

YOGA TANTRA: A NEW PARADIGM OF LIVING IN HARMONY

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ABSTRACT

We are in the midst of a revolutionary change in human consciousness. Moreover, we are questioning old values, doubting the way we have always done things, trying to make sense of a world which seems to lurch from one crisis to another: oil, food, economy, water. As we know, yoga is as physical as it is mental and spiritual. The benefits we will get from practicing yoga cover all areas of our being: the mind, body and soul and will help us find and achieve harmony in these three aspects of being.

The remarkable changes that have globalized society in the last 20 years are pushing us towards adopting a new paradigm of living. Whether it's be the field of medicine, social justice, the green movement, revelations in science or the spiritual renaissance, we are in the midst of sweeping changes not seen since the dawn of civilization. Hence the explosion of interest in meditation, yoga, alternative healing practices, strengthening of local and a host of other new trends that are reconfiguring the way we think and live.

When one is in harmony with one's self, one sings, internally and externally, the notes of gentleness, mildness, respect, humility, modesty, tolerance and forgiveness. Committing yourself to Yoga Tantra enables you to unlock hidden potential within your mind and body. The ancient holistic tradition of Yoga Tantra is making an increasing impact in the thinking of people everywhere interested in new ways of living in harmony with oneself and the world.

Keyword: Yoga Tantra, New Paradigm, Living in Harmony, Tantric Buddhism.

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Introduction

Society does not advance in a homogenous manner. New paradigms do not emerge in a day or supplant existing paradigms overnight. The new emerges under cover of the old and gradually grows in prevalence until it becomes dominant. The old persists long after it has lost its supremacy and may long continue to serve a functional purpose. Today we have arrived at a critical juncture where perpetuation and extension of the existing paradigm in harmony-living and other fields are grossly inadequate to meet the needs of humanity.

Tantra has been well tested over thousands of years, not in worldly laboratories but in the laboratories of the human body, by Yogi scientists and Tibetan Lamas who were not driven by commerce but by the earnest desire for spiritual knowledge and liberation. Their observations and insights have been passed down to this present generation. The sacred Buddhist scriptures known as Tantra provide detailed instructions on a wide range of topics, including spiritual knowledge, technology, and science. Their content is often paradoxical. In Tantra, science and mysticism go hand in hand, as do sensuality and asceticism. Many of Tantra texts contain detailed guidelines for spiritual practice. From this perspective, Tantra is a vast body of spiritual and physical knowledge, encompassing an array of practices, including all forms of yoga. These practices are aimed at expanding consciousness and liberating oneself "through life and not through escape, using the body as an instrument."

What is a paradigm?

Paradigm means a collection of thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions that dictate your feelings, action and results.⁵ There are these things called 'Paradigms' that are controlling basically everything in life, thoughts, actions, and results. No matter what it is that we want – paradigm will either help us to get there or keep us from getting there. So often we're committing the devastating mistake of living our lives on autopilot – with only small glimpses of inspiration, desire, and passion.

Principles of the new paradigm, that call for fundamental change in the way we approach life. The challenge for us today is to see beyond the innumerable fragments to the whole, stepping back far enough to appreciate how things move and change as a

⁵ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paradigm>, [1 March 2018].

coherent entity. We must learn to see the fluidity, welcome relationships, and recognize that all boundaries are porous.

The well-being of humans is intrinsically tied to the well-being of the earth system. The well-being and flourishing of life on Earth has value in itself, independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. In living systems, the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. Life doesn't make "monocultures" out of people, cultures, or land. Monocultures always collapse because of lack of diverse feedback in a constantly changing world.

Unlike mechanical systems, living systems do not change incrementally. In life, change occurs through fits, starts, surprises, unseen connections, and quantum leaps. Every living system has two tendencies. The first is a self-assertive tendency to preserve its individuality, and the second is an integrative tendency to function as part of a larger whole. Creating a dynamic balance between the two is required for any sustainable community or other living system.

What is Yoga Tantra?

Tibetan exegetes have developed numerous classification systems for tantric texts, the most common of which is a fourfold division into (1) action tantras, (2) performance tantras, (3) yoga tantras, and (4) highest yoga tantras. This method of differentiating tantras was developed in the 13th and 14th centuries and used to classify these text in the definitive version of the Tibetan Buddhist canon by scholar Pudön.⁶

In yoga tantra one visualizes oneself as an actual Buddha, and not merely as a devotee or companion of the Buddha. Yoga tantra consists of two parts: outer yoga tantra and highest yoga tantra. Yoga tantras emphasize internal yoga. One visualizes oneself and the archetypal deity as separate beings, and then one causes the deity to enter oneself. In highest yoga tantra one develops a profound awareness of one's body as being composed of subtle energies called "winds" and "drops" which move through a network of seventy-two thousand "channels". One then generates oneself as a fully awakened Buddha composed entirely of these subtle energies and possessing a Buddha's wisdom consciousness.⁷

⁶ John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 2nd edition, (Canada: Snow lion Publications, 2007), p.279.

⁷ Ibid., pp.281-282.

The first class of tantra, kriya tantra, gets its name from the strong emphasis it places on the external activities. The Sanskrit word kriya is etymologically related to the word karma, which literally means “action.” Thus kriya tantra places great importance on the physical actions we do in our practice, such as maintaining the cleanliness of our body, our environment, and the food we eat. If we are doing a retreat with four sessions, the retreat space must be cleaned in the morning before the first session, and we are encouraged to ensure our body is also clean before each session. We are also not supposed to eat black foods - food and drink that contaminate the body by disturbing the subtle winds. Kriya tantra also prescribes a lot of mudras. Mudras are very precise hand movements or positions. Each mudra has a specific significance, such as the various offering mudras that signify the substances offered. Mudras must be done, and they must be done perfectly. Each of these practices is meant to help the practitioner develop concentration through external activities.⁸

The second class of tantra is charya tantra. The name charya, which literally means “performance,” comes from the emphasis on rituals and recitation in this class. There are many other elements of a deity practice, but the focus here is on knowing how to set up and perform a variety of rituals.⁹

The third class is called yoga tantra. Yoga means “union”, Yoga tantra places more emphasis on internal activities, such as visualizations of the deity and mandala, than the first two classes of tantra.¹⁰

The last class is called highest yoga tantra (sanskrit= anuttara yoga tantra). Here the emphasis is on internal yoga or union with the deity, achieved through practices involving the manipulation of the wind energies within the body. Another unique feature of highest yoga tantra is the practice of taking death, intermediate state, and rebirth into the path. This is perhaps the biggest difference between the three lower classes of tantra and highest yoga tantra, since this is the key method to actualize the resultant stage - the union of the illusory body and the clear light mind. When we can join the most subtle mind with the most subtle of the psychic winds that abides in the center of the central channel, this is the union of the illusory body and the clear-light mind; this is enlightenment itself.¹¹

⁸ Tashi Tsering, Geshe. Gordon McDougall. (ed.). *Tantra: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought Volume 6*. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012)., pp. 83-84.

⁹ loc.cit.

¹⁰ loc.cit.

¹¹ Loc.cit.

According to the Nyingma tradition, within the Vajrayana there are six major tantras.¹² The special characteristic of Vajrayana is pure perception. Through an empowerment transmitted by a tantric master, one sees and actualizes the world as pure land and beings as enlightened ones. With the power or wisdom transmitted in the empowerment and with the extraordinary skillful means of channels, energy, and essence of the vajrabody, tantrists generate the experience of the great union of bliss and emptiness, and this attainment brings the mind, by force, to the point of realization.

The Wonders of Yoga Tantra

Practitioners of yoga tantra view all phenomena as being naturally free from the signs of mental projection and as manifestations of luminosity and emptiness. On the conventional level, meditators train in perceiving all appearances as mandalas of deities. Although trainees of yoga tantra engage in some external activities, ritual is viewed as being symbolic of the primary practice of internal yoga.

Many people all over the world are practicing yoga because it is very relaxing and it has a lot of health benefits. This particular type of exercise had started in the ancient times, and up to this day, it is becoming more and more popular. As the number of schools that are promoting yoga is increasing, and so is the number of practitioners who realize the true essence of this activity.

The art of practicing yoga helps in controlling an individual's mind, body and soul. It brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve a peaceful body and mind; it helps manage stress and anxiety and keeps you relaxing. It also helps in increasing flexibility, muscle strength and body tone. It improves respiration, energy and vitality. Practicing yoga might seem like just stretching, but it can do much more for your body from the way you feel, look and move.¹³

It improves your overall mind and body development

It improves your stamina and communication skills

It betters your relationship with other people

It helps your body repair itself better when injured

It improves and maintains your reproductive health

¹² Nyingma tantric scriptures classify the tantric teachings as three Outer Tantras: Kriyayoga, Caryayoga, *Yogatantra*, and three Inner Tantras: Mahayoga, Anuyoga, Atiyoga. Tulku Thondup Rinpoche. Harold Talbott. (ed.). *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*. (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), p.17, 33.

¹³ Debra Diamond, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, (San Francisco: The Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2013). Pp.

Increases your self-consciousness
 Increase happiness and for longer durations

Part of yoga tantra falls on meditation practice. Meditation with yoga tantra is practiced with the yogi sitting calmly and purifying their mind and heart of chaotic and unnecessary thoughts and desires. The yogi then is allowed to sense the life force within themselves and gradually, through their imagination and their feeling, can direct the life force to rise up through the spine from the tailbone all the way into the neck and then into your forehead.

Benefits of a strong yoga tantra practice are wonderful. We may not see enlightenment immediately and could be disappointed but the benefits that we get through a continuous practice are invaluable and it will offer you a new perspective on viewing the world and people around us.

How Yoga Tantra Changes Your Life?

Yoga Tantra awakens us through our body and our five senses. Yoga helps us move our body. When our 5 senses awaken, we begin to re-wire the neural plasticity of our brain – that means to get out our head and into our body, using our sensuality. So many women are in their heads all the time. They don't have time for themselves. They are analyzing, logically thinking how to create enough time in the day to do their to-do lists, look after their family, do their work, cook the dinner, clean the house etc. Then something happens in life, may be an illness, injury, a death or breakdown, or loss of job, relationship ends that causes to think we cannot keep repeating this.¹⁴

In ancient times people were much more oriented towards feeling rather than thinking, so they were more aware of this subtle aspect of themselves. In modern times we are not, we were taught to 'get on with it', create a 'stiff upper lip'. Now that's why we have to re-learn how to feel.

Tantra transforms your life because Tantra changes your intention for everything. It is a method of practice to expand your consciousness. It is about weaving together everything to transform your relationship with yourself primarily, and your body. This then filters into all of your relationships – family, intimate, co-workers, friendships. Yoga helps the body to open, then the alchemy of Yoga Tantra is magic. As anything in life worth having and worth developing time and commitment are needed.

¹⁴ Rob Preece, *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, (New York: Snow lion Publications, 2006)., pp. 168-175.

Tibetan Tantra or Vajrayana flourishes in America and other countries in a relative if somewhat attenuated form, under the guidance of many Tibetan teachers. There are hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist centres outside Tibet and India, primarily in the Americas and Europe, but also in eastern countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Russia and others. Practices in these centres, with Tibetan gurus or those trained directly by them, emphasize the true Mahayana ideal of rapidly gaining the enlightenment that characterizes a Buddha entirely dedicated to the purpose of relieving the suffering of others. In the Tantric or Vajrayana aspects of this system, harnessing the energies of the body, emotions and mind, including, joy, wrath, is not an end in itself but a potent means to the ultimate goal of realizing the true nature of reality, emptiness or Shunyata, thus attaining complete spiritual enlightenment and relief from the endless dissatisfaction of life, and using the power thus gained exclusively to help others do so as well.

Conclusion

Living in harmony within a family or society provides a wide range of benefits. But before discussing it, we will first discuss about living in harmony in general. Living in harmony within a family and also society is very important because in life, people themselves as social beings who need help from family and society itself. In everyday life of course, will always need help from others, therefore must maintain good relationship will be very good for life later.

Yoga Tantra is a refined form of the ancient Yoga exercise, and it is well-known because of its great impact on the overall wellness of a practitioner. In today's modern living where everything seems to be fast-paced, Yoga Tantra is a great way to get rid of stress and relax the entire body. The different exercises that are being executed would greatly help in generating energy, making a practitioner more productive and a new paradigm of living in harmony.

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