoga. The first mantra pertains to Brahma granthi, the second to Vishnu granthi and the third to Rudra granthi. The seven chakras can be grouped according to the different granthis.

Mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras come within the area of Brahma granthi, where the function of creation and reproduction begins, and the mantra *hsraim* pertains to this granthi. Manipura, anahata and vishuddhi chakras belong to the realm of Vishnu granthi, and the mantra *hsklrim* pertains to this granthi. Here, the function of maintenance or sustenance, as it relates to the three subtle koshas of pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya, is carried out. Ajna and sahasrara chakras belong to the realm of Rudra granthi and are related to transformation, inner evolution, integration and dissolution of the different states of consciousness and the attainment of undivided consciousness. The mantra of this third granthi or Rudra granthi is *hssrauh*.

Yantra

The yantra of Tripura Bhairavi consists of nine inverted triangles surrounded by a circle, the eight-petalled lotus, and the chakra griha, the four gates.

The nine triangles used in this yantra represent the gunas of tamas, rajas and sattwa that, in the course of sadhana, the sadhaka must confront in the gross, subtle and causal states. The extent and intensity of the gunas in these three states may be different, and often one experiences them in one's thoughts, ambitions, passions and dreams. The sattwic, rajasic and tamasic tendencies are also seen in one's samskaras and when the sadhaka confronts and transcends them in all dimensions and states of life, then that process becomes a method of tapasya. Thus, the yantra of Tripura Bhairavi symbolizes the attainment of the transcendental state through austerity.

Texts

There are three texts related to this mahavidya: *Tripura Bhairavi Tantra*, *Tripura Bhairavi Yamala* and *Tripura Tapini Tantra*.

SIXTH MAHAVIDYA: CHHINNAMASTA

The sixth mahavidya is Chhinnamasta. It is necessary to first discuss her form, for without an understanding of her form, this mysterious principle will remain beyond comprehension. The description of this devi is extraordinary. Kamadeva, the god of love and desire, is engaged in *kama krida*, or sexual activity, with his wife Rati. Kamadeva is lying down and Rati is on top of him. Chhinnamasta, in the form

of Kali, is standing on the body of Rati. There are two assistant yoginis on both sides of the devi. The devi is headless; her head has already been chopped off. In one of her two hands she is holding her own head and in the other, a pair of scissors. Three streams of blood are flowing from her neck. One stream is flowing into the mouth of her own head while the other two streams are flowing into the mouths of the two yoginis standing beside her. This form of the devi is quite terrible. Due to lack of understanding of this form, many people think she is a wicked goddess; others consider her to be a *gram devi*, patron deity of villagers.

There are many concepts and ideas about Chhinnamasta; however, in tantra the principle that she represents is clear. She is regarded as *mahaprana shakti*, the ultimate energy principle, a combination of prakasha and nada, light and sound, resembling a flash of lightning and a thunderclap where there is the experience of light and sound.

Similar to all other representations of the divine in tantra and elsewhere, Chhinnamasta and the other mahavidyas have been described in a symbolic form. A purely intellectual examination of these forms is not enough; they have to be seen from a yogic or psychological point of view. It is necessary to understand them in this context so that no theory, principle or philosophy is based exclusively on intellectual thinking. They represent the achievement of inner experiences in human life as well as the methods of their achievement; they form the means and basis that lead one to the full understanding of consciousness. Efforts should therefore be made to understand these principles and concepts as fully as possible, using a broad outlook, free from prejudices.

Pranashakti

Yoga views pranashakti in three forms: mahaprana, prana and upaprana. *Mahaprana* pervades the entire universe, both the manifest, mundane and material as well as the unmanifest and transcendental creation. *Prana* pervades only the manifest or material creation. *Upaprana*, minor prana, pervades all animate objects and regulates their states. Therefore, wherever the life force is experienced is the experience of upaprana. To comprehend Chhinnamasta, an understanding of all three stages and states of prana is essential.

Mahaprana is energy, a power of action or a power of light. It governs all the elements, either directly or indirectly. In the absence of mahaprana, there can be no energy in any element, tanmatra, or gross, subtle or causal states. Without energy, none of their qualities or characteristics will manifest, they will remain in an inanimate, inert state with no action or vibration. Whenever there is life, creation, Shiva, Shakti, Prakriti and Purusha, mahaprana is also present. It is this energy that keeps the Purusha and Prakriti elements awake and supplies them with energy. 'Keeping them awake' implies developing their qualities by supplying energy, bringing their achievements into the light and giving form to their different states through experience.

The tantrics, yogis and vedantic scholars have viewed mahaprana in the form of electric energy or luminosity, as a primordial energy composed of the two elements of nada and prakasha. When nada and prakasha combine, mahaprana is experienced. It appears to be in the form of uncontrolled energy that is experienced only for a moment like a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder, disappearing immediately. It occurs in an unmanifest form.

Mahaprana flows in living, animate bodies through particular channels known as nadis. *Nadis* are the channels for the flow of pranashakti. If one sits in a room between open doors and windows, one will experience a flow of air, while someone sitting in a corner of the room will not have the same experience. Likewise, the form of the flow of prana varies in different states and will be experienced differently. For example, if the wind is blowing at a speed of one hundred miles per hour outside the room, the same speed will not be experienced inside the room even if all the windows of the room are open. This happens

as energy acquires specific states in specific conditions. If it is experienced in a certain form and state at a certain place, it is not necessarily experienced in the same way elsewhere.

There are various states of consciousness and different functions of the senses. Due to these different states of body and mind, every living being experiences pranashakti in different forms. The word *prani*, living being, is also derived from prana; it is anything within which the vital force is flowing. This is why prana is perceived and known as life force.

When the same mahaprana enters a living being or a body, it flows through various channels of the body. The area of experience of prana is known as *pranamaya kosha*, the pranic body. It is different from both the physical and mental bodies. It is related to and controls the subtle and causal bodies. According to the yogis, the *brahmarandhra* or crown of the head is the door through which mahaprana enters into an otherwise lifeless body, thus bringing it to life. Mahaprana passes through the three granthis: Rudra granthi at the top of the body, Vishnu granthi in the middle, and Brahma granthi in the lower portion of the body. The prana enters into all the granthis and takes on different forms in each.

The voltage of electricity is stepped down as it passes through various transformers from its generation in the power plant to its destination in a house. It is transformed from about 11,000 volts down to 440 or 220 volts, and depending on the appliance used, it may be again transformed down to 24, 12 or 6 volts. In the same way, the granthis reduce the intensity, flow and capacity of pranashakti within the subtle and causal bodies of individuals. An average person experiences prana at the level of Brahma granthi through which it is distributed throughout the physical body and other bodies or realms of existence.

The Upanishads say that prana flows in the gross, subtle and causal bodies through the 72,000 nadis contained within the physical body. It divides itself into the upapranas, which include prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. Upapranas control the physical body and increase or reduce the capability of the external limbs and internal organs.

Thus, the first transformation of mahaprana into prana happens within the causal body through the creation of the Rudra granthi. Then Vishnu granthi and Brahma granthi are created in the subtle and gross bodies, respectively. After the creation of Brahma granthi, prana divides itself into the five upapranas.

Symbols and names

The scissors held by Chhinnamasta represent her ability to cut through the three granthis. In other words, in order to maintain the intensity and capacity of prana, she cuts off the three transformers that exist within the human body, beginning with Brahma granthi.

Ida, pingala and sushumna are the three main nadis of the 72,000 nadis spread throughout the body. Within these nadis, three forms of prana are seen: *chandrashakti*, lunar or mental energy, *suryashakti*, solar, pranic or vital energy, and *santulitashakti*, balanced energy. Pingala nadi is the suryashakti with Dakini as its deity, while ida nadi is the chandrashakti and its deity is Varnini. Dakini and Varnini are the two yoginis standing on both sides of Chhinnamasta. It is possible to realize them through sadhana. Yoga is the only path that teaches the method of controlling the pranashakti flowing through ida and pingala. Only when these two nadis are purified and controlled through yoga does the power and energy of Dakini and Varnini awaken.

Chhinnamasta cuts off the three granthis existing in the body. When the Brahma granthi is destroyed, the five upapranas become one and take a form in the gross body to unite with the prana of the subtle body. Vishnu granthi is then cut off, destroying the limitations of the subtle body, after which the pranas of the gross and subtle bodies merge into the causal body. Lastly, when the Rudra granthi is cut off, the manifest, material prana merges into and unites with mahaprana.



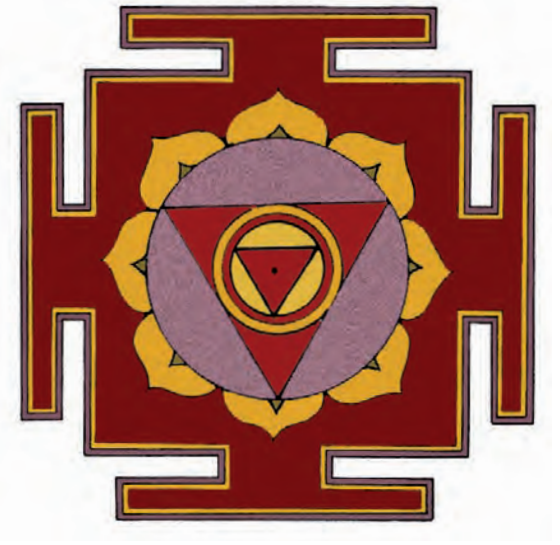
The devi has chopped off her own head and keeps it in her other hand. This is a symbol of the piercing of Rudra granthi. The same mahaprana that flows in the transcendental or unmanifest world is now flowing in the gross, subtle and causal states without any obstacle or resistance. Keeping the head in her own hand has another meaning. It signifies the elimination of dualities and differences in the four components of antahkarana: *manas* or rational mind, *buddhi* or intellect, *chitta* or memory, and *ahamkara* or ego. All the experiences of antahkarana cease to exist with the merger of pranas in Rudra granthi, including the experience of ego. Only one state remains at that time: the state of transformation from the mundane to the transcendental. In this state the *jiva*, the individual soul, attains the form of Shiva; the sadhaka achieves the state of self-realization through sadhana.

Three streams of blood are flowing from the open wounds in the devi's neck. The main stream represents the sushumna nadi and the devi's head is drinking the blood from this stream. The two smaller streams symbolize the suryashakti and chandrashakti or the pingala and ida nadis respectively, and the two attendant yoginis, Dakini and Varnini, are drinking the blood from these streams. This is symbolic of the fact that all the flows of prana are ascending, moving upward. The flow of prana at the gross level is attracted to the mundane material world. With the piercing of Rudra granthi, that attraction dissolves and the prana starts flowing upward in the form of three currents of Chhinnamasta's blood. This flow of prana is now taking place in the unmanifest dimension. After ascending in space, it again enters the three mouths.

Another name of the devi is Vajra Vairochani. *Vairochani* means self-effulgent, and *vajra* is a thunderbolt, the weapon of Lord Indra. Indra is also called Virochana. According to the Vedas, Indra is the king of gods. He is also the lord of the senses. Through sensory experiences, one receives pleasure and passions are fulfilled. Sensory pleasure is the greatest attraction of human life and out of all sensorial pleasures, the deepest experience is the one obtained through sexual intercourse. Chhinnamasta has been called Vajra Vairochani, the Shakti of the lord of senses, for with the

awakening and ascent of pranashakti, one overcomes the craving for sensorial pleasures. As long as one is under the control of Brahma granthi, the desire for creation and procreation remains. Creation is the function of Brahma, and within human beings this capacity is related to sexuality and the desire for procreation. When Brahma granthi is cut off, the attraction of sensorial pleasures and sexual instincts dissolves. This is why Chhinnamasta is shown as standing on Rati and Kamadeva.

Indra, the lord of the senses, exists in the body as the jivatma and enjoys and receives knowledge through the senses when in an extroverted state. The senses, consisting of the karmendriyas, jnanendriyas and the antahkarana, are necessary for the movement and function of the body in the material world, and the form of the ahamkara of Indra is the last, ultimate existence of antahkarana. The characteristic of the indriyas is that they are attracted to, and thus run after, pleasures, enjoyment and satisfaction. Desire and the absence of desire, willingness and unwillingness, all emerge from the realm of senses. The indriyas enjoy being in such environments, conditions and activities that are convenient and suitable for them. Indra is the god, the deity of the instincts of enjoyment and desire for pleasure. He is the jivatma, and so has been given the highest position among manifest creation; in the Vedas as well, Indra has been given the highest position among gods.



Sex, the dormant instinct of pleasure and enjoyment through the senses, is the strongest instinct in human beings. In the imagery of Chhinnamasta, sensuality is symbolically presented in the form of Rati and Kamadeva, who symbolize the sexual enjoyment between man and woman or between Purusha and Prakriti. Creation begins with the union of these two elements, and the power, force or energy for creation or procreation is received through the Brahma granthi. Chhinnamasta cuts off this granthi so that this energy moves upward, towards *yoga*, a state of union, and not downward towards *bhoga* or sensual enjoyments. The forms of Rati and Kamadeva are related to bhoga or the gross, mundane, material world; Chhinnamasta is the power by whose grace all desires for sexual and other pleasures and enjoyments can be overcome. When the intensity of sensuality is stilled, one begins to experience a transformation in the state of Indra. It is an experience of change, a state devoid of passion.

The devi is also addressed as Vajra, the weapon that Indra used to kill the demon, Vritra. According to tantra, *vritra* is an instinct, a tendency of tamas that overshadows the luminosity of jnana with its darkness. It is for the destruction of Vritra that Indra or jivatma makes use of the vajra whose power manifests in the form of striking electrical energy. Like a thunderbolt, jivatma has a sharp, boundless capacity for immediate change. Chhinnamasta is a symbol of that pranashakti that destroys all non-divine forces in an instant, hence the name Vajra Vairochani.

Another name of the devi is Prachanda Chandi. The prefix *pra* denotes intensity. *Chandi* means horrible and dreadful as well as exceptional or incomparable, hence *Prachanda Chandi* is the fiercest of all. The name Chandi is usually assigned to the fierce Kali; she is one

of the forms of Kali. The difference between Kali and Chhinnamasta is that while Kali is the terrifying force of kaala, time; she must take the help of kaala for effecting any change or dissolution, Chhinnamasta does not need time to bring about transformation. She does not have to wait for the right opportunity but acts immediately, without any aid from other energies or consciousness.

Another difference between these two powers is in their area of residence. Kali dwells in the heart where one's original nature and raw, powerful emotions find expression. Refined emotions are not expressed from the heart. The same applies to the type of karmas associated with these emotions. Chhinnamasta resides in the eyebrow centre or ajna chakra. Two states are experienced at the eyebrow centre or ajna chakra: one is *sankalpashakti*, a firm resolution, vow, solemn promise or goal, and the second is *drishtishakti*, the power of vision or intuition. With the awakening of ajna chakra, one gains the power of intuition and acquires inner perception. Chhinnamasta represents both these energies.

Chhinnamasta is also identified with Renuka, the mother of Parashurama. Parashurama is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Since Chhinnamasta also comes sixth in the order of the mahavidyas, she is therefore called *Shashthi*, 'the sixth'.

The story of Renuka is that her husband, Maharshi Jamadagni, ordered his son Parashurama in a fit of rage to cut off her head. Parashurama accepted his father's order and without any question, chopped off the head of his mother with his axe. Jamadagni was pleased with his son's unconditional obedience and told him to ask for a boon. Parashurama prayed that his mother be revived, and Jamadagni granted his wish. Sometime later, after the demise of both Jamadagni and Renuka, Parashurama accidentally met with Lord Dattatreya and accepted him as his guru. The guru instructed him to worship his own mother, to which Parashurama replied, "She was the mother of my physical body, why should I worship her?" Dattatreya explained, "Devi Chhinnamasta appeared in the form of Renuka to bring you into this world as the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Your father ordered you to cut off her head so that she might perceive her true existence. After her head was severed, she was no longer your mother but once again became Mother Chhinnamasta." ThusDattatreya taught Parashurama the sadhana of Chhinnamasta vidya.

Mantra

The bija mantra of Chhinnamasta is *Ham* or *Hoom*. This mantra is known as dhenubija which comes from *dhenu* meaning cow. *Dhenubija* implies a Shakti through whose worship all the wishes and desires of a sadhaka are fulfilled. The sadhana of this mantra is prescribed for eradicating the different experiences, states, samskaras and karmas. The mantra *Ham* is a part of the mantra *So-Ham* used in *ajapa japa dharana*, the practice of spontaneous mantra repetition. This effortless japa that begins with the ajapa sadhana allows one to transcend all the states of mind and gain the experience of *anahad nada*, the unstruck sound. The poet Kabirdas has described it in the following way:

> *Aisa jaapa japo mana lai, soham soham surata gai;*
> *Chhaisau sahasa ikkisau jaap, anahad upaje apai aapa.*
>
> Fix the mind on the breath in such a way that both breath and mind continuously chant *So-Ham So-Ham* together. If that can be sustained for 21,600 breaths (the number of breaths one takes in twenty-four hours), then one experiences the vibrations of consciousness emerging: anahad nada, the unheard sound.

The very word 'ajapa' signifies that this sadhana is not a conscious process. Through this method, one acquires subtle awareness in the different states of consciousness. When the japa of this mantra goes on continuously even in the subtle and causal states, without any conscious effort, it ultimately becomes a state beyond

mind, mental vrittis or tendencies. One acquires the capacity to transcend the mind with the practice of dhenubija.

Sadhana

There are three sadhanas for the worship of Chhinnamasta. These are: prana vidya, vidyuta dharana, and seeing the light hidden inside matter. *Prana vidya* is a practice taught in yoga, the purpose of which is to gain control over prana by becoming aware of its transmission and flow. It implies that one is monitoring pranic communication with conscious awareness.

In the second sadhana, *vidyuta dharana*, when one has reached the one-pointed state of dharana, one should feel and experience that electric energy is entering into the body from space. This sadhana is designed to evoke the experience of cosmic energy within oneself in the form of a flow of energy.

The third sadhana is seeing the pranashakti hidden inside matter. When one looks at a person, what one actually sees is the gross body, form, skin colour and other features. Similarly, one can see only the gross forms of birds, animals, plants, stones and objects in general. If, however, one does not see an individual or an object as matter, but in the form of pranashakti, energy or light, then the gross form will not be visible. This becomes possible with the development of intuition or the awakening of ajna chakra. When ajna chakra awakens, one does not see merely the form of matter, but also the energy and effulgence hidden or inherent in it.

Yantra

The yantra of Chhinnamasta has a Shakti triangle or inverted triangle in its centre. Around the centre are three circles, one above the other. These are contained within another Shakti triangle which is surrounded by an eight-petalled lotus. All these are housed within a yantra griha, or the four gates.

There are two Shakti triangles in this yantra. The central triangle symbolizes the manifest prana, and the three circles represent the three granthis, the gross, subtle and causal bodies and the three categories of indriyas: karmendriyas, jnanendriyas and antahkarana. The triangle outside these circles symbolizes the experience of mahaprana in the transcendental state.

Texts

The important texts related to Chhinnamasta include *Shaktisangama Tantra*, *Chhinnamasta Hridaya* and *Chhinnamasta Kanda*. Detailed descriptions and explanations of Chhinnamasta are provided in the *Shaktisangama Tantra*.

SEVENTH MAHAVIDYA: DHUMAVATI

Dhumavati is the seventh mahavidya. She is a strange goddess. In this material world she is related to sleep, lethargy, unconsciousness and forgetfulness. The principle pertaining to this devi has been defined as: *Tamasah param darshayati dhumavati* – "Dhumavati shows the path that takes one beyond tamas or darkness." She resides in a murky dimension where there is dearth of matter and light.

States of sat and asat

The rishis have seen the world in the form of sat and asat. Sat, existence or truth, includes God and those stages of the universe that are manifest, visible, intelligible and perceptible. All the tattwas from the five tanmatras up to the level of manifest body are the stages of sat.

The other stage is that of *asat*, meaning the absence of name, form and matter, that which is not visible, intelligible or perceptible. It is also identified with *abhava* or absence, a state of void where there is no knowledge or consciousness. Some thinkers regard it as a state of moksha, nirvana or liberation. According to tantra, the state of abhava has two main forms: pragabhava and pradhvamsabhava.

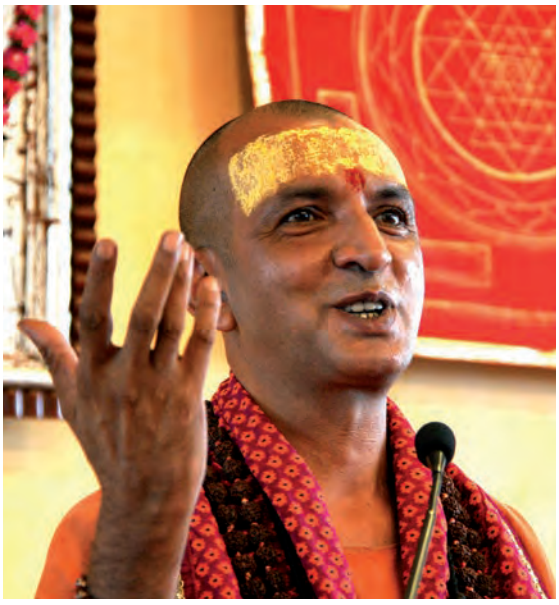
Pragabhava means a state prior to sat or manifestation. Before something is written on a blank piece of paper, that blank paper is in the state of pragabhava or in its original form. Prior to writing anything on it, there

is abhava or absence of creation or form. Similarly, pragabhava is the state of nothingness before creation. *Pradhvamsabhava*, on the other hand, is the nothingness that arises upon the dissolution that follows creation. Both of these are the states of abhava. Where nothing is visible, where there is no experience or perception, where there is only the state of darkness or tamas, then the devi active in this state of asat is known as Dhumavati.

The state of asat, abhava or nothingness has also been discussed in various tantric texts as well as in the *Rigveda* and the Upanishads. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* there is a statement: *Asadva idamagra asit tato vai sadajayata* – "In the beginning there was the state of asat or abhava, from which sat emerged." From the initial state of deep darkness emerges light. There was nothing in the beginning, only a state of *shoonyata*, nothingness and from this nothingness appeared shape and form. According to the scriptures, this state of darkness or nothingness is the state of asat.

In the scriptures, there are also references to a third type of abhava called sadabhava or atyantabhava. *Sadabhava* denotes a perpetual state of abhava; *atyantabhava* means total abhava. Many thinkers have said that there are only two states of abhava, pragabhava and pradvansabhava; the states prior to creation and dissolution. They hold that sadabhava is never possible within the realm of time or space. If one says that flowers are falling from the sky or that a rabbit has horns, it is not a fact. This is the experience of sadabhava. However, if something is not possible in time and space, it does not mean that it is not possible in some other dimension.

Therefore, in a discussion on the transcendental subject of abhava as represented by Dhumavati, there can only be two states of abhava, pragabhava and pradhvamsabhava, the states prior to creation and after dissolution. If the state of abhava is influenced by time, then it may be perceived in the form of a seed. The tree is not visible in the seed, thus the absence of the tree in the seed is the state



of pragabhava. The seed then germinates and becomes a tree with branches and leaves, flowers and fruits. Taking the seed from the fruit, with the tree again being absent, is the state of pradhvamsabhava. Here is a desire to generate the primal, original state after the manifest state has been dissolved. In tantra, this primal, original energy, asatshakti or abhavashakti has been seen in the form of Dhumavati.

She has also been seen in the form of sleep, darkness or unconsciousness. In the *Devi Mahatmyam*, she is described as *kalaratrirghoraratrirmoharatrishcha daruna*, the great, dark, terrible night of delusion. In other words, the form of Dhumavati is like night even for kaala. Time does not exist there. There is the state of abhava even in the state of darkness. There is darkness in the state of avidya. Thus, a deep unconscious state has been seen as *astitvarahitashakti* or a Shakti that does not exist.

Yogamaya is the Shakti of Vishnu. Vishnu is depicted as resting, relaxing on the bed of infinity in the state of yoga nidra. Yoga nidra means the state of conscious unconsciousness and this conscious unconsciousness is the Shakti of Yogamaya or Dhumavati.



Eminent and efficient cause

Shakti or *chetanashakti*, the energy of consciousness, is in itself the eminent cause as well as the efficient cause. If any desire is generated within an individual, a part or fraction of this energy enters into that desire and also into the action or function related to it. His emotion or consciousness appears in the form of desire and expresses itself in the form of action. According to tantra, the supreme consciousness is itself both the eminent cause and the efficient cause. In the *Taittirya Upanishad* it is said: *Tat srishtva tadeva anupravishat* – "At the moment creation takes place, God Himself enters into that creation." Where there is no creation or there is absence of creation, then God separates Himself from it. Thus the state of abhava or nothingness is the real, original state.

Shakti of the state of non-being

Dhumavati has been called the motivating force of the state of non-being. Each of the devis discussed earlier represents a manifest state or a form of creation. For example, Kali is the kaalashakti, Chhinnamasta is pranashakti and Bhairavi is kriyashakti. Dhumavati is the symbol of non-being before creation, the state of abhava.

Devi of tamas

This devi is regarded as the goddess of tamas. There are two aspects of tamas, darkness and avidya. A part of the function of tamas enters into creation and the manifest states. Unconsciousness is a part of tamas; in sleep, one enters into the unconscious state where there is no knowledge or perception of any kind. This is the realm of Dhumavati.

Form

The form of Dhumavati is quite peculiar and grotesque, lacking the gentleness and beauty of the other devis. Her form has been described in the following way:

Vivarnaa chanchalaa dushtaa deerghaa cha malinaambaraa,
Vimuktakuntalaa rookshaa vidhavaa viraladvijaa.
Kaakadhvaja rathaaroodhaa vilambita payodharaa,
Shoorpahastaatirukshaakshaa dhootahastavaraanvitaa.

The verse says that the devi is ugly or featureless. In the original state, where the differences between name and form end, there is no form of the devi that can be received and accepted by the antahkarana. In the absence of a form, she is formless or is a Shakti without form. Dhumavati is agitated, restless and unsteady. The primal, original energy does not have any base, nor is there anyone to control it. In the unconscious state, there is no conscious element that could be called Shiva or Purusha. A wild horse without a rein cannot be controlled by anyone. This is the state of an uncontrolled, unsteady and restless Shakti.

Dhumavati is wicked, huge and her clothes are dirty. This signifies that the real effulgence or lustre of her body is hidden; her splendour or beauty is not visible. The name Dhumavati, the smoky one, also indicates that her colour is smoky. In smoke, there is no definite form of either light or darkness; it is the intermediate state. When the rays of light radiate through

darkness, the murky form of smoke appears at that moment.

Unlike Tara, whose hair makes a single braid, ekajata, Dhumavati's hair is loose and unkempt, symbolizing that there are all kinds of gross, subtle and causal Shaktis in a dispersed or scattered state. In Dhumavati the energies are not organized or unified as one Shakti. The unkempt hair is yet another expression of the uncontrolled state of this Shakti. Her eyes are red, crazy and unfocused, not one-pointed. This represents the scattered senses that cannot be centred on one point.

It is said that Dhumavati is a widow, symbolizing the original solitary state of Shakti. In the process of her transformation, this original Shakti acquires or accepts different purushas or masculine counterparts, representing consciousness, and thus attains different states and conditions. This primal, original Shakti acquires Kaala when in the form of Kali, Akshobhya when in the form of Tara, and so on. However, when the Shakti reverts back to her original state, there is complete abhava or absence of the existence of any purusha element. She lives independently without any partner; hence the form of a widow.

The devi is old. She has a laughing face and broken teeth. She rides a chariot and on her flag there is the emblem of a crow. In one of her hands is a winnowing basket, a tool used for separating the husk, pebbles and other waste from grains. The function of winnowing implies the act of separating sat from asat, life from death and creation from dissolution, which the devi does using her own shakti. Lastly, her other hand is in varada mudra for granting boons.

Mantra

The full mantra of Dhumavati is *Dhoom dhoom dhoomaavatee phat svaahaa*, and the bija mantra is *Dhoom*.

Sadhana

The following mantra is the sadhana of Dhumavati:

Asato maa sadgamaya
Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya
Mrityormaamritam gamaya.

Take me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.

Trying to attain one's own original form with this dharana is the sadhana of Dhumavati. The sadhaka sits in a solitary, quiet place, free from disturbances, and concentrates his mind on the void. He practices the dharana of, 'I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the emotion. I am neither a doer nor an enjoyer.' This sadhana leads to the experience of the state of nothingness in the realms of senses and antahkarana. This is the first stage in the process of attainment of the experience of Dhumavati. Thereafter, in the same void, the experience of the unsteady or restless Shakti begins, ultimately leading one to the realization of being inherent in non-being, which is the goal of this sadhana.

Yantra

The yantra of Dhumavati is very simple. There are two interlacing triangles in the centre, one is upward-pointing, the other is inverted. They are surrounded by a circle with an eight-petalled lotus on it. The lotus is enclosed in the yantra griha.

The upward-facing triangle is the symbol of the Shiva tattwa and the inverted triangle represents Shakti tattwa. Here, both the elements are in a state of rest or relaxation. They are united or combined into one, and are in their original state. Both the elements are identical. As a consequence of being in their state of rest, there is no action, transformation or attainment of any kind. This is the state of Dhumavati.

Texts

There are two texts related to Dhumavati: the *Dhumavati Tantra*, which describes the form and principles of the devi, and *Toshini Tantra*, which explains the system and methods of worship and sadhana.

EIGHTH MAHAVIDYA: BAGALAMUKHI

The eighth mahavidya is Bagalamukhi. She represents *stambhanashakti*, the stupefying power of obstruction or hindrance that can make one completely idle or useless. She has been described in the following way:

Vaadee mookati rankati kshitipatirvaishwaanarah sheetati,
krodhee shaamyatidurjanah sujanati
kshipraanugah khanjati.
Garvee kharvati sarvavichcha
jadatitvadyantranaayantritah,
Shreenitye vagalaamukheepratidinam kalyaanim tubhyam namah.

The meaning of these mantras is simple and superb. The Shakti transforms an eloquent speaker into a mute or dumb person and makes a majestic, wealthy person poor and piteous. Wicked people develop pure dispositions and amiability through her influence. Those who run fast are crippled or become lame. She destroys the ego of the egoist and converts a learned, wise person into an ignorant person. Salutations to Devi Bagalamukhi who is auspicious and possesses eternal authority and power!

Only the hindering or obstructing shakti of the devi is being expressed through all these functions. The power of Bagalamukhi stops all the activities of one's life and makes one foolish or stupid. In fact, she makes one completely ignorant and one's mind, intellect and speech thoroughly inert. The name Bagalamukhi has been derived from the root *balga*, a bridle. A bridle is used to control a horse, therefore Bagalamukhi is the devi who puts a bridle into one's mouth to stop one's speech, making one mute or dumb.

Speech has always been representative of the senses, as it is the capacity to express them. It is through speech that human beings express their experiences acquired through the karmendriyas, jnanendriyas and antahkarana. Speech, therefore, has been accepted as the medium of expression in all the states of life.

Speech does not imply only the spoken word, but includes all the activities of the senses, mind, intellect, chitta and ego. The gross speech is a means of contact with the external world and the subtle speech is a tool of inner understanding and clarification. To hinder or obstruct this expression is the function of Bagalamukhi. The karmendriyas, jnanendriyas and antahkarana have extroverted tendencies. As long as these senses remain active, the consciousness of human beings will continue to be extroverted. The stambhanashakti is experienced when efforts are made to obstruct or hinder the senses and to awaken the inner states. Thus stambhanashakti means *sanyam*, control over external tendencies.

Another name of Bagalamukhi is Bakamukhi, from *baka*, duck. She converts the faces of her enemies and opponents into those of ducks. This metaphor arises from the traditional symbology where the swan and the duck represent opposite qualities. While the swan is the symbol of wisdom and knowledge, the duck is seen as an epitome of stupidity, quacking throughout the day and unable to control its voice. It is said that Devi Bagalamukhi converts the heads of her opponents into ducks, confusing their mind and intellect. In this confused state of mind and intellect, one cannot see anything correctly and clearly. One cannot think, act or express anything.

In tantra, one can find discussions on experiments pertaining to various mantras, for example: *marana*, mantras to kill someone; *uchchatana*, mantras to disturb someone's mind; *stambhana*, mantras to paralyze movement; *sammohana*, mantras that give one the power of attracting any living being; hypnotism; *vidveshana*, mantras that give the power of creating animosity; shanti, freeing from diseases and fear, and others. These are all different ways of influencing or manipulating nature. The Bagalamukhi Shakti is utilized for the act of stambhana, for stoppage or paralyzing movement.

In ancient times, the Bagalamukhi mantra was used to stop the advancing enemy

soldiers. Such experiments, though, do not constitute the aims of Bagalamukhi sadhana, whose primary aim is to stop or obstruct the tendencies of the mind. Its best example is found in yoga. The second sutra of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* says *yogashchittavritti nirodhah* – "To block the patterns of consciousness is yoga." This, in effect, is the beginning of Bagalamukhi sadhana where efforts are made to block or stop the tendencies, patterns and actions emerging from within.

Three powers have been discussed in the context of Tripura Sundari: Bala, young virgin; Mantrini, counsellor identified as mahavidya Matangi; and Dandanatha, wielder of the mace and 'army chief'. Bagalamukhi Shakti is Dandanatha. Bagalamukhi has the capacity of blocking all activities; wherever there is action, Bagalamukhi Shakti can be used there. This Shakti has no influence at all in the state of rest or steadiness. She makes use of her stambhanashakti when in the restless, unsteady and active state. She stops and controls all kinds of unsteadiness, agitation and uneasiness. She can exercise her power of control only when action or motion begins.

Form

The form of Bagalamukhi is beautiful and auspicious. She wears yellow clothes and exquisite ornaments. With her left hand she is pulling the tongue of her enemy, and in her right hand she is holding a club. The duck-like head of the enemy is related to the name of the devi, and her action of pulling the tongue implies the blocking or stopping of all expressions. She is holding the club in such a way that anything could be shattered to pieces with the force of its blow. Here, the club is a symbol of a blow to the antahkarana of the enemy. All the activities of mind, intellect, chitta and ego are blocked or stopped with a blow from the club.

Sadhana

According to tantric texts, a sadhaka performing the worship and sadhana of this



devi should wear yellow garments, use yellow flowers and a mala of turmeric. These texts say that the colour of consciousness in the state of sattwa is effulgent and luminous like gold. When consciousness acquires a particular form after transformation in this manifest world, its golden colour is changed into yellow and its effulgence and luminosity disappear; they merge into themselves. If the lustre of gold is removed, it becomes yellow.

The yellow colour is also considered to be the colour of antahkarana, as consciousness cannot express itself in its original, luminous form in the antahkarana. The full potential of the mind cannot develop. When the full potential of the antahkarana develops and starts experiencing the state of sattwa, only then does a sadhaka attain the state of hiranyagarbha, the cosmic state. It has been said in the tantras that the worldly, gross or external consciousness perceives samskaras as different from the subtle state. This is the state of the manifest mind and its colour is yellow. The practices of raja yoga and hatha yoga are the main sadhanas of this devi; it is through these practices that both the external and internal patterns of consciousness are



controlled. The *Yoga Sutras* explain in great detail the meaning and states of such control.

Mantra

The bija mantra of Bagalamukhi is *Hreem*. The longer mantra is *Om Hreem Bagalamukhi-Sarvvadushtanam-Vvachammukham-Stambhaya-Jihvam-Kilayakeilaya-Buddhinnashahaya Hreem Om Swaha*.

Yantra

There are two interlacing triangles in the yantra of Bagalamukhi; a Shiva triangle with its apex at the top, and an inverted Shakti triangle with its apex pointing down. In the centre where these two intersect is another Shiva triangle. The interlacing triangles are surrounded by a circle and around the outside of this circle is an eight-petalled lotus. The lotus is enclosed in the yantra griha.

Although this yantra resembles that of Dhumavati, its implications change because of the central Shiva triangle. While Dhumavati represents the unmanifest, primal unconscious and deep tamasic state, Bagalamukhi is said to convert a conscious or rajasic state into a still or tamasic state and stupefy it. Thus, Dhumavati represents the unconscious element, whereas Bagalamukhi has the capability to obstruct or hinder any conscious element. The conscious element that is obstructed or hindered has been depicted by the small Shiva triangle placed in the centre of the yantra. The meaning is clear: where Shiva and Shakti are perceived in a form in the manifest state, there Bagalamukhi possesses the capacity to obstruct or hinder the conscious element.

Texts

The important texts related to Bagalamukhi include *Samkhayan Tantra*, *Bagalamukhi Tantra*, *Shakta Pramoda Tantra* and *Vagala Krama Kalpavalli*.

NINTH MAHAVIDYA: MATANGI

Matangi is the ninth mahavidya. This devi is related to manas, the thinking mind. Similar to Tara and Tripura Bhairavi, Matangi also represents vakshakti, the power of speech. The power of speech is experienced in the form of vaikhari, audible or gross; madhyama, subtle or intermediate sound; pashyanti, causal sound; and para or transcendental sound in the gross, subtle, causal and turiya states. While Tara represents the causal sound, pashyanti vak, and Bhairavi the transcendental para vak, Matangi is the power of the expressed, gross speech or vaikhari vak. A sadhaka experiences this Shakti in the vaikhari form.

The life of an individual is said to be introverted in the states of para, pashyanti and madhyama. An introverted life does not have any relationship with the manifest, external world. It is when the activities of inner life begin to manifest externally through the medium of vaikhari vak that one begins to establish a relationship with the external world through the senses and the antahkarana. In this state, the power of word or speech becomes an important means of expression of the experiences of consciousness in the sensorial world, and conversely, for communicating the experiences of the sensorial world to the field of consciousness. The power of word is a transitional and transforming energy with the capacity to establish a contact between the external and internal worlds.

It is generally accepted that in the gross expression, speech is related to the antah-karana; however, it is not only the gross expression that is discussed here. Although the devi represents the gross vaikharishakti, she is also related to all other states of consciousness. When the 'word' is produced in different states of consciousness, it sows its own seed there in the form of jnana or knowledge.

Sadhana

The sadhana of nada yoga has been prescribed for the worship of Matangi Devi. There are various forms of nada yoga and the first form described in yoga is *nadanusandhana*, the process of internalization that starts with the hearing of external sounds. Efforts are made to hear the grossest sounds as well as the most subtle perceivable vibrations, all of which fall into the category of vaikhari vak. It has been said that in the process of this sadhana, after the practice of listening to external sounds for a long time, the inner consciousness of sound expands and a gradual development of inner consciousness takes place. Then, after discontinuing with the external sense of hearing, the sound hidden in the field of memory is heard by the inner senses. Sometimes a melody, the sound of a flute or the chirping of birds are heard, sometimes the sounds of sea waves dashing against the rocks or the beating of drums and cymbals are also heard.

The sages have tried to understand nada in its different forms, which fall into the two main categories of *ahata nada* produced by two objects coming into contact with each other through touch, contact or friction, and *anahad* or *anahata nada*, the unstruck sound that is self-projected, independent of any other object.

The ahata nada is sound as one knows it in the material plane: when the tongue and palate, teeth or lips touch together, a sound is produced. The sound of clapping is the result of striking the palms of the two hands together. The musical tone of the flute is heard as a result of obstruction of air by the inner surface. A sound is produced when the hands strike the drum or cymbals.

The most subtle form of nada is the anahata nada within the realm of pashyanti vak, where the various internal experiences of birds, cymbals or melodies, as mentioned above, occur. When one begins to experience anahata within oneself, all the senses and physical or external consciousness are harmonized and begin to swing or dance with it. This nada yoga sadhana has been prescribed for the realization of Devi Matangi.

Form

The tantric description of the form of Devi Matangi is as follows. She looks like the daughter of a *chandala*, a person of the lowest case, and is dark in colour. She is wearing the clothes made of bark, and flowers are entwined in her hair. In one hand, she holds a lute and in the other, a parrot. This short description of the devi indicates that her form is thoroughly natural, like that of a tribal girl.

There is a similarity between the word *veena*, the lute that the devi is holding, and the word vani (vanee), speech. The subtle sound waves are emerging from the veena of the devi. The parrot she is holding does not have the knowledge of any language; however, it can be trained to learn any language. The parrot may be taught the form of a language so it may become as capable as a human in expressing words. This parrot represents the consciousness of human beings, which does not have any language of its own. If it tries to express itself, it will produce an imperceptible sound. The birth of a language takes place when consciousness gradually expands and its relationship is established with the external environment, objects and senses. Our present language was not produced in this current form. A language is produced in a different form and, through a process of purification, it undergoes many revisions, changes and amendments. Matangi is the controlling power, the capacity to transform consciousness.

It can be said that language is first produced in the causal state. The words again find expression from the causal to the subtle and from the subtle to the gross states. Even after expression in the gross state, they pass through many changes and transformations. Therefore, the parrot that the devi holds in her hand has symbolic importance. It is a symbol of the evolution of human consciousness in the sensorial world, where the expression of consciousness takes the form of speech or language.

Different names

Vagvadini is the second name of Matangi, meaning that she is the Shakti who provides the capacity for speech or pronunciation of words. In the Vedas, including the *Rigveda*, one can find prayers to Vagdevi or Vakdevi, the goddess of speech. Vak has been included in the mantras of Saraswati also.

The third name of Matangi is Mantrini. This establishes her connection with Tripura Sundari, as Mantrini is one of the three forms of Sundari. While in the form of Dandanatha, Sundari is identified with Bagalamukhi, Mantrini is her advisory Shakti, recognized as Matangi. Advice or counsel is generated from the mind. Mind is the source of understanding, intellect, reflective thinking or ideas. Therefore, reflective thinking or the capacity to advise is a different form of Matangi. Through this capacity, she motivates the mental powers in external and internal life. The purpose of motivation in external life includes two things: first, the removal of worldly ignorance; and second, the reception of knowledge pertaining to the external world. The purpose of advice or counselling with regard to internal life implies the removal of ignorance through self-reflection and analysis.

Another name of Matangi is Mahapisachini. A *pisacha* is a kind of evil spirit whose form cannot be seen. It has a smoky, indistinct appearance. The devi is called Mahapisachini as she is dark-hued and has a hazy appearance. This devi is also known as Sumukhi, one who expresses auspicious speech or words with her mouth.

Mantra

The bija mantra of Matangi is *Hreem*. The longer version of her mantra is *Om Hreem Kleem Hoom Matangyai Phat Swaha*.

Yantra

The yantra of Matangi resembles the yantra of anahata chakra and the Dhumavati yantra. There is a circle surrounding the two interlaced Shiva-Shakti triangles and the eight petals of a lotus around the circle, enclosed within a yantra griha.

Now a question arises. How will it be possible to have the glimpse or vision of their differences if the yantras of Dhumavati and Matangi are similar? Here, it is important to know that the essential differences between yantras are made on the basis of their colours. The colour of the Dhumavati yantra is slate or charcoal grey, while the Matangi yantra is blue like the sky.

Texts

There are four tantric texts related to Goddess Matangi: *Matangi Tantra*, *Matanga Hridaya*, *Shakta Pramoda* and *Matangi Sahasranam*. The *Shakta Pramoda* contains discussions on Matangi as well as other subjects, and *Matangi Sahasranam* contains the thousand names of the devi and also includes the methods of her worship.

TENTH MAHAVIDYA: KAMALA

Kamala or Kamalatmika is the last of the ten mahavidyas. She is related to atmashakti or inner strength. The mantra and methods of sadhana resemble those of the third mahavidya, Tripura Sundari, with whom she is almost identical. Sri Vidya is the means to worship Kamala as well as Sundari; her bija mantra is *Shreem*. The differences between the two are only in their forms and respective devatas or masculine counterparts. Kameshwara or Shiva is the devata in the vidya of Tripura Sundari, while Lord Narayana or Vishnu is the devata of Kamala.

Generally, there have been differences of opinion between the Shaiva and Vaishnava



schools of thought. According to some beliefs, Shiva is the symbol of the power or force of dissolution, while Vishnu is the sustainer, the maintainer, therefore, it seems that one who causes dissolution cannot perform the functions pertaining to sustenance or maintenance. Similarly, one who performs the functions of sustenance or maintenance cannot become the cause of dissolution. The Shaivas regard Shiva as the ability or the capacity that causes change or transformation and, therefore, accord him the paramount importance. On the other hand, the Vaishnavas accord the foremost place to Vishnu as the sustainer. A subtle, deeper reflection on tantra, however, reveals that there is very little difference between the two. Tantra states that differences only arise in human minds due to ignorance.

One of the names of Shiva is Hara, and Vishnu is called Hari; both names derived from the Sanskrit root *hri*. Therefore, there is not much difference between Hara and Hari other than that the syllable 'i' has replaced 'a' in Hara. As a result of this, their names are used differently and tantra accords equal importance to both of them. As was mentioned in the discussion on Kali, the *Nandikeshwara Shaiva Siddhanta*, where Shaivism is described on the basis of Sanskrit sutras by Panini, 'a' implies all-pervasive consciousness while 'i' implies power, force or energy. Thus, Hara becomes Hari when 'i' is added to it and Hari, according to the tantrics, is thus the force or energy of Hara. Hara and Hari, in fact, are the two forms of the same truth. In tantric thought, *Hara* represents chetana or consciousness and *Hari* the shakti or energy.

To understand this concept fully, consciousness and energy should not be considered as masculine and feminine; rather, they should be seen from a different point of view. Evolution or development is the goal or purpose of consciousness, and in this process of evolution, change and transformation continues to take place from one state to another. Fulfilment is experienced through Shakti in the state of transformation. Accomplishment or fulfilment cannot be experienced in the state of Hara, but in the realm where Shakti is operative. This Shakti has been called Hari Shakti or Hari and the transformed state of consciousness has been named Hara. Both these devatas, although ultimately one and indivisible, thus make use of their different talents and capabilities in the process of creation.

The Rudra form of Shiva represents the wrathful, terrible Shiva, the destroyer; yet,

according to tantra, an auspicious form is hidden even within this Rudra form and this auspicious form is inseparable from the Vishnu element. Conversely, the Rudra form is visible even in the loving, compassionate nature of the Vishnu element. It is through his Rudra form or power that he maintains the system, regularity and discipline of the worldly transformation. Rudra Shakti is the quality, the characteristic of the cosmic universal evolution and Vishnu Shakti is the basis of all the Shaktis involved in this evolution. After dissolution of the destructive forces, Rudra takes the form of Kameshwara to perform the auspicious functions. Kameshwara is the god of love, a god full of soft, pleasant feelings and ideas. Kameshwari, Tripura Sundari or Mohini is the Shakti of Kameshwara.

Kameshwara and Kameshwari are experienced in all three lokas of bhuh, bhuvah and swah and this is why this devi has been called Tripura Sundari. According to tantra, these three lokas are also respectively linked with sat, chit and ananda, and with the body, antahkarana and the individual self or *atma*. Kameshwara and Kameshwari are experienced in the state of sat, chit and ananda; they represent the three higher states of atma, or different stages of experience. After transcending the physical level or body and antahkarana, the sadhaka is established in the realm of atma. Here also the sadhaka experiences the different states of sat, chit and ananda related to atma. The state of sat is the first state and ananda is the last state. In the intermediate state of chit, atma and Paramatma merge into one. Vishnu Shakti is known as Kamala or Kamalatmika and it is through this Shakti that Kameshwara and Kameshwari are experienced differently in all three lokas.

The story of Vamana avatara, the fifth incarnation of Vishnu as a divine dwarf, is relevant here. To humble the pride of the mighty demon, King Bali, Vishnu assumed the form of a dwarf brahmin or Vamana and asked Bali for as much land as could be covered by three of his strides. After Bali had gladly consented, the dwarf assumed gigantic proportions and covered the whole earth, bhu loka, in one stride and the heavens, bhuva loka, in the second, placing his foot on Bali's head in the third stride. According to scholars, these steps represent the three worlds, or the three different states of atma or consciousness in the world of animate and inanimate objects. Tantra and the Vedas have called them sat, chit and ananda. Without Vishnu's control over the state of sat, creation would not exist as we know it today. In the state of sat, the three gunas generally remain inherent in creation in a balanced form. In the state of asat, these gunas remain inherent in different proportions and their goal is bondage rather than evolution.

Vamana could measure the entire creation in the state of chit, and the Param tattwa, the Supreme Element or the Supreme Self, in the state of ananda. Vishnu and his Shakti reside beyond these states in the fourth state of turiya. The function of consciousness or creation continues in all other stages with the motivation received from Vishnu and Kamala.



The Vishnu tattwa has been given the highest place in the context of the tenth mahavidya of Shakta tantra. Due to the tantric idea of non-separateness, Shiva and Vishnu have not been considered different. They have been considered indivisible or inseparable. Thus, the ancient Shakta tantra accepts the existence of Vishnu just as the Vaishnavas do today, and the same acceptance applies to Shiva by the contemporary tantrics.

As Kamala is the Shakti of Vishnu, she is identical with Lakshmi. *Lakshma* is an auspicious mark or symbol worn on the forehead that enhances beauty or splendour. The replacement of 'a' with an 'i' to become Lakshmi implies the presence of Shakti; hence the Shakti held by the Supreme Consciousness on his head is known as Lakshmi. Lakshmi resides in all the auspicious activities of the world. The entire animate and inanimate universe is pervaded by aspects of the grandeur of Lakshmi. Lakshmi and what she represents is known as Kamala in tantra, just as Vishnu is known as Narayana.

Kamala is also known as Sushama. *Su* is a prefix denoting auspiciousness, and *shama* is derived from the root *sam*, which means equal. Thus, Sushama or Kamala is the Shakti equal or equivalent to the Vishnu Shakti or the conscious element. She is known as a capable, competent and auspicious Shakti.

The name Kamala is derived from the roots *kam*, water, and *ala*, to wear. Thus, Kamala is one who wears water like an ornament or jewel. This is related to the idea that Vishnu rests in the ocean on the bed of infinity. The ocean or water is the abode of Vishnu. Kamala, his Shakti, is therefore fully decorated with water.

Another name of Kamala, represented in the Vedas, is the name Apovasana which comes from *apah*, water, and *vasaana*, female clad in robes. Thus, Apovasana translates as 'the Shakti who is clad in water.' Another meaning of apah is movement, motion or speed; consequently, Apovasana also means that this is the Shakti or action in which there is the experience of motion or movement. On the basis of this interpretation, it may be said that Kamala is the power that is wearing the garment of active consciousness.

The body, antahkarana and atma are all experienced in life. At the level of atma are the experiences of sat, chit and ananda. As long as movement, evolution and action are experienced in these states, the experience of Kamalatmika Shakti will continue to be there. In yogic terminology it is known as *chetan-shakti-vilasa*, the play of the conscious energy, the conscious or awakened state that continues to be there in every field of life. Kamala Mahavidya is also known as Sri, an auspicious word in itself, the symbol of an auspicious Shakti.

The name Kamala is also related to *kamala pushpa*, the lotus flower. The root and stem of the lotus remain in water, yet its leaves and flowers remain above and unaffected by the water. Similarly, a sadhaka first of all experiences the Kamalatmika Shakti in his unconscious state. From the yogic point of view, swadhisthana is the symbol of the water element and unconsciousness. Unconsciousness is the realm where the light of consciousness cannot penetrate and so the omnipotence and omnipresence of Shakti cannot be experienced in this realm. Similarly, the omnipresent Shakti cannot be experienced in an unconscious state; it is experienced only in a conscious state. The Shakti exists in its own form like the lotus in that unconscious state. Although living in water, it remains unaffected by it. The lotus has also another characteristic. It blooms in the light of the sun and closes at the time of sunset. In a similar way, Kamala is experienced at the time of illumination; one can experience the Kamalatmika Shakti only at the time of inner awakening.

The yogis have seen the chakras in the form of lotus flowers. Every chakra is the symbol of a state of evolving consciousness. The lotus flower of each chakra has a certain number of petals, each of which is the symbol of one aspect of consciousness in that state. Therefore, when each petal of one's inner lotus blooms, it expresses the evolution in one state of consciousness. When all the petals of

a particular lotus chakra bloom, then it is said that the consciousness and the entire field related to that chakra have fully evolved.

Form

Kamala is standing on a lotus flower. She has four hands. In two of them she holds lotus flowers, her third hand is in abhaya mudra and her fourth hand is in varada mudra. Her body is beautiful and effulgent like gold. Her form is like that of Lakshmi. The clothes of the devi are white, shining and radiant. The lotus flowers in her hands signify that the devi governs all the states of consciousness. It is only by her grace that consciousness awakens and evolves.

The devi is standing on a fully-bloomed lotus flower, which is the symbol of higher, awakened and evolved consciousness. Four elephants are standing around her, each one of them holding a pitcher with its trunk, pouring water on the goddess. This devi is bathing continuously, wearing clothes of water. The four elephants standing around the devi also represent strength, intellect, action and disciplined consciousness. The elephant is believed to be very strong, wise and intelligent and has a very sharp memory. Its movements are slow, but steady and controlled, and it can walk at one speed without stopping for a long time. This is why it is regarded as a symbol of systematic and balanced action in tantra. It is also said that the elephant is an aware and disciplined animal, therefore it symbolizes total consciousness that is controlled, regulated and disciplined.

Yantra

The yantra of Kamala Mahavidya is like that of Matangi, differing only in colour. The background of the Kamala yantra is golden and the colour of its lines is white.

Mantra

The bija mantra is *Shreem*. There is also a longer mantra of Kamalatmika, *Om Namah Kamalavasinyai Swaha*.

Texts

There are twelve tantric texts related to the Kamala Mahavidya, of which three are important. These are: *Tantra Sara*, *Sharada Tilaka* and *Kamalatmika Tantra*.



4

Ganapatya Tantra



Shiva and Shakti represent the eternal principles governing life, both transcendental and subtle. While Shiva is the all-pervading consciousness, Shakti is the creator of all things from the transcendental to causal, subtle and gross. When Shakti created the manifest universe, a link was required to bridge the gross universe and the transcendental, divine nature. This link needed to have both divine and human qualities to enable aspirants to transcend the mundane and access the spiritual realms, yet be discerning enough to block the way of unprepared seekers. This link could only be created by Shakti, rather than Shiva, as Shakti is the active creator. Thus, Shakti created Ganesha to bridge the realms of the gross and the transcendental.

As a deity, Ganesha has been accepted by both Vedanta and tantra, two of the major spiritual traditions of India. The first reference to Ganesha comes in the *Rig Veda* where he is identified as a remover of obstacles. On account of this quality, Ganesha has become the first god to be worshipped before embarking upon any endeavour or effort, whether social or individual, material or spiritual. As life is full

of endeavours, be they spiritual or material, Ganesha holds special value on a universal level. Ganesha has become a divine being that both spiritual aspirants and householders can identify with, thus the sect of Ganapati tantra has developed in its own right.

The majority of Ganapati tantra followers are situated in the western part of India, where a number of Ganesha temples, each depicting an image of one of his aspects, can be found throughout Maharashtra. In fact, this region celebrates festivals related to Ganesha as public events with great pomp and splendour.

Origins of Ganesha

The story of tantra continues from atop Mount Kailash where Shiva, the original propounder of tantra, and his consort Parvati lived in harmony. According to mythology, one day Parvati, also symbolized as Shakti, said to herself, 'I have no one to serve me or protect me. Everything that I create is enticed by Shiva and becomes his follower, an adherent of his path. I need somebody who can serve me, who can help me and provide protection for me.' Thus, through her *sankalpashakti* or willpower she created Ganesha, her *manas putra* or mind-born son.

Due to being born of Shakti alone, Ganesha had never met Shiva. The first encounter Ganesha had with Shiva resulted in confrontation. One day Shiva wanted to speak with Parvati, and so he ventured into the area where Parvati was taking her bath. However, his entry was stopped by the small boy, Ganesha, who had been standing guard, instructed by Parvati not to let anyone pass through. This angered Shiva, and he called for his army to fight Ganesha. Thanks to the powers that he had received from his mother, Shakti, Ganesha was able to defeat them all. Watching this, Shiva became enraged. He took up his trident and pierced it through Ganesha's throat, killing him and separating the head from the body.

When Parvati realized that her son had been killed by none other than Shiva himself, she became furious and manifested in the form of Kali, ready to destroy the whole world. The gods and rishis intervened to pacify the devi, pleading with her not to destroy all of creation, and supplicated Shiva to restore life to her dead son. In response, Shiva ordered his followers to travel north and find the head of any living being born at the same time as Ganesha. They eventually found a mother elephant sleeping on the ground with her young calf. When they discovered that the baby elephant had been born at the exact same time that Ganesha had been given life, they took the head of the elephant calf and brought it back to Kailash. Using the elephant's head, Shiva was able to bring the boy back to life.

Parvati was not satisfied with merely having her son revived. Due to the great injustice caused to Ganesha, she demanded that Shiva invest Ganesha with special powers. Thus, all the gods bestowed upon him a portion of their powers and gave him the name Ganesha, meaning the 'ruler of groups or hosts'. *Gana* implies all groups of life forms: the celestial, the human, and the lower or demonical life forms. *Isha* indicates control, master or lordship. Thus, Ganesha is the lord or master of all life forms.

The elephant-headed god: link between the gross and the transcendental

The question may arise as to why Shiva did not recognize Ganesha as Shakti's son, but the answer is that Shiva was perfectly aware of who he was and what had to be done. It should be remembered here that the purpose of Ganesha's birth was to link the transcendental realm of Shiva and the material realm of Shakti, and also to restrict or provide access to both, as required. As Shakti is the actual creator, this link could only be created by Shakti.

Thus, through her will she created the human form of Ganesha. However, the creatrix Shakti by herself is insentient, which means any offspring or creation of Shakti will also be insentient. It is only when consciousness enters these insentient forms that they become sentient, which is known as the Shiva effect. Ganesha, in his human form, was lacking the qualities of Shiva and had only limited



awareness. Human beings, like anything else created in this universe, live a conditioned existence. Earth is a conditioned existence; it is a conditioned expression of the cosmic power, and this is true for all the other elements as well. The elements are all predefined, conditioned expressions of the cosmic power and so are all their products, whether human beings, animals, insects, plants or bacteria.

Often it is said that the mind is conditioned by the influences of society, culture, religion, and so on. However, this type of conditioning occurs only after one is born. Before birth, the mind has already become conditioned by the 'tamasic curse': no matter where people are born, they all have the same physical structure. Babies born in different countries all have the same general form: arms, legs, head, eyes, nose, ears, everything is the same, only the skin colour and some minor features may vary. Just as one is born with a specific form of body, one also comes equipped with a specific nature and quality of mind. The nature and quality of this preconditioned mind is tamasic, for it must be able to interact in the material dimension. Ganesha was also born with such a conditioned mind, and it was due to the lack of higher awareness that he failed to recognize Shiva and tried to fight him.

Shiva was concerned: 'How can Shakti create a life form without my input? How can she create a form which has the absence of consciousness in it? How can this son of Shakti, who will ultimately be identified as my son too, remain a normal, worldly, common person, a conditioned being? Something has to change. I shall make good use of this form of Shakti's.' However, in order to make good use of the form created by Shakti, he had to make some modifications. By chopping off Ganesha's head, Shiva actually removed the seeds of conditioning from Ganesha and prepared the way for him to be regenerated with a higher quality of consciousness.

When Shiva cut off Ganesha's limited human head, and replaced it with that of an elephant, Shiva actually removed the seeds of conditioning from him and prepared the way for his regeneration into a higher quality of consciousness. He bestowed upon him the gift of the *mahat tattwa*, the transcendental mind. Shiva then gave Ganesha the instruction, "Create obstacles for the wicked and remove obstacles for the pious." This became Ganesha's primary function and, endowed with these powers, he became the first god to be worshipped before embarking upon any endeavour or effort, whether social or individual, material or spiritual.

The elephant head of Ganesha reveals the beauty and cleverness of Shiva. Ganesha was born with a normal human head; however, Shiva knew that if Ganesha was to fulfil a vital role and become a bridge between the material and the transcendental, he could not function with an ordinary human mind; he needed to have the mahat tattwa, the greater mind. The elephant's head represents someone who utilizes his mahat shakti.

According to the yogic principles, the greater mind is composed of four expressions: *ahamkara*, the ego principle; *chitta*, the archetypal memories; *buddhi*, the gross intellect; and *manas*, the thinking, interactive, rational

mind. One is predominantly using the faculty of manas in life. Buddhi and chitta are used much less, and ego is the underlying foundation of life. However, Ganesha uses all four faculties with the same ease and effectiveness; thus he is said to be the master of the mahat tattwa.

The elephant is also an animal with an extremely active memory. Other animals and birds do have memories as well, but these are usually short-term and fleeting: when they see something, they forget about it quickly. An elephant, however, remembers for a very long time; it has a big head with an exceptionally retentive memory.

What is contained within memory? Memory is a storehouse of all the impressions from the beginning of time and creation until today. Therefore, when Shiva placed the head of an elephant on Ganesha, Ganesha became the master of time, for he received all the memories from the beginning of time and creation until the present. Since Ganesha was born of Shakti and then transformed by Shiva, Shiva also made him the master of matter whose main duty is to serve and protect Shakti. In kundalini yoga, mooladhara is the seat of kundalini or Shakti, where she is lying dormant, and Ganesha is the doorkeeper of mooladhara who does not allow anyone to enter mooladhara. It is only by propitiating Ganesha that mooladhara can be awakened.

Bridging the instinctive and intuitive mind

While in spiritual terms Ganesha is the link between the gross and the transcendental, on the physical and mental plane he is the bridge between the lower, instinctive brain and the higher or intuitive brain centres. Approximately fifteen years ago, a Lebanese scientist photographed the brain from different angles. As he was looking at these images, he discovered that various shapes can be recognized and observed in the brain. At first, he could not understand what they represented, but then he found that they were images of devis and devatas. When he searched for Ganesha, he discovered him in the brainstem.

At the point where the spinal cord enters the brain, there is a small section known as medulla oblongata, which is a part of the cerebellum. The cerebellum is known as the 'primitive brain', as it is here that the most basic, instinctive functions are grouped. Above the cerebellum or primitive brain is the cerebrum, also known as the higher or 'intellectual brain', as it is the seat of the intellect. When viewed from below, this intellectual brain with the primitive brain and brainstem sitting below it resembles Ganesha's elephant head.

Ganesha allows one to move from the level of primitive existence into a higher existence of knowledge; that is his function, both in mythology and in life. The medulla oblongata, which is the physical seat of Ganesha in the body, is also associated with ajna chakra. According to kundalini yoga, ajna chakra is the controller of mooladhara chakra. Swami Satyananda mentions in his book, *Kundalini Tantra*, that to awaken mooladhara and the



energy inherent in it, one must first work on ajna chakra. Ajna chakra is the 'switch' and mooladhara is the 'bulb': just as a light bulb is activated by a switch on a wall far from the light itself, the activation of mooladhara and the awakening of kundalini occur when one is able to activate ajna chakra. Ajna chakra is also the seat of guru. It is the guru in ajna chakra that gives a command to Ganesha in mooladhara when the aspirant is ready to go within and have darshan of Mother Kundalini. Ganesha enables the jump from the primitive brain to the transcendental brain, from the lower mind to the higher mind, and enables one to access the kundalini shakti.

Ganesha and Kartikeya, the mind and the senses

Ganesha was not the only son in the family of Shiva and Parvati. He had a brother, Kartikeya, and both boys lived in Kailash together with Shiva and Parvati. While Ganesha, the mind-born son of Parvati, has the head of an elephant symbolizing the higher mind, Kartikeya, the mind-born son of Shiva, is depicted as having six heads. These six heads represent the five gross elements and the mind. They represent one who identifies with and is actively involved in the world, one who is subject to all the emotions that rule over embodied beings. An average person's character is more like that of Kartikeya than that of Ganesha: everyone has six 'heads', the five sensorial heads and one mental head. As each head tries to prove its supremacy over the others, the result is total confusion and distress.

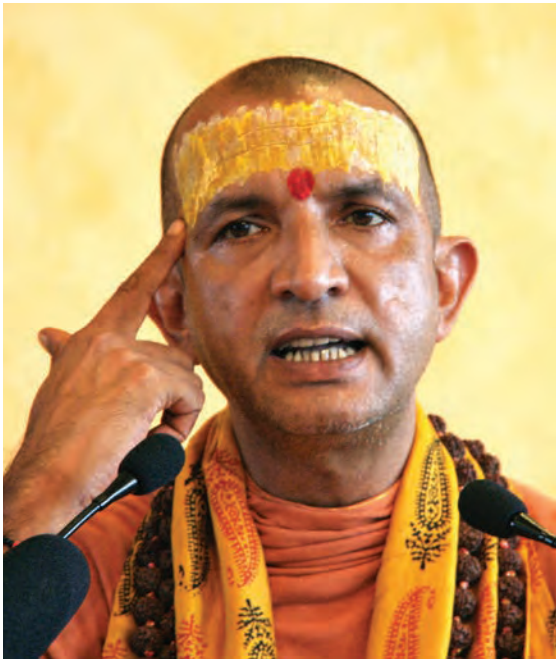
Kartikeya was created by Shiva to help the gods win their fight against the demonical forces and powers. When the gods were unable to resist the onslaught of the demons, in distress they appealed to Shiva to give them a powerful leader. To help the devas, Shiva gave his *ojas* or vital power to Agni, the fire god. Agni could not hold the luminous ojas of Shiva and dropped it into the waters of the Ganga. From this Kartikeya was born. At that time, six women were bathing in the river. When they saw a beautiful boy emerge from the water, all of them said at once, "I am his mother," and started fighting over him. To solve this situation, the newly-born Kartikeya miraculously grew six heads so that he could suckle the milk from each of the mothers and satisfy them all.

If devas represent the transcendental and cosmic powers, the demonical forces represent the gross and detrimental powers of life. Kartikeya had to be in the middle of the two to vanquish the demonical powers and support and encourage the establishment of the divine powers. Therefore, Kartikeya is seen as utilizing his powers through the abilities of the senses and the mind, whereas Ganesha represents a being who is equally at ease in all the expressions of consciousness of the mahat tattwa. Ganesha is calm and composed, while Kartikeya can become volatile, just as most people may become volatile when something does not happen according to their expectation in life.

Creativity of the higher mind

The two brothers lived happily with their parents in Kailash and grew up together. When they reached the marriageable age, Shiva and Parvati received a marriage proposal from a king who had two beautiful daughters. Both sons agreed to marry; however, Shiva became anxious about Kartikeya's volatile and human nature. 'If he marries', Shiva pondered, 'he may not live happily with his wife or do justice to the family.' Therefore, Shiva decided that both the princesses will be married to only one of the two sons. So he made a plan. He would ask the two sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya, to travel around the earth, three times, and the first one to complete the journey and return to Kailash would qualify to marry the princesses. Of course, being the manipulator of destiny, he knew the outcome beforehand.

Kartikeya was very happy when he heard the news, as his vehicle was a fast-flying peacock, while Ganesha's vehicle was no faster an animal than a rat. Initially despondent about the situation, Ganesha, being the master of the



higher mind, came upon a brilliant idea. When the race began, Kartikeya sat on his peacock and flew into the sky. Ganesha, however, in a calm manner, proceeded to first worship his father and mother. He walked into the quarters where Shiva and Parvati were seated and said, "Father and Mother, I am ready to go around the earth three times, but before I do, I want to worship you." Shiva and Parvati became very pleased, especially as Kartikeya had flown off without even saying goodbye. Ganesha did his pooja, offered flowers, incense and lights, and then did three *parikramas* or perambulations around them and said, "Now I am going. Give me your blessings." Shiva and Shakti both raised their hands in blessing and Ganesha walked out of the room. However, instead of going anywhere, he simply went back to his room, lay down on his bed and fell asleep.

That evening, Shiva and Parvati sat alone at the dining table. Parvati looked dejected. Shiva asked, "What happened?" Parvati said, "I'm missing my sons, especially Ganesha. Kartikeya can fend for himself; he is the commander-in-chief of the celestial army, but I do not know how Ganesha is going to survive without food. I am feeling very sad." Shiva said, "If you are missing Ganesha, why don't you go to his room and spend some time there?" Parvati agreed, went into Ganesha's room and, to her great surprise, found Ganesha sleeping on his bed. Wonderstruck, she pondered what had happened: 'Is Ganesha not interested in marriage? Why did he not go on this race around the earth?'

She woke him up and asked, "Why are you sleeping here?" Ganesha replied, "Mother, when I completed the worship, I was exhausted and so I decided to rest before embarking on the journey. Now that you have woken me up, I am hungry. Please give me something to eat." Parvati said, "All right, come with me," and took Ganesha to the dining table where Shiva was seated. Shiva feigned surprise and said, "Ganesha, you are here? What happened? Your mouse could not carry you?" Ganesha replied, "Father, I have already gone around the world three times." Shiva said, "How is that possible? Kartikeya is only twelve hours into his journey around the world. You did not even leave Kailash and yet you say you have completed your journey." Ganesha replied, "Father and Mother, you are both givers of knowledge. You have given all the sciences and philosophies to the people of the world. You have given them the tantras; you have given them every kind of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. You yourselves have written in the scriptures that father and mother together represent the earth, as it is they who have given birth to all of us. It is you who have nourished us. It is you who are nurturing us. You are the earth, and I have gone around you three times. I have completed my perambulation." Shiva smiled in agreement and said, "Well done! You shall be married tomorrow morning itself." That night, all the arrangements were made and, in the morning, Ganesha was married to the two beautiful princesses named Riddhi and Siddhi. *Riddhi* means material prosperity, and *siddhi* means spiritual prosperity; Ganesha was married to both.

Division of Shiva's family

When Kartikeya returned to Kailash from his race around the earth, he went to his parents and told them he had completed his journey without seeing his brother anywhere, and so was ready for marriage. As he was saying this, the door opened and Ganesha walked in, followed by his two beautiful wives. Kartikeya flared up: "How? How did Ganesha marry the two princesses?" In reply, Shiva told him the story, praising Ganesha's intelligence. Kartikeya could not bear this humiliation and said, "I have been cheated and will leave Kailash forever."

Kartikeya left Kailash and went to the south of India where he established his hermitage on top of a mountain called Krauncha. Shiva and Parvati went there and supplicated Kartikeya to return, but he refused. Instead, he asked his parents to stay with him in Krauncha. They agreed, and remained in the form of a *jyotirlinga*, an illumined Shivalingam, which came to be known as Mallikarjuna. The temple of Mallikarjuna is in Sri Sailam, the place where Kartikeya established his ascetic ashram and where, in association with other ascetics, he lived the life of a sadhu, propagating the path of sannyasa, seclusion and renunciation. Even today, the teachings of Kartikeya are guidelines for sannyasins on how to live, think and act.

Kartikeya's new location gave another idea to Shiva: all his family would propagate the spiritual path in different regions. Therefore, to Kartikeya he said, "You shall propagate the teachings of renunciation and asceticism in the south of India. That is your mission." To Ganesha he said, "You go to the western part of India and control and govern that region." To Shakti he said, "You go to the eastern part of the land and govern there." For himself, he kept the northern part and governed that region. Thus, even today Kartikeya is worshipped as the primary deity in southern India where he is known as Murugan. In western India, for example in Maharashtra, the primary deity is Ganesha. In eastern India, such as Kamakhya and other places, it is Shakti who is worshipped most of all, and in northern India, it is Shiva.

This is how Shiva, Shakti, Kartikeya and Ganesha and their respective tantric shastras have pervaded the psyche of Indian civilization.

Swastika: unmanifest form of Ganesha

Divine beings, powers or forces can be perceived in two ways: the unmanifest and the manifest. In sentient beings, the unmanifest nature is known as the *atman*, the soul, while the manifest nature is the body and the senses. One can see this manifest nature in the physical body and in the senses, and work with them; however, one cannot perceive the atman, the unmanifest nature. It is known that the atman is there, yet one does not know its shape, form, quality, nature or character. The atman is formless: a formless nature, a formless quality, a formless tattwa, while creation or existence has form: a perceptible quality, nature and tattwa.

The same principle applies to the cosmic powers. They can manifest and they can also remain unmanifest. When they manifest, they take a form that is known as *sakara*, the visible form that can be looked at, touched and felt: a form similar to that of a living being. A personal identification takes place between the seer and the form that is observed. For example, one may think, 'I like that form of Ganesha. He is very sweet.' That is an understanding, an appreciation of the form. However, what is his unmanifest, non-physical form? What kind of power does he represent in the unmanifest dimension?

In the yogic and tantric tradition, it has been said that the unmanifest should be visualized as a symbol. Just as the manifest nature is seen in the form of the body, the unmanifest has to be visualized as a symbol. When one looks at the image of Shiva, one sees two arms, two legs, matted hair, a serpent around his neck, his body smeared in ash and holding the trident while seated in meditation; that is the manifest form of Shiva. The symbol of the unmanifest Shiva tattwa is the Shivalingam.

Similarly, the symbol of the unmanifest form of Ganesha is the swastika. The symbol is made up of four lines that cross each other and then rotate. When the swastika is in motion, it denotes the wheel of life, the cycle of birth and death. When it is static, its four arms can be seen extending outwards, representing the four efforts, or *purusharthas*, the four actions or aspirations that every individual must follow in order to attain the highest experience of peace and bliss. These four efforts are artha, kama, dharma and moksha.

The effort to attain social security and prosperity is *artha*; the effort to fulfil one's expectations and desires is *kama*; the effort to live a virtuous life is *dharma*; and the effort to transcend the limited self is *moksha*. These are the four predetermined efforts of life, and once upon a time people did follow them in sequence. Today, people are following only two of them: artha and kama. The fulfilment of desires and attainment of satisfaction, as well as safety, security and prosperity, are the primary efforts of most people.

Of these four actions, two are gross and two are spiritual. Artha and kama are gross actions that lead to completeness in the material realm, and dharma and moksha are spiritual actions leading to attainment in the spiritual dimension. Thus there are two on one side of the swastika, dealing with the material existence and the gross life, and two on the other side, dealing with the spiritual existence and the cultivation of a divine nature and positive qualities in life.

Ganesha represents these four efforts, the four attempts at attaining completeness, wholeness and fulfilment in the physical, material dimension as well as in the spiritual, transcendental dimension. This is what is represented in the swastika. If one follows the four purusharthas in a balanced and harmonious way, one will receive the grace of both the consorts of Ganesha: the material as well as the spiritual prosperity. However, if one does not follow this system and is stuck in one aspect, either artha or kama, one will not receive the grace of either, and instead will become caught up in a 'rat race': just as a laboratory rat runs endlessly in its wheel, thinking it is getting somewhere, one is also moving in one's own illusory wheel within this great cosmic laboratory.

Propitiating Ganesha

The three areas governed by Ganesha are time, matter and memory. Being the doorkeeper of the mind at the brainstem, Ganesha must ensure that nothing negative can enter. He is there to block the negative from infiltrating the mind; however, often one does not recognize his work and instead ignores his warnings. When his warnings are ignored, he comes back and creates problems; in common parlance this is known as 'conscience'. When one does something wrong, what is it within that tells one that they have done something incorrect? What is called 'conscience' is actually Ganesha inside telling one not to do this or that. It is this faculty of Ganesha that makes people aware of the right and the wrong.

Therefore, in order to propitiate Ganesha, one needs to have *satvichara*, right thinking, *satkarma*, right performance, and *satvyavahara*, right behaviour. By thinking, acting and behaving in the right manner in day-to-day life, one is able to manifest the powers of Ganesha in life. Being the doorkeeper of life, Ganesha then ensures that nothing negative enters. If some negativity does come along, he will create obstacles to stop it from getting in, and if some negativity has to be overcome, he will remove the blocks that hinder its release. These are the two functions of Ganesha: to create blocks; not to create difficulty, but to stop the negative from entering life, and to remove blocks so that the negative elements can leave one's life. Therefore, he is called *Vighnaharta*, the remover of obstacles and the maintainer of peace.

Aradhana

Aradhana means worship: the invocation and realization of the higher nature that is within all. One strives to attain this by trying to

understand the spiritual concepts that govern life, by singing mantras, by chanting stotrams and by connecting with a different state and frame of mind in which joy, contentment and happiness are experienced. This sustained experience of joy, contentment and happiness is the beginning of spiritual awareness.

Whenever one is happy and free of mental problems, whenever one is content and has no cause of discontentment in life, whenever there is joy and no sorrow within, this state of mind is able to lead one to the realization of one's own spiritual nature. One's material, gross nature is subject to the influences of the environment, society, people and the world. Due to these influences that affect the mind constantly and continuously, the colours of the mind keep changing. Whatever the colour of the mind, one begins to perceive the world in that colour as well. When there is happiness, contentment and joy, one connects to the aspect and the energy of luminosity, *jyoti* or light, and illumination.

The energies that uplift the human mind are known as devatas and devis. Devatas represent the masculine principle or the positive pole, and devis represent the feminine principle or the negative pole. Here the words 'positive' and 'negative' do not indicate good and bad; rather, one should understand them to be two poles of the same energy. Just as there is day and night or plus and minus, in the same way there is deva and devi. Both are in coexistence; one cannot exist without the other.

Traditionally, Indians believed that devas and devis can actually materialize. It was much later in the course of history that missionaries from different cultures and religions introduced the thought of God as being a concept only and not a reality. However, the Indian culture did not believe that God is only an idea or a concept. Indians believed that God is real; that He is a transcendental being, yet possessing the ability to manifest in the gross dimension. Consequently, Indians have understood God as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. This God quality, this God-nature or God-consciousness must perform



different roles at different times in human life. It is not different from human existence; human existence is an integral part of the God-consciousness. This is what the ancient yogis visualized and realized in higher states of meditation. They said that the presence of God, the divine, transcendental nature and quality, can be invoked and experienced in one's own life. This was the start of spiritual awareness and spiritual understanding in the Indian psyche.

In the course of time, the sages and seers of the different traditions also identified different qualities and functions of energy in relation to the mind, the senses, people's interactions in the world, ego and emotions; in short, in relation to every dimension of human experience. All these forces and powers were given a name and each name represented different manifestations of this cosmic godly power. What many people today call devis and devatas, gods and goddesses, are not merely residents of an imaginary heaven; they are realities of human life.

Ganesha as a benevolent force

The story of Ganesha's birth defines his function, and the story of his marriage indicates

what boons he can provide. The symbolism of Ganesha is clear: a chubby god with an elephant's head who enjoys the beauty of life, who enjoys good clothes, who likes to eat good food, who always brings auspiciousness in life and who is a benevolent force that, when invoked, can help one transcend one's own shortcomings and limitations.

In mythology, one can imagine Ganesha as a cosmic entity. Physically, one can experience him in the body as the part of the brain that takes one from primitive and instinctive behaviour to rational and knowledgeable behaviour; from reactive behaviour to behaviour that is well thought-out. In the psychic dimension, he is the guardian of all the *Shaktis*, the feminine energies that are responsible for the creation and formation of life, body, mind, sentiments and all other human experiences. Ganesha is not the guardian of Parvati only; Parvati represents the Cosmic Shakti in her entirety; however, this Cosmic Shakti manifests in a myriad of forms such as Lakshmi, Saraswati, Indrani, and many more. Ganesha protects Shakti in all her forms and maintains her purity, preventing her from being tainted by ignorance.

In this guardian role, Ganesha is the protector of the Cosmic Shakti within the aspirant also. Cosmic power is pure and untainted. When one comes into this body, the cosmic power also enters the body and once it has entered, it falls asleep. If this cosmic power within becomes active and begins to interact with the senses, therefore connecting to the objective world, it becomes tainted. This inhibits, restricts and limits its force.

If one is wearing white clothes and goes into a coalmine, some black smear will mark the white clothes, no matter how careful one is. Therefore, the role of Ganesha in mythology as his mother's guardian also represents his role in the life of an aspirant; Ganesha protects the 'whiteness' of one's shakti from becoming tainted by the influences of the sensorial world. When she is not interacting with the world, Shakti is dormant within the body in the



form of kundalini, and as long as she remains dormant, one will continually move in the cycle of birth and death. When Shakti awakens in the form of kundalini, one can then free oneself from this attraction or vortex that the circle of life creates with its movement, and detach oneself from the influences of birth and death.

Storehouse of wisdom and understanding

Time, matter and memory, the realm of Ganesha, are the three important aspects of life. Memory is limited; one might imagine that one has the memory of this lifetime; however, the memories that are held are not sharp or clear. There is no clear memory of what one did when one was young. Most people cannot recall what they were doing on the same day one year ago, or even remember what they did yesterday.

One's memory is short-lived. Ganesha's capacity for remembering indicates that he possesses the memory of everything that has occurred since the beginning of time until the present day. He is like the genetic imprint that contains all the information from day one of existence. Thus, he is the storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and information. Ganesha is the power, the shakti that links the gross and the physical with the spiritual and internal; he is a bridge between these two levels of experience.

Another attribute of Ganesha is that he controls every kind of experience that enters the perception of consciousness, which is not to be mistaken for normal human perception. Perception of consciousness has to be understood in the right context. At present, one is aware and conscious; however, one is not aware of each and every input of the senses or of the functions and behaviour of one's own mind. Ganesha has this homogeneous awareness, a total awareness of the past and the present, thus he becomes the ruler, the controller of all experiences that occur in the realm of consciousness. Nothing is unknown to him.

Ganesha is also the controller of all agents that provide either positive or negative understanding, knowledge or experience: he is the controller of the divine and the demonical both, the link between the transcendental and material. Ganesha controls the demonical and the detrimental forces through strategy, and guides the benevolent forces through logic and deep, internal, intuitive inspiration. One must use strategies to manage the evil that has surrounded them, and this is what Ganesha does when he has to control the negative hosts, the negative shaktis, the negative powers. When Ganesha deals with the positive, uplifting powers and forces, he uses intuitive, logical awareness and inspiration. When the spiritual aspirant is lifted up from fear and confusion into conscious awareness, then right thought, right speech and right interaction become the trademark of human life. When the right action, right speech and right interaction become the trademark of human expression, then one has befriended Ganesha.

Vedic Ganapati aradhana

The vedic tradition says there are eight obstacles that hamper human evolution: *mada*, arrogance; *abhimana*, ego; *matsarya*, jealousy and competitiveness; *moha*, obsessive infatuation; *lobha*, greed; *krodha*, anger; *kama*, sensual and sexual passion; and *mamata*, the sense of 'mineness'. These are the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life. All of them are integral aspects of human life, common expressions of normal people who live in the world. However, these expressions hold back the evolution of consciousness and bind one down; they tie one firmly to the sensorial dimension from which there is no escape. In that situation, the statement of Shankaracharya becomes a reality: *Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam*, *punarapi janani jathare shayanam* – "Again and again we die; again and again we take birth in the womb of our mother." The vedic tradition says that these eight obstacles must be avoided and overcome by invoking the grace of Ganesha.

For each pitfall, a particular aspect of Ganesha has been defined. One must fight fire with fire. You have to remove a thorn with another sharp object. Similarly, to deal with one's anger or to overcome passion, one has to invoke the appropriate quality of Ganesha. To deal with the eight shortcomings or limitations of human life, eight different aspects of Ganesha have been identified, known in the vedic tradition as *Ashta Vinayaka*. These eight forms can be seen in temples in the western region of India. To eliminate arrogance, one should invoke *Ekadanta Ganapati*; to remove the detrimental ego, the form of *Dhumravarna Ganapati*. The form of *Vakratunda* is invoked to remove jealousy and competitiveness, and the form of *Mahodara* to eradicate infatuations. The form of *Gajanana* is called upon to remove greed, and the form of *Lambodara* to control anger. The form of *Vikata* is invoked to control passion, and the form of *Vighnaraja* to control

attachment. These are the eight forms or symbols of Ganesha that have been accepted in the vedic tradition, literature and scriptures. All the references to Ganesha in vedic literature define the practices, sadhanas and mantras by which one can overcome the eight detrimental qualities of life, after which the spiritual journey becomes smooth and fast, leading to the extraction from the wheel of life and death, and establishment in the higher nature of consciousness, which is the ultimate role of Ganesha in one's life.

An example of how the sadhana of Ganesha is utilized to manage the negative traits of the personality is the use of the Ekadanta Gayatri mantra for the elimination of arrogance:

Om ekadantaaya vidmahe vakratundaaya dheemahi tanno dantih prachodayaat.

As nearly everyone is arrogant to varying degrees, due to the influence of the self-assertive ego on the human personality, everyone may try the following sadhana: every morning, visualize the ugly form of the arrogant nature in the mind. Those who have practised the technique of tattwa shuddhi will be familiar with the idea of *papa purusha*, 'the sinful man', which entails visualizing the figure of a hideous human-like creature representing all that is base and impure within the personality, and then transforming it into pure nature with the use of mantra and breath. In the Ekadanta Ganapati sadhana, one must visualize such a papa purusha in the mind and identify it as arrogance. Holding that mental image, repeat the Ekadanta mantra and with each repetition, see the image shrink until it disappears completely. If one does this every day for one month, one can be assured that arrogance will reduce considerably and if this is practised continuously, it will gradually vanish altogether.

This is the vedic concept of creating a condition of mind known as *pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivation of opposite thought. It may be asked as to how visualizing something negative in the mind, such as the image of papa purusha, and repeating a mantra can help in overcoming a negative mental state. One must understand that although one is visualizing the negative, at the same time one is focusing on and giving out the positive, and this is pratipaksha bhavana. When visualizing the negative trait one cultivates the opposite, benevolent virtue, and this overpowers the negative. This is the idea that the vedic tradition has followed in order to overcome the eight ills of human nature.

The vedic focus of Ganapati aradhana is to attain mastery and victory over the limiting mental states that create strife, confusion and conflict in life and give birth to insatiable desires and expectations. Essentially, the vedic tradition says, 'Live a happy and pious life, a life which is infused with the awareness of the divine.' Generally, one's awareness and memories are not divine; rather, they are gross in nature as they link one to friends, family, expectations and desires rather than to transcendental realms. However, when the memory is not of the gross world, and instead remembrance is of the higher nature, then that becomes *dhyana*, meditation. As long as one is dealing with memories of the gross nature, one is going through the process of pratyahara and dharana. The moment remembrance of the divine quality and nature comes in the mind, one moves into the meditative state.

The positive virtues have to be cultivated through appropriate and right thought, speech, action, interaction and behaviour. Once these become the hallmark of one's expression, the doors of the chakras will open up and Ganesha will say, "Now you are ready to enter. You have overcome the eight enemies of your life and now you can enter the dimension of Shakti who will elevate you and take you to the highest point, the realization of your true nature." All the doors open up and Ganesha invites one in; he becomes a friend.

Tantric Ganapati aradhana

The meaning of *tantra* is expansion of consciousness and liberation of energy. The vedic tradition stops at the level of



modification: modifying and managing the negative, and cultivating and living the positive. One should become pious, virtuous, and lead the divine life, which is the purpose of Vedanta, according to Swami Sivananda: to live the higher qualities in this gross, physical, material dimension. Tantra goes one step further. One has already overcome the negative traits and is established in a positive frame of mind, and now wants to explore their nature. One wants to expand one's perceptions so that they are not confined to the senses only; rather, they can become part of a universal experience and a universal realization.

With this view, tantra identifies further shortcomings which are deeper than the eight enemies that one has overcome by following the aradhana of the vedic tradition; it says that there are four more smugglers living in this body and mind. 'Smuggler' is an apt term, as they trade peace, happiness and contentment for strife, discord and confusion. These four enemies within are the basic instincts: craving, fear, sexuality and sleep. These are the four areas in which tantra begins to work after one has completed the first part of the journey by following the vedic path and process. In order to deal with the subtler and more potent pulls and attractions and repulsions within human nature, tantra has evolved another set of Ganesha imagery.

There is one work of literature called *Mudgal Purana*, in which thirty-two tantric forms of Ganesha have been described. Each tantric form of Ganesha deals with overcoming a specific negative trait of human nature. Broadly speaking, the physical, mental and emotional desires and cravings can be managed through the invocation of *Bala Ganapati*, the young Ganapati. There is a comprehensive symbology associated with him: from the way his feet are placed, to the position of his hands, trunk and paraphernalia. Each modification has a very precise meaning; it is a symbol whose meaning must be known if one is to identify and recognize that meaning, nature and quality.

In this manner, each image of Ganesha conveys a path that a tantric can take to improve a particular trait of his nature. Just as cravings can be overcome through the invocation of Bala Ganapati, sleep, fear and negative sexuality can also be overcome by invoking the appropriate aspects of Ganesha. For example, negative sexuality can be overcome by invoking *Uchchishtha Ganapati*, and fear by invoking *Vikata Ganapati*. There are also different mantras, different Ganesha Gayatris for each of these different forms, as well as various yantras.

Mantra and yantra go together, as it is the mantra that creates the yantra. When one chants a mantra, no matter which one, energy lines or pranic flows are created in the mind. Prana flows throughout the body and when the channels are open and prana is flowing through them, the circuit of prana becomes a yantra. Therefore, the body experiences the power of the mantra together with the mind. Initially, the power of mantra is felt on the gross level in the body through the feeling of relaxation; the nervous agitations subside and a state of peace pervades the mind. These, however, are only the first physical experiences. In addition to them, a subtle effect is also taking place in the consciousness and a yantra is being created. One is not aware of it, yet while chanting the mantra *Om*, for example, with total awareness, one actually creates a pranic yantra within oneself. The field of the yantra surrounds, nourishes, energizes and protects the whole

body. This effect is nevertheless dependent on the practitioner's focus and ability to connect himself with the energy spectrum within. In those who can do this, the yantra comes alive; this is the concept that tantra clarifies. Mantra and yantra both become aids for overcoming the limiting conditions of life, body, mind and senses, and for establishing oneself in one's higher nature.

Each symbol of Ganesha indicates a process in the unfolding of human potential, the unfolding that leads one to material prosperity as well as spiritual prosperity. Amongst the thirty-two symbols or forms of Ganesha, some are benign and some are fearful, some are sexual in nature and some are pleasant. This imagery does not indicate that Ganesha is a tantric deity; that is a question for intellectual debate and intellectual debate can never open the doors of reality. The doors of reality open with human experience, and that is what tantra emphasizes.

There is one image of Ganesha called Shakti Ganapati, in which his consorts are sitting naked on his lap. In the image of Uchchishtha Ganapati, Ganesha and his consort are in sexual union. There is the image of *Brahmachari Ganapati*, in which he is pure and untainted. In this manner, thirty-two images of Ganesha have been identified by the tantras with the purpose that meditation on these images, with the corresponding mantras and yantras, will bring about a qualitative change in life and help overcome the limiting conditions that hold one to this material dimension. They can free the aspirant from all the bonds that hold him down so that he can elevate himself. This is the tantric process.

Sadhana and discipleship

Havan, or fire ceremony, is a tantric process as well as a vedic process; it is common in both the systems as are the mantras and yantras. The difference between the two is that in the vedic tradition, one is dealing with the modification of one's worldly nature to live a healthy, happy and full life, while in the tantric tradition



one aims to realize and explode the dormant dimensions of one's consciousness.

Meditation plays an important role in the tantras, as it is the process by which one can isolate oneself from the influences of the sensorial and the objective world. By disconnecting oneself, one can immerse one's awareness in the inner discovery, the inner journey. Once the four basic instincts have been overcome through Ganesha upasana, the doors of spiritual life open up and the form of Ganesha becomes *Pranava Ganapati* where the image of Ganesha is made of the symbol *Om*. That is the esoteric image of Ganapati, the 'Om Ganapati'.

In this highest sadhana of Ganapatya tantra, the three mantras that make up the mantra *Om* are used: A, U and M. The combination of these three sounds becomes *Om*, and when *Om* is dissected it becomes A-U-M. In the sadhana of Pranava Ganapati, the A-U-M mantras are used to access the

causal dimension of existence. The gross is accessed through the vedic Ganapati aradhana; the mental dimension through the tantric aradhana; and the causal dimension through Pranava Ganapati sadhana, upon completion of which one can identify with the Shiva tattwa, the Shiva nature. Ganesha brings one to Shiva, and *Om* is the symbol of Shiva. Ganesha not only belongs to the same family as Shiva, but he is also the master of sounds, of mantras. This highest Pranava Ganapati sadhana is taught only by a guru to a qualified and competent disciple.

In order to achieve the goal of any sadhana, be it vedic, tantric, or any other sadhana aimed at the attainment of spiritual life, first of all, one has to perfect one's discipleship. The foundations of discipleship are faith and trust in the guru, which is difficult as people generally become too unrealistic in their own ideas about surrender, faith and trust, creating an identity crisis in their lives. Therefore, first one has to deal with that identity crisis before becoming a disciple, and then become a competent sadhaka. The aspirant has to become a competent disciple so that the high energy can flow through him and he can become an enlightened being.

Eight attainments of Ganapati aradhana

When Ganesha is pleased with the aspirant, the feeling of love and compassion in the close family, along with cooperation, coordination, sympathy, respect and obedience, will come in. That is the immediate effect of Ganesha in one's personal life and in the lives of one's close family members. The second effect of Ganesha reaches out to the extended family: one's relatives, neighbours and friends. In relation to them, understanding, cooperation, sympathy and friendship will increase and predominate in one's behaviour. With the third effect of Ganesha, this love extends to all the people with whom one interacts in the world, including business associates and people at large. The feeling of love, affection, sympathy and compassion will extend to everybody.

Love is the first attainment of invoking Ganesha. The second attainment is the betterment of buddhi, which leads to the third attainment, greater understanding, and as the result of the first three, the mind becomes creative and intuitive. When the mind becomes creative and intuitive, it follows the path of *dharma*, righteous action, behaviour and understanding. This is the fourth attainment. Love and dharma together conquer karma, and being able to overcome one's karmas is the fifth attainment. These are the five attainments of a sadhaka who is living in the material world.

The sixth, seventh and eighth attainment are related to raja yoga and kundalini yoga. This is the domain of sannyasins and spiritual sadhakas, not of householders whose aspirations do not extend beyond the desire to experience peace and bliss. These three final steps are the realm of those who want to cultivate higher awareness and awaken the kundalini: her awakening, rising, and merger with Shiva.

According to kundalini yoga, kundalini has to be properly controlled and guided. If that power is not guided, its effect can be negative. If it is not channelled, one can become the biggest criminal in the world and if it is suitably directed, one can become a great saint. Dams are created to control the flow of water. If all its sluice gates are opened at once and the water rushes out, inundation and flooding will take place and houses will be destroyed. That is the negative aspect of kundalini awakening, which can occur if one does not know how to control the opening and closing of the gates. Therefore, it is said that the awakening of kundalini has to be done in a proper manner; the right gate and the right amount have to be opened at the right time, allowing the energy to flow in a controlled way.

Value of innocence

Whatever efforts in life or in sadhana one may make, one thing stands out as the primary mover in life, and that is innocent belief. This is a quality that is hardly seen in anybody. As

nobody really has it, all the sages and seers have said that it should be cultivated. Christ said, "In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, be innocent like a child." It is this innocent belief that becomes the hallmark of a spiritual aspirant, rather than logic, buddhi or reflection. These are to be used merely as stepping stones to come to the point of innocent belief. Sri Aurobindo said, "In the beginning the intellect was my friend, but now it has become the greatest barrier of my life." That statement holds true for each and every one. One goes through a lot of 'intellectual gymnastics' and the intellect becomes a barrier. Therefore, the cultivation of innocent belief is a primary requirement for every spiritual aspirant, for when the innocence is there, Ganesha does manifest; the divine powers come to the rescue.

There is a story of a little boy who used to live in a tiny hamlet in the middle of the forest. Across the forest, there was a slightly bigger village with a school. When the boy reached the school-going age, he walked every morning from his home across the forest to go to that school, and in the evening he would again cross the dark and mysterious forest to return home. The boy was only about eleven years old, and as he had to walk along this track alone, he used to feel very frightened.

One day he told his mother, "Mother, I go to school every day and I have to pass through this forest. I am afraid of going alone." His mother said to him, "Why don't you call your big brother? He will hold your hand and take you to your school." The boy said, "I never knew I had a big brother." Mother replied, "Yes, you have a big brother, but you have not seen him all this time because he lives in the forest and tends the cows day and night. He doesn't have the time to come home." "What is his name?" asked the boy. His mother replied, "His name is Gopala." "And will he come if I call out to him?" "Yes, he will come. If you believe in him, he will come to you."

The next morning, when the boy was afraid walking alone through the forest, he called out, "Brother Gopala! Brother Gopala! I am afraid. Where are you? Come and take me to school." Nothing happened. Again in his desperation he called out, "Brother Gopala, brother Gopala! Where are you? I am frightened!" Still no one came. Again he called out, "Brother Gopala, why are you ignoring me? Why are you not coming to me?" Suddenly, he heard the music of a flute and, from behind a tree, out came a boy of about fifteen years of age, with a turban on his head decorated with a peacock feather, holding a flute in his hand. The boy said, "I am your big brother Gopala. Why are you afraid when I am here? I am sorry for not having seen you earlier, as I have been busy tending my cows, but come, I will take you to your school now." He took the little boy to the school and brought him back every single day from then onwards.

One day, the headmaster of the school informed all the students, "Tomorrow we will have a special celebration and I want each student to bring a glass of milk." The little boy went home and told his mother, "Mother, tomorrow I have to take a glass of milk to school." His mother said, "My son, there is nothing in this house that I can give you. Not even a drop of milk." The boy said, "Mother, can I ask my brother for some milk? He tends cows, why can't we ask him?" His mother thought that the child was going through childhood fantasies, and so she said, "All right, ask him. Let us see if he gives you something or not."

The next day, the boy called out to his brother Gopala, "Brother Gopala, brother Gopala, come!" Gopala came before him. The little boy said, "You know, today I have to take some milk to school." Gopala said, "Listen, I have distributed all the milk and the only milk that I have left over is in this tiny cup. You take this to your teacher." The little boy took the little cup and went to the principal. The principal looked at him and said, "What have you brought?" The boy said, "Whatever milk my brother gave me, I have brought you that." The teacher looked at the table, upon which there were big tumblers and glasses filled with milk,

and he became annoyed. He said, "What is this? There is no milk there!" He hit the boy's hand and the cup fell down. However, as it hit the ground, a stream of milk started gushing out of it and the little drop became a big pool. When the teacher saw this miracle, he gasped, "Who gave you this tumbler? The milk does not stop flowing!" The boy said, "It is from my brother Gopala." "Where does this brother Gopala live?" asked the teacher. "In the forest," replied the boy. "Can you show him to me?" The little boy said, "Yes, come with me. He will definitely see you."

The boy and the teacher went together into the forest, and the boy called out, "Brother Gopala, brother Gopala, come! The teacher wants to see you." Nobody came. Again he called out, "Brother Gopala, if you don't come, the teacher is not going to believe in me. Please come." And there he saw this blue-hued boy coming along the track, smiling a bewitching smile. The boy told the teacher, "Look, look! My brother is coming. Isn't he beautiful?" The teacher looked and said, "I can't see anybody there." The boy said, "But he is standing in front of us. Look at him. He is looking at you. He is smiling." The teacher said, "There is nobody here." The little boy asked his brother, "Why can't the teacher see you?" Brother Gopala said, "Because the teacher does not believe." The little boy said, "He is never going to trust me again if he doesn't see you. Please show yourself to him." Gopala said, "No. Not until he believes. But, because of your request, I will play my flute." Krishna played a tune on his flute, the teacher heard the music and fell down at the feet of this little boy. Through his innocent belief, the child actually materialized Krishna right in front of him.

This tale of a child's belief illustrates that ultimately, it is innocent belief that becomes the distinguishing mark of a spiritual aspirant: no siddhi, no occult power, no expectation, no grandness or greatness, just innocent belief. When one is able to cultivate this innocent belief, then one can say, "Ganesha is my eternal friend." This is the crux of Ganapati tantra, as it allows the spiritual qualities to flower in one's life.



5

Saurya Tantra



The sun has a powerful influence on every kind of life form. When life became aware of itself, many millions of years ago, when life opened its eyes to the world, the first thing it experienced was light. Primitive man considered that magnificent orb of light to be the first manifestation of the invisible God. He recognized the sun as the sustainer, controller and protector of all creation. Darkness brought uncertainty, insecurity and fear of predators, whereas the sunlight brought confidence, safety and vision of the world. Man realized that his dependence on the sun pervaded all spheres of life, therefore it was only natural for the sun to be worshipped as the highest god, the benevolent power that sustains and protects.

Gradually a theory developed of how to harness the *shakti*, the power, of the sun and this theory became part of tantra. Tantra is the original collection of knowledge that combines the material, social, personal, and spiritual aspects of life, and revolves around the two central principles of Shiva and Shakti. At the core of each tantra is a devata or deity that symbolizes the ultimate reality and the nature of creation. Furthermore, each deity represents a specific energy that can be utilized to uplift and transform life. In Saurya tantra, the first deity

is Surya, the sun. Even though the influence of Shiva and Shakti is inherent in it, the primary invocation is of Surya.

Tantra is a philosophy and a lifestyle; an idea and a discipline to be followed. In its practical aspect, the methods of sadhana in Saurya tantra are almost identical with kundalini yoga. In fact, according to some thinkers, the rites and rituals of kundalini yoga constitute the method of sadhana in Saurya tantra. The theory of kundalini yoga can also be seen as an attempt to explain the theory of Saurya tantra psychologically. While this tantra has become extinct as an individual and complete system, some aspects have been preserved in the form of spiritual practices such as kundalini yoga, healing techniques, and rituals such as sandhya vandana or Gayatri upasana.

From darkness to light

There are two types of prakriti: the invisible *avyakta prakriti*, which is unseen yet which exists; and the *vyakta* or manifest prakriti that can be experienced through the senses. In this context, *prakriti* does not mean nature; it refers to the potential to become, to change, to transform. It is the potential of the faculty of action. In the invisible dimension, where things exist yet are unseen, this potency of action, prakriti, is in its quiet and peaceful form, balanced, harmonious and integrated with everything.

Science tells us that space is not empty, and that beyond the planets, stars and galaxies there is dark matter and dark energy. It is believed that this dark energy pervades space entirely and is responsible for keeping the galaxies together, not allowing them to disperse. Dark energy exists as a reality, although it is so subtle that it cannot be measured. It exists and passes through all matter, including the body; its speed is so intense that no matter can stop it. It is this dark energy or dark matter that has been known in the tantric traditions as avyakta prakriti, unmanifest energy, and which becomes visible only with the emergence of light. Prior to that, it is in a state of darkness. Darkness does not indicate the absence of its reality, just as darkness in a sealed room does not indicate the absence of objects contained within it. Darkness simply indicates the absence of visibility. In avyakta prakriti, the dark energy and dark matter coexist together in a potential form, just as the potential of a tree is inherent in a seed.

If the night sky is looked at, upon a sea of darkness tiny points of light lie dispersed. The inherent quality of space is darkness; light is only a response, a manifestation of a process that has happened in the dark space. Light is the first manifestation of the cosmic potential. Thus, it is recognized and identified as the first god, Adidevata. With the emergence of light, the mind becomes active and the ability to see, recognize and identify develops, just as objects in a dark room become visible when the light shines in.

Along with light comes *jnana*, knowledge. Thus, the sun as the primordial god Adideva represents both vitality, *pranashakti*, and knowledge, *jnanashakti*. When the primitive man thought of the sun as God in the sky, he was not wrong. It is light that makes the invisible prakriti become visible and as this visible prakriti is seen due to the interaction between the senses and sense objects, it means that it comprises one's entire life and the whole of creation.

Three aspects of the sun

Over a period of time, people came to realize three aspects of the sun: the gross and physical, the subtle and invisible, and the transcendental. In the material, gross, physical dimension the sun is the luminous orb in the sky. In the subtle dimension, the sun is the vital energy governing the body and its life. In the third aspect, sun is perceived as the transcendental state of luminosity and knowledge, the dimension that is known as the *surya mandala*. This is the dimension of the sun where only light and knowledge exist, a dimension where there is not a single speck of darkness and no deviation from the path of jnana into the abyss of *ajnana*, ignorance. The state of perfect knowledge and expression of that knowledge is the experience of surya mandala, the ultimate end of all suffering and pain in life.

Physical aspect: In the gross dimension, the sun controls the rhythm of life, the seasons, the rain, growth, and so on. At the physical level it enhances the vitality of every living form, from a human body to a blade of grass. Different rays of the sun have different purposes, too. A rainbow breaks down the original invisible or 'white' light into colours such as violet, indigo, and so on, which can be seen with the naked eye. Beyond these are various other forms of solar radiation such as infrared and ultraviolet, which can be detected by various means. Each form of solar radiation has a different function to perform in creation, a definite purpose and particular influence on the human body, as well as other celestial bodies. The sun is also considered to be the lord of time as it controls and defines the perception of time. This is what is understood as the gross nature of the sun.

Subtle aspect: Yogis discovered the subtle aspect of the sun; the sun as the controller of the pranic body, the solar body that exists in every individual, responsible for life and death. Even after the soul has left the body, the vital power of the solar body still lingers on, gradually leaving in its own time. This has been shown in research using Kirlian photography where, for instance, the pranic field of a leaf cut in half still appeared intact as that of a whole leaf. A similar phenomenon was observed in people who had lost their limbs; in the Kirlian picture there was an image of the entire limb. How is it that energy continues to retain its shape even when the physical object is not there? These experiments indicate that the pranic body, *pranamaya sharira*, can exist independent of the physical body and the soul. It is a distinct entity dependent on and governed by the sun.

Yoga speaks of the five *koshas*, sheaths or bodies, that combine together as the vehicle of expression for the individual soul. The first is the annamaya kosha. *Anna* means food; hence *annamaya kosha* is the physical body that is nourished and sustained through food. Next comes *manomaya kosha*, the body of the mind. The mind is sustained through pleasure; as long as there is pleasure in the mind, the world appears bright and enjoyable. However, whenever there is a reduction in pleasure, the world looks gloomy and dark. One becomes dominated by a craving to seek the lost pleasure, happiness and contentment, for the wellbeing and health of mind. The third body is the *pranamaya kosha*, representing the dimension of the sun, the life energy that serves as a link between the gross and the subtle. The fourth body is *vijnanamaya kosha*, the dimension of Shiva or consciousness. All the experiences in life become impressions in consciousness and are recognized in the form of samskaras, desires, expectations, karmas, and so on. They all form part of the dimension of consciousness, that is, the fourth body. The fifth body is that of Shakti or bliss, the *anandamaya kosha*. With the awakening of Shakti, the union between Shiva and Shakti takes place and one experiences bliss. That bliss, fulfilment and contentment are of the highest nature.

According to solar tantra, the different *nadis* or pranic flows in the body are described as the rays of the sun. Eighteen different rays have been identified, which include ida, pingala and sushumna. The vital energy in its subtle form is contained in pockets of concentrated energy, which have different potencies. These pockets of energy are the chakras from mooladhara to ajna. When the chakras are activated during sadhana, limitations and conditionings are gradually removed and the pranashakti, the inherent potential or power within the chakras, is awakened, along with an associated attainment of jnanashakti.

Pranamaya kosha is the intermediary body between the gross, mental and physical realm and the subtle consciousness and energy. Through sadhana it becomes possible to harness the power of the sun, and to rise above all the experiences of pleasure, pain, sorrow and difficulties, and in their stead experience luminosity, knowledge and freedom. In Saurya tantra, the yamas, niyamas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana take one beyond the gross, physical and subtle

experiences of the sun into a third dimension which is known as the surya mandala, the dimension of the sun.

Transcendental aspect: In Saurya tantra, surya mandala is the term used for the highest state of consciousness where one becomes one with the divine. It denotes pure luminosity and wisdom. By entering into surya mandala, one becomes knowledge, one becomes the light. This is achieved through a yogic process that is both exoteric and esoteric in nature. Along with the yogic process are meditations and mantras that enhance the personal effort, focus and awareness of what one is trying to achieve.

In the scriptures it is said that creation comes forth from the sun and again merges in the sun. Although creation is generally seen as Shakti, activity, Shakti also uses Surya, the first God, to aid in the process of creation. How did this solar system emerge? Originally, there was only one blazing orb of heat and light, and that was the sun. Over time, different portions of the sun separated and formed the planets and other celestial bodies. In Saurya tantra, this cosmic event has been given reference to in the form of a mythological story. According to the story, the glow and the heat of the sun were unbearably intense and Vishwakarma, the architect of the devas, shaved off parts of the sun and formed from them the different planets. From other fractions of the sun's luminosity he forged celestial weapons for the devas, signifying that the gods' weapons were made of pranashakti rather than from steel and other such materials. When Vishwakarma had separated heat or pranashakti from the sun, the sun's heat became endurable, allowing life to emerge. This is the mythological description of a scientific phenomenon.

At the end of the sun's life cycle, the solar system will again dissolve into the sun. Scientists believe that when the sun becomes old, it will bring destruction to the whole system, changing into an ever-expanding red giant and swallowing up all the planets in the process. Each galaxy has its own number of solar systems and each solar system controls creation and life



within its boundaries. Thus, scientifically, the sun is important for creation, life and existence. In Saurya tantra, this has also been explained in the form of a story where Surya is the creator as well as the eventual destroyer of the universe.

Symbology of the sun god

In the tantras, the sun has been depicted as travelling in a chariot. This chariot has six wheels, three on each side and is being pulled by seven horses with one set of reins. The driver of the chariot is without legs and Surya is sitting on the chariot, travelling through the heavens.

This representation of the sun is indicative of the subtle and causal bodies. The chariot represents life. Its six wheels are the six chakras from mooladhara to ajna. Sahasrara is not included as it is considered to be a transcendental centre, corresponding to the surya mandala, which is beyond the human psychic framework. Each of the six chakras that support the chariot of life contains a specific potency of pranashakti and jnanashakti, which increases from mooladhara up to ajna. Mooladhara is the most diluted chakra while



ajna is the most potent one. From the viewpoint of *rasayana siddhanta*, alchemy, mooladhara is the chakra with the lowest potency, as pranashakti and jnanashakti are constrained and restricted here. While consciousness is centred in mooladhara, one remains restricted to a state of mind that is limited by desires for security, passions and enjoyments. As the prana shakti and consciousness move upwards, there is a gradual progression towards higher states until, in ajna, the experience of *jnana chakshu*, the eye of wisdom, takes place. Ajna, the sixth chakra, has the highest potency, as there pranashakti and jnanashakti are unlimited in quantity. When consciousness and prana evolve fully in all the six chakras, the resulting state of jnana is known as the state of Surya.

The seven horses that pull the chariot represent the seven rays of the sun, which become visible as the colours of the rainbow. They also symbolize the seven faculties or instruments that the sun governs: the primeval element through which creation takes place; the four aspects of the mind: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara; the *karmendriyas*, the senses of action; and the *jnanendriyas*, the senses of cognition. These seven faculties are represented by the seven horses, which pull the chariot of life in time and in space. Karmendriyas are the medium for work, drive and action, while jnanendriyas generate prana in life and awaken jnana. In the process of self-analysis through the mind, intellect, chitta and ego, perception of awareness and awakening takes place in the subtle and causal states of consciousness, while the primeval element consisting of the five gross elements, *pancha mahabhoota*, and the five subtle elements, *pancha tanmatra*, enable one to understand and experience the original, primordial state of the jiva.

The two reins by which the horses are controlled represent *uttarayana*, the northward path of the sun, and *dakshinayana*, its southward path. The sun's journey in the northern direction indicates *moksha*, liberation from sorrow and suffering, while its passage towards the south indicates rebirth and bondage. It has been seen in the lives of enlightened people that those who want to attain moksha wait for the sun to become northbound before leaving their body, while those who want to return to this dimension leave their body during dakshinayana.

When Bhishma, the great commander in the war of Mahabharata, was mortally wounded in a fight, he had so much *sankalpashakti*, willpower, that he was able to hold on to his pranas for about a month until the sun became northbound. In this way he ensured that he would not take birth again. In modern times, Swami Satyananda demonstrated the other approach. He had said, "I do not want moksha, freedom, or final emancipation. I want to come back to this world again and again to wipe the tears of those who are suffering." When the right opportunity came, he chose his time to depart when the sun was in the southward plane.

The charioteer, known as Arun, controls the horses. It is said that he has no legs because he never leaves the chariot, and his legs have disappeared due to non-use. He represents the *jivatma*, the individual soul. His absence of legs symbolizes the fact that the individual soul in itself is only a witness and not a performer of actions. It can observe and guide the powers

that move it through life, but it cannot move and become active.

The resplendent Surya is the rider. Life, pranashakti and jnanashakti together represent Surya. He is also the lord of time and has different names according to the month. Although different mantras have been given in Saurya tantra for different purposes and contain many names of the sun, the twelve months are generally considered the twelve names of the sun.

Shani, Yama and Yamuna

Apart from Surya, the two other deities that are prominent in Saurya tantra are Shani, the planet Saturn, and Yama, the god of death, both of whom are considered to be sons of Surya. In astrology, Shani, also known as Saura, is said to influence prosperity in the form of fixed assets that one has, especially in the sense that Shani's apparently malevolent disposition can create a negative impact on these. Assets here are to be understood not only from the material perspective, but also on the more subtle levels; one's samskaras and mental equipment are the real assets in life. Under the influence of Shani, the mind experiences many disturbances and upheavals which, for the discerning aspirant, act like a prod to push one further in life, out of old conditionings and perspectives. In Shani upasana, the attempt is to transform the negativities in life into positive energies.

Yama is the controller of the wheel of time; he controls the direction in which the soul will travel after death. If it is led in the northward direction, it will go to heaven, the path of liberation or uttarayana. If it travels southwards, it will go to hell, the bondage of material existence. Yama, the lord of death, decides on the merits and demerits of individual souls, and according to the attainments and karmas sends them on one of the two paths.

Apart from these two sons, Surya also has a daughter called Yamuna who, on the earthly plane, manifested as the sacred river of the same name that is generally associated with the life of Krishna. The worship of these three deities has been included in the Surya upasana as a way to improve one's karmas.

Beyond and above these three deities is Surya, whose potency gives them life and power. The potency of Surya has been called *nityashakti*, the primeval energy of the entire animate and inanimate universe. This energy has been given the name Gayatri.

Originators and upholders of Saurya tantra

Primitive man worshipped the sun in many ways: as giver of life, light, safety, heat, warmth and the element that cooked grains and meat. Thus, in the material dimension, fire or *agni* represented this cosmic solar energy. From an esoteric viewpoint, the sun became the symbol of luminosity, *prakasha*; that which destroys the ignorance of tamas and is associated with ultimate knowledge. Systems of worship and prayer gradually developed around the sun, and such practitioners came to be known as *saura*. As these ideas developed, they became part of tantra, and different tribes and societies worshipped the sun in their own way.

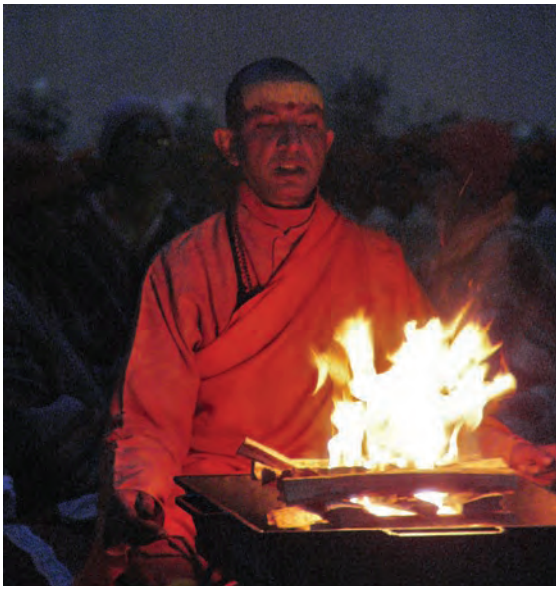
During that time there was a sage called Rishi Vishwamitra, who had led an unusual life. He had been a king, and as king he had been very envious of the preceptor Vasishtha. Vasishtha was a *brahmarishi*, a rishi who was in constant communion with Brahman, God. Fuelled by his envy, King Vishwamitra sought to acquire powers and spiritual attainments as great as those of Vasishtha. The events took such a turn that he ended up paying obeisance to Sage Vasishtha, who advised Vishwamitra to worship Surya in order to stabilize himself in the highest spiritual identity of a brahmarishi. Thus, he followed the disciplines as defined in the Saurya tantras to invoke the grace and blessings of the sun. In the deepest states of meditation he realized the sound of the Gayatri mantra, the mantra of the sun, and thus became the originator of the Gayatri mantra. Over a period of time, after becoming completely established in the state of a brahmarishi, he propagated Surya worship with the Gayatri mantra.

After the era of Vishwamitra, the tradition of Saurya tantra gradually declined. It was revived again in the age of Krishna. According to mythology, Krishna had many wives and with each wife he had many children, except for one, Jambavati. She was unable to conceive and was quite disturbed about it. Upon her supplication, Krishna decided to seek the advice of a sage. They went to Sage Upamanyu who taught Krishna the Pashupata tantra, the first tantra, the first yoga. The sage said, "With this tantra, with this yoga, both of you perform sadhana and please Shiva. When Shiva is pleased, he will bless you with children."

Krishna and Jambavati followed the system of Pashupata tantra for many years and, as a result of their perfection in this sadhana, Shiva appeared before them and requested them to ask for a boon. Jambavati replied, "I want a son like you." Shiva said to Krishna, "Your wife has asked for a son like me, but remember that I am the destroyer. If I incarnate in the physical dimension, it will be to destroy, transform and change. If I take birth in your family, your entire tribe will be annihilated." Krishna replied, "If this is so, then you are giving us a twofold boon, as it is my own intention to make my people weak. They have become too powerful, arrogant and destructive, blinded with success, prosperity and power." Shiva then agreed to take birth in Krishna's family as his son and, in due course, Jambavati bore a son with the name Samba. In keeping with Shiva's prophecy, Samba eventually became the cause of the downfall of Krishna's tribe.

In his youth, Samba was exceptionally handsome and attractive, being the incarnation of Shiva and the son of Krishna, thus combining the beauty of both. All the women of the city, including Krishna's own wives, started to spend their time playing with Samba and neglecting their duties. At that time Sage Narada appeared who, in order to accelerate the course of events, told Krishna that the boy was leading a very loose life and bringing disgrace to the family. Krishna became very angry and cursed his son to become ugly through skin disease and leprosy. Narada then appeared again to revoke his previous statement and declare Samba innocent. Krishna approached his newly-disfigured son and told him that as the curse could not be revoked, he had to heal himself by following the path of Surya upasana, worship of the sun.

Samba meditated on Lord Surya who advised him to cross the 'ocean of salt' and go to Shak Dweep, present-day Iran, where he would find adepts at sun worship. Following these instructions, Samba arrived in Shak Dweep and found four tribes of people who worshipped the sun through the medium of fire. He brought these people with him to India, to his land of Dwaraka, today's Gujarat, where the first sun temple was constructed. With the application of the solar tantra that these people practised, Samba was able to heal himself, which prompted him to propagate sun worship and construct sun temples all over the country. One of the last remaining solar temples is still found in Konark, Orissa. Others have been destroyed, yet once upon a time there were many areas in India where Saurya tantra was propagated. The *Samba Purana*, one of the *upa* or minor Puranas, is considered a text of Saurya tantra and mentions the therapeutic value of this system.



Around the time of Samba lived another prominent Surya upasaka, King Karna who, as the elder brother of the Pandavas, is a well known character of the epic *Mahabharata*. His kingdom of Anga was situated in Bihar and its capital was called Champa Nagari, today's Bhagalpur. Karna is said to be the son of Surya and Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas who, as an illegitimate offspring, was abandoned after his birth. However, being the son of Surya himself, he was no ordinary human but a siddha from birth, and it is said that he was born with armour and earrings.

Armour symbolizes awakened pranashakti, which acts like armour for the physical body. This can be observed in the masters of eastern martial arts who are able to break solid objects with their bare hands or heads through concentration of prana, possible through the awakening of manipura chakra. Awakened pranashakti also allows the faculty of subtle hearing to develop. The ability to perceive the *anahata nada*, or unstruck sound, is symbolized by the earrings worn by Karna. Another way in which this faculty manifests is the ability to learn any language very quickly. At a deeper level, this is the power that allows one to hear transcendental mantras as these are non-sensory vibrations realized in the deepest states of meditation. For Karna, this meant that he could intuitively communicate with the sun, his father.

In his Surya upasana, Karna worshipped the eyes of Devi in a *Shaktipeeth*, an awakened place of Shakti worship, located in present-day Munger. Known as Chandisthan, it is a place where, according to legend, the eyes of Shiva's wife Sati fell after her immolated body had been cut into pieces by Vishnu. The eyes of Devi are related to the solar energy, as the light of the eyes, vision and sight are symbolic of the energy of the sun. Munger has been known among tantrics from ancient times as a powerful place of sadhana. Karna would worship Shakti there and as part of this worship, he would sacrifice his body to her. Pleased with his sadhana, Devi would then revive him and give him a new body, as well as an amount of gold equivalent to his body weight. Karna would then distribute it to his subjects from a platform called Karna Chaura, which is today found within the campus of Ganga Darshan, Munger. Karna was an exemplary practitioner, while Vishwamitra and Samba were propagators of Saurya tantra.

In modern times, only a fraction of the original form of Saurya tantra survives, either as a set of therapeutic practices or mantras of protection against obstacles. As a philosophy, a sadhana or a way of life it has become practically extinct. However, Swami Satyananda, who in his lifetime revived and restructured several ancient yogic systems, can be seen as a modern-day yogi who perfected the sadhanas of Saurya tantra. His global work on yoga and tantra was given a shape when he settled in Munger in the early 1960s. He used to perform sadhana on the platform where Karna gave alms from. During his meditations there, Swami Satyananda received many spiritual visions, realizations and guidance; it was there that he saw the mahasamadhi of his guru Swami Sivananda and where he had the revelation that 'Yoga is the culture of tomorrow', which became the creed of his mission. These experiences in Munger became the catalyst for the establishment of the Bihar School of Yoga and the yoga movement, for which ajna chakra, the third eye, was chosen as the symbol.

When he later left Munger, he settled in Rikhia in order to perform higher sadhanas. Among them, what stands out most prominently is the *panchagni sadhana*, literally meaning the 'sadhana of five fives', which lasted for ten whole years. Panchagni is the highest practice prescribed in Saurya tantra, in the same way that in the yogic literature, people consider kriya yoga and kundalini yoga to be the highest sadhana. It involves performing japa and meditation while sitting in between four burning fires, with the blazing sun overhead as the fifth fire. Swami Satyananda performed this particular sadhana from 14th January to 16th June each year, the hottest period of the year, when the sun is in its north axis. It is said in Saurya tantra that panchagni can be performed only by

those who are able to face the five internal fires that bind one to this gross, material, sensorial dimension: *kama*, passion; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation; and *mada*, arrogance. Swami Satyananda performed this sadhana to its completion. During the final stage, it was actually possible to observe the form of manipura chakra emerging around his navel, indicating that he had perfected the panchagni vidya; his internal fires had become balanced with the external fires. With the help of this sadhana, he was able to transcend his body and all karmas, and became a *turiyatita*, one whose consciousness is established beyond the gross, subtle and causal states.

Another sadhana related to Surya upasana that Swami Satyananda made accessible for the benefit of all is the *Sat Chandi Mahayajna*, an annual event in Rikhia where the worship of Chandi is performed in the presence of thousands of people from all over the world. Chandi is a form of Shakti symbolized as pure light, representing vision, just like the eyes of Devi in Munger's Chandisthan.

Significance of Gayatri

The most well known and common form of Saurya tantra that has survived, and is still practised, is the upasana of Gayatri, who in this system is seen as the Shakti of Surya. Furthermore, as the Gayatri mantra is found in the Vedas, Saurya tantra became acceptable to the brahmins. Gayatri constitutes such a distinct part of the Saurya system that it is also known as a separate system called Gayatri tantra, in which the absolute form of God, who pervades all the three lokas, is the deity of the Gayatri mantra.

Three shaktis of Gayatri: According to Sage Vedavyasa, the Gayatri mantra represents three shaktis. In the morning, she takes the form of Gayatri, representing the ascent of consciousness. At midday, she becomes Savitri, by whose grace the shakti of the sun descends to the earth, and in the evening she changes into Saraswati, the goddess of learning. These three forms represent the three different energies of the sun. Gayatri is jnanashakti, the capacity of knowledge and is also known as *Vedamata*, the mother of the Vedas. She represents the knowledge contained in the Vedas pertaining to both transcendental and worldly matters, *para vidya* and *apara vidya*, respectively. Savitri, the Shakti of sunlight, removes the darkness of ignorance by awakening the inner eye of the sadhaka. This experience takes place in the subtle world beyond the antahkarana, therefore it pertains to para vidya. Saraswati enables one to perceive knowledge in the gross form, through the intellect, which is a part of the antahkarana and belongs to the relatively gross realm of apara vidya. Thus, all three forms of Gayatri are associated with knowledge.

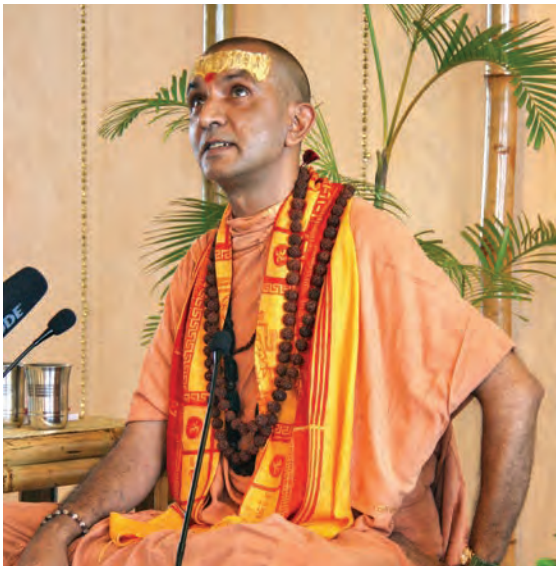
Gayatri is also seen as the compassionate mother of the *trimurti*, the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. According to this belief, at the beginning of creation there was only the unmanifest divinity or *Parabrahma*, without any form or guna. In that state, the desire for creation became strong and Parabrahma manifested itself through the three gunas of rajas, sattwa and tamas, out of which emerged the child-forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, respectively. Initially, they started behaving in an uncontrolled manner, upon which Gayatri, the Shakti of the Supreme Self, appeared in the form of Vedamata and nurtured the misbehaving trinity. She then put them to sleep in a swing of space, or *akasha*, whose four strings were the four Vedas. When they woke up, they were left to wander through the endless space. Despondent because they did not know who and where they were, they invoked Mother Gayatri who is knowledge personified. Gayatri appeared before them and reminded them of their real forms, roles and purpose.

Form of Gayatri for meditation: In Saurya tantra, Gayatri is described as having five faces and ten arms. She is sitting on a lotus flower and is clad in red garments, with a crescent moon in her crown. One of her hands is in *abhaya mudra*, for bestowing fearlessness and another one in *vara mudra*, for granting boons. In her next three hands are a bowl made from a human skull, a lotus flower and a golden ornament, and in the remaining five hands

she wields divine weapons: a conch, axe, goad, mace, and wheel. When Gayatri nurtures the three gunas or the trinity in the form of the absolute, Supreme Shakti, then she takes the form of an active, functional devi. Her red garments represent her active nature, as red is the colour of rajoguna.

Gayatri's ten hands represent the ten gross senses and the ten subtle senses. The gross senses include the karmendriyas and jnanendriyas, while the subtle senses comprise the five mahabhootas and five tanmatras. The weapons and other objects she holds in her hands represent her different aspects and functions. The sound of the conch is symbolic of the sound of pranava, the mantra *Om*. It is the symbol of the primeval sound, the undecaying, indestructible Brahman or God. Her *kalachakra*, the wheel of time, is the cause of both creation and dissolution. Her axe is intended to take the individual soul to the absolute, unmanifest world lying beyond the worldly states. The mace represents concentrated strength. The bowl, which is made from a skull, is filled with water signifying that Gayatri absorbs in herself the worldly ocean or the water of karmas. In the lotus flower are represented the various aspects of the evolution of consciousness. The goad in her hand is the symbol of a disciplined and controlled state of the jiva. Gold is a pure tattwa and indicates the pure state of consciousness; hence the gold ornament that she holds represents absolute, formless consciousness. The thousand-petalled lotus on which she sits is the symbol of the highest spiritual attainment.

Gayatri has five faces. With four of them she looks in the four directions and with the fifth face she looks within. The four Vedas are also said to come from her four mouths, taking the form of *pashyanti vak* or causal sound. The fifth mouth produces *para vak*, the transcendental sound that remains unmanifest. The moon in her crown is the symbol of chittashakti and represents activities pertaining to creation and production in the unmanifest dimension. This, in brief, is the form of Gayatri as described by the tantras.



Gayatri mantra: According to Swami Sivananda, the Gayatri mantra is an invocation of Surya, Hari or Narayana, and Shakti. These three concepts represent the germination and the flowering of life. Surya is responsible for life, Narayana is the indweller in every life form as its spirit, and Shakti is the cause of every life. All three are represented in the mantra of Gayatri. The full form of the Gayatri mantra is as follows:

Om bhuh Om bhuvah Om swah Om mahah Om janah Om tapah Om satyam.
Om tatsaviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dheemahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat.
Om aapo jyotirasomritam brahma bhurbhuvah swah Om.

Om	the imperishable Brahman; God
Bhuh	the basis of prana or vital energy
Bhuvah	the etheric or astral realm
Swah	the ruler; master of all
Mahah	venerable, worshipful
Janah	without beginning, eternal
Tapah	rays or beams of knowledge
Satyam	the unchanging existence; permanent being
Tat	that
Savituh	the creator of the universe

Varenyam	worshipped by the gods
Bhargah	form of pure light
Devasya	to one who illumines all
Dheemahi	we meditate
Dhiya	intellect
Yah	that who
Nah	our
Prachodayaat	to motivate to aspire for realization
Aapa	water; worldly ocean of karma
Jyotih	light of lights
Rasah	that which is present in everything as its essence
Amritam	that which is nectar
Brahma	the god who manifests himself
Bhurbhuvah-swah	basis of life, protector, master or ruler

> We meditate on that eternal God who is our creator, who is an independent reality, worshipful, beginningless, who is the light of wisdom and truth, propitiated by the highest gods, who bestows wisdom. May our intellect be illumined by that light of God. May the all-pervading God who protects us from the waters of karma, the light of lights, the essence of all, the ruler and protector of life, bless us with immortality.

The most popular form of the mantra, however, is the short version:

> *Om bhur bhuvah swaha tatsaviturvarenyam Bhargodevasya dheemahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat.*

Apart from these two forms, the intermediate form is also used, which is the same as the long mantra without the final oblation of *Om aapo . . .*

The Gayatri mantra has its own *chhanda* or metre, which comprises twenty-four matras. *Matra* is usually translated as syllable; however, more precisely it is a unit of duration. If each of these 'syllables' lasts one second, then twenty-four matras will represent twenty-four seconds. This is the metre called *gayatri chhanda* and any mantra that adjusts to it becomes a Gayatri mantra. The original Gayatri of the sun that has been discussed above starts with *Bhur bhuvah swah . . .*, to which *Om* is added as a prefix; sometimes, it can also be added at the end as a suffix. Along with this mantra, there are other Gayatris pertaining to different deities such as Ganesha, Guru, Shiva, Durga, Vishnu, Rama and Kali.

The *bija*, or primary seed, mantra of Gayatri is *So-Ham*, which is the mantra generally used in the meditation practice of ajapa dharana. The longer forms of Gayatri are also used in pranayama and meditation.

Texts related to Gayatri: There are three main texts related to Gayatri: *Gayatri Stotra*, *Gayatri Rahasya* and *Gayatri Tantra*, all of which come within the ambit of both Shakta and Saurya tantra. Apart from these there is also a text called *Gayatri Kavacha* in Vaishnava tantra, which indicates that Gayatri sadhana has been prevalent in all these three systems. In Vaishnava tantra, Gayatri is mostly mentioned in the Pancharatra literature. A description of *Gayatri Kavacha* can be found in *Vasishtha Samhita* and the rules, methods, rites and rituals to accomplish or perfect it.

Healing in Saurya tantra

One of the major aspects of Saurya tantra is healing, and a number of practices have been described for this purpose. The rays of the sun are known to have healing properties. With the appropriate mantras, one can enhance these properties. Special attention is given to the sense of vision, as eyes represent the light: that which allows life to interact with its environment and the world. Eyes also represent the shakti of the sun.

In Saurya tantra a variety of healing methods has been devised, such as exposing water to sunlight to absorb the sun's rays and energy. The followers of this system do not drink water straight from the well or tap; instead, they store the water in a special pot so that sunlight is allowed in. Once the water has been charged with the potency of sunlight, it is ready for drinking. Similarly, the water is also exposed to different colours to change its quality and attributes.

By invoking the mantras of Surya, it becomes possible to overcome different obstacles in life. When Rama was about to fight his final battle with Ravana, Sage Agastya appeared on the scene and initiated him into the mantra of Surya, the famous *Aditya Hridayam Stotram*. He said, "Rama, you will be victorious only when you have repeated this mantra three times." Thus, this stotra can be used by anyone to overcome difficulties and obstacles. When chanted three times at the time of sunrise every day, everything will change: not only one's mindset, ideas, thoughts and perceptions, but even situations that one encounters in life. One will become more optimistic, hopeful and positive in one's approach and thinking.

More specifically, solar mantras have been used extensively to heal the body of its external afflictions such as skin problems, sensorial problems and eye defects. In fact, there is a book specially designed to help recover eyesight, known as *Netra Tantra*. It contains mantras to help remove cataract, to get rid of short-sightedness or long-sightedness and other defects. The mantras relax the mental agitations and tensions that accumulate in different parts of the body at different times. When the eyes are stressed, they become blurred and the vision becomes limited. For example, people who wear glasses often experience that at night it is very difficult to read, even with glasses, as the eyes are too tired. With particular mantras the frequency of the eye nerves can be accessed and thus be strengthened.



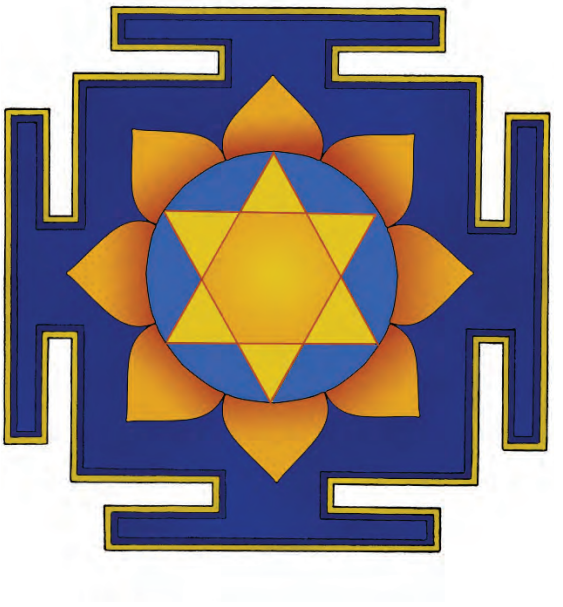
Saurya tantra believes that each and every part or function of the body has a specific frequency. During sickness, the electromagnetic field of the body emits a frequency that is different from that of a healthy body. This change in frequency is experienced in the form of health, vitality and stamina, or as dullness, lethargy, weakness and sickness. However, that is only one's subjective experience; in reality, the frequencies of the body keep on changing every moment. Mantras can restore balance in the frequencies of the electromagnetic or pranic field in the body, and this in turn removes all types of defects, problems and illnesses. The primary aim of these practices is to improve the quality of one's life, not merely to work as interventional therapy for removing the symptoms of disease. In the application of these mantras, one is not only attempting to heal oneself, but also allowing them to subtly transform one's nature.

Many people who have experimented with the healing powers of Saurya tantra have benefited. There is a special period around Diwali when *Chhath pooja*, worship of the sun on the sixth lunar day, is conducted. In this worship, there is a strict schedule with specific times for fasting, eating certain food, waking up and sleeping, maintaining silence, bathing, and offering water, *arghya*. It has been seen that many types of skin problems disappear practically overnight when one is able to complete this pooja in the right, systematic manner.

The tantras proclaim that when the individual soul assumes a physical form, it is always sick. It always experiences some kind of affliction, whether physical, psychological or spiritual. There is not a moment or period in life when one is completely healthy on all dimensions and at all levels. One may be physically fit, yet weak psychologically. One may be psychologically stable, yet emotionally unstable. One may be emotionally fit, yet spiritually weak. Life is always influenced by major and minor afflictions, which happen when the lifestyle is not regulated. Therefore, it is the regulation of lifestyle that results in the attainment of health, and that is the teaching of the tantras as well yoga. For this reason, one should never think of these disciplines as systems of therapy. They should always be understood from the perspective of improving, adjusting and fine-tuning one's lifestyle, with wellbeing as a natural attainment.

Sadhana

Saurya tantra, along with Ganapatya and Pancharatra tantra, is different from the much more prevalent Shaiva and Shakta tantras which accept life as it is; where lifestyle need not be modified as long as one practises one's prescribed sadhanas and disciplines. In Saurya tantra, however, the focus is on improving the quality of life by overcoming destructive habits and leading a virtuous life. This is to be achieved through a combination of the practices of yama, niyama, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, which allow one to gradually perfect and transcend the gross as well as the subtle experiences, until the realm of surya mandala is attained. Asanas are not mentioned as they are understood only as practices to enhance the abilities of the body. Once the faculties of the body have been improved, once the body attains its state of optimum wellness, one need not practise asana any more. The condition of the body can then be maintained through regular routine and modification of lifestyle. At this stage, sadhana becomes mental in nature.



The ultimate goal of sadhana in Saurya tantra is the attainment of jnana, knowledge. Jnana has been called superior to yoga as, ultimately, yoga becomes a process which leads us to jnana. The highest quality in life is understanding. When there is understanding, all the higher qualities of life such as love and compassion come by themselves. This understanding is part of knowledge, and yoga becomes the process through which one moves into the dimension of knowledge and luminosity. Therefore, in Saurya tantra knowledge is considered to be superior to yoga. It is said that if one has knowledge, one can understand purusha and prakriti as well as the Shiva tattwa. With knowledge, one becomes able to offer the lotus of one's heart to the divine.

Yama and niyama

In yoga, the rules of conduct and personal observances, the yamas and niyamas, are designed to calm the mind so that it can move into the state of meditation and eventually samadhi. Similarly, other systems have their own rules of conduct, which cultivate a particular quality of the human personality that is in line with the precepts of that system. In Saurya

tantra, there are three yamas and three niyamas: *kripalutva*, cultivation of compassion; *kshamatva*, the ability to forgive; *kshamata*, increase in personal capacity or ability; *satya*, truthfulness; *shaucha*, purity of body and mind; and *arjavam*, straightforwardness.

Compassion is associated with the sun because the sun shines on everyone in equal measure, not distinguishing between the pious and the crooked. Equal vision, equal understanding is the trait of a compassionate person. It does not mean feeling sorry for someone; rather, it implies the ability to understand everyone, their needs and nature, and to act appropriately. Kshamatva, forgiveness, is similarly associated with the sun, as is purity or shaucha. Anything that is thrown into the fire will be consumed by it and converted into ash. Fire has the natural ability to transform everything into its essence, whether good or bad, while remaining ever pure itself.

Satyam and arjavam, truthfulness and straightforwardness, are also naturally associated with the sun. In sunlight there can be no darkness; no falsity can hide in light or knowledge. However, as is true for all the yamas and niyamas, arjavam and satyam have to be viewed in context and with common sense, and in the light of: *Satyam bruyat priyam bruyat*, *na bruyat satyam apriyam* – "One should only speak the truth that is pleasant and not speak the truth that is unpleasant." In a culture where most people prefer diplomacy to straightforwardness, these yamas and niyamas have to be understood with regard to one's sadhana, the situation, the lifestyle and the environment in which one is living.

Mastery over prana

The practices of pranayama, as they are known today, are classified into three groups: vitalizing or heating, calming or cooling, and balancing or harmonizing. In Saurya tantra, the practices to be perfected are the heating pranayamas which include surya bheda, kapalbhati and bhastrika. Each of these techniques is to be developed together with a change in lifestyle, including diet, so that the subtle energies that the practitioner is working with do not become volatile and aggressive, and instead are contained and guided. This is a common rule for all the advanced yogic systems.

Proficiency in these powerful vitalizing techniques gives mastery over pranashakti that flows in the pingala nadi, also known as *surya nadi*. Such mastery is symbolically presented in the story of a young Hanuman who, on one occasion, swallowed the sun and the whole world became dark. This event symbolizes an experience in spiritual life in which pranashakti is activated. In modern times, mastery over pranashakti was demonstrated in research done by Dr Elmer Greene of the Menninger Foundation in the US in the 1970s on Swami Nadabrahmananda Saraswati, an eminent disciple of Swami Sivananda, and an accomplished musician and nada yogi. The experiment was to verify the claim that he could remain without breathing for forty to fifty minutes, or perform *nada kumbhaka*. Swami Nadabrahmananda was put in an airtight glass chamber, his whole body was covered in wax and all the orifices of his body were plugged to ensure that not even a single particle of oxygen could enter his body. Under these conditions, he was to play tabla. A monkey and a burning candle were put into two identical glass chambers. The candle flame went out within a few minutes, having burnt out all its oxygen supply. The monkey fell unconscious after about ten minutes, indicating the high level of carbon dioxide inside the box. However, Swami Nadabrahmananda played his tabla for forty-five minutes. The researcher then placed a microphone on different parts of his body and in all the places, the sound recorded resembled the humming of the mantra *Om*.

This experiment illustrates the possibilities one can attain with mastery over pranashakti; even breathing, one of the most essential processes of our body, can be suspended for prolonged periods of time. This is not to be viewed as some miraculous achievement, but as something that is attainable by following a sequential process to its perfection.

Pratyahara and dharana

Pratyahara and dharana are common to every system of yoga, tantra, Samkhya and Vedanta. The purpose of pratyahara is to withdraw oneself from the external distractions, and dharana implies that one's awareness is focused. In terms of practice, there is no difference between pratyahara and dharana techniques, they are the same regardless of the path, system or discipline that is followed. The only difference is that, in dharana, a qualitative change and intensification of experience occurs in comparison with pratyahara. Dharana does not mean focusing on one thing only. In the beginning it is necessary to focus on one thing; however, after some time it becomes possible to practise dharana while performing different duties and actions with the same efficiency, awareness and understanding as one would have during a session of formal meditation. *Dharana* simply means to fix the mind on something so that the mind becomes still.

In the pratyahara techniques of Saurya tantra, the aim is to fix one's attention in manipura chakra, in anahata chakra or in ajna chakra. Manipura chakra represents the sun, anahata chakra, according to this system, represents the moon, and ajna represents fire. In Saurya tantra, the cool moon is thought to be complementary to the hot sun. The moon merely reflects the light of the sun and has no light of its own. Yet the light it reflects has the distinct quality of making everything cool and, therefore, the moon is also considered to be an integral part of the Saurya tantra sadhana.

It is said that the rays of the moon give out nectar, which was consumed by the devas at the beginning of creation and gave them immortality. Sunrays become moonbeams, moonbeams give birth to nectar, and nectar is consumed by the devas. This sequence is similar to one's own experience: the moon reflects the light of the sun and when it does so, the light is no longer seen as sunrays, instead as moon rays. As for nectar, this is also present within the reach of one's daily experience. There is a hormonal secretion that is produced in minute quantities in the brain at the top back of the head at a point known as *bindu*, and from there it proceeds downwards to be consumed and burnt in the stomach, the region of manipura chakra. This secretion is known in the scriptures as *amrit* or nectar, and it is the burning of this hormone in the stomach that causes decay and death of the physical body. The pratyahara techniques in Saurya tantra are designed to retain this hormone in the throat in order to attain immortality. This corresponds to the theory of *khechari mudra*, a yogic technique of locking the tongue that aims to achieve the same goal.

In the first pratyahara practice, one focuses on the sun of manipura chakra, which is the seat of pranashakti in the body. The second meditation is on the moon in the heart centre and the third is on fire in the forehead. After mastering these three, the fourth meditation is on surya mandala in sahasrara chakra. In this process, one passes through the experiences of manipura, anahata and ajna chakra, becoming aware of all the different mantras that exist in



these chakras and repeating them in sequence. Each chakra has a set of secondary mantras that are usually depicted as letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, known as *aksharas*. These are inscribed on the individual petals of the chakra lotuses, whereas the bija mantra is written in the heart of the lotus. In swadhisthana chakra, for example, the bija mantra is *Vam* and its aksharas are *Bam*, *Bham*, *Mam*, *Yam*, *Ram* and *Lam*. Both the bija and the aksharas are chanted while focusing on each petal of the relevant chakra. Once the mantras have been completed, the awareness ascends pingala nadi to the next chakra where the same process is repeated. This sequence allows one to gradually withdraw from the external experiences of suryashakti to more subtle experiences of this shakti. This leads one into the practice of dharana and dhyana, where consciousness and pranashakti are made to ascend through the chakras until sahasrara is ultimately reached.

Pratipaksha bhavana

In order to manage efficiently and effectively in life, family and society, and to manage the problems and tensions that arise in various situations and environments, it has been advised across all the yogic systems to practise *pratipaksha bhavana*, which translates literally as 'contrary feeling'. In Saurya tantra, this is described as a sadhana where the manas is cleaned through manas, buddhi through buddhi, chitta through chitta, and ahamkara through ahamkara. This process takes place through the cultivation of opposite thoughts. For example, when a thought comes to the mind, 'I don't like this person', one should instantly start dwelling on the opposite thought, 'I do like this person.' This is to be applied to all situations in life so that it becomes possible to manage the different states and conditions of mind.

When one identifies with negativity, the responses, the mind and its perceptions all become negative and limited, which in turn influences the entire personality and character. This then translates into all spheres of life, including meditation, as the *swabhava*, character, has more power and influence than the will, *iccha*. In the words of Swami Satyananda, "People want to concentrate in meditation, but who wants to concentrate? The mind that is jumping like a monkey is the same mind that starts to desire concentration. If you find that one aspect of the mind is distracting you and another aspect of the mind is telling you to focus, first you have to strengthen the aspect of the mind that is weak." This is achieved through the practice of pratipaksha bhavana, which is undoubtedly a difficult, but nevertheless an essential sadhana; superimposing the positive and creative on top of the limiting, destructive and negative. In this manner, one should manage the limiting and the destructive nature of manas through the positive nature of manas; the distorted chitta through the positive aspect of chitta; the deluded buddhi through the positive aspect of buddhi; the arrogant ahamkara through the positive aspect of ahamkara. It is the secret sadhana of Saurya tantra.

Rituals and mantras

Another aspect of Saurya tantra is the rituals in which mantras, yantras, and *upasana*, worship, are combined. These external acts enforce faith and conviction, mental clarity and understanding. In the lunar month of Magha, January to February, there are spiritual observances on *Surya Shashthi*, the sixth day of the bright fortnight. On that day, fasting is to be maintained and not a single negative, critical or destructive thought is allowed to come to the mind. This is achieved with the help of mantras.

There are several collections of mantras attributed to sun worship which have rituals associated with them. These include the twenty-one names of Surya, which are used for good eyesight and the *Surya Sahasranama*, the thousand names of Lord Surya. The most widely used mantra connected with the sun is the Gayatri mantra. When this mantra is chanted, it is to be connected with the *sankalpa* or resolve to attain clarity, wisdom

and creativity. This is the simplest form of the practice, which is traditionally taught to children in India at a particular age, together with the practice of *surya namaskara*, salutations to the sun, and nadi shodhana pranayama. These are taught with the aim for them to acquire wisdom, jnanashakti, and vitality, pranashakti, through the grace of the solar power. In the practice of *japa* or mantra repetition, which is emphasized in Saurya tantra, it is either the full form of Gayatri that is used, or the bija mantra *So-Ham*. This is synchronized with the breath, leading to the practice of ajapa japa.

Sandhya vandana

One commonly practised ritual originating in Saurya tantra is sandhya vandana. *Vandana* means salutation, and 'sandhya' is derived from the root *sandhi* or junction, referring to the three junctures of the day, sunrise, midday and twilight. This routine involves standing in a river waist-deep at these three times, offering water to the sun and chanting the Gayatri mantra. The brahmins perform the three sandhyas daily without fail, as do many Indian householders. The aim is to connect with the solar power and enable one to receive energy from the sun. There is no definite understanding as to how these rituals work, nonetheless they do give many benefits. Thus, the practitioner is asked to simply perform them without unnecessary intellectual analysis and to find out for himself.

It is also mentioned that while one is performing the sandhyas, one should be aware of one's dharma. What is one's dharma as an individual? Individual dharma entails progress and growth, which can only happen through appropriateness in actions, thinking and behaviour. The three sandhyas help this to be recognized in life. In India, it is a common sight to observe people standing along riverbanks, offering water to the sun. Where no river is available, a simple pot or *lota* is used.

In the morning, this is done while doing trataka on the red rising sun until it starts turning yellow. While gazing at the rising sun, water is taken in the hands or in a glass and offered to the sun, and at the same time the Gayatri mantra is chanted twenty-four times. The same process, but without gazing at the midday sun, is repeated at midday and at sunset. In the morning, concentration is on the image of Gayatri, at noon on Savita, and in the evening on Saraswati. They all represent the same Shakti; however, her form changes as the sun progresses, just as individuals change as life progresses. The morning is one's youth, midday is one's middle age, and evening is when one becomes old; they represent the same person undergoing transformation. In the same manner, the potential and the rays of the sun undergo a transformation as they traverse through the sky. In early morning, when the sun is cool, the effect and properties of its rays are different from those at other times of the day. Therefore, a corresponding image has to be visualized and these three images have been given in the form of the three goddesses.

One variation of this practice is the watering of the tulsi plant. While facing east, looking at the morning rising sun and doing their mantra, people offer water to the tulsi plant. If a tulsi plant is not available, then any other plant can be used instead. The important point of these practices is not to allow water to be wasted, as water represents life, and life has to nourish life. Therefore, water has to go either into water or to the root of a plant.

Advanced practices

Beyond the set of sadhanas that have been discussed are the advanced practices of Saurya tantra. One example mentioned earlier is the panchagni vidya, where one faces the heat of five fires at one time. However, this sadhana is the culmination of an effort that can be made by everyone on a personal level; that is, to remain aloof from the five internal flames that burn inside and afflict one's life, mind and behaviour. They are: kama or passion, krodha or anger, lobha or greed, moha or infatuation, and mada or arrogance. Whenever there is a fight, confusion or conflict in life, it is rooted in

one of these five inner conditions. Saurya tantra says that if one is able to maintain one's balance while facing these five fires within, then one can manage the five external fires and transcend the mind and the individual self.

Another higher sadhana is known as *sarva karya siddhi vidhanam*, method to obtain perfection in every action. It is a meditative process enabling one to attain success in every effort and action in life. In this sadhana, with one-pointed, fixed body awareness, a certain pranayama is practised wherein one experiences Shiva and Shakti tattwa in anahata and manipura chakra. This is combined with a visualization of prana in the form of *vayu*, air, as being below agni, fire. This is a reversal of the usual order, and the effort awakens pranashakti, which first takes the form of vayu, then gets heated up by agni and subsequently proceeds up to sahasrara.

In another practice, known as *hridayapushpa sadhana*, ten different feelings or sentiments are evoked and then offered to Shiva, not Surya, along with water. *Hridaya* means heart, and *pushpa* means flower, referring to the heart lotus or anahata chakra. This is another higher meditative ritual of Saurya tantra.

Worship of the Shiva and Shakti tattwas has also been mentioned. The best form of worshipping the Shiva tattwa is by using the Shivalingam, while the best form of worshipping the Shakti tattwa is through the image of Kali. Kali is a form of Shakti worshipped in Saurya tantra and the goddess Chandi is one of the forms of Kali. The image of Kali is used because she is the power of time and Surya is the lord of time. Kali is not considered the consort of Surya, but they have similar functions. Surya is the master of time and Kali is the Shakti of time.

Sannyasa as the final stage of Saurya tantra

After having gone through the higher sadhanas, Saurya tantra says that in the final stage of attainment, the aspirant must take sannyasa. Ultimately, the world must be renounced, for as long as one remains attached to the world, one has to deal with the mind which is prone to diversions and distractions. If one can renounce everything, then that renunciation is known as *sannyasa*. Having renounced all wealth, family and social associations, one becomes capable for attaining the ultimate bliss, *ananda*. That is the identity of a sannyasin: absolute detachment from everything, and that is the final attainment in Saurya tantra.



6

Pancharatra Tantra



Pancharatra tantra literally means 'tantra of the five doctrines' and derives its name from the five principles essential for understanding the higher nature. The four other schools of tantra: Shaiva, Shakta, Ganapatya and Saurya tantra have been named after their first seer or preceptor: Shiva, Shakti, Ganesha and Surya, respectively. The Pancharatra tantra is an exception to this rule as its name does not bear the name of its originator, Lord Narayana or Vishnu.

In many Pancharatra texts, Sri Krishna, identified with Vishnu, is seen as the original propagator of this tantra; not the Krishna who was born as an avatara, but the Krishna who represents the Supreme Personality or Supreme Consciousness. The word *krishna* means that which is dark, that which is hidden and undiscoverable. Just as nothing can be seen in a room that is in absolute darkness, the Supreme Consciousness also remains hidden. In darkness, there are no colours, no objects, no perception of size or shape; however, as soon as there is light, the hidden is revealed. Thus, darkness does not indicate the absence of existence; it merely indicates the inability to perceive.

This imperceptible being has been identified as Krishna, the Supreme Personality, the highest

consciousness, the identity of the transcendental Self. In this transcendental nature, there are no divisions of time, space and object; it is a continuity of awareness extending through all dimensions. This power has generally been defined as God. For the sake of understanding, the word 'God' can be taken as an acronym indicating the three cardinal functions of this unfathomable power: 'G' for generation or creation, 'O' for organization or sustenance, and 'D' for destruction or transformation. This higher power regulates the lower life, just as the mind controls one's behaviour and quality of thoughts. The higher mind decides what kind of life is going to be lived, according to one's karma and dharma. *Karma* refers to the law of cause and effect that shapes the life of each individual, where actions inevitably bear fruit, and *dharma* refers to the natural role or duty that one plays in life. For each individual who is born, there is a blueprint indicating the avenues through which life will be directed. Before one constructs a house, a blueprint of the house is made. Before one manufactures a car, one makes a blueprint of the car. In the same manner, each individual has come with a blueprint of life. That is the individual's destiny, which is invariably followed whether one is aware of it or not. This blueprint of life is given by the higher power that controls every aspect of creation, just as the mind controls every aspect of human behaviour.

That super-mind or transcendental Self is known as Krishna: the hidden one, the unseen one, the dark one; and that power which is ever-present despite its invisibility, is the source of the Pancharatra tantra. Krishna first imparted this teaching to Brahma the creator, who is the first aspect of the Indian trinity. It was the knowledge contained within the teachings of Pancharatra tantra that helped Brahma to create the world, the universe and all the beings. In the course of time, Brahma passed the knowledge on to Shiva, who represents the third quality of the trinity, change and destruction; indicating that even change and destruction require knowledge. After that, Shiva passed it on first to the four Kumaras, the four young celibate sadhus who are the mind-born sons of Brahma, and then to Narada, the celestial bard. Narada represents an intermediary between the higher and the gross consciousness. He is the only being who can move between the higher and the lower dimensions; the enlightened ones only remain in the higher realms, and people with a gross mind stay in the lower realms. Narada imparted the teaching of this tantra to the great sage Vedavyasa, the codifier of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the writer of *Mahabharata* and many other important scriptures. Vyasa transferred the knowledge to his recluse son, Shukadeva. It was Shukadeva who brought the tradition of Pancharatra to the world at large; however, Narada is the most commonly mentioned name as he was the one who brought down the higher knowledge to the lower dimensions.

The story of Narada and Shiva

One day, when Narada was practising austerities in the mountains with the hope of getting some glimpses of the higher reality, he heard a voice: "If you have invoked Krishna, then what is the use of practising any austerity? Invocation of Krishna is beyond all austerities. On the other hand, if you have not performed the worship of Krishna, not being inclined to do so, then what is the use of austerities? If you are able to experience Krishna within and without you, what is the purpose of austerities? They are unnecessary. Then again, if you do not experience Krishna within and without, then what is the purpose of practising austerities?"

Narada became utterly perplexed and started searching for a sage who would lead him out of his confusion. He found a *yati*, a long-haired recluse living in the Himalayas, called Lomesh, 'the hairy one'. Lomesh advised him to consult Lord Shiva, as there was no one else capable of solving this riddle. Following Lomesh's advice, Narada went to Mount Kailash to meet Shiva. He found him absorbed in meditation and stayed quiet until Shiva

opened his eyes. At that point, Narada asked, "Lord, I have a question. What were you meditating upon?" Shiva answered, "I was meditating upon Lord Narayana, my *ishta devata*, chosen deity." Narada then told Shiva about his experience of the celestial voice that brought confusion into his mind. Shiva's response thus began the exposition of the Pancharatra system of tantra.

Narada's quandary can be understood in the following manner. Just as a traveller disembarks the train once the destination is reached, likewise, when one has reached one's spiritual destination, austerities become irrelevant and there is no need to practise them. In the instance where one has not even thought about embarking on a journey, there is no reason to get on a train. Thus, having attained something and not intending to attain something are the two extremes, neither of which requires austerity. Sadhana and personal effort are for those people who are in the middle, who are travelling. The two extremes represent the sattwic and the tamasic condition, while in the middle is the rajasic disposition. If one is established in sattwa, one need not do anything further. Likewise, if one is so conditioned by tamas that there is no intent to reach sattwa, there is no question of effort. Sadhana is to be practised by those whose intention is to transform and to become better.

Shiva's reply to Narada was, "Narayana is the transcendental consciousness. In this transcendental form he is known as Krishna, the hidden one, the dark one, and it is this Krishna power that makes each and every living being alive. You cannot see the soul. You can see your body and experience your mind, but what about the spirit? The spirit cannot be seen, yet it is within you and when it leaves you, your life will come to an end. Neither your body nor your mind will function. That *atma*, that soul within you, is the reflection of Narayana, for Narayana is the indweller of all hearts. He exists in every atom of creation as life, he sustains creation, and nurtures and maintains life. I meditate on that principle, that which sustains, which maintains and which regulates. This principle can be understood by knowledge."

The nature of knowledge and intellect

Narada asked Shiva, "Can you explain to me the nature of this knowledge?" Shiva began the exposition by saying, "I am knowledge. I am the presiding deity of knowledge and my consort, Bhagavati, is the presiding deity of intellect." This statement is the beginning of Pancharatra tantra. Shiva is not a person; it is a luminous state of consciousness. It is the state of an awakened or realized Self and in that state of awakening and realization, consciousness is pure knowledge, pure awareness.

Higher consciousness is characterized by omniscience. It perceives everything and, therefore, Shiva is knowledge. Shakti or Bhagavati is the presiding deity of intellect, which here means that which is interacting in life, with the world and with the divine. The intellect has these two faculties: when it interacts with the world, it is a forward, horizontal movement, and when it deals with the higher nature, it moves vertically. When the intellect flows out into the world, the form that Bhagavati assumes is known as 'maya', while the vertical intellect that connects one with the divine is known as 'yoga'.

Therefore, another name of this cosmic power is Yogamaya: maya meaning confusion, yoga meaning clarity. This is the name of the Shakti who controls the intellect. When engaged in the world, the maya aspect becomes powerful and dominant; however, when one disconnects from the world and focuses on the cultivation of virtues and awareness, then maya becomes weak and yoga comes to the forefront. When the eyes are opened again and one reconnects with the world, yoga becomes weak and maya is strengthened. This power that can fluctuate between the two extremes is known in its unified form as Bhagavati or Yogamaya, and in its divided form as yoga and maya.

Five types of knowledge

Then Narada asked Shiva, "How do I know that I am transforming myself, my limited self, and that I am experiencing peace and contentment? How do I become aware of my transformation and how should I strive to attain those states of mind?" Shiva answered, "With the cultivation of knowledge. In the absence of knowledge, there is no progress. Knowledge is awareness." The more aware one is, the more knowledgeable one becomes; the less aware one is, the more ignorant one becomes. Therefore, the first step towards knowledge is the cultivation of awareness. To explain, Shiva instructed Narada on five kinds of knowledge, which form the 'pancharatra'.

The first type of knowledge outlined in Pancharatra is *adhyatmika jnana*, the transcendental knowledge of the inner dimension, the Supreme Element or *Paramtattwa*. The second type is *Hari bhakti jnana*, knowledge of devotion through which one can unite oneself with that highest reality, transcend the gross limitations of the body and merge with the higher consciousness. The third form of knowledge is *mukti prada jnana*, knowledge that liberates the mind and brings emancipation and freedom in life, *mukti*. Next comes *yoga yukta jnana*, the knowledge of the efforts, the sadhana and yoga that can help one rise beyond the earthly dimension. The fifth and last kind of knowledge is *samsara vishyak jnana* or *vishayatmika jnana*, the knowledge about the world, society, objects, and the involvement of the individual with these. Along with these five doctrines, emphasis is placed on both individual and social dharma, as well as devotion as a means to connect with the divine.

Shiva's exposition began with the highest knowledge, the transcendental knowledge, and coming down to the lowest, most gross form of knowledge. However, the process of evolution of an individual begins with the lowest type of knowledge and moves towards the highest. Thus, the sadhaka begins with vishayatmika jnana, the understanding of the material world and one's participation and involvement in it.



After such understanding has developed, he moves into yoga yukta jnana, which involves making the effort to change the pre-existing conditions and to develop a new and better condition of life. This leads to mukti prada jnana, gaining the understanding of how to attain liberation in life, to become free from the bondages of the world. This allows him to move into the fourth aspect of knowledge, connection with the higher or transcendental Self, Hari bhakti jnana. Finally, he comes to the highest form of knowledge, adhyatmika jnana, the spiritual knowledge.

Ten themes of Pancharatra tantra

Along with the five types of knowledge, Shiva also instructed Narada in ten practical subjects that are the core of Pancharatra tantra, and that aim to cultivate the awareness and understanding of the five types of knowledge. When equipped with these disciplines of sadhana and the knowledge that they bring, luminosity and freedom from difficulties and mental barriers can come into life. They include: 1. philosophy 2. mantra shastra 3. yantra shastra 4. maya yoga 5. yoga 6. mandir nirmana 7. pratishtha vidhi 8. samskara 9. varna ashrama dharma , and 10. utsava.

Philosophy: In its philosophical aspect, the central theme of Pancharatra tantra is creation and its various aspects. It gives a detailed outline of how creation occurred and how it progressed from transcendental to subtle to gross, beginning with Narayana as the highest

principle and ending with the world of matter.

Mantra shastra: The knowledge of mantras, their use and application. Mantras comprise a major part of the yoga yukta jnana or knowledge of yoga and are used extensively throughout the entire Pancharatra system.

Yantra shastra: This is the science of yantras. *Yantras* are geometrical symbols that provide a map of the human consciousness. Yantra shastra encompasses the use of yantras, the process and the direction to be taken when travelling deep into one's consciousness. It is an advanced science requiring extensive preparation and training under a guru.

Maya yoga: This is a peculiar subject of this tantric system. Unlike yoga, which is intended purely for one's spiritual evolution, maya yoga involves techniques that allow one to excel in the material world; it is a yoga that produces illusion.

Yoga: In Pancharatra tantra, many different practices of yoga have been mentioned, such as kundalini yoga, pranayama, mantra yoga and *nyasa*, a process wherein one consecrates all the parts of the body with the use of mantra.

Mandir nirmana: Literally, this means 'establishing a temple'. In the Pancharatra system, detailed instructions are given for the construction of such a place. However, it is not only the construction of a temple that is advised. It includes the creation of a personal place of power where one can recharge oneself with the energy created and upheld there. It means the creation of an appropriate, spiritually conducive environment to help one's spiritual journey. Thus, all places where one can receive upliftment and higher inspiration, from an altar at home to a large centre of concentrated spiritual power, such as a temple or an ashram, can be considered part of mandir nirmana.

Pratishtha vidhi: This is the science of consecration. When a symbol has been chosen and installed in the place of worship for the worshipper to identify with, the procedure of *prana pratishtha* is conducted to infuse that symbol with life force. It is a precise and elaborate ritual involving worship and mantra, in which every sense expression, such as sight, touch, smell, and so on is imposed on the image. The aim is to make the inanimate object come alive so that it responds to one's sentiments, feelings and prayers. The faith of the worshipper nourishes the power thus invoked and, conversely, the grace of that divine power nourishes the worshipper. Pratishtha vidhi is also known as *avahana*, the invocation of a cosmic power.

Samskara: Samskaras are impressions that form one's mental make-up and character. While at a personal level these are understood in the form of thoughts, behaviours, memories and so on, at a social level these can be customs and traditions that influence one's life in society. In the scheme of Pancharatra tantra, it is this second aspect that is emphasized; understanding how to cultivate proper samskaras that facilitate one's spiritual evolution while living in society.

Varna ashrama dharma: Society is seen as an organic whole, where each individual has to function with a specific set of duties and responsibilities. For example, an engineer has the skills and knowledge required to be an engineer; therefore, as an engineer one should not attempt to do the work of a doctor. In the same manner, just as there are specific skills for every profession, in life there are also specific skills that one has to cultivate. One skill of life is the cultivation of intellectual abilities or education; this is known as *brahmin dharma*



or *brahmin jati*. All subjects of education, such as the arts and sciences, can be included in this category. If one becomes proficient in any subject and teaches it to others, it increases one's intellectual knowledge.

The second varna is *kshatriya* or *kshatriya dharma*, the ability to protect and nurture. This implies the use of protective strength and confidence. Just as a warrior protects the nation by fighting, using his strength and skills, in the same manner, an awareness has to be cultivated of how to preserve and protect one's environment, family, society, as well as one's good intentions and virtues. When a farmer plants vegetables in the garden, he must create a form of protection around the newly-planted shoots. Each day, he must check that they are intact and that no animal or bird has eaten them; there is a concern to protect what he has planted. Similarly, there needs to be a concern to protect what is planted in the mind. The positive sankalpas, affirmations, determination and spirit have to be looked after. Unlike a New Year's resolution that is often forgotten within a few days of making it, a true sankalpa is an expression of mental clarity. If the mind is clear, the sankalpa becomes one's focus, goal, aspiration and effort. However, if the mind is clouded and confused by desires, then the sankalpa loses its meaning. Thus conviction, determination and strength have to be cultivated to preserve and protect what is good and beautiful in life, and this is the core of kshatriya varna.

The third varna, the *vaishya dharma*, involves action, participation, distribution and interaction. It is a professional, market-oriented dharma intended for survival. When vegetables are bought in the market, it is survival dharma, eating to survive. In the market there is interaction with other people and an exchange of money and goods. This is what vaishya dharma is centred upon: production, distribution and consumption of products and services. The fourth varna is *shudra dharma*, involving all the duties and responsibilities to maintain society and the human civilization and to look after its basic needs.

Utsava: In Pancharatra tantra, much importance is given to utsava, or public festivals. In India, with the exception of a few modern-day 'imported' festivals, all celebrations have had a spiritual focus. Whether Navaratri, Sivaratri, Holi or Diwali, all of these festivals are conducted during periods of specific planetary alignment that have been identified by the saints and sages as especially auspicious for particular types of sadhana. None of them are meant for entertainment. At the time of a festival, one is to connect with the spiritual idea behind it and to practise sadhana according to it, so that one's mind and emotions are uplifted and divine blessings received. Traditionally, no invitations are ever necessary to participate in such events; only an announcement is enough and people will come of their own accord, knowing that doing so will bring them spiritual benefit. Along with that, these festivals create a social ambience, a positive environment.

First level of awareness

The first level of awareness that one has to develop is the knowledge of the material world or vishayatmika jnana, so that one can understand and transcend the limitations of the material world. What can one do to improve life while one lives in this world? Due to the attraction towards sense objects, the senses give birth to feelings of like and dislike, pleasure and pain, positive and negative. As one interacts with the senses and the sense objects, the concept of duality arises: me and that. The material world identifies each individual independently, and as long as this individualistic identification exists, there is duality in the world. This duality leads to a separation of one human being from another human being. The idea of superiority and inferiority emerges, of better and worse, of black and white, and everyone thinks, 'What I believe is correct.' In this state, there is no resilience of wisdom, instead knowledge becomes stiff, like a log of wood. One holds

on to that piece of wood, saying, "This is the knowledge", when, in fact, knowledge should be resilient and not stiff. In this world, due to one's conditionings, due to the impressions of society, culture and environment, the intellect is not able to cope with the external distractions and it cannot maintain its harmony and balance. The causes of imbalance are tension and strife, and the causes of tension and strife are unfulfilled expectations and desires. All these are self-oriented causes. As long as one is in the conditioning of self-oriented awareness, one is blind to other people. In essence, that is the material life.

At this level, the mind fluctuates between two ideas, karma and dharma. In life, the mind is coloured by maya and this causes the intellect to interact and identify with the world of senses and sense objects, believing them to be the source of ultimate happiness, joy and peace. Looking for peace and happiness through the senses means that the wrong tool is being used to get the right thing, for the senses are not designed to provide such an experience. The nature of the senses is to be immersed in *bhoga*, enjoyment of the world, and not yoga, which requires confinement from the world and which is what ultimately brings peace, happiness and contentment. Thus, it is not possible to use the senses to cultivate spiritual awareness. This can be seen in an experiment as simple as just trying to sit still for a few minutes. Within a very short time, the body will become restless and uncomfortable, as it is not its nature to be still. If one wants to become still, one has to struggle with oneself.

How does material interaction affect one's behaviour? In the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62–63), Sri Krishna describes this process clearly: "You are surrounded by sense objects, focusing on them continuously and constantly as and when they appear. Generally, the moment the mind identifies with a sense object, a craving, desire and attraction surfaces. You are then guided by the craving to connect with and to possess the object of desire. If the desire is not fulfilled, anxiety sets in the mind, and you start to question why it is not possible to fulfil that desire. When there is a state of anxiety in the mind, wisdom is clouded. When wisdom is clouded, discrimination disappears and when that happens, you can consider your life to be equal to death."

Without discrimination, life cannot be called life. Life is the ability to discriminate, to know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Discrimination differentiates human life from all other life forms. This ability to know right from wrong is lost in the state of delusion, infatuation or obsession, as one gets caught up in the whirlpool of emotions and desires that lead to suffering, pain, guilt, desire, need, envy, aggression, disturbances, distress, insecurities and fears; yet, all the while wanting to attain peace. While interacting with the world of senses, only karma is followed, and the never-ending mental pendulum of likes and dislikes, attractions and aversions goes on swinging. The mind swings constantly from one extreme to the other, compelling one to perform karma, or actions, according to its whim. However, when the mind becomes stable and there is inner peace and clarity, then one begins to live one's dharma. Shiva tells Narada, "In this world, people with awareness have to live their dharma and inspire those who are merely performing karma to understand what their dharma is." This means that one must open the mind and not simply live according to the conditioning that one has been exposed to.

What are the different forms of conditioning that one has been exposed to? It includes the personal identity of 'This is me and my needs', conditioning right from birth by family, society, culture and environment. People are caught up in the cross-current of outer interactions and as a result receive samskaras from these, such as customs, traditions, thoughts and behaviours that govern life in the material dimension. To understand how samskaras govern life, one does not have to look outside. It is enough to simply look at and observe one's entire life; what has been gained and what has been lost, what has been attained and what has to be let



go of. Such observation leads to the realization of what one's dharma is, and releases one's obsession with karma.

Dharma is the beginning of awareness. Awareness does not imply merely seeing what is happening in the environment; it means applying the understanding of dharma in day-to-day interactions. If this happens, improvement of material life will come by itself. This is the first level of awareness that has to be cultivated while living a normal life: learning how to express one's dharma towards oneself, towards one's family, society, and the human civilization. In the system of Pancharatra, two major areas have been described in relation to one's dharma in life: varna and ashrama. In his instruction to Narada, Shiva outlined four stages or transitions in life that one has to go through, called the *ashramas*. Furthermore, Shiva explained that it is the duty of each individual to realize the dharma of each stage; how one has to live and act in every situation during that stage of life. In the first stage, one is a student; in the second, one becomes a responsible working member of society; in the third, one retires and lives a quiet life, following the principles of experience and knowledge that one has gained in life; and in the fourth, one makes the attempt to develop spiritually and to attain emancipation.

Brahmacharya ashrama is the young age dedicated to imbibing the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to survive in material life. It is the life of studentship where learning is the sole focus. When education has been completed, one is prepared to proceed into *grihastha ashrama*, the life of a householder. In this stage of life, one's dharma changes. For a student, there is no concern in life other than studies; however, once the studies are completed and one becomes a responsible member of human society with a profession and a family, one's responses, karma and dharma must change. The grihastha ashrama comes with a new set of experiences: love and jealousy, affection and hatred, struggle and competition, taking on responsibilities, taking care of the family, trying to excel in one's profession. All this becomes the karma and the dharma of marital life or grihastha ashrama.

Then, once one has gone through the fulfilment of one's profession, one retires with plenty of experience and some basic understanding in relation to the world, society,

family, life, of how to handle one's own mental idiosyncrasies and how to manage other people. However, at the same time, one is no longer active in society and has no functional role to play in the family. What is one to do then? Many people are at a loss after their retirement and spend their time and resources on things that they do not really need, in search of entertainment. There is a karma and dharma for this stage of life known as *vanaprastha ashrama*. In this ashrama, the mind is diverted from social involvement, and an awareness of and fulfilment of the inner, spiritual needs is cultivated which makes one more stable and peaceful inside. Reflecting on what one has learnt from life experience, and inspiring the next generation to accept its responsibilities: this is the process of vanaprastha ashrama, the retired life.

After this, one moves into the fourth stage of life, the *sannyasa ashrama*, where the sole purpose of life is to work for one's spiritual upliftment. As a student, in brahmacharya ashrama, one works for intellectual development, in grihastha ashrama for the development of one's family, in vanaprastha ashrama for improving one's wisdom, and in sannyasa ashrama for one's spiritual evolution.

Life has to be looked at in its totality to discover what one's dharma and karma are. If one is an industrialist and manufactures bicycles, then that is both one's karma and dharma. How can one use that profession to find mental peace and harmony? This is where the knowledge of dharma comes in, in relation to that karma. When a soldier is fighting a battle, he is performing karma, yet how does he understand his dharma? He would create confusion in his mind by thinking: 'Am I being violent? Am I going to reap the evil effects of my karma?' Karma should not be thought about in this manner. When doing something, dharma should be foremost rather than the limited understanding of karma. In this manner, when one looks around, at the society, at the world and one's interactions with it, one recognizes that interactions have to be modified. However,



how can interactions be modified and knowledge of the world be developed? Out of the ten subjects of Pancharatra tantra, two are used for this purpose. The first is varna, knowing what one's dharma is according to one's trade, society, qualification and according to what one has been doing in life, and the second is through utsava, festivals, to uplift the spirit and mind; not for entertainment, but for upliftment.

Dharma is an inherent responsibility in every interaction; it is an inherent commitment that an individual feels when relating to each and every aspect of life. The creative expression of dharma makes one free from mental and emotional strife and tension. In this context, Shiva says, "You have to follow the dharma of society. You have to follow the personal dharma. You have to follow the code of conduct that will make you happy and joyous and not take you into states of anxiety and depression. Therefore, Narada, realize that your awareness is only to be used to observe the world and your responses to the world, and your willpower has to be used to control and manage your responses." Two things are said here: awareness to become observant and willpower to remain strong.

One can follow this advice of Shiva in one's day-to-day life. Try it today. Observe your reactions, responses, interactions and communications. Be aware of each and every word that you say, and before you say it, think, 'This is the sentence I am about to speak.'

Cultivate that awareness. Realize how you are interacting with the world, with other people, with society, and regulate your behaviour. That is following dharma; regulation of behaviour is following the dharma. Irregular or eccentric behaviour is not dharma. When all expressions are regulated, whether it be expressions through the senses, the mind, the emotions or the intellect, then they bring peace and do not dissipate the attention. Thus, when one follows one's dharma and creates a positive and creative environment, one is ready to move into the next level of yogic knowledge.

Second level of awareness

The second level of awareness to be cultivated is more personal and starts by asking certain questions: What makes one function? How are individual limitations overcome? How can the debilitating, disturbing and dissipating mental behaviours be transcended? To find answers to these questions, to understand oneself and to manage the mental and emotional behaviour, yoga is used. In yoga yukta jnana, the focus of awareness shifts from the external world to the individual and one gains knowledge of the tools of yoga to be applied in life. Just as improvement of the external environment depends on following one's dharma, the improvement of one's personality depends on the practise of yoga for the betterment of mind, sentiments, emotions, thoughts and performance. Here, yoga is used to transcend the gross nature of the mind. Yoga is not used for health or for the reduction of stress and anxiety, rather to awaken the powers of prana, to awaken the powers of the mind. Karma yoga is the creative expression of performance. Jnana yoga is the creative expression of intelligence. Bhakti yoga is the creative expression of emotions. Hatha yoga is the creative expression of the human body. Raja yoga is the creative expression of the mind. Therefore, yoga should not be thought of as a limited set of practices; it is a process that brings out the creativity from within and makes one a better and happier person. Yoga brings about improvement of the individual and enables one to imbibe the right samskaras.

Samskaras are attitudes. How can one maintain a positive attitude? One has to work on that, and once a positive attitude can be maintained, it becomes a samskara. There is the verse, 'God, grant me the patience to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.' That is the cultivation of an attitude through which one learns not to get anxious, instead to remain relaxed. When one is relaxed in every situation and accepts that situation, then there is no anxiety. Anxiety arises if there is non-acceptance of a situation, when one feels that something is being taken away and one wants to hold on to that, whether it be money, husband or wife, or anything. Changing that attitude and knowing that to be the karma that one has to go through and following the dharma to uplift oneself, will lead to greater peace and harmony in personal and social life.

There are people who cry most of the time; however, if they start to smile for even one second every day and keep on increasing the duration of the smile, in the course of time they will forget their sorrow and will always be smiling. An individual does not constitute a mind or a body that are separate in behaviour; an individual is made up of the conditionings that are formed by the interaction of the body, senses, mind and energy. Over a period of time, these conditionings become habits, whether social, personal or emotional. Habits represent the traits or the character of the individual which are then reflected in the individual's response to certain circumstances or situations. The understanding of habit should not be confined to things like smoking or drinking; such habits are on the fringe. The real habit is what one expresses in day-to-day affairs. These habits, character or traits have to be observed and changed into something better.

The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali talk of the need to manage the five *chitta vrittis* or modifications of consciousness: *pramana*,



right knowledge; *viparyaya*, erroneous perception; *vikalpa*, fancy; *nidra*, sleep; and *smriti*, memory. However, the cessation of these five kinds of vrittis alone cannot lead the aspirant to meditation. Although not specifically mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras*, the reduction of the five vrittis leads to the birth of a sixth vritti, called *Brahmi vritti* wherein the mind is absorbed in contemplation of the higher reality. It is the birth of this sixth vritti that will take one on the spiritual journey. The five vrittis are material, external in nature and represent one's association with the world; they do not reflect an association with the divine. Under normal circumstances, the mind is absorbed in the contemplation of pleasures in life: relationships, food, house, entertainment and so on; however, when the Brahmi vritti develops, it will mark the beginning of spiritual awareness, the spiritual trait within. This vritti has to be cultivated so that it becomes a samskara, a habit. Thus yoga and positive samskaras are used as tools and mediums to improve the individual self.

In the exposition on yoga, Shiva first explained the subject of kundalini yoga to Narada. He described the chakras, the kundalini, how it can be awakened and how it journeys through the nadis, crossing through the chakras, until it attains Shivahood. Next, Shiva explained pranayama. He said, "Pranayama helps in regulating the flow of pranashakti. If pranashakti is dissipated, then diseases come in. If pranashakti is active in the body, then one can be free from diseases and illnesses, blocks and imbalances, and also purify the channels for the ascent of kundalini shakti."

One important aspect that Shiva tells Narada is that the *vayu*, the breath, is moving continuously through the nadis and chakras. When the breath is arrested unconsciously at ajna chakra, one dies. For normal people, at the time of death the breath is arrested, not wilfully, but unconsciously, at ajna chakra. However, if one can wilfully and consciously bring the pranas to ajna chakra, then that death becomes samadhi. Thus, Shiva has correlated the concept of pranayama with the attainment of samadhi and death. The science of *pranayama*, breath expansion and control, has been explained by Shiva to direct the pranas in order to attain samadhi, and not death. This is a new concept that has emerged in Pancharatra tantra.

Shiva continues on to say that meditation is also a part of yoga. He describes meditation on

light, in which one drops all identification with the world and thinks of nothing but the *jyoti*, the flame. Swami Satyananda says that when one meditates, one is aware of three processes simultaneously: the process of meditation, the meditator, and the object of meditation. When one starts the meditation, one knows that one is the meditator, that one is practising a particular form of meditation, and the aim one is aspiring for. As one goes deeper into the meditative state, awareness of the practice drops away. It becomes natural and spontaneous and only the meditator and the object of meditation remain. After some time, even the consciousness of the body and mind drops away and only the object of meditation is visualized. There is no physical or sensorial awareness, just the awareness of the object of meditation. In the fourth stage, one merges with the object of meditation. When Shiva talks about meditating on light, he is actually defining the fourth stage of meditation, where there is total merger, and dropping of all the holds that the world and the senses have on one.

As a part of yoga, Shiva also speaks of *shuddhi*, purification, mantra and nyasa. In Pancharatra, elaborate methods of nyasa are described, including placing fifty-one mantras in different parts of the body. As each mantra is uttered, one moves one's awareness through the different parts of the body. This is where the practice of yoga nidra, developed by Swami Satyananda, comes from. The attainment of purity in various parts and organs of the body, by taking the mantra to those areas and charging them, is the real practice of yoga nidra.

In this manner, Shiva tells Narada about the yogic systems, the purpose of which is cultivation of the appropriate samskaras. This is the second level of knowledge.

Third level of awareness

The third level of awareness is about how to maintain peace, balance and harmony while being engaged in the activities of the world. Mukti prada jnana is knowledge that liberates the mind and brings freedom in life. There are people with professions that require them to work the whole day, with no time to relax. Their work consumes all their effort, energy and stamina, and as they are not aware of their condition, this creates different stresses and tensions in the mind. Ambitions and needs, strengths and weaknesses, all create different conditions in the mind that are very subtle. Therefore, a subtle awareness of the deeper aspects of one's nature and mind has to be cultivated to extract oneself from those areas where one is too engrossed and attached.

There has to be an effort to become free and light instead of increasing associations and attachments. Yoga has been very clear on this point. It says, be ready to renounce any relationship if it is not conducive to your development and growth. Relationships can help one to evolve as well as cause one to regress. Many times, people live in destructive relationships for many years only to fulfil their need for security, not realizing that life is to be lived for growth, happiness and fulfilment. If this awareness is not present, one cannot make a clear distinction between what one wants to associate with and what one should leave behind. When people spring-clean their house and get rid of things that they do not require, many of their old attachments are left behind as well. By getting rid of useless things, they become free mentally, too. The same principle has to be applied to the mind. What are the unnecessary things that are being carried and





how can one free oneself from them? Often many useless thoughts are kept in the mind, just as certain memorabilia is kept, as there is some emotional attachment to them. This keeps one connected with little things from the past that have no relevance in one's life any more.

To detach from the negative influences of the world is known as mukti. One must live in the world with positive and creative expressions, which will allow one to flower and develop one's own skills better. To achieve mukti, one has to move through the knowledge of the world to the knowledge of yoga, and then observe how one is attached to and connected with the world. One must become the *drashta*, the witness, of oneself and see which strings pull one in which direction at different times in life. If one can be an objective witness of oneself, a part of the mind will always observe and regulate one's interactions. To attain this state, Shiva has given two methods: mantra and yantra.

Mantra is described as *Mananat trayate iti mantrah* – "The power that frees the mind from its self-created bondage is mantra." Mantra is a very powerful tool. When one practises a mantra, to begin with, one experiences peace, quietness and silence. If the practice is maintained on a regular basis, then gradually the behaviour of the mind changes.

After having achieved a certain depth of concentration through mantra, yet deeper levels can be accessed through yantra. There are many levels of concentration. For instance, one can be concentrated in action with the knowledge that 'I am moving and I know that I am moving. My hands are moving, my arms are moving, I have that awareness. Every time something moves in my body, my mind notices which part is moving. Whether fingers, toes or eyes, everything can be within the scope of that awareness. When I am looking around, it is not the eyes that are moving; I am aware that my sight is seeing a particular thing or person as I move.' The level of awareness and concentration develops with the use of mantra and yantra, and it allows the psyche to clear itself.

There are four aspects of the human intellect. The first aspect is *manas*, the reflective power, the thinking faculty; the second aspect is *buddhi*, rationality and the intellect; the third is *chitta*, the impressions and memories; and the fourth is the *ahamkara*, individuality, the ego, the knowledge that 'I exist'. Manas and buddhi connect one with the outside world, while chitta and ahamkara connect one with the inside

world. In mukti prada jnana, one is dealing with chitta and ahamkara, as this level of awareness gives freedom, mukti. Freedom from what? Mukti implies emancipation from all the impressions that are contained in chitta and from the expressions of the ego's rigidity. Once these are let go of, the consciousness becomes clear. There are many people who, through meditation, have been able to release very deep-rooted impressions from within chitta and thus overcome major obstacles in their lives, such as chronic mental and physical ailments. With the release of a suppressed memory that is the cause of some problem, one feels happier, more relaxed and more peaceful.

Through mantra and yantra, the psyche clears itself of material that one has suppressed; material that lingers in the depths of the consciousness in the form of memories, impressions and other perceptions. This is the third level of awareness, the subtle awareness that one has to cultivate to attain mukti, emancipation from those things that keep the mind bound. With such an optimistic and clear mind, karma and dharma can be fulfilled in material life. One then becomes able to witness the interactions with the world of senses and sense objects, to remain detached from their negative influences and to develop a positive experience of interaction in this worldly dimension. This freedom is not of spirit; it is freedom in life, while one is living in the material dimension.

Fourth level of awareness

The fourth level of awareness or knowledge is Hari bhakti, the yoga of creating a connection with the divine. In order to establish that connection, the environment has to be appropriate. The creation of such an environment is the subject of mandir nirmana, in which Shiva explained to Narada in detail how temples should be created.

A particular mindset develops when one goes to a temple, a place of worship, or to the place of one's altar, just as a particular mindset can be observed in other places. In the bedroom there is a desire to lie down on the bed, in the kitchen it is natural to open the fridge and have a snack, and in the sitting room the mood changes into one of relaxation. Just as every room of a house has its function and a different mood is created upon entering each room, in the same manner, a different mood is created when one moves into a place that has been designated as a centre of power or *shakti*.

People who go to places of worship and pray have their prayers answered. This phenomenon is explained in quantum physics where the interaction of energy between an animate object, a person, and an inanimate object, such as a rock, is described. The author Itzhak Bentov, in his book *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, says that any piece of rock kept on an altar and prayed to every day will, in time, absorb one's shakti and start responding to one's prayers. Although quantum physics is not universally accepted, such statements correspond with yoga, which states there is an interaction, a relationship of give and take, of energy between an animate being and different inanimate objects. This interaction of energy revives the prana in the inanimate object. Its prana comes alive and responds to one's faith and belief. That is what happens in churches and temples, where people go endowed with faith and belief. They express their faith there and, as a result, that place is charged by the particles of the shakti of faith. Therefore, when people go there they feel good, they feel blessed, as if all the mental worries have simply disappeared. In this environment, for a few moments, freedom and lightness is felt.

To cultivate this fourth level of awareneness in one's house, there should be a fixed place, a room for yoga, meditation and pooja, where one can go and simply be with oneself. This place or room then becomes one's place of power. A small place of worship is recommended, where objects such as a flower, water, a lamp or *deepak*, incense and a spiritual symbol are kept, which represent the five elements of creation: earth, water, fire, air and ether. In India, the spiritual symbol often used is the symbol of Om or the

image of one's guru or one's chosen deity, ishta devata. However, one need not be limited to these. In different parts of the world, different symbols are used. Whether the symbol is a cross, a picture of Jesus Christ, an image of Buddha or any other representation of the divine, this is sufficient as long as one knows that the symbol represents the omniscient nature of life. Every morning, light the deepak and incense, sprinkle a few drops of water on the earth, and say a prayer for the image that is placed there. Sit down and meditate in front of it. While doing so, let go of any thoughts of the world and commune only with the divine. In this way, the hidden matter from ahamkara, ego, and from the mind is brought out, and liberation is attained by connecting with the source of power. This is known as Hari bhakti, devotion to the Higher Self.

Apart from the creation of a place of power, Hari bhakti jnana is also widely connected with music. All traditional Indian music, whether classical or folk, is devotional music, as opposed to music played for entertainment. In fact, the culture of entertainment music did not exist in India until the arrival of the film industry. This is because Indians have always believed that music should elevate the consciousness and that is the fundamental theory of music. Music should also bring joy. Life is measured by smiles and songs just as distance is measured in miles. *Kirtan*, devotional singing, leads to that, as does dancing, which complements kirtan.



Kirtan is very beneficial because it induces a different state of mind. Extensive research has been conducted to examine the influence of different kinds of music on plants, animals, the human mind, etc. Kirtan music has been found to be exceptionally good for the mind, as the words that are used are mantras, which percolate into the brain, mind, consciousness and emotions, and elevate the pranas. Kirtan is very good therapy too, for when one sings and claps, heat is generated in the body and circulation is increased. Often, even heart problems have been managed through kirtan, thanks to the removal of blocks in circulation. Kirtan is something that should be done at home at least once a week. It can even be done in the privacy of one's own room, singing along to a recording of kirtan. Kirtan brings a noticeable difference to the frame of mind, perception and attitude, and the experience of life becomes more enjoyable.

Fifth level of awareness

The last form of knowledge is adhyatmika jnana, spiritual knowledge. Adhyatmika jnana is actually a philosophy, an understanding. In the Pancharatra system, Shiva describes to Narada the aspects of Narayana, who is the preserver and maintainer of the world. Narayana is the passive power and his consort, Lakshmi, is the active power. In the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Shiva is the destroyer. In Christian terminology, these three aspects of God can be described as the Son (Brahma), the Holy Ghost (Vishnu), and the Father (Shiva). Each of these forms have a respective Shakti emerging out of them. The Shakti of Shiva is Parvati, the Shakti of Vishnu is Lakshmi and the Shakti of Brahma is Saraswati.

Creation requires knowledge. Brahma is the creator and Saraswati is the knowledge or wisdom of creation and of that which is created. Vishnu is the preserver, maintainer and sustainer, and for that he requires prosperity, affluence and abundance that are represented by Lakshmi. Shiva is the destroyer and the cause of change, of new emergence, new birth, and for that he requires the help of Shakti because she is the power that can take one to the material dimension as well as uplift one to spiritual heights. In this trinity, Shiva and Shakti are indivisible; they are one and the same. This idea is symbolized in the iconography of tantra by *Ardhanarishwara*, a form of Shiva that is half male and half female. The half-male and half-female form indicates that these two faculties are integrated with each other, just as the sun and its light are one. In the absence of the sun there is no sunlight, and the presence of sunlight indicates the presence of the sun. On the other hand, Vishnu and Lakshmi, and Brahma and Saraswati are separate, just as the moon and the moon's rays are separate. The moon by itself does not emit light. What is seen as the rays of the moon is actually sunlight reflecting off its surface. Thus, the moonlight and the moon are not one. Narayana is a single entity like the moon and Lakshmi is like the rays of the moon, the reflective power of Adishakti. The Shakti directing the sun's rays to the moon and the moon reflecting those rays is Lakshmi.

This duality is observed when Lakshmi becomes an active principle. Lakshmi is endowed with two powers: *kriya*, action, and *bhooti*, becoming a force or matter. Here, force indicates the subtle, and matter indicates the manifest. Thus, representing kriya, action, she can be either an invisible force or manifest matter. When Lakshmi becomes an active principle, the first phase of manifestation is known as *shuddha srishti*, the pure creation, not coloured by the three gunas of tamas, rajas and sattwa. The levels of creation that follow are known as *ashuddha srishti*, the impure creation, which are coloured by the gunas and are combinations and permutations of different qualities, attributes and elements.

Six transcendental qualities of God

When Lakshmi appears as pure creation, she develops six qualities that do not fall into the category of tamas, rajas or sattwa; they are transcendental. Rajas, tamas and sattwa only become active when one views the world from an individual's perspective and, as individuals, an effort is made to move from tamas towards sattwa. However, despite this effort, one remains in the field of maya, in the same way that if one walks from one end of a room to the other, one still remains within the room. However, beyond this field of maya, the dimension of senses and sense objects, the pure nature is identified in the form of six qualities.

The first quality is jnana, knowledge, which here refers to omniscient, unrestricted knowledge that is self-conscious, eternal, and all-pervading, *sarvajnata*. Omniscience is the first characteristic of God and of the Shakti principle, and of Narayana and Lakshmi in the shuddha srishti. The second quality is *aishwarya*, lordship, in command; the controller of all prosperity and wealth. Aishwarya also means unimpeded activity. According to other tantric literatures, this corresponds to *icchashakti*, the power of will. The third quality is *shakti*, the potential to become the material cause of creation. The fourth is *bala*, strength, which can also be understood as absence of fatigue in connection with the creation of the world. In the Bible it is said that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. However, in tantra the idea is different; there is no fatigue in creation or in the actions of the divine. If people become fatigued, it means that they are not using their strength, their bala. Therefore, the power to sustain things is also called bala. When a light object is held in one hand, a small fraction of one's total strength is being used. However, if the object is bigger and heavier, more strength will have to be utilized to hold it and it may also exceed one's capacity altogether. Strength is inherent in the body, giving one the power

to sustain things; and the power of the divine is inexhaustible and sufficient to sustain the entire creation. The fifth quality is *veerya*, virility or valour, remaining untainted and unaffected despite being the material cause of creation. The sixth quality is *tejas*, the divine splendour or the divine might, which can also be called self-sufficiency.

These are the six transcendental gunas or qualities that indicate the presence of a divine power. In fact, one may even say that they are the attributes of God; the six transcendental qualities that are contained in that higher power. These qualities are not only independent by themselves, they are also matched into three pairs known as *vuyhas*, creating specific combined potencies. The first pair consists of jnana, knowledge, and bala, strength. The combination of knowledge and strength gives the ability to attract minds. Anybody who is knowledgeable will have the upper hand and so will anybody who is strong. When both these qualities come together, the capability that is developed is called *sankarshan*, the ability to pull. With this combination of knowledge and might, an illumined person can pull out the *avidya*, nescience or ignorance, from the mind of another person. With that strength, one becomes *balarama*, the mighty one, and sankarshan, one who can pull out the negativity from another person and destroy it. By virtue of pulling out the negative and restrictive, one becomes more enlightened.

The second pair is made up of aishwarya, lordship, and veerya, virility. In the Pancharatra tantra, this is called *pradyumna*, indicating one who is endowed with great radiance or aura. Aishwarya, mastery over wealth and prosperity, and virility, become the cause of radiance and positive expression in the life of an individual. The third pair, known as *aniruddha*, is the combination of shakti, potency, and tejas, splendour or self-sufficiency. When these two come together, there are no obstacles or barriers anywhere. These three ideas that take birth from pairing of the six qualities, make up the body of the transcendental God.

Five manifestations of God

The transcendental God, when descending to the material dimension, undergoes five transformations. The original nature of God, of the divine, is transcendental and consists of the six qualities, which are beyond time and space, beyond any limitations and confinements. The second manifestation occurs with the pairing of the six qualities into the three vuyhas: sankarshan, pradyumna and aniruddha. The third manifestation of God is *vibhava*, the glorious nature, and *vibhu*, the quality of interconnectedness. Every individual is interconnected by the glorious nature of the divine. The light of one candle can be used to light a hundred, a thousand, other candles. That is the connection that one candle has with all other candles. The glory, the luminosity and the interconnectedness of all constitutes the third manifestation of God, where everyone is connected by spirit. People may look different: tall, short, thin, fat, white or black; however, the spirit, which is colourless, represents that glorious nature of the divine. That spirit, which is in everyone, is the connection that is shared by all.

The fourth manifestation is *antaryamin*, one who knows all, or omniscience. Omniscience here means that this higher consciousness knows what one is going through at any time and is experiencing it as well. This is because of the interconnectedness. Swami Satyananda says that when a person is hungry, remember that God inside that person is also hungry. When a person is suffering, remember that God inside that person is also suffering. If a person is happy, remember that God inside that person is also happy. God is a reflection of what is being experienced here and now. God is not simply an observer of what is being experienced. God is part and parcel of one's experience, as God is the indweller of all lives. God is omniscient. God knows what is happening in the mind of an insect as well as in the mind of a human being. That sarvajnata, the omniscient nature, is within everyone, in the form of the 'God DNA'.

The fifth manifestation is *archa*, the form in which God is worshipped, the form with which individuals identify the higher reality. Christians may identify it with the symbol of a cross or with the image of Christ. Muslims can identify the higher reality with the symbol of Kaaba in Mecca. Buddhists can identify it as Buddha and worshippers of Shiva identify with an image of Shiva or a Shivalingam. There are many ways in which divinity can be identified; whatever one is attracted to, whatever holds one's attention, that becomes the manifest form. The transcendental reality comes down until one can connect with it, as an idea or by observing it in an image or symbol. It is the presence of that higher consciousness that has to be realized in this lifetime and that one has to merge with.

Approaching the divine

Pancharatra tantra also talks about four ways of being together with the divine: *salokya*, being in the *loka*, or place, of divine presence; *sannidhi*, to have a glimpse; *samipya*, closeness; and *sayujya*, merger. These are the four attitudes and connections one has to cultivate in relation to God.

Salokya is the understanding that this world is God's loka, therefore one must live here with dignity without destroying it. Just as one behaves with discipline and self-control in the home of a respected person, in the same manner, when one comes into this world, why should one not think that 'This is the world of my beloved God and I have to live here with dignity and with peace'? That awareness, attitude and understanding should be developed so that the world is not seen as a place of enjoyment; it is seen as a place where the true nature of the self can be realized.

Similarly, sannidhi can be cultivated with the thought: 'I need to come closer and to have a glimpse of that divine Self.' To have a glimpse of the divine, one must make the effort to purify oneself and to work on oneself. Eventually that glimpse will come, and one day there will be somebody looking in through the gates to see what work is being done. One then works to become close to the divine, to experience samipya. This is done by cultivating faith and devotion so that there is more interaction with that Higher Self in one's life. The effort and work continues until one becomes one with the divine, sayujya.

Throughout this process, hope should never be lost. In fact, it can only happen if one has hope. The fundamental teaching of tantra is to never to lose hope and to remain connected with the higher reality at all times. Tantra teaches one to transcend the limited self and to become the giver of light, hope, peace and love. That is the subject of tantra in general, and Pancharatra tantra in particular.





Epilogue

Tantra in the Satyananda Tradition

In order to understand at what level the tantras are being used in yoga, one has to look at yoga itself and not at tantra. Yoga is divided into two parts: esoteric or internal, and exoteric or external.

The basic structure in all the different paths of yoga, such as hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga or karma yoga, forms part of the exoteric yoga. This exoteric or outer yoga is again divided into two: one that is oriented towards behaviour and lifestyle, and one where the focus is on practice and sadhana. Hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga are sadhana or practice-oriented; they are something that individuals involve themselves in physically or mentally. The lifestyle and behaviour-oriented yoga includes the paths of karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga, where the focus is to work on and improve one's thinking, behaviour and interactions, with the aim to bring out and utilize one's inherent qualities in the best and most creative manner. These two major branches constitute the exoteric yoga, the outer yoga, which has become the yoga as it is known today.

There is another part of yoga, however, the esoteric or inner aspect, which allows the individual to internalize and access the deeper dimensions of his nature. This esoteric group of practices is located in and grouped with the tantras. Through yoga, one enters into higher experiences and states of tantra. What the world knows is the exoteric yoga, the transformative yoga, the sadhana aspect of hatha yoga, raja yoga and the like, which are more physical, psychological and emotional. After the transformative yoga, one moves into expressive yoga: karma, jnana and bhakti yoga, and this is one level of yoga that people live.



In reality, one does not need more than the exoteric yoga to live in society and the world, to manage the mind, manage stresses, tensions, anxieties and *chitta vrittis*, modifications of the mind. However, there is a group of people who investigate deeper, and they move into the esoteric yoga and through esoteric yoga, into the tantras.

Sri Swami Satyananda has extracted certain aspects of esoteric yoga from the tantras. One of them is *nyasa*, the practice of assigning the various parts of the body to different deities. When pandits are conducting different yajnas and havans, they perform various nyasas, such as *anga nyasa*, nyasa for the different parts of the body, or *hridaya nyasa*, nyasa for the heart centre. The chanting of mantras by the pandits is usually accompanied by corresponding gestures, *mudras*, or touching the respective parts of the body with the hands. This is known as nyasa: placing awareness on different parts of the body, and Swami Satyananda developed it into the practice of yoga nidra. This is an example of a practice of esoteric yoga that has been incorporated into the main structure of yoga.

The application of prana for healing, as in the practices of prana vidya, has also been taken from the tantras. While the exoteric yoga limits itself to the practice of pranayama, in the esoteric yoga one learns the method of using pranashakti for healing. Similarly, the practice of ajapa japa is a meditation technique utilized to a great extent in the Vedas, the Upanishads and also in yoga, incorporating breath awareness, the psychic passages and the mantra. The practice is also a part of the tantric meditations. Ajapa japa is one common practice referred to in yogic, tantric, vedic and upanishadic literature, and even has its own separate treatise, the *Hamsa Upanishad*. Therefore, this is one common meditation practice covered in all three systems: the vedic, the tantric and the yogic.

There are also the practices of kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. There are two types of kriya yoga: one is the exoteric, the group of twenty practices taught to internalize the awareness, and the other is the esoteric. The exoteric process develops the shakti, awakens the kundalini and the chakras, whereas the esoteric process applies the shakti, the transmission of shakti and through this transmission of energy, chakra awakening can be achieved. This is what Swami Satyananda referred to when he said that he was initiated into kriya yoga by Swami Sivananda in ten minutes before leaving the ashram. This was an esoteric transmission of shakti and not the practice of the twenty kriyas.

The use of yantras and mantras, such as the guru mantra, is a tantric initiation. Yoga only uses two mantras, *So-Ham* and *Om*, while the idea of a guru mantra and the use of a personal mantra according to one's energy field is a tantric concept, a tantric approach. Therefore, mantra initiation and yantra sadhana are tantric sadhanas. The chanting of mantra in any form, in which one participates and becomes involved, whether in meditation, as music or kirtan, all these form part of tantra.

Havan and yajna are also taken from the tantras, although havan and yajnas form part of the vedic tradition as well. The difference is that in the vedic tradition, havan and yajnas are geared towards environmental and social balance, while in tantra they are used to invoke, concentrate and solidify the cosmic power or Shakti so that she becomes benevolent and showers her grace on people. For instance, the Sat Chandi Mahayajna that is held annually in Rikhiapeeth is an invocation of the cosmic power through mantras and yantras that give it a shape, a tangible form and tangible experience. The Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna held in Munger is another form of yajna and havan, as is Yoga Poornima in Rikhia. Similarly, the Mahamrityunjaya sadhana practised in the ashrams on Saturdays, the abhishekas on the 5th and 6th of every month, are tantric practices; they are not yogic practices. They may or may not involve fire, nonetheless the use of mantras and yantras and the invocation concentrates the Shakti.

The spiritual system that Swami Satyananda has created is a blend; yoga and tantra are the main sources, and the vedic tradition is the foundation of these two. The vedic tradition emphasizes integration in society, the tantric tradition emphasizes personal realization, and the yogic tradition emphasizes self-preparation. The integration of these three approaches is the hallmark of Satyananda Yoga.

There are also the higher transmissions, known as dikshas. The word 'diksha' comes from the Sanskrit root *dik* which means 'to realize' or 'to see'. Thus, it means developing a different perspective, acquiring a different vision. It means seeing something differently from what was seen before. Diksha means that you open a door and look inside. The door is not closed any more; it is open and you are peeping into it and seeing the objects that are there, acclimatizing yourself to the room before you enter. Then another door opens and you again peep into it; that is another diksha. This word diksha has come to be defined as initiation, yet it simply means acquiring a different vision, a different perspective.

The diksha process starts with the esoteric yoga: first comes the mantra, second is a particular lifestyle, and third is pranic transmission. First, the guru diksha internalizes the aspirant; it makes him aware of his inner self. Next comes lifestyle diksha, which results in lifestyle changes that modify the external routines and behaviours so that there is compatibility and balance between one's internal and external aspirations and one's environment. Then, to the qualified disciples, the transmission dikshas or *shaktipat* are given, which comprise a whole series of tantric dikshas where various *abhishekas* or consecrations are performed, culminating in *poorna* or full abhisheka.

The last diksha is the control of matter, which indicates perfection in the realm of prakriti. There, one can materialize, manifest and manipulate the elements. That diksha is the last one; in it the mind is no longer ordinary; it becomes transcendental. Swami Satyananda represents the culmination of this form of diksha. In life, in death, and beyond death he was, and is, in control of the elements. He continues to teach the tantric truths to every aspirant who seeks him out. "Call me and I will come," he said at his last public darshan, and he has kept his word.



Glossary

Abhaya mudra – mudra to dispel fear; a gesture of benediction; gesture of fearlessness; see Mudra

Abheda – unity, non-duality; non-difference, non-distinction, undivided

Abhimana – pride, conceit, ego; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress in spiritual life

Abhisheka – ceremonial bath; consecration; a most important initiation in the tantric tradition

Abodha – ignorant, unintelligent, puzzled; non-intelligence, non-perception

Achara – conduct; good behaviour; custom, an established rule of conduct, usual formality; tantric code of conduct

Acharya – one knowing or teaching the acharas or rules; teacher, preceptor, spiritual guide

Adharma – disharmony; not fulfilling one's natural role in life; unrighteousness; wickedness, injustice, guilty or wicked deed, sin; all that is contrary to dharma and the law; demerit, non-duty

Adhibhautika – suffering that proceeds from extrinsic causes such as other people, beasts, birds or inanimate objects; in Pashupata philosophy, one of the threefold causes of misery, viz. 1. adhyatmika, 2. adhibhautika, and 3. adhidaivika; includes causes by natural calamities over which humans have no control

Adhidaivika – pertaining to heaven or celestial beings; extrinsic sufferings due to super-natural causes; in Pashupata philosophy, one of the threefold causes of misery, viz. 1. adhyatmika, 2. adhibhautika, and 3. adhidaivika; whatever is happening is because of God's will in which humans have no control

Adhyatmika – pertaining to the atma (soul); relating to oneself or to the law of life; that which proceeds from intrinsic causes, such as disorders of the body and mind; in Pashupata philosophy, one of the threefold causes of misery, viz. 1. adhyatmika, 2. adhibhautika, and 3. adhidaivika

Adi – beginning, commencement; first, primary; primordial, eternal

Adishakti – the power of creation; that which appears to our senses; power of maya; a name of the Supreme Goddess; primordial power, first power of creation; also called Adyashakti

Aditi – boundlessness, immensity; mother of the gods known as Adityas; large, pervasive, vast; conscious element

Advaita – not divided into two parts, the feeling of non-duality; identity or non-difference; monistic vision of reality; non-dual experience; of one or uniform nature; that for which there is no other, especially referring to Brahman/atman; union with the universe or soul; union of soul and matter; union with the supreme existence or Brahman

Adyashakti – see Adishakti

Aghora – that which is not ghora; that which is peaceful; 'one for whom nothing is abominable'; one who is totally in tune with one's nature having mastered the elements;

totally innocent, gentle; in the Shaiva agamas Sadashiva's third face is known as aghora

Aghori – an order of Shaiva ascetics

Agni – fire; the god of fire; fire of the stomach, digestive faculty; metabolism; the third mahabhoota in tantric philosophy, with the special property of form; see Pancha mahabhoota

Agni tattwa – fire element, fire principle; see Pancha mahabhoota

Aham – 'I' or ego

Ahamkara – 1. egoism or self-conceit; the self-arrogating principle 'I', 'I am-ness', self-consciousness; 2. sattwic ahamkara: egoism composed in the sense of goodness and virtue; rajasic ahamkara: dynamic egoism with passion and pride; tamasic ahamkara: egoism as expressed in ignorance and inertia; 3. universal state of existence, ceaselessly creating itself; universal 'I am' of which the individual sense of 'I-ness' is a part or manifestation; 4. the base for maya's power of projection; 5. one of the elements of creation, i.e. the conception of individuality; the principle responsible for the limitations, division and variety in the manifest world; independent self-identity of the individual

Ahara – third basic instinct, craving food or nourishment; food, nourishment, anything that nourishes the body/mind; craving for fulfilment, desiring or wanting

Ahimsa – absence of violence from within; non-violence; harmlessness, abstaining from killing or giving pain to others in thought, word or deed; general attitude of welfare for the entire world; one of the yamas as described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; see Yama

Aishwarya – inner wealth; regal or divine qualities; in the tantra agamas it means a balanced, awakened, intuitive, discriminative and sattwic state of mind endowed with divine qualities; material or spiritual wealth; supremacy, sovereignty, power; divine attributes like wisdom, renunciation and others; lordship, in command; controller of all prosperity and wealth

Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra

Ajna chakra – the third eye, the command or monitoring psychic/pranic centre, also known as the guru chakra. The centre of individual consciousness, it enables mind to mind communication with the external guru and one's inner self. It represents intuition or the pure inner awareness engendered by the confluence of ida, pingala and sushumna nadis. Physically, the concentration point is situated at the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column in the midbrain, corresponding to the pineal gland; see Chakra

Ajnana – ignorance, non-cognizance; unawareness, darkness, also called avidya

Akaala – wrong time, premature; that which is not within the limit of a periphery, perimeter or zone

Akara – form

Akasha – element of ether, space, sky; primordial state of existence; one of the five mahabhoota, its special property is sound; that which fills all space between worlds, molecules and everything; its most subtle manifestation (tanmatra) is in the pre-nuclear state of matter; see Pancha mahabhoota

Akasha tattwa – space element; ether principle; see Pancha mahabhoota

Akshara – letter, form; quality of a mantra; syllable; literally 'that which does not perish'; sounds which do not die; imperishable, indestructible; fixed, firm

Amavasya – the last day of the dark half of the lunar month

Amrit – nectar; literally 'deathless'; immortal; life; the nectar of immortality which descends from bindu; ambrosia; also called soma

Anahad nada – see Anahata nada

Anahata – 'unstruck' or 'unbeaten'; sound heard by yogis; see Nada

Anahata chakra – psychic centre in the region of the heart, the vibration or 'beat' of

which regulates life from birth to death; corresponds to the cardiac plexus in the physical body; corresponds to hridayakasha in meditative practice; centre of emotions which, when developed, gives the psychic force to materialize desires; see Chakra

Anahata nada – transcendental cosmic sound experienced only in the higher states of meditation; sound that cannot be grasped or heard externally; that sound which is beyond sound; unstruck sound

Ananda – pleasure, happiness; pure unalloyed bliss; state of consciousness (in yoga practice); in Vedanta: one of the three attributes of the ultimate principle; name of Shiva; beatitude, contentment, fulfilment; see Satchidananda

Anandamaya kosha – subtler sphere of existence or consciousness; the innermost sheath (kosha) of the embodied spirit; the experience of the blissful nature of the spirit; body that is of Shakti; see Pancha kosha

Ananta – endless, infinite, boundless, inexhaustible, endless

Anga – limb or part of the body; a constituent part; a step

Anna – food

Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter; the sphere of existence created by food, maintained by food and which ultimately becomes food, i.e. the body; see Pancha kosha

Anta – end, culmination

Antahkarana – inner organ, instrument or tool of consciousness comprised of the four different experiences or expressions of consciousness: manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara; also called mahat tattwa

Antar – inner, internal

Antarika – inward, internal, real

Antaryamin – inner ruler; the Supreme Being present in every object of creation and guiding all creatures; one who has omniscience

Anubhava – direct perception or cognition, knowledge derived from personal observation or experiment; experience; intuitive consciousness (self-realization); personal spiritual experience

Anubhuti – experience, perception, feeling, knowledge

Anugraha – divine grace, kindness, assistance

Anushthana – a resolve to perform a mantra sadhana with absolute discipline for a requisite period of time; a fixed course of sadhana; systematic performance of religious practices undertaken usually for some definite period of time, for example, forty days

Apara – all knowledge except spiritual knowledge; worldly knowledge; ordinary; inferior; lower; mundane, material

Apara anubhuti – mundane experience of consciousness

Apara vidya – intellectual (or lower) knowledge of the Vedas; intellectual knowledge; material or worldly knowledge

Aparigraha – freedom from covetousness; abstention from greed; non-receiving of gifts conducive to luxury; without possessions or belongings; non-possessiveness; one of the five yamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* as a preliminary discipline of yoga; see Yama

Apas – water; the liquid state of matter; one of the five mahabhootas with the special property of taste; see Pancha mahabhoota

Apas tattwa – element of water

Aradhana – to be fully immersed in worship of the deity with intense reverence; invocation and worship; invocation and realization of the higher nature within all

Aradhya – the object of adoration and worship

Arati – rite of worship involving waving of lights with reverence before a deity

Archa – form in which God or the higher reality is worshipped; form identified as the higher reality

Archana – offering of flowers, etc. at the time of worship; honouring; reverence or respect paid to deities and superiors; a form of ritual, rite or external worship; the fifth step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Ardhanarishwara – form of Shiva which is half-male and half-female; Shiva and Shakti united in one form; concept of ida and

pingala nadis in yoga philosophy; illustrates the ultimate state of oneness as perceived by tantra

Arghya – respectful offering of water to the gods or to guests; valuable

Arjavam – straightforwardness, being truthful and innocent; one of the niyamas in Saurya tantra

Arpana – to offer oneself; total surrender

Artha – accomplishment; attainment in all spheres of life; material need; wealth; in yoga philosophy, the object of meditation; see Purushartha

Asakti – attachment

Asana – a physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself; the third limb of yoga as described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*; seat; posture for meditation or for health; in hatha yoga, a specific body posture to balance and channel energy (prana), open the chakras and remove energy blocks

Ashrama – stage, order, or period of life, of which there are four: brahmacharya or studentship, grihastha or household life, vanaprastha or forest-dwelling, sannyasa or total renunciation; hermitage, hut, cell, dwelling or abode of asceticism and spiritual practice

Ashta Vinayaka – eight different aspects of Ganesha identified in the vedic tradition to deal with the eight limitations of human life, viz. 1. Ekadanta 2. Dhumravarna 3. Vakratunda 4. Mahodara 5. Gajanana 6. Lambodara 7. Vikata 8. Vighnaraja

Ashtanga yoga – the eight limbs of yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*, viz. 1. yama 2. niyama 3. asana 4. pranayama 5. pratyahara 6. dharana 7. dhyana 8. samadhi; another name for raja yoga

Ashuddha – impure, not purified; incorrect, wrong

Asteya – honesty, not stealing; one of the yamas of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; see Yama

Atma, Atman – the self beyond mind and body; also called principle of life, supreme consciousness, spirit, soul, etc.; the seer of turiya (reality) according to Mandukya Upanishad; essence of life; individual self

Atmabhava – feeling of unity with all; seeing the atman (soul) equally in all beings

Atmanivedana – dedicating one's entire self to the divine; self-surrender; the ninth step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Aum, Om – universal mantra, in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*: repetition of Aum and meditation on its meaning is the practice resulting in union with Ishwara; in Vedanta, Aum is regarded as Shabda Brahman and as the seed of the Vedas; in *Mandukya Upanishad*, the 'A' of Aum is explained as the waking state of consciousness, the 'u' as the subconscious, the 'm' as the unconscious and the whole reverberation to represent the superconscious state; original nada; primal sound vibration; bija mantra of Tara mahavidya; see Om; see Pranava

Avahana – invocation using mantras to manifest the deity or cosmic power

Avastha – state of consciousness or condition of the mind; position; circumstances

Avidya – ignorance; lack of conscious awareness; mistaking the non-eternal for the eternal; confined cognition; the chief of the five kleshas or sources of trouble and confusion described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; illusion personified or Maya; one of the five restricting cloaks of maya; see Kanchuka

Aviveka – indiscrimination; wrong knowledge or understanding

Avyakta – not manifest or apparent; uncreated; primary matter which has not yet entered into real existence; undeveloped; invisible, imperceptible; indistinct; inarticulate; undetermined; unknown

Bahya – external

Baikhari – audible speech or sound; one of the stages of nada yoga; one of the ways of practising mantra japa; the sound that is produced by the striking or friction of two things, e.g. speech or music produced by playing instruments; also called vaikhari

Baikhari japa – articulate, audible or loud repetition of a mantra

Bala – 1. *bala*: strength, power; violence, force; army troops; absence of fatigue in the creation of the world, power to sustain, 2. *baala*: young child; boy, 3. *baalaa*: a young girl

Bandha – binding, tying; connection, union; psycho-muscular energy locks that close the pranic exits (like throat, anus, etc.); psychic locks that concentrate the flow of energy in the body at one point or plexus; postural contraction of the body

Bhadra – gracious, gentle; blessed, auspicious, fortunate

Bhakti – complete devotion to the higher reality of life; love for all beings; devotion as service

Bhakti yoga – channelling emotional energy to a higher reality of life; a systematic path with nine steps or stages expanding, strengthening and purifying the emotions

Bhava – becoming, being, existence; feeling; love; condition; state, inclination or disposition of mind; pure sentiment; attitude or emotion

Bhaya – fear, the second basic instinct; insecurity

Bhoga – experience and craving for pleasure, enjoyment, delight through objects of pleasure; enjoyment of the world

Bhrumadhya – eyebrow centre; trigger point for ajna chakra

Bhuh loka – terrestrial plane of existence

Bhukti – material enjoyment; path of enjoyment; association of consciousness with senses and sense objects

Bhuvah loka – intermediate realm between earth and heaven, astral plane of existence

Bhuvana – a being; mankind; world, earth; abode, residence; universe, cosmos, creation

Bija – seed, source; origin

Bija mantra – seed sound, repeated mentally, the seed thus planted in the mind germinates into one-pointedness; a basic mantra or vibration; sacred syllable

Bindu – seed, source, drop; the basis from which emanated the first principle (maha tattwa) according to tantra shastra; psychic centre located in the head, the most important psychic centre in nada yoga; semen

Bodha – spiritual wisdom, knowledge, intelligence; awakening

Brahmacharya – conduct suitable for proceeding to the highest state of existence, especially continence or absolute control of sensual impulses. One of the yamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* as resulting in indomitable courage; centred in higher consciousness

Brahmacharya ashrama – first stage of life up to twenty-five years according to the ancient vedic tradition, devoted to study and learning; see Ashrama

Brahman – God as creator, one of the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara (or Shiva); hiranyagarbha or cosmic intelligence; eternal, omnipresent principle of existence or ultimate reality. The all-pervading 'something' or 'nothing' from which all time, space and creatures are uninterruptedly being created. According to Vedantins, Brahman is both the efficient (nimitta) and the material (upadana) cause of the visible universe, from which all manifest things are produced and into which they are absorbed; the sacred and mystic syllable Aum (Om); the Vedas

Brahmanda – literally 'Brahma's egg', the cosmic egg, the macrocosmos or universe

Brahmandiya – cosmic or universal

Brahmarishi – a member of the priestly caste (brahmin) who has attained realization; a sage; a rishi who in constant communion with Brahman, God

Brahmavidya – science of the self; knowledge of Brahman (the supreme existence); study to attain real knowledge; spiritual science

Brahmi vritti – vritti that leads to identification with the drashta (witnessing consciousness or Brahman); spiritual aspect of the vrittis, the self-aware, individual consciousness; mind absorbed in contemplation of the higher reality

Brahmin – of the priestly caste; a person whose life is dedicated to the study of the Vedas and dispensation of the knowledge of Brahman and is thus qualified to act as a priest in vedic rituals; one of the four guilds or divisions of the caste system in India

Brihat – large, big, absolute; Brahman

Buddhi – discerning, discriminating aspect of mind; the faculty of valuing things for the advancement of life; principle of universal intuition in which the meditator becomes joined in the super-reflective state of samadhi; a faculty which enhances discriminative power; intelligence or intellect

Chaitanya – the consciousness that knows itself and knows others; absolute consciousness; consciousness, mind, intelligence, spirit

Chaitanyata – faculty of self-awareness or consciousness; aware of existence or life; being

Chakra – wheel or vortex; centre of energy or psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis). The main chakras threaded in the region of the spinal column on the sushumna nadi relate to many levels of the human being. On a physical level, the main areas of influence are: mooladhara chakra, pelvic plexus; swadhisthana chakra, coccygeal plexus; manipura chakra, solar plexus; anahata chakra, cardiac plexus; vishuddhi chakra, pharyngeal plexus, also connected with the thyroid gland; and ajna chakra, plexus of command at the top of the spinal column, also connected with the pineal gland. Bindu at the top back of the head and sahasrara, at the crown of the head, are often included among chakras, though they are more subtle experiences. Of the twenty-eight planes of consciousness or regions, the highest seven are called loka, the next seven are chakra, the next seven patalam and the lowest seven naraka

Chakravyuha – circular formation of soldiers in a battle

Chakshu – eye, one of the five organs of knowledge (jnanendriya); sight; light; lustre

Chandan – sandalwood tree associated with divine qualities of fragrance and coolness

Charya – conduct; and related to the discipline, regulations, and conduct of life; method, means or instruments

Chhanda – holy song; metre; prosody

Chit – thought; perception; intelligence, intellect; understanding; the heart/mind; pure knowing beyond the division of subject and object; in Vedanta, one of the three attributes of the ultimate principle; the soul, spirit and the animating principle of life; Brahman, the pure consciousness that lies behind all phenomena; conscious, self-aware

Chitshakti – the power of pure consciousness; mental force governing the subtle dimensions; intellectual capacity; power of self-revelation of consciousness; also called prakasha

Chitta – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; thinking, concentration, attention, enquiry; the stuff of the mind; storehouse of memory or samskaras; one of the four parts of the antahkarana or inner instrument; seat of consciousness, and as such includes the conscious, subconscious, unconscious and superconscious

Chittashakti – mental force governing the subtle dimensions; lunar energy associated with the function of ida nadi

Chitta vritti – disposition or state of the mind; inclination; feeling, emotion; in yoga philosophy the inward working of the mind, its mental vision or inward purpose; Sage Patanjali lists five main categories of chitta vritti in the *Yoga Sutras*: 1. right knowledge (pramana) 2. wrong knowledge (viparyaya) 3. imagination (vikalpa) 4. sleep (nidra) 5. memory (smriti). They can be painful (klishta), leading to an increase in karmic stock and the necessity for embodiment, or not painful (aklishta); modifications of consciousness

Daan – gift, donation; liberality, unconditional giving; purification; protection; selfless giving

Dakshina – the right side; the right hand or arm; situated to the south, southern; sincere, straightforward, honest; epithet of Shiva or Vishnu

Dakshinayana – southern 'path' of the sun when, due to the tilt of the earth and its elliptical orbit, the sun appears to move south towards the Tropic of Capricorn. The six months of this southern journey are from mid-July to mid-January. It is not regarded as a good time to die, as one will be reborn on earth. This path is also called pitriyana and dhumamarga; one of two prescribed paths of meditation; see Uttarayana

Damaru – an hourglass-shaped hand drum; one of the accoutrements of Lord Shiva

Dasya bhava – cultivating the inner attitude of being a servant of God; the seventh step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Deha – body; mass; person

Dehadhyasa – false identification with the body; sensory interaction with the world does not affect or alter the thoughts, mind or energy of an individual in this state

Deva – luminous being; a god or divine being

Devata – god; form of divine dignity or power; divine being representing the higher state of evolution; illumined form; divinity, deity; the presiding deities or illumining powers of the five sense organs

Devi – female deity, goddess; name of Durga, Saraswati and others

Dharana – concentration or complete attention; sixth stage of ashtanga yoga described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as holding or binding of the mind to one point; bearing, supporting; moulding; keeping in memory

Dharma – the natural role we play in life; ethical law; duty; the laws or fundamental support of life; usage, practice, custom; religion; virtue, righteousness, good work; regarded as one of the four aims of human existence; identity with a specific school of thought

Dhyana – spontaneous state after deep concentration or meditation; the seventh of the eight steps described in raja yoga; the intermediate internal process where the power of attention becomes so steadily fixed upon the object of meditation that other thoughts do not enter the mind; natural expression of the sattwic state

Digambara – naked, literally 'space clothed' ('dik' means space or direction, 'ambara' means cloth), an epithet applied particularly to a sect of Jaina monks that forbids clothing

Diksha – initiation, consecration; preparation for a sacrifice or a ceremony; dedication of oneself to a particular object; ceremony or religious rite in general; birth of a new vision

Divya – divine; divine power; transcendental

Divya bhava – divine feeling; divine nature; illuminated, transcendental nature and consciousness

Drashta – witness, uninvolved observer, onlooker, seer; the consciousness that knows what is going on; atman or purusha

Drashta bhava – witnessing attitude

Dravya – substance; money; liquid; items used for sadhana e.g. clothes, asana, flowers, wood for havan, etc.

Duhkha – grief, pain, suffering; uneasiness; difficult; unpleasant

Duhkhanta – end of pain, grief and suffering

Dvaita – dual; duality

Dvaitadvaita – beyond monism and dualism; devoid of oneness, duality and multiplicity

Dvaitavada – dualism; doctrine of dual existence

Dvija – 'twice born'; a person who has had a rebirth through knowledge or initiation; a brahmin; used also for a person of the kingly and warrior caste, kshatriya, or the merchant caste, vaishya, whose investiture with the sacred thread makes up a second birth

Dwara – door, gateway, entrance, opening, aperture; way; means

Dwesha – repulsion, aversion; hatred, enmity, dislike, repugnance, antagonism; one of the five causes of suffering (kleshas) described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as aversion to the unpleasant

Gana – crowd, group; troop; Shiva's attendants

Ganesha – 'lord of the ganas'; name of the elephant-headed deity who is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Shiva beheaded him when he blocked his path following Parvati's instruction to allow no one in while she was bathing. Shiva then relented and gave his son an elephant's head. Ganesha is the scribe of the *Mahabharata*, deity of mooladhara chakra and regarded as the remover of obstacles and a god of fertility; lord or master of all life forms

Ghrana – nose, one of the five jnanendriya (organs of knowledge); sense of smell via the nose

Grihastha ashrama – the second stage of life according to the ancient vedic ashrama tradition, i.e. household or married life from twenty-five to fifty years of age; see Ashrama

Guna – attribute, characteristic or property of all creation. According to Samkhya and yoga philosophy, Prakriti (cosmic primordial matter or substance) is constituted of three gunas, viz. sattwa, rajas and tamas. The three gunas undergo transformation from the unmanifest (avyakta) to the manifest (vyakta) state, produce matter and control it, thus creating the whole cosmos with all beings, time and space. They relate directly to the human character; strength; virtue

Guru – one who dispels the darkness caused by ignorance (avidya); teacher; preceptor; teacher of the science of ultimate reality who, because of extended practice and previous attainment of the highest states of meditation, is fit to guide others in their practice towards enlightenment; 'gu' means darkness, 'ru' means dispeller

Hari – a name of Vishnu, one of the gods of the Hindu trinity composed of Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Shiva, the destroyer; the sun; the moon; horse of Indra

Hasta – hand, one of the five organs of action (karmendriyas)

Havan – fire ritual performed for incidental purposes (naimittika karma)

Hiranyagarbha – 'the golden egg' or womb of creation; golden seed of the unity of life; cosmic subtle body. Hiranyagarbha is the first formation from the formless, the beginning of all time and space which spreads from the centre of the immeasurable present. The history of the universe and of human beings is unwinding from this everlasting, all-pervading timeless centre. It is said that Brahman alone is creating himself from his own substance

Homa – sacrificial fire that symbolizes the divine light on earth; ritualistic process in which oblations to the devata are offered into the fire while maintaining a sitting position

Hridaya – heart; core centre

Iccha – wish, desire; will; will of God

Icchashakti – creative force or that desire which is the first manifestation of the greater mind; omnipotent desire-force; willpower

Ida nadi – channel of lunar energy between the left nostril and the base of the spine, governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain. The ida energy flow criss-crosses the spine through the major chakras between mooladhara and ajna, conducting the passive aspect of prana manifesting as mental force, lunar force or chittashakti. Ida nadi and its counterpart pingala nadi have been related to ascending and descending tracts of the autonomic nervous system. These pathways function in yoga to open both the subconscious and superconscious mind

Idam – this, here, 'am'

Indriya – power, force; sense organ; physical power or virility; power of the senses

Ishta – object of desire; the chosen ideal; the particular form of God one is devoted to; a sacrificial rite; worshipped, reverenced, beloved; liked, favourite, dear

Ishta devata – personal deity, one's favourite god, one's tutelary deity, the aspect of God that is dear to the individual

Ishta mantra – mantra of the chosen deity

Ishwara – higher reality; unmanifest existence; non-changing principle or quality; principle of higher consciousness; a state

of consciousness beyond the physical and mental realms governing the entire physical universe; supreme being, lord, master; one who rules; powerful, able

Ishwara pranidhana – cultivation of faith in the supreme or indestructible reality; one of the niyamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*; complete dedication of one's actions and will to the Lord; see Niyama

Jagrat – first dimension of consciousness, witnessed by Vaishvanara according to *Mandukya Upanishad*; state of consciousness related to the senses and the phenomenal material universe

Jagrat avastha – state of waking consciousness; consciousness of the objective universe; according to *Mandukya Upanishad*, the first state of consciousness, related to the 'A' of Aum

Janah loka – plane of rishis and munis; one of the seven higher planes of consciousness; a spiritual loka in the unmanifest dimension

Japa – to rotate or repeat continuously without a break; repetition of a mantra or name of God

Jihva – the tongue or the organ of taste and speech, one of the five jnanendriyas (organs of knowledge)

Jivanmukta – a soul who is liberated while living; a person who, being purified by true knowledge of the supreme reality, is freed from future births and all ceremonial rites while yet embodied; in Vedanta, a person who has experienced all seven stages of wisdom (jnana bhumika)

Jivatma – individual or personal soul

Jnana – knowing, understanding; hearing; consciousness, cognizance; higher knowledge derived from meditation or from inner experience; wisdom; the organ of intelligence, sense, intellect

Jnana chakshu – literally the 'eye of wisdom' or intelligence, the mind's eye; immediate vision of reality

Jnana kanda – that inner or esoteric portion of the Vedas referring to true higher knowledge, or knowledge of the supreme state of existence as distinguished from knowledge of ceremonial rites; self-purification through transformation of the intellect

Jnanashakti – power of knowing; the omnipotent universal force of knowledge

Jnana yoga – yoga of knowledge and wisdom attained through spontaneous self-analysis and investigation of abstract or speculative ideas; the path of knowledge; constant and serious thinking on the true nature of the self as taught by the guru; contemplation as the principal means of attaining the higher knowledge of reality; leading a discriminative lifestyle, living with wisdom

Jnanendriya – sensory organ; five subtle organs of perception, viz. ears (karna or shrotra), skin (twacha), eyes (chakshu), tongue (jihva) and nose (nasika or ghrana)

Jyoti – light, brightness, fire

Jyotirlinga – natural oval-shaped stone worshipped as Lord Shiva, there are twelve jyotirlingas worshipped in different parts of India; symbol of pure consciousness; the effulgent Shivalingam in sahasrara symbolizing the illumined state of consciousness; induces concentration of mind

Kaala – time; kaala is that which makes one emotionally attached to different beings, mistaking them for the Brahman or the reality; black or dark blue colour; time (in general); proper time or portion of time; time considered as one of the nine substances; one of the five kanchukas (limiting aspects of energy) which creates the dimension of time and restricts the individual within it; one of the eight bhairavas or states of consciousness; the Supreme Spirit regarded as the destroyer of the universe; epithet of Shiva as a personification of the destructive principle or law of existence; Yama, the god of death; the planet Saturn; the weather

Kaalashakti – the power of time; Kali

Kaarana – cause, reason; the unmanifested potential cause that in due time takes shape as the visible effect; material cause of the universe remaining during the period of dissolution, i.e. potential cosmic energy; the

generative cause, creator, father; the origin; ground, motive

Kaivalya – final liberation; the state of consciousness that is beyond duality; perfect isolation; final emancipation; nirvana; the state that unifies all differences

Kalaa – one of the five kanchuka (limiting aspect of energy) which restricts the creative power of individual consciousness and body; the manifest universe of time and space; ray or force which emanates from the nucleus of bindu due to vibrations caused by nada; part of a letter or word; art; the shakti that manifests as the five bhootas or the elements

Kalachakra – the immortal dimension beyond the lokas subject to laya and the abode of the Cosmic Self; wheel of time

Kalyana – auspicious, beautiful, lovely, good; happiness, prosperity, virtue

Kama – emotional need for fulfilment; wish, object of desire; affection, love; the god of love; lust; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Kanchuka – invisible cloak of maya which limits or restricts consciousness and creates the notion of duality; literally 'sheath' or 'envelope'; five in number, viz. 1. kalaa: limits the power to do all 2. avidya: limits the power to know all 3. raga: creates like and dislike 4. kaala: limits perpetual existence by creating the notion of time 5. niyati: limits freewill

Kanya – young girl; virgin

Karana – object; instrument; the body

Karma – action and result; action in the manifest and unmanifest dimension; work, deed; duty; in vedic parlance karma means sacrifice (yajna) at the physical level; law of cause and effect that shapes the destiny of each individual with actions inevitably bearing their fruit, as the law operates inexorably throughout the universe; pity, tenderness; it also implies devoted action to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted; each individual spirit (jiva) is under the influence of four types of karma

Karma kanda – the part of the Vedas that relates to sacrificial rules and ceremonial acts on the physical level; efforts made towards purity and introversion by adopting an external method or rite

Karma sannyasin – one who performs duty as a householder involved in material life and also as a sannyasin seeking spiritual evolution

Karmashakti – power of action

Karma yoga – the yoga that reveals the secret of action; action performed with meditative awareness; dynamic spirituality; yogic path of selfless service; yogic discipline based on the law of cause and effect; gaining immunity to karma by dedicating one's actions to God; actions performed unselfishly for the welfare of others, without attachment to the fruit of one's action and renouncing the doership and enjoyership of any action

Karmendriya – motor organs, five physical organs of action, viz. vocal cords (vach), hands (hasta), feet (pada), genital organ (upastha), anus (payu); five powers of action

Karna – the ear, one of the five organs of knowledge; to listen, to come to the ear, to become known; sense of hearing via the ears

Kartavya – performing action with knowledge; that which ought to be done; duty

Karuna – mercy, compassion, kindness

Karya – effect (correlate of karma); the physical body is described as the karya, whereas the causal body is described as the kaarana (cause); the world; Hiranyagarbha; what ought to be done or performed, duty; matter, thing, fact; religious rite; action based on experience

Kaya siddhi – perfection of the body through yoga

Khechari mudra – literally 'the attitude of moving in space'; tongue lock; a hatha yoga practice in which the elongated tongue passes back into the pharynx to stimulate the flow of life-giving nectar (amrit), whereas in the milder raja yoga form the tongue is inserted in, or folded backwards towards, the upper cavity of the palate

Kirtan – singing of God's name; practice in which a group of people sing a collection of mantras; the second step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Kosha – body or realm of experience or existence; covering of the self that limits manifestation of the ultimate reality; pail, box, vessel in general; see Pancha kosha

Kripa – blessing; grace; mercy

Kripalutva – quality of compassion and kindness; one of the yamas in Saurya tantra

Krishna – eighth incarnation of Vishnu, who took birth in Dwapara yuga as the son of Devaki. He was brought up in Vrindavan by Yashoda and loved Radha, and his activities there are recorded in the *Bhagavata Purana*. He later reclaimed his inheritance and married the princess Rukmini. To uphold dharma he orchestrated the Mahabharata war. His teachings to his friend and disciple Arjuna during that war are immortalized in the *Bhagavad Gita*. He is perhaps the most celebrated hero in the Indian tradition and is a historical figure; black, dark, dark blue; hidden and undiscoverable

Kriya – creative action or motion; in tantric literature, kriya is used in the sense of activity that is eternally associated with knowledge and leads to perfection, in which knowledge and action are found to be identical; the six physical cleansing techniques (shatkarma) of hatha yoga; proper education and training in rites and rituals; in the tantric concept of creation, the power and process of assuming a form. Kriya here also includes the five states of creation, preservation, dissolution, prevention and bestowal of grace

Kriyashakti – power or faculty of acting; the power of assuming a form

Kriyatmaka yoga – the systematic and organized forms of yoga practices as categorized in the Shaiva agamas

Krodha – anger, wrath, aggression; anxiety; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Kshamata – fitness, capacity, ability, competence; one of the yamas in Saurya tantra

Kshamatva – the ability to forgive, be merciful, patient; one of the yamas in Saurya tantra

Kshatriya – the kingly or warrior caste, one of the four divisions of the caste system in India; one who protects others from injury; the ability to protect and nurture; also called kshatriya dharma

Kshetra – field, area; ground; place of origin, womb; sphere of action; the body; the mind; dimension; field of influence; place; chakra trigger points; boundary or limit

Kshetrajna – knower of the field, body or dimension; the divine consciousness which resides within; the immanent aspect of the Supreme Self; one residing within a particular area

Kundalini shakti – Devi described as the potential energy of a human being dormant in mooladhara chakra, which, when awakened, stimulates the chakras, resulting in progressive enlightenment; cosmic energy

Kuta – form in which tantrics have visualized the mantras in Sri Vidya sadhana, similar in shape to pyramids or peaks

Laya – dissolution, solution; disappearance, extinction, destruction; union, fusion, melting

Laya yoga – yoga of conscious dissolution of individuality; a system of yoga where suspended animation takes place; the preferred technique for samadhi explained in the final chapter of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*

Lila – literally 'play'; diversion, pleasure; activity of Prakriti and its three gunas; divine play

Lobha – greed, desire; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Loka – open space, place, region; plane of existence, dimension; the world, earth; people, humankind; of the twenty-eight planes of consciousness or regions, the highest seven are called loka, the next seven are chakra, the next seven patalam and the lowest seven naraka; seven divine regions explained as being above sahasrara chakra, viz. bhuh (or jiva), bhuvah, swah, mahah, janah, tapah and satya lokas

Lopa – destruction, disappearance, abolition, erasure, elimination

Mada – arrogance; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Madhyama – middle, intermediate; intermediate sound, the second stage of nada yoga in which the meditator perceives nada and electromagnetic pulsation within the entire body, also called whispering sound (upanshu); intermediary stage of vamachara where one is immersed in meditation and continues to apply restraint in life

Madya – wine; one of the five makara of tantra; see Panchamakara

Maha – great; noble; big

Mahabharata – epic of ancient India said to be composed by Sage Vedavyasa, involving the history and consequences of the great battle between the Kaurava and Pandava princes. It describes the rivalries and contests of the five sons of Pandu (the Pandava) and the 100 sons of Dhritarashtra (the Kaurava). It consists of eighteen sections and the *Bhagavad Gita* is a part of it; see Krishna

Mahabhoota – the elements (space, air, fire, water and earth); see Pancha mahabhoota

Mahah loka – one of the seven higher dimensions of consciousness; plane of saints and siddhas; intermediate loka which connects the physical and spiritual loka and where all the three states of gross, subtle and causal are experienced simultaneously

Mahakaala – literally 'great or endless time'; cosmic time; timelessness; Shiva in his aspect of the destroyer

Mahat – great; greater mind; the great principle; the total mind which includes manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara; universal intellect (also called buddhi); in Samkhya philosophy mahat is the first product from Prakriti's process of manifestation and reflects the consciousness of Purusha into the material realm of Prakriti's evolutes; big, large, vast; ample, abundant; long, extended, extensive; epithet of Shiva

Mahat tattwa – see Antahkarana; see Mahat

Mahavidya – 'great wisdom'; ten forms of Shakti representing the subtle teachings of Shakta tantra: Kali, Tara, Bhuvaneshwari, Shodashi, Sri Vidya, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi and Kamala; supreme or higher knowledge

Maithuna – physical union; fusion of male and female energies; one of the five makara of tantra; the first basic instinct; copulation; the union of atma, the individual self, with Paramatma, the Supreme Self

Mala – dirt; impurity of mind such as lust, greed, anger, etc.; also called vikara

Mamata – feeling of mineness, sense of ownership, self-interest and selfishness; pride, arrogance; self-sufficiency; individuality; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Manan, manana – thinking, cognition, reflection, intelligence, understanding; inference arrived at by reasoning; meditation on the eternal verities; second of the three steps on the path of knowledge in vedantic sadhana, the other two being shravana and nididhyasana

Manas – finite, rational mind concerned with the world of senses and sense objects; mind; reflective power, thinking faculty

Manasi – mental

Manas putra – 'mental son', mentally conceived; a son born through will or sankalpa

Manasshakti – mental or lunar energy; the power of contemplation and reflection

Manasic japa – mental repetition of a mantra

Mandala – area, zone; circular or round pictorial representation; orb, globe, wheel, ring, disc; troop, group, a collection; a division of the *Rigveda*; diagram within a circumference symbolizing the deeper aspects of the human psyche and capable of invoking cosmic power; complex geometric symbol merging macrocosmic and microcosmic realities; a pictorial form of a yantra

Mandukya Upanishad – one of the major Upanishads which describes the three states

of consciousness represented by the three sacred letters composing Aum and the fourth which unites yet transcends them: vaishvanara, tejas, prajna and turiya

Manipura chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated behind the navel in the spinal column, corresponding to the solar plexus and associated with vitality and energy; centre of willpower; literally 'city of jewels'; see Chakra

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body; one of the five sheaths (kosha) covering the self. It is investigated with the aid of pratyahara and dharana techniques and manifests in the dream state and during meditation. One realizes it through various manifestations of mental power and original thinking; mental body, mental sphere of life and awareness

Mansa – meat; see Panchamakara

Mantra – subtle sound vibration; tantric tool which liberates energy from the confines of mundane awareness and expands the consciousness when repeated; a word or sentence propounded by liberated souls to help spiritual aspirants and ordinary people in gaining perfection, health or supernatural powers; vedic hymn; a sacred text; word of power; divine power transmitted through word; incantation

Marga – track, path or way to the intended goal; search, inquiry, investigation; a means

Matra – unit of time; time interval in pronouncing a vowel; standard measure, rule; unit; moment; particle, atom, element

Matri – mother; mother as a term of respect or endearment; epithet of Lakshmi; epithet of Durga; epithet of the Divine Mother; ether or space; sky; the earth

Matsarya – jealousy, envy; being jealous; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Matsya – fish; particular variety of fish; the king of Matsyas (name of a people and a country); an incarnation of Vishnu; one of the five makara of tantra; see Panchamakara

Maya – cause of the phenomenal world; in Vedanta philosophy, the two powers of maya are: 1. the power of veiling (avarana shakti), and 2. the power of projection (vikshepa shakti); partial understanding; wrong or false notions about self-identity; in Samkhya philosophy, pradhana or prakriti (nature); power of creation; illusive power; something that can be measured

Moha – confusion, delusion, error; infatuation; attachment; state of mind; one of the eight pitfalls that hamper the progress of the human journey in spiritual life

Moksha – liberation, freedom, release; state of existence; in yoga, final emancipation, liberation from the wheel of births and deaths, the aim of yogic practices

Mooladhara chakra – the basic psychic and pranic centre in the human body situated in the perineum in men and the cervix in women and also connected to the coccygeal plexus, it is the seat of kundalini (the primal evolutionary energy in human beings)

Moola – root; basis

Mudra – literally 'gesture'; physical, mental and psychic attitude that expresses and channels cosmic energy; a movement or position made or taken by the fingers or limbs in meditation as a result of the circulation of kundalini shakti; a seal, a sealing posture; also means 'grain' which is one of the five makara of tantra; see see Panchamakara

Mukti – release, liberation; according to Vedanta, mukti is due to right knowledge, or intuition of truth (tattwa jnana); final absolution of the self from the chain of birth and death

Nada – subtle sound vibration created by the union of Shiva and Shakti tattwas; subtle sound vibration heard in the meditative state; voice, sound, cry, roaring; nasal sound represented by the semicircle or half moon (ardha chandra) beneath the point (bindu) in the Sanskrit symbol for Aum or Om; the prolongation of the sound in mantras such as Aum or mystic sounds (representing the eternal); the primal sound or first vibration from which all creation has emanated; Aumkara (Omkara) or Shabda Brahman; flow

Nadi – a river or channel of energy, corresponding, though not identical, to the modern idea of nerves or the meridians of acupuncture; psychic current; flow of energy. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Shiva Swarodaya* posit 72,000 nadis in the human body, of which three are most important; see Ida; see Pingala

Nara – decaying principle; matter; man, male, person, hero; Supreme Being, original or eternal man; presence, body, figure, form

Nasika – nose; trunk of an elephant; the subtle organ of smell, one of the five jnanendriyas

Nava achara – nine progressive tantric codes of conduct: vedachara, vaishnavachara, shaivachara, dakshinachara, vamachara, aghorachara, yogachara, siddhantachara and kaulachara; the ninefold path of tantra

Neela – the colour blue; symbol of sky or space, the akasha element

Neelakantha – literally 'blue-throated', an epithet of Shiva referring to the blue colour of his throat which was caused when he protected the world by drinking the poison churned from the ocean of milk by the devas, who were seeking the nectar of immortality (amrita)

Nididhyasana – profound, deep meditation; third step in vedantic sadhana, after hearing (shravana) and reflection (manana)

Nidra – fourth basic instinct; deep sleep; isolation from the mind and senses; unconscious state; shutting off; sleepiness; sloth; one of the five vrittis listed in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; prajna; see Vritti

Nirakara – without form, formless, devoid of form; unmanifest

Niranjana – stainless, unstained, untainted; free from falsehood; pure, simple; an epithet of Brahman

Nirguna – without quality or attribute, formless

Nirguna Brahman – Brahman without attributes or form, powers or predicates; a state of pure being without qualities (gunas); the impersonal, attributeless absolute

Nirmana – creation, construction

Nirodha – complete cessation of the patterns of consciousness when the mind is under perfect control; confinement, locking up, imprisonment; enclosing, covering up; suppression, control, restraint, check; hindrance, obstruction, opposition; state in which the mind is blocked or prevented from functioning; beyond the three qualities (gunas); fifth of the five states of mind, in which the awareness of consciousness alone prevails

Nishtha – steadfastness; being established in a certain state

Nivritti – 'no vritti'; lack of vrittis

Nivritti marga – the path of renunciation of the world

Niyama – observances or rules of personal discipline to render the mind tranquil in preparation for meditation; the second step of ashtanga yoga mentioned by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. He enumerates five rules of conduct that apply to individual discipline, viz. 1. purity (shaucha) 2. satisfaction or contentment (santosha) 3. austerity or penance (tapas) 4. self-study (swadhyaya), and 5. renunciation of the fruits of action or dedication to the Lord or to the highest principle (Ishwara pranidhana); inner discipline; vedic text or explanation; doctrine; in yogic philosophy it means restraint of the mind or self-purification by discipline

Niyati – destiny; that which is fixed; law of restriction of the expressions and experiences of the pure soul to accumulated samskaras and karmas

Nyasa – renunciation; laying down; placing; planting; a pledge; entrusting; committing; giving up, resigning, abandoning, relinquishing; the practice of assigning the various parts of the body to different deities, which is usually accompanied with mantras and corresponding gestures or mudras

Ojas – vitality, subliminal sexual energy, bodily strength, vigour, energy; virility, the generative faculty; kundalini shakti; splendour, light

Om – bija mantra of ajna chakra; the universal cosmic mantra representing the four states

of consciousness; the sound indicating the supreme sublime reality or Brahman; the sound representing the first formation from formless existence or the first acoustic expression of Brahman; word of power; like the Latin word omne it means 'all' and conveys concepts of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence; existence; see Mandukya Upanishad; see Aum

Pada – foot, the organ of locomotion and one of the five organs of action (karmendriyas)

Pada seva – literally worship of the guru's feet; humbly obeying the guru and applying the guru's teachings in daily life; the fourth step of ninefold path of bhakti; merging oneself into the service of God

Palana – maintenance; maintaining creation in an orderly state; sustenance; one of Shiva's five basic actions

Pancha – five

Pancha bhoota – see Pancha mahabhoota

Panchadeva – the five main deities who represent the five aspects of the supreme transcendental force: Shiva, Shakti, Vishnu, Surya and Ganesha

Panchagni vidya – knowledge or science of the five fires; esoteric explanation of five processes of sacrifice; sadhana of sitting in the middle of four burning fires with the summer sun of India acting as the fifth fire

Pancha kosha – five sheaths, bodies or realms of experience and existence, viz. 1. physical dimension (annamaya kosha) 2. mental dimension (manomaya kosha) 3. energetic and emotional dimension (pranamaya kosha) 4. intuitive dimension (vijnanamaya kosha) 5. blissful dimension (anandamaya kosha); also called Pancha sharira

Pancha mahabhoota – the five gross or atomic states of nature, consisting of ether or space (akasha), gases or air (vayu), light or fire (agni), liquids or water (apas) and solids or earth (prithvi). They are an extension of the tanmatras into the physical world

Panchamakara – five elements used in tantric ritual sadhana, all of which begin with the letter 'M', viz. mudra (grain or psychic attitude), mansa (flesh), maithuna (physical union), matsya (fish) and madya (wine). The category of aspirant determines the symbolic interpretation

Pancha sharira – see Pancha kosha

Pancha tanmatra – five pre-nuclear states of nature, viz. sound (shabda), touch (sparsha), form (roopa), taste (rasa) and smell (gandha). They are the subtle states of the physical mahabhoota: space, air, fire, water and earth

Pancha tattwa – the five elements; fivefold state; collection of five

Pancha upasana – five different kinds of worship related to worshipping five deities, viz. Ganapati, Surya, Shakti, Vishnu and Shiva

Papa purusha – evil personified; personification of the sinful part of the individual; a part of oneself that is purified and transformed in tattwa shuddhi sadhana

Para – used in the *Bhagavad Gita* to indicate the supreme goal of life; other, different; distant, removed, remote; beyond; subsequent, following next to; higher, superior, highest, greatest; predominant, principal; opposite of apara; transcendental

Parabrahman – absolute, supreme reality; the transcendental reality

Param – the highest point or pitch, culminating point; the Supreme Being; final beatitude; extreme, farthest; last, worst; best, excellent; conspicuous

Paramatma – cosmic soul or consciousness, Supreme Self; the atma (self or soul) of the entire universe, of the individual as well as of the cosmos; liberated state of the inner self

Paramshakti – transcendental Shakti or cosmic energy

Paramshiva – transcendental Shiva or cosmic consciousness. Paramshiva has five major powers: chit (consciousness), ananda (bliss), iccha (will), jnana (knowledge), and kriya (action)

Paramtattwa – the supreme or transcendental element; ultimate truth

Para vidya – higher knowledge, transcendental knowledge, direct knowledge of Brahman

Pasha – noose, snare, net for catching birds; bondage inherent in creation; state of bondage

Pashu – animal, brute, beast; often added to words meaning 'man' to show contempt; in tantra it refers to a person living at the instinctive animal level of consciousness; experience of the individual soul in human life

Pashu bhava – instinctive personality; animal nature

Pashupata tantra – the philosophy and techniques that allow a person to master their animal tendencies and become liberated; the first and oldest tantra

Pashupati – 'master of animals'; an epithet of Shiva

Pashutwa – animality; sense of animality

Pashyanti – the third stage of nada yoga; meditation in which one perceives the entire universe as being sound (nada); ability to see, to look, to recognize and perceive

Patala – abode of serpents and demons; instinctive or animal realm; hell; seven planes of consciousness or regions described as being below mooladhara chakra, viz. atala, vitala, sutala, rasatala, talatala, mahatala, patala; lowest of the seven patalam; see Chakra; see Loka

Patanjali – author of the *Yoga Sutras*; an ancient rishi who codified the meditative stages and states of samadhi into the system of raja yoga and is famous as the propounder of ashtanga yoga

Pati – master, God or Ishwara; lord, ruler, husband; referring to Shiva

Payu – anus, the organ of excretion and one of the five organs of action (karmendriyas)

Pingala nadi – a major pranic channel in the body that flows from mooladhara chakra on the right, criss-crossing all the major chakras to ajna chakra. It conducts the dynamic pranic force manifesting as pranashakti, and governs the right side of the body and left side of the brain. It is associated with the mundane realm of experience and externalized awareness; also called surya nadi, as the solar energy flows through it; see Ida nadi

Pitri – departing ancestor; a divine hierarchy consisting of deceased progenitors and ancestors; the manes; father, forefathers

Pooja – honour, respect; rites; worship

Poorna – complete; full, filled; whole, entire; accomplished; strong, powerful

Poornata – fulfilment; fullness

Pradhana – the chief; the root base for all elements; undifferentiated matter; a term used in Samkhya for Prakriti, the material cause of the world. It corresponds to maya in Vedanta, but differs from maya on the following points: it is real while maya is unreal or phenomenal, and it is independent of Purusha while maya is dependent on Brahman; see Prakriti

Prajna – knowledge with awareness; according to Vedanta philosophy, the causal state (as in sound sleep), when the supreme reality is veiled by the causal body; the seer who observes the state of deep sleep (sushupti), the third state of consciousness expressed by the all-knowing 'm' of Aum according to *Mandukya Upanishad*

Prakasha – brightness, shining, brilliance; the essence of sattwa guna; spiritual brilliance, clarity, light; light of consciousness; the Shiva aspect in Kashmir Shaivism as the counterpart of vimarsha; see Vimarsha

Prakriti – individual nature; manifest and unmanifest nature; cosmic energy; the active principle of manifest energy; nature or primordial matter (source of the universe); according to Samkhya philosophy, insentient Prakriti consists of three aspects or qualities called gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. They remain unmanifest (avyakta) when in equilibrium, but when this equilibrium is disturbed by the proximity of the witnessing Purusha, consciousness, manifestation, creation and evolution set in

Pralaya – destruction or dissolution; final destruction of the universe, annihilation

Pralayakala – the time of universal destruction

Pramana – 'correct' knowledge; knowledge based on direct sensation or cognition; measure, standard, norm; authority; argument; proof, means of knowledge; one of the five modifications of mind (vrittis) described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as based on direct cognition (pratyaksha), inference (anumana) and/or reliable testimony (agama)

Prana – vital energy force, essence of life permeating both the macrocosmos and microcosmos; the sum total of all energy residing within the universe, both in the unmanifest states and in manifest nuclear states; breath, respiration; principle of life; vital energy that functions in various ways for the preservation of the body and is closely associated with the mind; one of the pancha prana (five energy fields), which operates in the region of the heart and lungs; according to the Shaiva scriptures the eleven pranas are the eleven Rudras living within each person. There are five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. There are five upapranas or sub-pranas: kurma, krikara, naga, devadatta and dhananjaya. There is also one master of them all, Mahaprana, who enters into the womb before birth, and when it leaves, the body dies

Pranashakti – dynamic solar force governing the dimension of matter; energy flow related to externalization of mind; the force of prana; see Pingala nadi

Pranamaya kosha – energy sheath, or vital or pranic body; the sheath (kosha) covering the self which is composed of pranic vibration and the rhythm of pranic forces; see Pancha kosha

Pranamaya sharira – see Pranamaya kosha

Pranava – another word for the sacred syllable Aum (Om), the primal sound vibration; a kind of musical instrument; epithet of Vishnu. Pra means prapancha or 'the illusion of the world', na means 'non-existent' and va means 'for you'. Thus pranava means 'the illusory world does not exist for you'

Prasad – clearness, purity, tranquillity; favour, grace, blessed gift or object, something full of grace; food dedicated to a god or the guru and thereafter eaten by faithful devotees as something holy

Pratipaksha bhavana – that principle of yoga which states that one may control a negative emotion by summoning its opposite, or a lower thought by countering it with a higher one; the method of substituting the opposite thought or emotion through imagination, e.g. fear is overcome by dwelling strongly upon its opposite of courage, or hate is overcome by love

Pratyabhijna – knowing; recognition or recovering consciousness; recollection; correct knowledge

Pratyahara – drawing back, retreat; restraining the sensory and motor organs; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; training the senses to follow the mind within; fifth stage of raja yoga

Pratyaya – seeds or impressions in the field of consciousness which do not disappear even in the first stages of samadhi; content of mind (in yoga philosophy)

Pravritti – rise; origin, source; flow; continued; advance, progress; tendency, inclination, predilection; conduct, behaviour; employment, occupation, activity; continued effort, perseverance

Pravritti marga – path of extroversion; path of action of life in worldly society or according to the nature of the world

Prithvi – literally 'the broad one'; earth, the solid state of matter, in Samkhya philosophy it is the fifth mahabhoota with the special property of smell; see Pancha mahabhoota

Prithvi tattwa – the earth element

Purana – ancient scriptures; past event; ancient, old; a class of ancient scriptures believed to be compiled by Rishi Vyasa

Purascharana – observance consisting of the repetition of a mantra

Purusha – literally 'who dwells in the city', the body being the dormant receptacle

of consciousness, the soul; the totality of consciousness; male, man, mankind; the Supreme Being, God; in Samkhya philosophy Purusha designates pure consciousness, undefiled and unlimited by contact with Prakriti or matter; see Prakriti

Purushartha – human effort; attainment; the four goals to be fulfilled in life: 1. wealth (artha) 2. desire (kama) 3. duty (dharma), and 4. liberation (moksha)

Pushpa – flower

Raga – love, affection; passion, amorous feeling; likes; attitude of mind towards the object of one's love (the positive aspect); attachment, attraction; anything that colours the mind; colours, especially the colour red; one of the five causes of affliction (kleshas) described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as being attracted to (or being attached to) what gives pleasure

Rajas – one of the three constituent qualities (gunas) of Nature (Prakriti), and all matter; dynamism; state of activity; creativity combined with full ego involvement; emotion; restlessness; oscillation; as a personality trait it is expressed by the desire to dominate; see Guna

Rasa – juice; serum found in the body tissues; taste; flavour; see Pancha tanmatra

Riddhi – highest sensual delight; wealth; nine varieties of extraordinary exaltation and grandeur that come as a yogi advances and progresses in yoga. Like supernatural powers (siddhis), riddhis are great obstacles on the path of yoga

Rishi – inspired poet, ascetic, anchorite, seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates on the Self; one who experiences other dimensions

Ritam – proper, right; honest, true; worshipped, respected; fixed or settled rule, law; sacred custom; eternal laws of the universe; divine higher truth; the absolute or cosmic aspect of creation beyond matter and energy; base of all creation

Roopa – form, figure; handsome form or figure; appearance; the quality of colour; any visible object or thing; natural state or condition; nature, characteristic; kind, sort, species; essence; the number one; arithmetical unit

Sada – always, ever, perpetually, at all times

Sadakhya – true name; one of the five shuddha tattwas (pure elements) in creation which lead to a universal experience; the five faces of Shiva (Sadashiva) in the Shaiva agamas: Shiva sadakhya, amurta sadakhya, murta sadakhya, kartri sadakhya and karma sadakhya

Sadashiva – the presiding deity of the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head; permanently benevolent; 'always auspicious' or 'the eternal Shiva'; the five-faced Shiva is the manifest form of Paramshiva. He has ten hands, in which he holds a pot, a half-moon shaped sword, a bow and arrow, a spear, a trident, a conch, a discus, a damaru, a lotus, and his last hand is held in abhaya mudra. His body is white like camphor and all the faces have three eyes, matted locks and snakes garlanding the throat; see Shiva

Sadhaka – one who practises sadhana; spiritual aspirant, seeker; efficient, effective, skilful; adapting; assisting, helping

Sadhana – fulfilment, accomplishment, complete attainment of an object; expedient tool, implement, means of accomplishing anything; worship, adoration; conciliation, propitiation; spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly for the attainment of inner experience and self-realization

Sadhu – good, excellent, perfect; fit, proper, right; enough; virtuous, righteous, honourable; kind, well-disposed; good or virtuous or holy person; sage, saint

Sahaja samadhi – spontaneous meditative experience where the mind is totally withdrawn from the external world

Sahasranama – thousand names

Sahasrara chakra – the thousand-petalled lotus; abode of Shiva or superconsciousness; highest chakra or psychic centre, which symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms and is located at the crown of the head; see Chakra

Sakala – complete, which implies manifestation with form; together with the parts, all, whole, entire

Sakara – with form; manifest

Sakhya – related to friendship

Sakhya bhava – seeing oneself as a friend of God; the eighth step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Salokya – being on the same plane as one's object of contemplation

Sama – same, equal; similar, like; even; parallel; unchanged

Samadhi – culmination of meditation; state of unity with the object of meditation and the universal consciousness; final step of raja yoga; self-realization; a state in which the mind is either completely concentrated on its object of contemplation (savikalpa samadhi), or ceases to function and only pure consciousness or pure awareness remains, revealing itself to itself (nirvikalpa samadhi); stable state of mind in which the knowledge, intelligence and personality are unwavering and beyond dissipation

Sambandh – link; connection, contact; association created between consciousness and an object

Samhita – collection of hymns, prayers and mantras, structured using rules of grammar and tone. They are called stotras, suktas, etc. and are chanted during worship and sacrifice (yajna). They are the oldest part of the Vedas

Samipya – being in close proximity to one's object of contemplation

Samkhya – number; one of the six systems of Indian philosophy (shaddarshana) and attributed to the sage Kapila. Samkhya is a spiritual science dealing with the twenty-five elements of creation; relating to numbers, calculating, enumerating; discriminative, deliberating, reasoning; a reasoner; the philosophical basis of the yoga system

Samsara – illusory world, the manifest gross world; cycle of birth, death and rebirth, transmigration, metamorphosis, meta-psychosis; passage; the course or circuit of worldly life, secular life, mundane existence; curse

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype; form, mould; operation, influence; idea, notion, concept; effect of work, merit of action; the faculty of recollection. Impression on the memory of all patterns and mental impressions of the past, which remain unnoticed in the mind, yet set up impulses and trains of thought; unconscious memories; sixteen traditional rituals marking different stages in life in a process of purification undergone by the soul after arrival in the body; process of consecration performed on an item of oblation

Samya – equilibrium; stillness; adoption of qualities

Samyavastha – literally 'state of stillness'; the state before manifestation or creation when the gunas of Prakriti are in perfect balance; state of equilibrium

Sanatana dharma – system of eternal values underlying the vedic civilization; eternal duty

Sanghar – transformation; one of Shiva's five actions

Sankalpa – will, volition, positive resolve; purpose, aim, intention; determination, conviction; desire, wish; thought, idea, reflection, fancy, imagination

Sankalpashakti – willpower

Sannyasa – dedication; complete renunciation of the world, its possessions and attachments; abandonment of the temporal; the six stages of sannyasa life are known as kutichaka, bahudaka, hamsa, paramahamsa, turiyatita and avadhuta; the fourth of four stations (ashramas) in the vedic concept of a full life

Sannyasa ashrama – traditionally the fourth stage of life for everyone from seventy-five years onwards; total renunciation classified into various types, viz. vairagya sannyasa, jnana sannyasa, jnana-vairagya sannyasa, vividisha sannyasa, vidvat sannyasa, atura sannyasa

Sannyasin – one who has taken sannyasa initiation; a yogi; one who is not dependent on the results of action

Santosha – contentment, satisfaction; one of the five niyamas enumerated by the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali; also known as the 'sword of Rama' due to its ability to cut through illusion (maya); see Niyama

Sanyam – mastery, control, restraint, self-discipline over one's behaviour; perfection of concentration; harmonious control of concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana) and samadhi fused into one process by which the yogi can know the inner cause of anything concentrated upon; concentration of mind

Saroopya – having the same form as the object of contemplation

Sarva – whole, entire; all, every

Sat – true; that which really exists; entity; essence; in Vedanta, one of the three attributes of the ultimate existence or reality (Brahman)

Sat Chandi Mahayajna – a powerful fire sacrifice performed in honour of Chandi, during which the Durga Saptashati is chanted a hundred times over several days

Satchidananda – the Supreme Reality as existence-consciousness-bliss

Satkarma – appropriate action, one of the three precepts of dharma comprising eternal dharma; right performance

Satsang – gathering in which the ideals and principles of truth are discussed; spiritual association; association with the wise and the good, along with the resolve and effort to express this in life

Sattwa – in Samkhya, one of the three constituent qualities (gunas) of Nature (Prakriti) and all matter; state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium, steadiness and purity; being, existence, reality, true essence; in yoga, the natural quality of purity, balance or goodness, which binds one by attachment to goodness and learning; life, spirit, breath, principle of vitality; consciousness, mind, sense

Satvichara – appropriate thinking, right thinking; one of the three precepts of eternal dharma

Satvyavahara – appropriate behaviour, right behaviour; one of the three precepts of eternal dharma

Satya loka – one of the seven higher dimensions of consciousness; also called Brahma loka

Satya – true, real, genuine; honest, sincere, truthful, faithful; virtuous, upright; absolute truth; reality; as one of the yamas described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, it leads to a state where actions are based on and culminate in the truth; in life it is a vow to follow truth and renounce untruth in thought, word and action; one of the niyamas in Saurya tantra; see Yama

Satyam – the unchanging principle; the relative aspect of creation perceptible by the senses and understood by the mind; truth; sincerity; goodness, virtue, purity

Sayujya – merging; abiding in the absolute

Shabda – sound; object of the sense of hearing and property of space (akasha); note (of birds, human voice, etc.); sound of musical instrument; word, significant word; see Mantra; see Pancha tanmatra

Shaddarshana – the six systems of Indian philosophy, viz. Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa (technically this is Purva Mimamsa) and Vedanta (also known as Uttara Mimamsa)

Shakti – primal energy; manifest consciousness; power, ability, capacity, strength, energy; the power of composition, poetic power or genius; in Samkhya, the power inherent in a cause to produce its necessary effects; the female aspect of creation and divinity worshipped by the Shakta sect; power that is eternal and supreme and of the nature of consciousness; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Indian mythology, Shakti is often symbolized as a divine woman

Shakti tattwa – physical, material cause of existence; one of the five shuddha tattwas

(pure elements) in creation which lead to a universal experience

Shaktipat – higher energy or experience transmitted by the guru to a worthy disciple; descent of power through worship (upasana); also called manasa diksha

Shaktipeeth – 'seat of Shakti'; the sixty-four centres of Shakti worship across India. According to legend, when Sati immolated herself, Shiva was wild with grief and roamed the worlds with Sati's corpse on his shoulder. To pacify him, Vishnu cut up the corpse with his discus and the body parts fell at different places; each of these came to be known as a Shaktipeeth

Shanti – pacification, allayment, removal; peace, calmness, tranquillity, quiet, ease, rest; cessation, end; absence of passion, complete indifference to all worldly enjoyment

Shastra – order; scripture, sacred book; any department of knowledge, science

Shatkarma – 'six actions'; in hatha yoga, group of six purificatory techniques viz. dhauti, basti, neti, nauli, trataka and kapalbhati; in tantra, six essential actions that an aspirant undertakes as part of sadhana viz. nyasa, japa, dhyana, homa, pooja and tarpana.

Shaucha – cleanliness of the body and mind, purity (internal and external); one of the niyamas as described by Sage Patanjali in the ashtanga yoga of the *Yoga Sutras*; one of the niyamas in Saurya tantra; see Niyama

Shava – corpse, dead body

Shishya – literally 'one who is under discipline'; pupil, disciple; scholar

Shiva – 'auspicious one' or 'good'; name of the god of the sacred Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction; destroyer of ego and duality; the first or original yogi; cosmic consciousness, counterpart of Shakti; the manifest form of Paramshiva who first appeared as Sadashiva; see Sadashiva

Shivoham – 'I am Shiva', an ancient mantra

Shivalingam – black oval-shaped stone of which those occurring naturally in the Narmada river are especially revered; symbol of Lord Shiva; symbol of consciousness; nishkala symbol of Lord Shiva; see Jyotirlinga

Shiva Purana – collection of six ancient scriptures that tell the story of Shiva

Shiva tattwa – essential, inherent cause of existence; element of consciousness

Shodashopachara – traditional form of worship with sixteen types of offering. 1. a seat (asana) 2. welcome (swagata) 3. water for washing the feet (padya) 4. water offered in a vessel (arghya) 5. water for sipping (achamana) 6. a mixture of honey, ghee, milk and yoghurt (madhuparka) 7. water for bathing (snana) 8. clothing (vastra) 9. jewels (abhushana) 10. perfume (gandha) 11. flowers (pushpa) 12. incense (dhupa) 13. lights (dipa) 14. food (naivedya) 15. betel nuts, etc. (tambulam) 16. prayer (vandana)

Shoonya – void state of transcendental consciousness; state of darkness prior to enlightenment referred to as 'the dark night of the soul'; mental vacuum; empty-hearted; vacant glance; listless; absent; non-existent, empty, deserted, wholly destitute; solitary; state of nothingness, zero

Shoonyata – quality of voidness

Shraddha – trust, faith, belief, confidence; belief in divine revelation, religious faith; sedateness, composure of mind; respect, reverence; one of the shat samapatti (sixfold virtues)

Shravana – ear; the act of hearing; that which is heard or revealed, the Veda; hearing of the shrutis or scriptures; study; fame, glory; wealth; the first step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Shrotra – ear, one of the five jnanendriyas (organs of knowledge); proficiency in the Vedas; sense of hearing via the ears

Shruti – the Vedas (created through revelation which was heard), literally 'what has been heard'; hearing; the musical notes; holy learning, sacred knowledge; reported, heard of, learnt, ascertained, understood; well known, famous, celebrated; named, called; subtle sound vibration that reveals sacred knowledge, also called nada

Shuchita – purification of the self; cleanliness of thought

Shuddha – pure

Shuddhi – purification; to purify; pure, clean, untainted; purity, cleanliness

Shudra – one of the four varnas or divisions of the caste system in India; one whose consciousness is least developed, due to which one remains in ignorance, causing one to weep and mourn; in the *Rigveda* it refers to the soul yet to be purified by samskaras; one with a services-oriented tendency of mind or one engaged in such a profession

Siddha – perfected being; sage, seer; semi-divine being of great purity and holiness; accomplished soul particularly characterized by eight supernatural faculties called siddhis

Siddhanta – spiritual theory; the established end; the demonstrated conclusion of an argument, established view of any question, the true logical conclusion; an established textbook resting on conclusive evidence; a proven fact; perfect culmination

Siddhi – paranormal or supernatural accomplishment; control of mind and prana; psychic abilities; eight supernatural powers obtained by yogis as a result of long practice viz. 1. anima 2. laghima 3. prapti 4. prakamya 5. mahima 6. ishitvam 7. vashitva 8. garima; other siddhis include the power of entering other bodies, the ability to read another person's thoughts, clairvoyance, clairaudience, omniscience, effulgence, vanishing from sight, etc. They are considered to be obstacles on the path to realization because they maintain interest in samsara; fulfilment, perfection; fullness, spiritual prosperity

Smarana – remembrance or contemplation; the third step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Smriti – memory; one of the five vrittis listed in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; tradition, law, the body of traditional or memorial law; canon; vedic texts transmitted by memory; a class of works called dharma shastra handed down by tradition; remembrance, recollection, thinking of, calling to mind

Snana – water offered in worship for bathing of the deity; bathing for purification

So-Ham – literally 'That am I', 'so' representing cosmic consciousness and 'ham' representing individual consciousness; mantra used in ajapa japa, said to be the unconscious repetitive prayer produced by the breath itself, the inhalation sounding 'so' and the exhalation 'ham' (also the reverse according to some texts); the bija mantra of Gayatri mantra

Soma – name of a plant that was the most important ingredient in ancient sacrificial offerings; juice of a potent plant drunk during religious ceremonies to experience divine intoxication; the moon, which in mythology is represented as having sprung from the eye of the sage Atri or as having been produced from the sea at the time of churning; nectar of the gods, amrita; wine

Spandan – movement, vibration; cosmic vibration, primordial pulsation; dynamic aspect of Shiva

Sparsha – the sense of touch; see Pancha tanmatra

Sri – wealth, riches, affluence, prosperity; beauty, grace, splendour, lustre; the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu; the word Sri is often used as an honorific prefix to the names of scriptures, deities and eminent people; auspicious

Srishti – creation, manifest universe; manifestation, emanation; letting go

Sthiti – state; sustenance; maintaining creation in an orderly state; condition; to become stable in one state of understanding, knowledge, experience and consciousness

Sthoola – gross; large, great, big, huge; strong, powerful; ignorant, foolish, doltish; relating to the waking state of consciousness (jagrat)

Sukshma – subtle; subtle dimension; relating to the world of the psyche

Sukshma sharira – subtle body or part of the subconscious which manifests in the dream state; the subtle body composed of pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya koshas; see Kosha

Sundari – an image of extraordinary beauty

Surya – the sun; vital pranic energy; the sun god; symbol of the atma

Surya mandala – image of the sun visualized at the eyebrow centre; the dimension of the sun where only light and knowledge exist

Surya namaskara – literally 'salute to the sun', a series of twelve asanas for revitalizing prana

Sushumna nadi – central energy flow (nadi) in the spine which conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara chakra. It is the main energy flow related to transcendental awareness. It is 'situated' in the spinal cord of the human body, and opens when balance is achieved between ida and pingala nadis. Within it lie three more important subtle energy flows responsible for transcendental experience

Sushupti – third dimension of consciousness, witnessed by prajna according to *Mandukya Upanishad*; deep sleep or unconscious realm of mind; profound repose undisturbed by the senses

Sushupti avastha – deep sleep; the third state of consciousness where there is no disturbance from inner or outer sources, related to the 'm' of Aum in *Mandukya Upanishad*

Sutra – a brief statement that explains the ancient spiritual texts; thread, string, line, cord, fibre; short rule or precept; aphorism or condensed statements strung together to give an outline of a philosophy as in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Swa – one's own innate, real force; soul, self

Swabhava – one's own nature

Swadhisthana chakra – literally 'one's own abode'; psychic/pranic centre situated at the base of the spinal column in the lumbar region (level of the generative organs), associated with the sacral plexus, and the storehouse of subconscious impressions; see Chakra

Swadhyaya – self-study; continuous conscious awareness of what one is doing; one of the niyamas recommended by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; education of the self; study of the scriptures and texts of yoga and self-knowledge

Swah loka – one of the seven higher dimensions of consciousness; the celestial region; paradise; the third region or state of existence beyond bhuvah loka, generally identified with heaven; also called swargaloka

Swapna – second dimension of consciousness, witnessed by taijasa according to the *Mandukya Upanishad*; subconscious realm of mind, state of dreaming

Swapna avastha – dream state of consciousness where external sensory disturbances are negligible, but the mind is caught in its internal impressions (samskara); the second state of consciousness, related to the 'u' of Aum in the *Mandukya Upanishad*

Swargaloka – see Swah loka

Tamas – in Samkhya philosophy, one of the three constituent qualities (gunas) of Nature (Prakriti), and all matter; inertia, stability, stillness; ignorance, darkness; the gloom or darkness of hell; mental darkness; illusion, error; in yoga, it is characterized by inertia, laziness, mental dullness, unwillingness to change; electrically neutral; see Guna

Tamoguna – quality of tamas

Tanmatra – subtle nature; quality or essence of the elements (mahabhootas) and the associated five senses (jnanendriyas) viz. 1. sound (shabda) 2. touch (sparsha) 3. form (roopa) 4. taste (rasa) 5. smell (gandha); see Pancha tanmatra

Tanoti – to expand, stretch, extend, spread, endure, perform

Tantra – most ancient science and culture which deals with the transition of human nature from the present level of evolution and understanding to a transcendental level of knowledge, experience and awareness; loom, thread, warps of thread extended lengthwise in a loom; main point, principle doctrine, rule; theory, science; scriptures devoted to spiritual techniques in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Shakti, forming a set of rules for ritual worship, discipline, meditation and the attainment

of supernatural powers; a particular path of sadhana laying great stress upon mantra japa and other esoteric upasanas; from the roots tanoti (to expand) and trayate (to liberate)

Tapah loka – one of the higher worlds just below satya loka; one of the seven higher dimensions of consciousness; described as a spiritual loka representing the subtle state in the unmanifest dimension; also called tapoloka; see Loka

Tapas – austerity; process of burning the impurities; warmth, heat, fire; pain, suffering; penance, mortification; meditation connected with the practice of personal self-denial; tapas in yoga means a burning effort which involves purification, self-discipline and austerity, a process in which the inner impurities covering the inner personality are completely eliminated, but this austerity is not exaggerated into self-mortification; cleansing for the perfection of body and senses; one of the five niyama described by the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali; see Niyama

Tapasya – practice of austerity

Tapobhoomi – a yogi's place of sadhana

Tara – a star; a fixed star; pupil of the eye; a goddess, one of the ten mahavidyas; name of the wife of Sugriva; saviour, the shakti of Akshobhya, another epithet of Lord Shiva

Tarpana – offering made with water in honour of ancestors or divinity

Tattwa – 'that-ness'; the truth about something, or the thing-in-itself; an element, a primary substance; essence, truth, reality; principle, category; in Samkhya twenty-five tattwas are mentioned, and in common parlance five of these, the pancha mahabhoota, are often referred to as the five tattwas; true state or condition, fact; true essential nature; the real nature of the human soul and the material world as being identical with the Supreme Spirit pervading the universe

Tejas – 'golden light or flame'; luminosity; edge or tip of a flame; fire, heat; light, brilliance, splendour; might, majesty; fire as an element or mahabhoota; the light state of matter according to the Samkhya Yoga classification; also called taijasa; see Swapna

Tirobhava – veiling; diversionary tactics to divert or stop the ascent of an individual to the source, and keep him engaged in material life; fourth of Shiva's five basic actions

Trayati – to free or liberate; to protect, rescue or save from

Trimurti – trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

Tulsi – the holy basil plant of India, sacred to Lord Vishnu and venerated by the Vaishnavas as most divine, she is symbolically married to Shalagrama (a symbol of Lord Vishnu); a herb with many healing capacities; the wood is considered to be very pure and is made into rosary beads (mala) used for mantra japa

Turiya – fourth dimension of consciousness, witnessed by atma according to *Mandukya Upanishad*; superconsciousness; simultaneous awareness of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind which links and transcends them; a quarter, a fourth part, fourth; in Vedanta, the seventh of the seven stages of wisdom (jnana bhumika), the final superconscious state of existence, a state of complete absorption of the mind in Brahman, in which the individual self or soul becomes one with the universal spirit; a state of nirvana, or liberation

Turiya avastha – the fourth state of existence, combining yet transcending the other three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, and related to the full understanding or reverberation of the mantra Aum according to *Mandukya Upanishad*; the state of samadhi

Turiyatita – 'beyond the fetters of nature'; the fifth stage of sannyasa; one whose consciousness is established beyond the gross, subtle and causal states

Twacha – skin; the power to feel, one of the five abstract knowing senses or jnanendriyas; the sense of touch via the skin

Tyaga – renunciation or gradual dissociation of the mind from worldly objects and from the seed of desire; leaving, forsaking,

abandoning, deserting, separation; giving up, resigning, renouncing; gift, donation, giving away as charity; liberality, generosity

Upadesha – instruction, teaching; advice, prescription, specification, mention; initiation, communication of an initiatory mantra or formula

Upaprana – a form of prana shakti pervading all animate objects, regulating their states; five minor pranas viz. krikara (or krikala), devadatta, dhananjaya, naga and kurma responsible for such actions as sneezing, yawning, decomposition, belching and blinking, respectively

Upa Purana – group of eighteen secondary Puranas that were later additions to the puranic literature; see Purana

Upanayan samskara – the sacred thread ritual, investiture with a sacred thread to initiate participants into sacred learning, one of the samskaras in the vedic tradition

Upanishad – literally 'to sit near and listen (to the spiritual teacher)'; derived from the prefixes 'upa', meaning near, and 'ni', meaning down, added to the root 'shad', meaning to sit, thus it means sitting down near a guru to receive spiritual instruction; ancient vedic text containing intimate dialogues and discussions between guru and disciple on the nature of the absolute and the path leading towards it; vedantic texts conveyed by ancient sages and seers containing their experiences and teachings on the ultimate reality; the Upanishads are the philosophical portion of the Vedas, the most ancient and sacred literature of the Indian culture, dealing with the nature of human beings and the universe. The Upanishads are regarded as the source of the Vedanta, yoga and Samkhya philosophies

Upanshu – whispered sound; one of the stages of mantra japa; the subtle or intermediate state of nada or sound; also called madhyama

Upanshu japa – japa done with a whispered or light humming sound, semi-verbal repetition of a mantra

Upasaka – worshipper

Upasana – personalized form of worship; sitting near, worshipping or contemplating on God or a deity; devout meditation

Upasana kanda – ritual of worship

Upastha – genital organ; see Karmendriya

Utsava – festival, holiday; joy, pleasure

Uttarayana – summer solstice; 'northern path' of the sun which takes six months of the solar year. A yogi who dies during this period is believed to be freed from the cycle of life and death; one of the two prescribed paths of meditation; path of light; see Dakshinayana

Vada – doctrine; body of teaching; a guiding principle, belief or precept; teaching; a discourse, discussion; controversy; argument; an exposition of sacred texts

Vaikhari – see Baikhari

Vairagya – non-attachment, dispassion, detachment from the world and its cause; it is spoken of as lower (apara), when it denotes detachment from the objects of pleasure, and higher (para), when referring to a cleansing detachment from the gunas or Nature (Prakriti) due to the attraction to Purusha

Vaishvanara – the seer who observes the manifest universe or the external, waking consciousness (jagrat), the first state of consciousness discussed in *Mandukya Upanishad* as relating to the 'A' of Aum; a name according to Vedanta philosophy for an individual in the gross (waking) state, where reality appears through the veil of an individual gross body; epithet of fire, fire of digestion (in the stomach), the god of fire; general consciousness (in Vedanta philosophy); the sum total of created beings; Brahman in the form of the universe (Virat Purusha); the Supreme Being

Vaishya – one of the four divisions of the caste system (varnas) in India, those who specialize in trade or undertake the responsibility of caring for society

Vak – word, sound; talk, language, speech, voice; assertion, statement; phrase, proverb,

expression, saying; name of Saraswati, the goddess of speech

Vakshakti – power of speech

Vama – left side; being or situated on the left side; reverse, contrary, opposite, adverse; lovely, beautiful, charming

Vanaprastha ashrama – third stage of life, traditionally from fifty to seventy-five years of age, where one retires from worldly life in order to practise sadhana in relative seclusion; see Ashrama

Vandana – prayer, worship; literally bowing down before God; living like the being one is worshipping and letting go of one's ego; the sixth step of the ninefold path of bhakti

Vani – speech

Varna – colour of a mantra; colour, hue; paint; complexion, beauty; class of men, tribe, caste (especially applied to the four principal castes); race, kind, species; groups of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet; recognition of atma at the level of kaarana, cause

Vasana – knowledge derived from memory; fancy, imagination, idea; false idea, ignorance; wish, desire, inclination; subtle desire; mental disposition; a tendency created in a person by performing an action or by enjoyment, which then induces the person to repeat the action or to seek a repetition of the enjoyment; subtle impressions acting like seeds in the mind capable of germinating or developing into action; the cause of birth and experience in general; desires that are the driving force behind every thought and action in life; passion

Vayu – wind, air; life breath or vital air, often used as a synonym for prana; in Samkhya philosophy vayu is the second mahabhoota, having the special property of touch; god of wind; see Pancha mahabhoota

Vayu tattwa – air element; see Pancha mahabhoota

Veda – knowledge; sacred knowledge, holy learning; the most ancient and authentic scripture of the sanatana dharma composed before 5000 BC, revealed to sages and seers and expressing knowledge of the whole universe. The Vedas are not written by any human (apaurusheya), having been directly revealed by the Supreme Being, Brahman. They are what is heard or revealed (shruti), as distinguished from that which is remembered (smriti). The Veda is therefore free from the imperfections to which human productions are subject. As the sounds forming the text of the Veda occur in the same order and are pronounced in the same manner, it is said to be eternal. It teaches who and what Brahman is, and how Brahman should be worshipped. Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas only amplify its teachings

Vedanta – literally 'the last part of the Vedas'; the Upanishads; Vedanta teaches the ultimate aim and scope of the Vedas. It states that there is one eternal principle (Brahman); philosophy of realization of Brahman; the end of perceivable knowledge, where the mind experiences its own limits and goes beyond them, gaining realization and understanding through that exploration; the school of Indian thought based primarily on the Upanishads. It upholds the doctrine of either pure non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta) or conditional non-dualism (Vishishta Advaita). Vedanta is also called Uttara Mimamsa; one of the six principal systems of Indian philosophy (darshanas)

Veera – man; hero; son; male animal; courageous

Veera bhava – attitude of a warrior

Veerya – heroism, prowess, valour; vigour, strength, energy, firmness, courage; power, potency; efficacy (of medicines); semen, virility; splendour, lustre; the result of mastering brahmacharya according to Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Vibhooti – psychic glory and power; manifestation of divine glory and divine power; pervasion; the special forms in which the Lord exhibits himself; the one

supreme form revealed in all objects of the senses; might, power, greatness; outer expression of the inner reality; supernatural powers acquired by a yogi in the course of the journey towards perfection through purification of the mind; prosperity, welfare; sacred ash

Vichara – reflection; enquiry into the nature of the self, Brahman or truth; ever-present reflection on the why and wherefore of things; enquiry into the real meaning of the maha vakyas (great sayings); contemplation on the real and the unreal

Vidhi – doing; performance, practice, an act or action; method, manner, way, means, mode; rule, commandment, any precept that enjoins something for the first time; sacred precept or rule, ordinance, injunction, law, a sacred command, religious commandment; an explanatory statement coupled with legends and illustrations; any religious act or ceremony, a rite; the 'do's' of living

Vidya – from the root 'vid' or inner knowledge; knowledge, learning, lore, science; higher knowledge, right knowledge, spiritual knowledge; a spell, an incantation; the goddess Durga; as one of the kanchukas of maya meaning limited knowledge; see Kanchuka

Vidyeshwara – soul, being of light and knowledge; the first element to emerge from consciousness which is cosmic and universal in nature, composed of the body of the soul and made of light. The Vidyeshwaras are pure units of Shiva's knowledge, desire and action.

Vijnana – intuitive ability of mind; essential knowledge, higher understanding; knowledge, wisdom; the principle of pure intelligence; understanding; discrimination, discernment; secular knowledge of the self; worldly or profane knowledge derived from worldly experience; science

Vijnanamaya kosha – astral or psychic (higher mental) sheath or body (kosha); one of the sheaths of the soul, consisting of the principle of intellect or buddhi, the subtler level of existence with its vision, intuition, wisdom and power of understanding; the covering of the self that is made of knowledge; see Pancha kosha

Vikalpa – fancy, unfounded belief, imagination; oscillation of the mind; doubt, uncertainty, indecision, hesitation; contrivance, art; option, alternative (in grammar); error, mistake, ignorance; one of the five modifications of mind (vrittis) described by the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali; see Vritti

Vikara – modification or change, generally with reference to the modifications of the mind; impurities (in Samkhya philosophy) which are evolved from a previous source or from prakriti; imperfections; also called mala

Vimarsha – term for the counterpart of prakasha in Kashmir Shaivism; the aspect of prakasha by which it knows itself; the inner nature (swabhava) of Shiva, the self-consciousness of the Supreme; another name for the Shakti aspect leading to the world process

Viparyaya – contrariety, reverse, inversion; change; absence or non-existence; loss of consciousness; complete destruction; error, mistake; distraction of mind; wrong knowledge, wrong cognition; one of the five modifications of mind (vrittis) described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; see Vritti

Vishuddhi chakra – literally 'centre of purification', the psychic/pranic centre located at the level of the throat pit or the thyroid gland and associated with the cervical and laryngeal plexus at the base of the throat. It is the psychic centre particularly connected with purification and communication; see Chakra

Vishaya samsara – objective or sensorial world, the world of the senses; see Samsara

Vishva – cosmos, universe, the whole world; name of the jiva in the waking state; every, everyone; eternal; all, whole, entire; universal; see Vaishvanara

Viveka – discrimination; right knowledge or understanding; sense of discrimination between the self and the not-self, between the eternal and the transitory,

between consciousness and unconsciousness, between Prakriti and Purusha; judgement; consideration, discussion, investigation; distinction, difference; true knowledge

Vrata – vow; resolution to carry out a particular vow under strict rules, e.g. in regard to food, sleep, bathing and the like

Vritti – a modification arising in consciousness; circular movement of consciousness; the five mental modifications described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* are: 1. right knowledge (pramana) 2. wrong knowledge (viparyaya) 3. dream or fancy (vikalpa) 4. sleep (nidra) and 5. memory (smriti); being, existence; abiding, remaining; attitude, being in a particular state or condition; action, movement, function; operation of mind; thought waves; the power or force of a word by which it expresses, indicates and suggests a meaning; patterns, circles; a whirlpool; see Chitta vritti

Vuyha – pairing of six transcendental qualities that make up the body of God according to Pancharatra tantra: 1. sankarshan, consists of jnana (knowledge) and bala (strength) and is the quality to pull out the negativity from another person and destroy it 2. pradyumna, consists of aishwarya (lordship) and veerya (virility), indicating one who is endowed with great radiance or aura 3. aniruddha, consists of shakti (potency) and tejas (splendour or self-sufficiency) producing no obstacles or barriers anywhere

Vyakta – manifest, seen; manifest universe

Vyakta prakriti – manifest nature

Vyavahara – behaviour; worldly activity, relative activity as opposed to absolute being; worldly relation; phenomenal world

Vyoma – space; sky or firmament, ether; another term for akasha

Yajna – sacrifice or sacrificial rite; vedic sacrifice; offering oblations into the fire; yajna consists of three syllables, ya, ja and na, which refer to the three processes involved in every act performed and which must be balanced: production (ya), distribution (ja) and assimiliation (na); yajna has three components: ritual or worship (pooja), satsang, and unconditional giving (dana)

Yajnopavita – sacred thread worn by a new initiate into Gayatri mantra

Yama – self-restraints or rules of conduct that render the emotions tranquil; the first of eight limbs or means of attaining samadhi in the ashtanga yoga of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. The five yamas are: 1. non-violence (ahimsa) 2. truth (satya) 3. non-stealing (asteya) 4. continence (brahmacharya), and 5. non-covetousness (aparigraha); universal moral commandments or ethical disciplines transcending creed, country, age and time; restraint, forbearance, self-control; restraining, controlling, any great moral or religious duty or observance; god of death

Yantra – geometric symbol designed for concentration or meditation in order to unleash the hidden potential within the consciousness; visual form of mantra used for concentration and meditation; astronomical diagram; an amulet; any prop or support

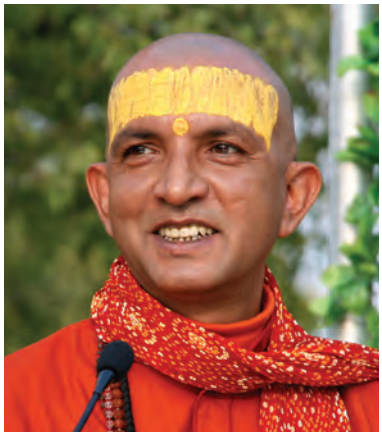
Yati – Dravidian ascetics; earliest sannyasins; to control oneself

Yoga – the root is yuj, meaning 'to join, to yoke, to concentrate one's attention'; a method of practice leading to conscious union of the human being (atman) with the universal existence or Brahman; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, power and spiritual wisdom as well as perfect health, a sound mind and a balanced personality; methods and practices leading to a state of union between two opposite poles, i.e. individual and universal awareness; union, communion; one of the six main systems of philosophy (darshanas) of India

Yogayukta – one who is established in yoga or linked through yoga

Yogamaya – the power of divine illusion; Shakti in the transcendental dimension

Yoni – womb, uterus, vulva, the female organ of generation; any place of birth; source, origin; generating cause; spring, fountain



Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came at the age of four to live with him at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and thereafter for eleven years he lived overseas, mastering skills in varied areas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping establish Satyananda Yoga ashrams and centres in Europe, Australia, North and South America.

At the behest of his guru, he returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and the Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahamsa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994 and the Yoga Publications Trust in 2000 in Munger. He also initiated a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. In addition to steering the activities at Munger, he travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world till 2009, when he received the command to embark on a new phase of sannyasa life.

Author of many classic books on yoga, tantra and the Upanishads, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to nurture and spread his guru's mission from his base at Munger.

SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

Tantra Darshan is an authoritative exposition on the most ancient spiritual tradition of the world by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, a siddha guru and master of esoteric knowledge. Distilling the essence of the vast system of tantra, Swami Niranjan takes one deep into an understanding as well experience of this science of life.

The book provides a perspective on tantra that both illuminates and clears misconceptions. It explains the universal nature of this science and its fundamental precept: the evolution of human nature from its everyday level of perception to a transcendental state of understanding.

Swami Niranjan's penetrating insights unveil the teachings and practices of tantra in a way that enable one to grasp the key features of the system. The book covers the philosophy of tantra, its tools and sadhanas, its progressive codes of conduct, and its five main traditions. Finally, there is a brief account of tantra in the Satyananda Yoga tradition, illustrating the practical and accessible nature of the teachings.

Compiled from discourses that Swami Niranjan gave over a two-year period from 2011 to 2013, at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, *Tantra Darshan* contains the power of a perfected master. The reading of the book itself can be regarded as a sadhana for the liberation of energy and expansion of consciousness, the aim of tantra.



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