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Tantra Sadhana a Technique of Cultivation of Holistic Healing



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Abstract

Health is wealth is a universal fact and we can't neglect it. It is thoughtful consideration that mankind is entering into another dimension of physical diseases and mental sufferings. Our life has become so mechanical and commercial that we have lost the capacity to understand the real nature of body and mind with the result that we are suffering from physical and mental ailments of various types like tensions, blood pressures etc.

How our body and mind become victim of diseases? Modern science has coined bacteria, virus etc. as causes of disease. India science of medicine, Ayurveda has a different view regarding this. In the words of Caraka, all diseases originate from the foibles of human thinking. They are namely grief, fear, anger, lust etc., which are at the root of diseases. This also reflects that in disease not only body but mind also plays prominent role. This fact has been wonderfully worked out by seers thousands of years back, which at present; we know as psychosomatic disease in modern medical terminology. For Tantra health means harmony between vital forces (prana sakti) and mental forces (citta sakti) which control body and mind respectively. Hence for Tantra, disease means disharmony between these two types of forces.

Keywords: Tantra Sadhana, Holistic Healing, Psychosomatic, Hathayoga, Therapeutic Value.

Introduction

Health is wealth. As it is true for the lay man so also equally it is applicable to the seeker of spiritually. To preserve the wealth of health, human race has found out different kinds of therapies. In the present era, Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda are the leading one. Among these, Allopathy has wide spread influence on mankind as it gives instant cure. At the same time, some of us also become victims of the side-effects of drugs which are, sometimes, severer than the original diseases and detrimental to health.

Is there no way to come out of this? Can't we cultivate our inner power of resistance inherent in body given by nature against disease? Yes, Tantra gives techniques for the cultivation of that power.

The concept of energy is the very core of Tantra on which the whole system stands. The term Tantra comes from the root $\sqrt{\text{tan}}$ which denotes expansion or cultivation. Tantra is a mode of practice (sadhana) through which one can expand the latent power which in Tantra terms is known as Kundalini or Serpentpower. Kundalini is considered as the source of all energies, the universal energy out of which everything manifests.

Tantric sadhana is very difficult to practice and sometimes it also proves dangerous in absence of authentic instructor (Guru). Our body is made of many types of sheaths. They are traditionally classified as Annamaya kosa (Food sheath), Pranamaya kosa (Vital sheath), Manomaya kosa (mind sheath), Vijananamaya kosa (Intellect sheath) and Anandamaya kosa (Bliss sheath). Tantra sadhana starts with the physical body. The goal of the Tantra sadhana is the realization of self. This self resides within the framework of body. Mind and prana are also related with body. So for reaching to the self, these three outer layers should be controlled. Tantra has not only mentioned process of realization but also it shows different ways to control the physical-mental processes which come in the way salvation. That way Tantra works as therapy.

The approach of Tantra system for salvation is unique. Other sadhana systems favour the mortification of mind and renunciation of material world while Tantra has totally different view. It accepts the bodily instincts positively and believes in the gratification of instincts like greed,

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anger, sex which resist any attempt at their eradication or suppression. This shows that they are unavoidable aspects of life. Among all instincts, sex is highly condemned by society. Tantra tells us not to negate sex. Transcend the sex with the help of sex as poison is removed by poison.

Thus physical body and its instincts both are highly esteemed in Tantra system. Actually, Tantra is a process of sublimation from gross to subtle or from physical to spiritual. Unfortunately, this system has been neglected by considering as a sorcery or black magic. We have chosen to focus attention on this important neglected aspect of Tantra.

The seed of the selection of this aspect also lies in the curiosity to know how our ancient seers could live desired life span without having any complication of disease. In my study of Tantra system, I could locate the secrecy of their health. I could see that they must have purified their bodily nerves by pranayama (Breathing process) by purificatory actions (satkriyas) and by Mantras which are scientifically woven in the daily Tantric sadhana. The bodily postures (Asanas) mentioned by the Hathayoga also have tremendous therapeutic value. Ancient seers must have utilized these postures and strengthened their limbs of body.

Lexical and Esoteric Meaning of Tantra

Many definitions have been given for the term 'Tantra'. In the Sanskrit lexicon, the term Tantra has used in many senses. "This term is derived from the root $\sqrt{\text{tan}}$ means 'to spread out'."¹ But what is to be spread out? "It is the spreading out or the expansion of worldly and other worldly knowledge."² Esoterically, the meaning expansion also represents the cultivation of latent physical and mental powers.

Now let us penetrate deeper into the very term Tantra and see what it represents? The term Tantra is a combination of two words namely, Tanoti and Trayate which stand for expansion and liberation respectively. But what is to be expanded and what is to be liberated? Here it is an expansion of mind and liberation of energy. Let us illustrate this point.

Mind functions within a specific circle or limit. It works through the data given by senses. We can see only those things which our optic system allows us to see. We cannot see behind the wall with naked eyes. There are also minute objects in the world which we cannot see through eyes because of its limitations. Like wise, we can hear only those voices which come from the specific range. Same is the case with all senses. This indicates that mind is dependent on sense stimuli and because of this its experiences are very limited.

If we break the boundaries of mind, it can have infinite experiences of varied types. Just not it is a slave of senses. If it comes out of the clutches of sense organs, it can flow everywhere and can enjoy desired experiences. This can happen only after the expansion or liberation of mind from the clutches of sense organs. Simultaneously, the modification of the powers of senses or the transformation of senses through certain practice also expands the area of the functions of mind infinitely.

How Tantra helps in this regards? Tantra sheds light on the way of expansion through techniques (One of the meaning of Tantra is also technique). "Tantra says that allow your mind to move everywhere. Expand the area of mind."³ Mantra helps in this regards. It's a vehicle for awakening the deeper forces laying within one self. A sound is a wave which carries electrical vibrations of energy. The pronunciation of Mantra gives a new dimension to consciousness which penetrates deeper into inner recesses of mind.

For this, Tantra has also prescribed unique types of method of meditation. Tantra is also meditation, but it is a meditation through symbols. These may be linguistic syllables (Mantra) or geographical figures (Yantra). Tantric way of dealing with mind is that, in which one has to attend each and every thought as a mere witness or seer and not to suppress the thought. Give total independence to mind, it will transcend the thought. So both by Mantra and by meditation one can come out from the boundaries of mind and can expand the arena of mind because only unconditioned mind can realize the infinite.

"The other meaning of Tantra is that which saves or protects."⁴ It saves the "Sadhaka from the wordly bondage by the constant meditation (Manana) of the Highest Reality in the form of Mantra."⁵ It also protects Sadhaka from physical and mental ailments. Thus it works as a Therapy. The Sabdakalpadruma, a Sanskrit dictionary also gives the meaning of the term Tantra in which it declares "Tantra as medicine and doctrine."⁶

So Tantra saves Sadhaka both as knowledge and as therapy. With the lamp of knowledge it saves Sadhaka from the darkness of nescience and with the healing process it protects him from physical and mental disorders. Hence it saves Sadhaka from both, spiritual as well as psychosomatic calamities.

Tantra Sadhna

Tantric sadhana is not a sadhana in abstraction but its results and consequences can be realized in everyday life. Tantra sadhana is basically a sadhana of Sakti or energy which is required to be manifested according to prescribed systematic practices. Nobody is left out from the clutches of energy. The very term Sakti is significant in this regards. As the Devibhagvat declare: "In the term Sakti, Sasca stands for superhuman powers (Aaisvarya) and kti for the daring (parakarma)."⁷ Are we not in search of these qualities? We, the lay man, do worship for the fulfillment of the desire for worldly pleasures; while a Tantric initiated sadhaka does this for the sublimation. So here we can get the justification of the significant verse of the Kularnava Tantra in which it declares that "Tantra gives both indulgence or worldly pleasure (Bhoga) and liberation (Moksa)."⁸

How it techniques work, which give such results, generally not possible to be achieved through other systems? Tantra techniques lead positively to the very source of pleasure that is mind. As we know,

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mind is the cause of pleasure and pain. Tantra says that the mind which binds us to the worldly affairs, the same mind can be the instrument of liberation. The potentialities of the mind are immense. We can utilize only the powers of conscious mind which is only a few drops of a sea of mental powers. The rest of the mind, which we are not in a position to utilize, is lying dormant which in terms of psychology is known as subconscious mind. Tantra sadhana is nothing but the awakening or unfolding of those inner potentialities.

Therapeutically, this aspect is also significant. The findings of Dr. Dasture which are published in Times of India, suggest that the "resistance power of mind or will power against disease can prevent the results of the disease like cancer even. And at the same time, a person with a weak mind may become victim of the disease only by mere imagination."⁹

Tantra sadhana is basically designed for strengthening the mind including cultivation of resistance power.

How this sadhana takes place? We come back to our original question. Many essentials are prescribed for the traditional Tantra sadhaka. Among them, the basic one is the competency of sadhaka. As it is said, Tantra sadhana is just like walking on the edge of razor. So for it, guru (guide) is required who can test the fitness of a sadhaka and then initiate him. Initiation is a passport to enter into the realm of sadhana. After having finished some external mode of worship, guru then teaches some inner aspects of worship in which Nyasa (identification), Mudra (Meditation), Bhuta Suddhi (Purification of bodily constituents), Prana pratishtha (Establishment of self) etc., take place. We shall deal with this in detail at proper place.

Now, something about the approach of Tantra sadhana. Tantra accepts the physical body positively hence it also accepts its impulses and instincts. Generally instincts become the cause of bondage but novel view of Tantra is that by gratification of these impulses and senses, one can transcend the limitation of finite experiences. Of course, this path is a slippery one which can lead one to the abyss of downfall if proper care is not taken. Tantra has not overlooked this fact. According to the nature of mental level of sadhaka, "it has prescribed three groups which are termed as the Pasu vira and divya sadhaka or in other terms Tamsika, Rajasika, and Sattvika sadhaka respectively."¹⁰

Essential of Tantra Sadhana

Tantric sadhana system is a sea in which the flows of various systems merge. As it is difficult to contain the sea in a pot, so it is difficult to contain all the details in a research paper. We, therefore, limit our task to present introduction of some of the salient features of Tantra sadhana. Sadhana is that which produces results of material or spiritual type. Whatever may be the result, the outer and the inner purification is the essential aspect of Tantra sadhana. The central point of Tantra sadhana is to worship deity by becoming deity. It means, as Tantra believes, what man worships is not that which is something

outside but his own consciousness itself. Though there are varieties in Tantra sadhana, here, we shall mention only those notions which are largely accepted by all. We here first start with the significant place of guru in Tantra sadhana.

Spiritual Guide: Guru

"Tantra declares that in the term guru, 'gu' stands for darkness while 'ru' stands for removal. Hence guru is he, who removes darkness of nescience."¹¹

Nescience of what? Like all other systems, "Tantra also accepts the identical relationship between the individual self and the universal self. Nescience of this fact is the hurdle in the way of sadhana. Only realized guru who is but Siva himself or the person who has realized Siva within himself can remove this obstacle and because of his, Tantra sees so difference between the Siva and guru."¹²

If a guru and Siva are identical then why lord chooses to manifest Himself through the medium of guru? Why should not He manifest directly? One may have such questions. One of such questions is asked by Parvati to Lord Siva in the Kularnava Tantra. "In response to that question Lord Siva replies that He is subtle, formless and being so, it is difficult to perceive. How then He can be worshipped? So out of compassion, Lord Siva takes the form of guru. Worship of him grants liberation and fulfilment."¹³ And being so, it is also declared by the same Tantra than the "guru is none other than Siva without His three eyes. Visnu without four arms and Brahma without His four faces. These are the symbolic explanation of the various modes of the Higher Reality."¹⁴

What are the characteristics of such a venerable guru? This has been explained in almost all Tantras. The list of the qualities of guru is such along that it takes two chapters in the Kularnava Tantra. Hence it is impossible to reproduce it here. But here we can mention some of them so that the layman can see who can be the real Tantric guru. The first requirement is that guru should be a realized one. Only such person can initiate other person. He also should know the past, present and future. He should be acquainted with the science of Mantra and Yantra also. Guru also should have a capacity to purifying the impurities of all kinds of disciple. Such and others are also the qualities of guru described in Tantra. These types of qualities are almost rarely to be found in a man in this age. But if suppose, somebody gets this type of personality, he would surely realize the glimpse of the higher reality. And because of this "significance, it is declared with reverence that guru can save us from the wrath of even god but nobody can save us from the wrath of guru."¹⁵ Only such an efficient guru can initiate a disciple.

Purification of Body: Bhuta Suddhi

Bhuta Suddhi means the purification of the elements of the body. The purpose of purification is to make clean the internal and external atmosphere of sadhaka's body. The outer purification can be done by bathing etc. and inner by Nyasa, Pranayama etc. As Kapali Sastry thinks, "It must be noted here that the purification of the various limbs, outer physical and

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the inner mind stuff aims not only at the eradication of the narrowing and obscuring influences of the elemental forces and the universal weakness of the lower Nature, but inviting in their place the opposite good influence of the benign forces, the powers of the supra physical worlds. That is why in the actual Bhuta Sudhi, every part is offered to a deity and the group of deities that are invoked to occupy their places in the body vessel, adhara, constitutes indeed the minor gods who are the parivaras (family) of the chosen chief."¹⁶

How the process of purification takes place? Our body is composed of five elements namely, Earth, (Prithvi), Apa (Water), Fire (Teja), Air (Vayu) and Ether (Akasa). Purification or harmony of these is the real Bhuta Suddhi.

Purification of Mind : Nyasa

The process of Tantra sadhana is from gross to subtle. Being subtle, purification of mind comes after purification of body. This inner purification can be done through Nyasa. How this purification takes place?

"The root verb of Nyasa is √Nyas – to place. With the help of the reference of Kapali sastriar, we could see the Bhuta Suddhi does not mean only removal of bad elements or impurities but also placing of good thoughts or divinity."¹⁷ After dissolving the sinful body and building spiritual body through imagination the body is to be instilled with prana or deity. The process of establishing deity starts with Nyasa. Like Bhuta Sudhi, this process also should be done mentally.

There are various types of Nyasa. Namely, Mantra nyasa, Mahasodha nyasa, Karanyasa etc.

Installation of Life: Prana Pratistha

Prana Pratistha is a unique contribution of Tantra sadhana to the oriental sadhana system. In the external worship, at initial level, sadhaka worships an image of Siva or of Visnu or of devi. At little advanced level Yantra, images of deities like Siva, Brahma or Visnu present higher reality into gross form. A step advance, in this direction of "gross to subtle" is presented through replacing image by Yantra, which is a diagram on the plate with seed letters or numbers symbolizing the union of the gross and subtle or individual self-consciousness with the divine consciousness, worship takes place instead of image worship it. The details of this, is given in all the Tantric works which are related with Tantra sadhana.

Mantra

The place of Mantra in the Tantra sadhana is very significant. Not a single Tantric rite is done without Mantra.

The root verb of Mantra is √man means to meditate. In the Nyasa we saw the significance of thought power. Mantra is nothing but the condensed form of that thought power. And that is why proper pronunciation and concentration on it gives result.

In the Mantra sadhana, Mantras are divided into four groups namely, friendly, serving, supporting and destroying. At the time of initiation, guru according to the nature of disciple gives the proper

Mantra and that Mantra should be done constantly. This is known as Japa.

Japa

Japa means repetition of Mantra. This process cultivates power of concentration. After sitting in any convenient posture in the silent place, sadhaka recites the Mantra into which he has been initiated.

Japa is of three kinds: (1) Vacika Japa in which Mantra is uttered audibly, (2) Upamsu Japa in which only movement of lips in visible but no voice is heard and the last one is (3) Mansika Japa which is considered as the highest form of Japa in which only repetition takes place with a single mind. One thing should be remembered here that only mechanical repetition does not create anything for the effective result, one has to do Japa with faith, aspiration and devotion.

"How Mantra-Japa does this that we shall see in the words of Aurvindo, The Word is a sound expression of the idea. In the Supra physical plane when an idea has to be realized, one can, by repeating the word expression of it, produce vibrations which prepare the mind for the realization of the idea. That is the principle of the Mantra and Japa. One repeats the name of the Divine and the vibration created in the consciousness prepare the realization of the Divine."¹⁸

Bhava : Mental Disposition

In the Tantric sadhana Bhava or mental disposition plays a prominent role. As we have seen throughout the essentials of Tantra that, Tantra lays stress on the mental worship. As has been accepted in the psychology, we become what we think. Thought has such a power that it can transform the personality of the thinker. The reason for this is that thought is directly related with mind and mind is considered as the moulder of personality. Tantric sadhana is based upon this principle. Due to significance of thought power Tantra lays stress on mental aspect in sadhana.

"Tantra has accepted the importance of mental disposition (Bhava) in sadhana to the extent that – as Rudra yamala declares deity does not reside in a stone or clay but it abides in a mental disposition or Bhava."¹⁹

The purpose of sadhana pre-supposes a duality of worshiper and worshipped. This duality exists till the identity between the devotee and the deity is established. Tantra has prescribed the different stages between the way of duality to identity. These stages are according to the mental tendency (Bhava) of sadhaka.

Pasu Bhava

Jiva is known as Pasu. The root verb of the term Pasu is √pas means bondage. The person who is in bonds of desires or Vasanas in Pasu. In the early stage of life, individual being is known as Pasu. The reason is that, at that time he is under the control of sense organs and desires.

In this Bhava, Tamas (Inertia) element is predominant. Lethargy (Alasya) and rigidity (Jadya) is the characteristic of the Bhava. Due to nescience (Ajnana), which is also one kind of bondage (pasa)

person plays only at gross or external level. Due to lack of this competency, he can not penetrate deeper into the subtle meanings of the sadhana process.

Vira Bhava

At this stage, Rajas (Activity) element is predominant. Those who can discriminate the real pleasure from pain also who has got control over senses, greediness, lust, anger etc. he comes under the realm of Vira bhava.

Only Vira sadhaka are permitted to utilize the 5 M's in sadhana because they have controlled their senses, and in such a sadhaka there is no possibility of decline.

After having controlled the senses, sadhaka enters into the third Bhava, that is Divya bhava.

Divya Bhava

"As Rajas is predominant in the Vira bhava, here in this Divya bhava, Sattva element is predominant. At this level as the Mahanirvana Tantra declares, sadhaka transcends the duality (Dvandvatitama)²⁰ of worshipper and worshipped.

So thus, sadhaka who has transcended the dualities and has established the identity with the desired deity is known as he who is possessed of divine bhava.

These three Bhavas are stages in sadhana. "It is victory of sadhaka in which sadhaka always goes upward from Pasu to Vir and from Vira to Divya bhava."²¹

Research Design

This is a literary research, where the tantra sadhna is analyzed and evaluated as a disciplinary aspect of realization. The process of an awakening or realizing these potentialities is the sadhana aspect of Tantra. Sadhana stands for activity or exertion sadh = to exert. So in sadhana.

Sadhaka has to follow or to do something (Kriyatmakam) for achieving the goal.

The study was conducted considering following steps.

1. Systematic review of scriptures, traditional yogic text and research literature.
2. The ancient as well as modern literatures were reviewed systematically to identify the major dimensions of human power.
3. Source of Data Collection: Each of the selected yogic texts (Tantra Asana, the truth about Tantra kularnava Tantra etc.) modern research reports is available in the R.D.V.V. Library Jabalpur (M.P.) India.

Procedure of Data Collection

Since this is a literary research, the investigator intended to collect information pertaining to this study from library and websites. The researcher fully concentrated on the literature available in the R.D.V.V. library.

Data Analysis

Importance of Tantra Sadhna that claims to achieve human Power health related fitness and values, were identified, accumulated and categorized. They were then interpreted logically with scientific reasoning.

Objective of the Study

In this age of modern science and technology if we observe the general health state of mankind we have to accept that in spite of the major advancement in the field of health care, we are losing our axis of balance and harmony at all levels. Physical, mental, emotional ethico. Social and spiritual and thus we are living in the world of mounting tensions in every sphere of life without having much sense of direction of healthy life and living. Moreover, what we are presently doing is just trying to overcome our psychosomatic problems by opting one pathy or the other at superficial level, without going to the roots of these problems, that may give us a temporary relief but cannot provide a permanent solution and therefore, the need of the hour is to find our deep underlying roots of the "inner disturbances"

The approach of Tantra Sadhna is highly positive. It is the message of Tantra, that nothing is to be neglected everything is to be your body – power, make it more and more powerful strengthen like a rock. Prepare body and mind to the extent that, it can endure any disturbance of outer and inner world.

Conclusion

Like realization of reality, unfoldment of physical and mental powers is also one of the goals of any sadhana system. Sadhana is a key through which one can open the treasure of infinite powers. Tantra has done this job very significantly and because of this, Arthur Avalon says "Infact both popular and esoteric Hinduism is, in its practical aspect, largely Tantric."²²

Throughout the Tantra sadhana, we could see that process of Nyasa, Bhuta Suddhi, etc. is nothing but the various techniques for mastering and unfolding physical – mental powers. This requires purified body-mind complex which is possible through Mantra and Hathayogic asanasa (postures) and pranayana which are inclusive aspects of the Tantra sadhana.

Through Hathayogic techniques body becomes free from diseases and through Mantra sadhana, mind becomes calm and concentrated. This also secures the therapeutic aspect. Consistent positive thinking which is possible only in concentrated mind, can heal any diseases. This is core of the thought therapy which has been found out in present time.

For the desired results in the Tantra sadhana, ritual commences with the resolution (Samkalpa). This resolution strengthens the mind of a sadhaka and also cultivates his Will power which is the source of all power.

The result of Tantric sadhana is very quick, effective and enduring. At the same time, there is also a limitation of it. This sadhana as the Kularnava Tantra declares, is to walk on the edge of a razor, so for safety of a sadhaka, an experienced and authentic guru is required which is rarely possible. So for a Tantra sadhaka, it is really a problem to have a realized soul as guru.

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Tantra sadhana is a tree which is full of flowers and fruits of supernatural powers but a guru prevents his disciples to utilize it for mundane pleasure.

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