



ParaYoga Master Training

Tantra Shakti: The Radiant Power of Yoga



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Glossary



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The Aim of the *Tantra Shakti* Training:

- Explore *tantra* as the most comprehensive approach to yoga, with an emphasis on practice and informed by its philosophical tenets, key theoretic principles and the wisdom of the living tradition.
- Further develop your capacity to apply the principles of *vinyasa krama*.
- Deepen and expand the reach of your yoga practice and/or teaching.
- Accelerate your development both inside and outside the world of practice.
- Learn how to apply *tantra*, its practices and principles to accelerate your development as a practitioner and potentially as a teacher.
- Delve into *tantra* as a yogic methodology for empowerment and self-mastery.
- Grow the skills to apply *tantra*'s exalted wisdom expressly for achieving an exalted life—for you and/or your students.

How to Make the Best Use of the Course:

- Practice!
- Experience—not theory—is the key to self-empowerment and to increasingly embody the wisdom of *tantra*.
- *To know tantra, you must experience tantra.*
- Self-knowledge is the key that opens the door to freedom, success and spiritual progress; it is also a prerequisite to knowing how to help your students thrive.



- Maintain a regular meditation practice.
 - in the earlier stages of meditation, the specific practice you choose to do regularly is less critical than the fact that you are practicing regularly
 - the superior student of yoga and *tantra* makes time for, and learns to, become increasingly comfortable with stillness
 - as you access the realms beyond thought, you connect to the stream of higher intelligence that is the source of these teachings
- Repeat classes and practices, mindful of the specific practices that:
 - challenge you (not necessarily physically)
 - touch on themes that you recognize as significant
 - impact you profoundly
- Continue filling in your practice surveys. This will help you maximize your retention of the material and expand your personal catalogue of the unique impact of each and every technique and sequence.



- When I experienced *tantra*, directly from my teachers it quickly began to transform my life.
- Decades later it continues to do so, positively affecting my inner world, the world around me as well as the diverse roles I play in the world (i.e. seeker, teacher, husband, father and human being).
- *Tantra* is the all-encompassing source of wisdom and techniques at the heart of ParaYoga.
- *Tantra* is as practical as it is profound.
 - its general intent is to ensure that you are forever connected to the inherent sacredness of life and to elevate your relationship to your life as well as self
 - the wisdom of *tantra* sheds light on everything, from the most practical and worldly, to the most subtle and sacred
- In order to fully understand and experience the scope and ultimate promise of yoga, you must draw from the wisdom of *tantra*—perhaps the most life-affirming and all-inclusive spiritual system ever developed and the light of a living tradition.
- In short, *tantra* is a philosophical system that sees the world as sacred and provides a comprehensive science that empowers you to experience it.
- Thus, *tantra* is two things:
 - a philosophical system that sees the inherent sacredness of existence
 - a comprehensive collection of methodologies that unveils this sacredness, making it possible to experience its philosophical core



Why Study *Tantra*?

- From the view of the tradition, yoga is more than *asana*. Most of us have had at least some exposure or, at least have heard of the vast array of principles, theories and methods, beyond *asana*. The following comprises only a partial list of these principles and practices:
 - *bandha*
 - *pranayama*
 - *chakra*
 - *mantra*
 - *kundalini*
 - *kosha*
 - *kriya*
 - *vayu*
 - *guna*
 - *yantra*
- *Tantra* links all of these diverse yoga practices, and much more into a single and integrated system.
- These principles will help you to begin to understand *tantra* and its philosophical core:
 - the universe, and all that is in it, is inherently sacred
 - in order to truly know yourself and the world you must demolish the wall that appears to divide the world of spirit and matter
 - the body is a universe unto itself, an exact reflection of the larger universe outside of it—as the scriptures tell us, “as below, so above,” “what is here is everywhere, what is not here, is nowhere”



- if you understand how to systematically “enter” your body and harness its powers, your body can be a springboard to spiritual awakening
- *tantra* aims to positively impact your outer and inner world, your body, mind, emotions, psyche and spirit as well as life
- The sheer vastness of tantra's reach is one reason it is so widely misunderstood and so easily misrepresented.
 - one can be easily distracted from tantra's deeper intent and aim by isolating any one of its many branches or practices (this is true for even experienced students of *tantra*)
- Our approach to *tantra* is based on tradition—one that has been sustained for centuries by the teacher/student relationship.
- Lineage and tradition is where you find the living experience of *tantra*
- We will specifically focus on the yogic applications of *tantra* that will most effectively help you:
 - expand your view of the world and your self
 - allow you to practice and teach yoga as a holistic science
 - increase your joy, capacity, creativity, freedom and self-awareness
 - further develop your capacity to apply the principles of *Vinyasa Krama* (wise progression)

Tantra Defined

- *Tantra* is the compound of two verbs and the word *tantra* has many meanings.
- The literal definition of *tantra* is to: “expand beyond all limitations.”

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- *tan*, means "to lengthen," "extend" or "stretch"
- *tra*, "to expand," "to move beyond all limitations," "to protect"
- The underlying theme of *tantra* is that you are under the influence of limitations related to birth, society, finances, health, genetics or *karma*.
 - what you do to overcome your limitations is *tantra*
- There are additional definitions that help shed more light on the many facets of the gem called *tantra*.
- The word also means "science" or "body of knowledge."
 - many ancient tantric texts are compilations (of methodologies) of a practically limitless and diverse array of human endeavors
 - e.g. the science of *mantra*, how to save money, how to live in harmony with lunar cycles, improving sleep and memory/ mental acuity, rituals to positively impact your environment, or auspicious times for starting and/or completing worldly activities, healing, health, energy cultivation
 - the point is: tantric wisdom expounds upon methodical approaches to all aspects of life, from the mundane to the spiritual
- Another meaning of the word is: "system," "method" or "technique." Tantric texts provide precise details on a variety of practices, designed to achieve specific spiritual or worldly results.
 - the defining characteristic of tantric practice relates to the principle that upon applying a technique it will spontaneously lead you to greater worldly and/or spiritual auspiciousness —increased freedom, more success, more happiness



- *Tantra* also means "to accelerate."
 - your time is short; your energy limited; thus, wanting to use everything at your disposal (body, breath, mind, astrology, *ayurveda* or diet) to expedite your process of awakening is natural and should be pursued
 - it is vital that you quicken the time it will require for you to achieve your goals and desires
- "Continuity" is another definition of *tantra*. This relates to the principle that not only is it vital that you reach the highest experience of thriving, you must also be able to sustain that experience.
- Yet another literal definition is "to weave," as in the weaving of fabric. This is one of the oldest uses of the term.
 - this refers to the weaving together of the disconnected parts of your self or the coalescing of any gaps in your consciousness
 - it also refers to the bringing together and harmonizing of the inner (spiritual) and the outer (mundane) into one elegant, continuous tapestry
- Finally, *tantra* means, "awe" or "wonder, "to have your heart touched."
 - *tantra's* aim is to unlock a fullness of being—returning you to the state that nature intended for you
 - from this fullness your heart is touched
 - you experience the satisfaction of being moved, filled with supreme joy and of recognizing your life as a gift
 - this is the simple, profound awareness that you are blessed to be alive



The Vision of Tantra

- *Tantra's* ultimate aim is three-fold: fulfillment (*bhoga*), freedom (*apavarga*) and accomplishment (*bhukti*).
- *Bhoga* refers to worldly fulfillment, the desire for which is innate.
 - the desire for pleasure, happiness and success follows us through every step of life
 - rather than judging desire, *tantra* recognizes desire as a constant; if nothing else, you will desire your next breath—even the desire to transcend desire is a desire
 - rather than judging desire as anathema to spirituality and struggling to transcend it, *tantra* sees desire as an expression of the soul/divinity
 - desire accompanied by discernment leads to spiritual growth/freedom
- *Apavarga* (emancipation) is also referred to as *moksha* (liberation).
 - *tantra* also lays out a path of merging our finite self into the Infinite—the ultimate freedom
 - however, tantrics do not try to “transcend” the world, to become a *jivanmukti* (disembodied soul)—one liberated from the body and all its worldly limitations; their highest intention is to experience ultimate oneness while living in and being part of the world
- *Bhukti* refers to “accomplishment.”
 - *tantra* acknowledges that self-knowledge and self-empowerment inspire you to become and to achieve things that reflect your soul's glory



- tantric methodology empowers you to achieve a life of real impact and meaning, in which creativity is heightened and your life plays a vital role of contributing to the whole of which it is a part

The Tenets of Tantra

- Life is sacred. The Sacred pervades all.
 - there is one reality, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent
 - tantric practice is designed to help you cultivate a relationship with this all-pervading, unalloyed and sacred Reality
 - if you don't see or experience the Sacred, it is not because it does not exist; it is because you are seeing it with an instrument that is not yet refined enough to see it
- The tantric formula to attract and/or have a direct relationship with the Sacred: become more like it.
- In other words, to attract the ultimate power and luminosity, become more powerful and more luminous.
 - "when you have rewoven the fabric of your consciousness, when you have returned to the state that nature intended, you will know the Sacred part of yourself..." (Yogarupa)
 - "when you know the Sacred part of yourself, you and your life will be Sacred" (Yogarupa)
- The body is the altar of life.
 - within your body are sacred seats (*pitham*)
 - these sites are laden with concentrated consciousness and power

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- they are beyond the scope of normative perception
- *asana*, *pranayama* and meditation are some of the ways by which you open the subtle energetic channels and thus gain access to these seats of power and grace—portals to the Divine
- There is no energy in the universe that is not in your body; there is no energy in your body that is not in the universe.
 - when you master the energies in your body, you can gain mastery of the forces outside of it
- To fully prosper—whether materially or spiritually—you need power
 - the challenges you face, internal and/or external, have power
 - thus, learning how to increase your power so that you can overcome your challenges is critical to having more fulfillment (*bhoga*), freedom (*apavarga*) and accomplishment (*bhukti*)
 - *tantra* is sometimes called *shakti sadhana* (*shakti* = “power,” “capacity;” *sadhana* = practice), a process of learning to collect, harness and channel your soul’s innate power
- “Energy follows thought.” Three keys to this principle are:
 - “the Fish of *Prana* and the Fish of Mind”
 - *pranadharana*
 - your thoughts energize whatever they focus upon
- “The Fish of *Prana* and the Fish of Mind describes the constant and ever-present relationship between energy (*prana*) and mind (*chitta*).
 - two sides of the same coin, *prana* and mind are constantly following one another; in general, energy follows thought

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- wherever mind goes, so goes energy—e.g. when the mind is scattered/distracted, so is your energy, in the process of thinking about joy or your heart you enliven your joy or your heart
- on a deeper level, the unique quality of your thoughts shape the whole of your energy body, including vayus, nadis, chakras
- on the other hand, through conscious control of your breath, your mind is brought under conscious control
- since it is easier to control your breath and energy than it is to control mind, taking advantage of this relationship (between mind and energy) is a key feature of tantric practice
- *Pranadharana*: the core of tantric methodology revolves around the value of collecting energy, in order to specifically potentize your practice and, in general, to fulfill the intention of your practice.
 - the process of concentrating and intensifying your pranic field is called *pranadharana*
 - by creating a stable and concentrated pranic field, any or all practices: *mantra*, *chakra* meditation, prayer or even a mental resolve are exponentially more potent and alive
 - the center for developing energetic concentration is the mid-brain or 3rd eye
- Whatever you think about, you energize. This is true whether positive or negative. Since energy follows thought, attention must be collected/concentrated.
 - your mind is a focal point, building and enlivening the objects and outcomes occupied by it



- *Tantra* is “the skillful science of energy management.”
(this is how Mani, my first teacher, described *tantra*).
 - if you are skillful, you can consciously shape your energy and thus create a positive direction for your mind
- *Tantra* embraces both a dualistic and non-dualistic vision.
 - *tantra* recognizes the fact that on one level of awareness, you are under the influence of dualism; you are identified with your body, time, good and bad, safe and unsafe, eternal and temporal
 - at this level of consciousness, your choices affect you, your life and your spiritual viability
 - it is unrealistic and impractical to insist that you are not affected by what you eat, your lifestyle and your relationships
 - it is in this context that *tantra* employs yoga and tools such as *asana*, *ayurveda*, *vastu*, *pranayama*, etc. to help you create a level of balance so that you can move beyond duality
 - therefore, be mindful of your relationships, lifestyle, diet, environment, how you breathe, sleep, your nervous system, etc.
 - at the same time, *tantra* asserts that the ultimate Reality is singular, all pervasive—non-dual
 - when you perceive Reality within yourself—as yourself, you will eventually see it everywhere; the Sacred pervades and is not separate from the material world
 - steeped in Oneness, you become and are less affected by, dualistic reality



- Because it is rooted in a fundamentally non-dualistic view of the universe, *tantra* perceives the notions of “good and bad” as projections of mind.
 - *tantra* does not partition the universe into good and bad—it's all sacred
 - a clear mind, free from prejudice, in touch with the Sacred, sees grace pervading everything
 - the Sacred is not confined to the Eternal
 - thus, use and do whatever helps you grow, provided it does not violate the laws of virtue and as long as it does not obstruct anyone else from seeking their highest and best
- A teacher is required to bring *tantra* to life in order for a student to experience the fullness of its authentic transmission.
 - transmitting the depth of their experience, a teacher's experience is alive in their voice and conveyed through *kavi*—whispering wisdom
 - *tantra* is not learned, it is received; the wisdom of *tantra* is received from one who knows and has experienced *tantra*, not from a book
 - the power of revelation is alive within the tradition
 - the tradition provides infinite knowledge from which to draw and to positively impact the whole of your life—most of which is beyond the scope of most students to even imagine
 - trying to invent your own approach to *tantra* is less than ideal because you are confined by the limits of your own perceptions, prejudices and capacities
 - you remain disconnected from centuries of wisdom that have been cultivated and passed down by previous masters



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- a teacher of authority, schooled by a lineage, can perceive your path and needs better than you can
- Conclusion: *tantra* is that which protects you, while accelerating your process of moving beyond your limitations, thus allowing you to experience greater meaning and joy in every area of your life.
- The practice of *tantra* is the systematic application of methods that give you access to the Sacred and help you realize it seamlessly and continuously in your life.
- It is worth noting that many students, who may not have practiced, studied or met a qualified teacher of the tradition, may have heard about or even delved into one aspect of *tantra*—ritual.
- Yet, while ritual or external practices, can be extremely powerful and remarkable, external tantric ritual practice will not be the focus of our studies in ParaYoga.
 - all of the effects and outcomes of external rituals are accessible through a yogic approach, that is to say internal (using *asana*, meditation, *bandha*, *mudra*, visualization and *bhav* and the like)—non-ritualistic approach
 - everything you could want to accomplish through practice—greater joy, capacity, freedom and fulfillment—is accessible through the practices and principles of *tantra* we will explore in depth
- More reasons for focusing on the yogic approach to *tantra*:
 - few tantric rituals can be taught in a group context or are accessible to a wide audience



- rituals require a deep knowledge and mastery of *sanskrit*, along with an understanding of esoteric knowledge and principles and level of discipline—this would exclude most students you will ever come into contact with
- many of the ingredients and elements required in tantric rituals are not readily available
- We focus on what is most practical, accessible and effective about *tantra* as well as where and how *tantra* and yoga combine to offer the greatest benefit to you and those who you will teach. This is the extraordinary world that was introduced to me by teachers.
- More than forty years later, this is the approach to *tantra* that I am most excited to share and, of which I am certain, countless future generations will benefit from the most.