CHAPTER THREE

SALIENT FEATURES OF TANTRA

Tantra emerged, flourished, declined and also survived during its long journey. In its long journey, Tantra had to face stiff challenges. In spite of bitter criticisms and strong oppositions from all corners, Tantra occupies the most important position in the history of Indian Culture and Hindu Religion. The salient features of Tantra attracted the millions of people. Scholars cannot overlook Tantra for its undying nature. No philosopher can withdraw his/her attention from Tantra for its salient features. Some of them are discussed in this chapter.

1. REVEALED

In spite of differences among the scholars, most of them confirm the divine authorship of Tantra. According to them, Tantra is revealed\(^1\) and Apauruseya.\(^2\)

_Saundaryaloharī_ says\(^3\) that sixty four Tantra texts are emanated from Lord Śiva.

Tantra's divine authorship is asserted when Devī says to Śiva.\(^4\)

\[tvaya kṛtāṁ tantrāṁ jivottaraṇahetave\]

You emanated Tantra for the emancipation of beings.

Lord Śiva Himself authored Tantra in different forms and different parts for various purposes.\(^5\)

1. TMV, p. 20.
2. TSRL, p. 19.
3. SL, 31 sl.
4. MN, 1/49.
In Yogini Tantra, Lord Śiva says:

Oh Goddess! Now I speak to you of the rare Tantra.

Lord Śiva Himself says that He and Pārvatī emanated Tantra.

2. ANTIQUITY

Tantra cult is very old. It is not possible to fix the exact date of the origin of the Tantric Cult. Scholars view that it is pre-historic cult. Tantric Literature's most ancient form is unknown to us. But its antiquity is proved from the fact that in the Vedic and post-Vedic Literatures, references of Tantra are made. Undoubtedly the Tantric Cult is older than Tantric Literature. Despite controversial opinions, it is a common view that some Tantric texts are fairly old and some are obviously modern. Some opine that it appeared in the beginning of the Christian Era and the latest of Tantric works came down as late as ever the 18th or the 19th century A.D. Some place Tantra in between the 7th century A.D. to the 19th century A.D. According to some, it emerged in the fifth or the sixth century A.D. and it gained popularity from the 7th century A.D. and began to decline from the 14th century A.D.

6. YOG, 1/1/22.
7. PT, 1st kh, 9th pari.
8. PBS, p. 181.
9. HPH, p. 15.
10. FC, i, p. 174.
12. TIB, p. 41.
14. ŚCAI, p. 150.
15. HOD, v, ii, p. 1073.
3. FORM

Tantra is generally cast in the form of dialogues between Lord Siva and his consort Parvatī. When Lord Siva is asked by Parvatī and He replies, it is generally called Āgama. When Lord Siva asks and Parvatī replies, it is called Nigama.

Lord Siva is the speaker and Parvatī is the listener in Kulārṇava Tantra, Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, Yogīnī Tantra, Toḍala Tantra, Nirvāṇa Tantra, Kuhbir Tantra and in many other Tantra works.

In Kulārṇava Tantra, Parvatī asks Lord Siva to tell about Kulācāra. Lord Siva replies, Devī asks, 'O God, Kulesa, Honoured by all lokas, ocean of kindness, I desire to listen to Kulācāra. Please tell me.'

Then Siva replies, 'O Devi, I am telling what you ask.'

In Rudrayāmala Tantra and Saḍāmnāya Tantra, Parvatī is the speaker and Lord Siva is the questioner and listener.

Matsyasūkta is a work on Tantra in the form of a dialogue between Paśārā and Virūpākṣa.

In Vārahī Tantra, the dialogue occurs between Guhyakālikā and Caṇḍa-bhairava.

17. HOD, v, ii, 1051 p.; POT, 83 p.
18. RUY, Introduction.
20. KNT, 11/1-2.
21. TK, p. 337.
In *Hāṅgavilāsa Tantra*\(^{23}\), the subject matter is in the form of a dialogue between the author and his wife.

In the Introductory Chapter of *Laliṭā-Sahasranāma*,\(^{24}\) Agastya, who has been listening to the account of the deeds of the Goddess given by Hayagrīva, as set forth in the Lalitopākhyāna, asks the latter why he did not include in his narrative the thousand names of the Goddess —

"But you have not told me the thousand names of Laliṭā Devī. Have you forgotten to do so or have you deliberately refrained? or am I unworthy of having the names?"

Thus questioned, Hayagrīva replies,

‘I did not tell you, because I thought it was a secret. Now that you have asked me with devotion, I will impart to you.’

Thus he gives him the thousand names.

In *Gandharva Tantra*\(^{25}\), Śiva is the speaker and Pārvatī is the questioner and listener too. But in the 40\(^{th}\) chapter, Lord Śiva and Pārvatī change their positions. Śiva becomes the questioner and Pārvatī the replier.

*Tripurā Rahasya*\(^{26}\) is in the form of a discourse delivered by Haritāyana to Nārada.

*Piṅgalamatat*\(^{27}\) is in the form of a dialogue between Goddess Piṅgalā and Bhairava.

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23. BTL, p. 189.
24. LSA, Introduction.
25. GAND, 40/1.
26. NLT, p. 72.
27. Ibid., p. 90.
4. STORE-HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE

Tantric Literature is vast. It is basically a Sādhanā Śāstra. Keeping this feature intact, Tantra either deals with or refers to almost all the subjects that were studied during the Tantric Period. From Philosophy to Science – all the subjects are either discussed or referred to in Tantra. Following are the subjects that are dealt with or referred to –


In this context a scholar comments:\textsuperscript{28}

The Tantra deals with all matters of common belief and interest from the doctrine of the origin of the world to the laws which govern kings and the societies, which have been divinely appointed to rule, medicine and science generally. The Tantra is not only the basis of popular Hindu practice, on which account it is known as the Sādhanā Śāstra, but is the repository of esoteric belief and practices, particularly those relating to Yoga and Mantra tattva.

5. POSITION OF WOMEN

Sri Sri Cand\textsuperscript{29} says,

\textit{vidyāḥ samastāstava devi bhedāḥ}

\textit{striyāḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu}

All the various knowledges, O Goddess, are portions of You, as is each and every woman in the various worlds.

\textsuperscript{28} POT, pp. 49-50.

\textsuperscript{29} ŚC, 11/6.
Devī with all Her aspects is there in woman. Thus Tantra gives the highest honour to women. A woman is considered to be the embodiment of the Supreme Śakti who pervades with universe.

Women have as much as right as men to participate in the rituals of Tantra, a feature which is notable for its absence in the Vedic ceremonial religion.

According to Śrīvidyārnava Tantra, women are gods and goddesses, souls and lives—

straīya devāḥ strīyaḥ prāṇāḥ strīya eva hi jīvitam.

A woman can be initiated. Moreover, a woman has the every right to be a Guru. It is considered to be an auspicious act if a Sādhaka is initiated by a woman Guru.

straīya dīkṣā śubhā proktā sarvakāmaphalapraddā.

A Sādhaka worships his Śakti (wife or Patnī) in Cakra. 

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra prohibits a householder from torturing his wife. He is advised to protect his devoted wife like mother and not to leave her even in times.

30. ŠAS, p. 164; IMG, p. 96.
33. MOT, p. 5.
34. ŚVT, p. 383.
35. ATV, pp. 64-65.
36. ŠĀKT, 2/15, TPRN, 1/20.
37. GUP, 2/16
38. Ibid, 4/34
39. MN, 8/39.
of greatest misfortune.

The same Tantra\(^{40}\) further says that one should please his wife by riches, clothes, love, respect and pleasing words –

\[
dhanena \text{ vāsasā premnā śraddhayāmṛtiabhāṣanaiḥ} \\
satataṁ toṣayeddārān nāpriyāṁ kvacidācaret
\]

In this democratic age, it is often alleged that many guardians are indifferent to the education of girls. But Tantra gives much importance on woman education. Mahānirvāna-Tantra\(^{41}\) says that girls (daughters) should also be given education.

Māyā Tantra\(^{42}\) warns that a wife can never be forsaken –

\[
naiya tyājyā svakāmini
\]

Yogini Tantra\(^{43}\) says that virgins belonging to all castes are to be worshipped.

Mūḍhamālā Tantra\(^{44}\) also says that all the girls and women irrespective of caste are to be worshipped.

Kulāśrava Tantra\(^{45}\) says that a woman is to be revered and even if she be guilty of a hundred wrongs, she is not to be hurt even with a flower. It is a sin to speak disparaging of any woman.

Kaulāvalīnirguṇa Tantra\(^{46}\) says that the whole universe is the manifestation of a woman.

\(^{40}\) Ibid, 8/42.

\(^{41}\) MN, 8/47.

\(^{42}\) MAY, 11/36.

\(^{43}\) YOG, 1/17/31.

\(^{44}\) MM, 5/19-21.

\(^{45}\) KNT, 11/65.

\(^{46}\) KN, 10/71.
strīmayaṇca jagatsarvam

Women are the parts of Devī. 47

Śaktisahgama Tantra 48 says that women are gods and goddesses, creation and beneficient.

According to Nirvāṇa Tantra 49, even an ugly woman should not be neglected. Person who neglects an ugly woman, will lose his sons and wealth and become a Cāṇḍāla.

Pheṭkārinī Tantra 50 says that women should not be hated and should be worshipped.

strīdveso naiva kartavyo viṣeṣāt pūjanaṁ striyāḥ.

According to Devī Bhāgavata 51, if a woman is insulted Prakṛti (Nature/Divine Mother) is insulted as women are born of the Kalā portion of Prakṛti.

Tārā Rahasya 52 says that all women are forms of Devī.

We may quote the view of a scholar 53

‘This worship of women as the Devī Herself had a tremendous social effect. In the West, the status of women was raised after the introduction of the Christian worship of Mary – the Mother. But the prominent note is worship of youth and beauty through the ages established the worship of Mother in the family and in

47. Ibid, 15/104.
48. ŚASA (Kāli), 3/142.
49. NV, 11/36.
50. PTK, 11/17.
51. DB, 9/1/137.
52. Tārā Rahasya as quoted in TTT, p. 56.
53. HSO, pp.46-47.
society, which evidently is the result of the worship of God as the Mother. The new world order is coming. The barriers of country and culture and race are slowly being obliterated. Swami Vivekananda believed that the contact of the Eastern Motherhood and the Western Wifehood will be harmoniously developed to the advantage of both. Tantra accepts both the Motherhood and the Wifehood of women, which must be the total attitude of a balanced culture.6

6. NO CASTE-ISM

Indian culture is based on the principle of unity-in-diversity. The Hindu caste system was originally based on this principle. But in course of time it became more and more rigid and deprived the people of the lower castes of the privileges which were enjoyed by those of the upper castes.54

Tantra has two divisions – (i) The Dharma of society (Samāja), (ii) The Dharma of spiritual culture (Sādhanā). According to the regulation of Samāja Dharma, caste acknowledges caste. But in Sādhanā Dharma, there is no caste distinction.55 We only find the question of fitness or worthiness in Tantra.

According to Kulārṇava Tantra,56 there is no caste in Cakra –

jātiḥmada na cakre 'asmin.

Tantra also warns that a person who is stick to casteism in Cakra, is cursed by the Yoginis.57

All persons become Brahmins in Cakra. They return to their original caste.

54. PFH, p.80.
55. ŠAŚ, p. 22.
56. KNT, 8/101.
57. Ibid, 8/103.
soon as Cakra ends.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{verbatim}
pravṛtте bhairavicakre sarve varṇāḥ dvijātayah
nivṛtте bhairavicakre sarve varṇāḥ prthak prthak
\end{verbatim}

\textit{Mahānirvāṇa Tantra}\textsuperscript{59} says that as touch cannot affect food and the like offered to Brahmin, so there is no distinction of caste in food offered to thee.

The same Tantra\textsuperscript{60} further says that when seated in the Bhairavī Cakra, men of all castes composing it are like the best of the twice-born, but when the circle is broken, they revert again to their own respective castes.

Lord Śiva says\textsuperscript{61},

'In this circle there is neither distinction of caste nor impurity of food. The worshippers in the circle are My image, there is no doubt about that.'

\textit{Mahānirvāṇa Tantra}\textsuperscript{62} warns that he, who, whilst in the circle makes distinctions of caste, descends to a terrible hell even though he should have gone to the very end of the Vedānta.

\textit{Devi Rahasya}\textsuperscript{63} also echoes that in Cakra all castes become Brahmins.

\textit{Kaulavaliśnirnaya}\textsuperscript{64} also warns that he, who, whilst in Cakra makes distinctions of caste, is eaten by Yoganī and is cursed by Candikā. Moreover, all become Śiva and there is no distinction of caste in Cakra. When seated in the Bhairavī Cakra, men of all castes become Brahmins.

\textsuperscript{58.} Ibid, 8/96.
\textsuperscript{59.} MN, 6/198.
\textsuperscript{60.} Ibid, 8/180.
\textsuperscript{61.} Ibid, 8/181
\textsuperscript{62.} Ibid, 8/195.
\textsuperscript{63.} Devī Rahasya as quoted in AP, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{64.} KN, 8/47-48.
Tantra\textsuperscript{65} also declares that all Śāktas are Brāhmaṇas

\textit{Yogini Tantra}\textsuperscript{66} says that there is no distinction of caste in Kumārī Pūjā. If anyone makes any distinction of caste, he goes to hell and never comes back –

\begin{equation*}
\text{jātibheda na kartavyah kumārīpūjane śive}
\end{equation*}

\begin{equation*}
\text{jātibhedāṃmaheśāni narakāṇna nivartate.}
\end{equation*}

7. PRACTICAL

Tantra is above all a practical Śāstra primarily concerned with action (kriyā) and ritual. The Hindus have everything regarding Sadhāna in Tantra, which, on this account, is called the Sadhāna Śāstra. Sadhāna includes in itself both worship (Pūjā) and all its rituals. Tantra is thus a practical Śāstra as it affords the direct proof of experience. Moreover, in Tantra, the importance of book knowledge is secondary.\textsuperscript{67}

As Tantra is full of rituals that are connected with physical and mental exercises, it is practical. A little acquaintance with the Tantric rituals speaks of Tantra’s practical nature. Important Tantric rituals are - Dīkṣā (Initiation), Pūjā (Worship), Kumārī Pūjā (Virgin Worship), Śaṭkarma (Six magical rites), Homa (Sacrifice), Bali (Animal Sacrifice), Šava-Sadhāna (Sadhāna on the dead body), etc.

All these rituals are practical. Hence a scholar comments.\textsuperscript{68}

\textquote{In Tantra, there is ninety-nine per cent practice and practice produces theory.} \textquote{In Dīkṣā, practical activities are connected. A Śisya has to perform some essential duties before the Initiation Ceremony. These are performed during the first three days before the Initiation. These are shaving...}

\textsuperscript{65} MM, 1/2/6
\textsuperscript{66} YOG, 1/17/31-32.
\textsuperscript{67} DOT, i, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, p. 178.
bath, taking of vegetarian food or on fasting, uttering Gayatri Mantra, lying on Kusa bed.

On the day of the Initiation the following activities are performed –

Guruvarana (Welcoming of Guru), Ghaṭa-sthāpana (Installation of Ghaṭa). Mantra - Devatā – Pūjā (Worship of the Devata of Mantra), Abhiṣeka of Śiṣya with water performance of Homa, Śiṣya Pūjā (Worship of the Śiṣya by the Guru). Nyāsa (Identification of different parts of body and utterance of Mantra), Mantra-dāna (Giving Mantra to Śiṣya), Guru Dāśīṇa and Brāhmaṇa-bhojana.

In case of Pūjā, following rituals are performed – Dinakṛtya (Performance of necessary morning duties), Snāna (Bath), Pādaprakṣālana (Washing of feet), Ācamana (Rinsing of the mouth), Bhūtasuddhi (Purification of elements), Nyāsa (Identification of different parts of body with the pronunciation of Mantras), Dhyāna (Meditation), Prāṇapratisthā (Installation of Prāṇa/Sakti in the Image), Japa (Utterance of Mantra) and Homa (Sacrifice) etc.

The Guru and the Śiṣya remain always active in performing all the rituals.

Ṣaṭkarma of Tantra is totally practical.

Regarding the practical nature of Tantra, a scholar comments.69

“The study of the Vedānta may produce big intellectual giants and may help students to formulate philosophical theories but practically it has no value if it is not accompanied by Sādhanā .......... Both theory and practice are of utmost importance to reach the Highest Goal. They should go together.

‘Whereas other Sastras are concerned with speculation only, the art of medicine and Tantra are practical, self-evident and prove themselves at every step’.”

69. MT, vii, Introduction, p. 5.
8. CRYPTIC LANGUAGE

Tantra is really an occult science. Like all occultism throughout the world, its teachings are veiled under the garb of cryptic language. People who are uninitiated in the mysteries of deep spiritual significance embodied in the cryptic language, very often misinterpret these and later on emerge themselves in dark and obscene and definite immoral practices with the false idea. The symbolic language of Tantra is called Sāndhībhāṣā, i.e., Twilight Language, secret language or intentional language.

Examples of cryptic phrases are — ‘inserting his organ into the mother’s womb’, ‘pressing his sister’s breasts’, and ‘placing his foot upon the Guru’s head’. In Sāndhī terminology the ‘organ’ is the ‘contemplating mind’, ‘the mother’s womb’ is the Mūlādhāra Cakra or base center. The sister’s breasts are ‘heart center (Anāhata Cakra). The Guru’s head is the brain center (Sahasrāra).

Saundaryalohaśi says, — ‘Oh! Mother, the letters — ka, a, e, la, ha, sa, ka, ha, sa, ka, la joined to the three HRIMS, became your name and form.’

śivaḥ saktih kāmah kṣitiratha raviḥ śīlakiraṇaḥ  
smaro hāṁsāḥ śakrastadānu ca paramāraḥharayaḥ  
amī hṛllekhābhistisṛbhivāsavāṇeṣu ghaṭitā  
ḥhajante te varṇāstava jananī nāmāvayavatām.

This stanza gives the secret sixteen-lettered Mantra of Śrī-Vidyā in the cryptic language.

Here Śiva = Ha, Śakti = Sa, Kāma = Ka, Kṣiti = La, Hṛlekhā = Hrim. These words are joined. Then a Mantra is formed. ‘Ha Sa Ka La HRĪM’. It is called Bāgghavakūṭa. Again Ravi = Ha, Śīlakirana = Sa, Smara = Ka, Hāṁsā = Ha, Śakra = La. HRĪM is added to those letters. Then the Mantra is — Ha Sa Ka Ha La HRĪM. It is called

70. TW, p. 32.
71. Ibid, p. 32.
72. SL, 32 sl.
Kāmarāja Kūṭa. Then Para = Sa, Māra = Ka, Hari = La, HRĪM is added to these letters.
The Mantra is Sa Ka La HRĪM. It is called Śaktikūṭa. These three Mantras form the
sixteen-lettered Mantra of Śri Vidyā.

Śaradāśīlaka\textsuperscript{73} says that the twelve lettered Mantra of Tvarītā is – Tārā, Māya,
Varma-bija, Rddhi added to the eleventh vowel, then Kūrma, Bhagavān, Kṣa, Sīr,
Dīrghatanucchoda, Bhagavān added to Saṁvarta and lastly Māyā. All these are cipher
words. The original meaning of these words are –

Tāra = AUM/OM, Māyā = HRĪM, Varma-bija = HUM, Rddhi = KHE. Kūrma,
CA, Tadantya Bhagavān = CHE, Kṣa, Sīr, Dīrghatanucchoda = HUM, Bhagavān,
Saṁvarta = Kṣe, Phadanta, Māyā = HRĪM PHAT. Then these constitute the twelve
lettered Tvarītā Mantra.

\textbf{AUM HRĪM HUM KHE CA CHE KṢAḤ STRĪ HŪM KṢE HRĪM PHAT}

In \textit{Tantra-raja-Tantra}\textsuperscript{74}, there is a cryptic style of writing adopted to keep the
contents concealed and those who have the key can only read. The notes to the verses are
also in the same character. These verses describe only the different kinds of wine to be
used in the worship.

9. REBIRTH

According to S. Radhakrishnan\textsuperscript{75}, ‘The doctrine of rebirth has had a long and
influential history’.

Tantra accepts the doctrine of rebirth. It does not, however, acknowledge it a
mere matter of argumentation or reasoning, but like a geographical map, it makes clear

\textsuperscript{73} ŠAT, 10/1-2.
\textsuperscript{74} TART, 8/72-90.
\textsuperscript{75} PFH, p. 234.
the unending chain of existence of Śādhaka.\textsuperscript{76}

A present life is preceded by many others and will be followed by many more. The spirit of the new born babe does not come from nowhere but it is implanted in the physical fetus following its release from another body that has died.\textsuperscript{77}

The doctrine of rebirth is explained thus\textsuperscript{78} –

A speck of Supreme Energy shoots out from the main lump. It will take the form of a grain of sand on the breast of the Earth. After several thousand years, several such grains of sand will cluster together to form a piece of stone, or a hump of clay, moulded or burnt with a certain shape, that is another birth. That quantity of clay with the help of water will give birth to amoeba, germs, jelly, insects, ants, etc. That is another birth. With this process of gradual culture the supreme energy passes through several births.

Tantra says that after undergoing 84 lacs of births, soul gets the attire of man.\textsuperscript{79}

After crossing many stages in the final stage, a Tantrik Śādhaka becomes a Parama Haṁsa, who is liberated whilst yet living. It must not, however, be supposed that each of these stages must necessarily be passed through by each Jīva in a single life. On the contrary, they are ordinarily traversed in the course of multitude of births. The weaving of the spiritual garment is recommenced where, in a previous birth, it was dropped on death. In the present life a Śādhaka may commence at any stage. If he is born into Kaulācāra, and so is a Kaula in its fullest sense, it is because in previous births he has by Śādhanā in preliminary stages, won his entrance into it. According to Niruttun\textsuperscript{79} –

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{76} POT, p. 562.
\end{flushleft}
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{77} CCC, p. 13.
\end{flushleft}
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{78} HRC, p. 114.
\end{flushleft}
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{79} NV, 2/5-6; ŠRC, 1/6; KN, 1/27; ŠĀKT, 1/21; RUY, 1/157.
\end{flushleft}
Tantra⁸⁰, the knowledge of Sakti is acquired after many births.

According to Mahānirvāṇa Tantra⁸¹, it is by merit acquired in previous births that the mind is inclined to Kaulācāra.

Kulārṇava Tantra⁸² says that as a leech goes from one grass to another grass, Jīva goes from one body to another body. Getting the next body, it leaves the previous body.

Tantra compares this rebirth to the journey from one house to another house.¹³

Lord Kṛṣṇa also confirms the doctrine of rebirth in the Śrīmadbhāgavatagītā.⁸⁴

10. SANSKRIT ALPHABET

According to Tantra, the total number of the Sanskrit Alphabet is fifty (50)⁸⁶ or according to some Tantra texts, it is fifty one (51).⁸⁶

According to Niruttara Tantra⁸⁷, the string of heads worn by the Divine Mother round her neck is the Varṇamālā or Garland of Letters consisting of fifty (50) or fifty one (51) letters of the Devanāgarī script.

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80. Niruttara Tantra as mentioned in IT, p. 81.
81. Mahanirvana Tantra as mentioned in IT, p. 81.
82. KNT, 1/50.
83. Ibid, 1/51.
84. BG, 4/5.
85. ŚAŚ, p. 487; HOD,v, ii, pp. 1062, 1099; ṢṬAT, p.6, YTP, p. 15; OH, p. 213; POY, p.561; DOT II, p. 85; SOT, p. 274; SSI, p. 51; TSO, p. 62; MAY, 4/8; ṢAM, 1/70; GAT, 3/131; RTN, 3/21, TSA, p. 72.
86. BSD, p. 52.
Toḍala Tantra\textsuperscript{88} says that Kuṇḍalinī Devī is ornamented by fifty letters –

\[
\textit{sadā kuṇḍalinī devī pañcāśadvarṇābhiṣītā}
\]

Gupta Sādhana Tantra\textsuperscript{89} says that the garland of fifty letters is Aksamālā.

This Aksamālā includes fifty letters from “A” to “Kṣa”.

\[
\textit{aksamālā maheśāni pañcāśadvarṇa-rūpiṇī}
\]

\[
\textit{akarādirmahēśāni kṣakārānto yatāḥ priye.}
\]

The same Tantra\textsuperscript{90} further says that these fifty letters from ‘A’ to ‘Kṣa’ exist in bones and the garland of fifty letters exists in a very small size of bone.

\[
\textit{akarādī – kṣakārānta asthimadhye sthitāḥ sadā}
\]

\[
\textit{tilārdhe cāsthī-madhye ca pañcāśadvarṇarūpiṇī.}
\]

In Matṛkānyāsa these fifty letters are connected.\textsuperscript{91}

In Kāmadhenu Tantra\textsuperscript{92}, Lord Śiva says that in His throat remain Bījas consisting of fifty letters

\[
\textit{mama kanyāḥ sthitaḥ bījāṁ pañcāśadvarṇādabhūtām}
\]

This Tantra further says\textsuperscript{93} that these fifty letters ‘A’ to ‘Kṣa’ are the Divine Mother who is the embodiment of Bīja.

\[
\textit{akarādikṣakārāntāmātyākā bījarūpiṇī.}
\]

The Divine Mother who is the embodiment of the fifty letters (Vargṇa) is present in the various letters inscribed on the petals of the Cakras. These letters are called

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{88} TOD, 9/14.
\item \textsuperscript{89} GUP, 11/3.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid, 11/14.
\item \textsuperscript{91} BTS, p. 152.
\item \textsuperscript{92} KD, 1/6.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid, 1/9.
\end{itemize}
Mātrkās.⁹⁴

*Phetkārinī Tantra*⁹⁵ says that the Divine Mother is the embodiment of fifty letters:

\[ \text{pāncaśadvarṇa} - \text{rūpātmā mātrkā paramesvārī} \]

*Sāradātilaka*⁹⁶ says that Kuṇḍalinī Devī is the embodiment of fifty letters. This Tantra⁹⁷ further says that the Goddess of Learning’s face, hands, feet, middle part and chest are divided by fifty letters.

*Bhūtasuddhi Tantra*⁹⁸ says that in Ṭajā Cakra placing the soul connected with mind fifty mātrkās should be uttered ten times.

*Kaṅgākalamālinī*⁹⁹ says that the letters from ‘A’ to ‘Kaśa’ are Śiva-Sakti and these fifty letters are embodiments of eternal Brahman.

\[ \text{akārādi-kṣakārāntā varṇāstu siva-śaktayah} \]
\[ \text{pāncaśacca ime varṇā brahma-rūpāḥ sanātanāḥ.} \]

The fifty letters from ‘A’ to ‘Kṣa’ are Kulkuṇḍalinī (the Divine Mother) who has issued this universe.¹⁰⁰

\[ \text{akārādi – kṣakārāntā svayam paramakuṇḍali} \]
\[ \text{sarvain carācaraṁ viśvān varṇātmā sūyate dhruvam} \]

*Nirvāṇa Tantra*¹⁰¹ says that in the abode of Devī, the altar which is the embodiment of fifty letters, is present.

\[ \text{tanmadhye vedikāṁ devi pāncaśadaksarātmikām.} \]

---

⁹⁴. CHI, iv, p. 250, Article – The Spirit and Culture of the Tantras.
⁹⁵. PTK, 1/4
⁹⁶. ŚĀT, 1/53
⁹⁷. Ibid, 6/4
⁹⁸. BHUTA, 3/29
⁹⁹. KAG, 1/11.
¹⁰⁰. As quoted in TTT, p. 309
¹⁰¹. NV, 10/61.
Kāmakalāvilāsa Tantra⁹² says that Parā, Paśyanti and Madhyamā in Her form aspect as the uttered gross letters by these three is produced Vaikhari composed of fifty-one letters.

\[ \text{etābhirekapañcāsādakṣarātmikā vaikhāri jāā.} \]

Āgamatattva-vilāsa⁹³ also speaks of fifty-one letters.

\[ \text{ebhirītī ityuktairekapañcāsādvarṇaṇārītyarthāḥ} \]

Thus it is said by fifty-one letters –

According to a scholar,⁹⁴

Sanskrit Alphabets are of Tantric origin. The fifty letters of Sanskrit varṇamālā are the fifty basic vibrations, which constitute the entire universe. Moreover, the world is a collection of different waves and vibrations. There are fifty fundamental vibrations in the world symbolically represented by the fifty letters of Sanskrit Varṇamālā.

II. SYMBOLISM

The use of symbols is one of the main features of Hindu Religion.⁹⁵ Tantra uses symbols to express different meanings. Some of the symbols used in Tantra are mentioned here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swastika</td>
<td>Spiritual victory⁹⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liṅga</td>
<td>Cause of creation and destruction⁹⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

102. KK, 32. sl.
103. ATV, p. 1181.
104 TMSB, p. 171.
105. HDS, 92. p.
106. TMSB, p.4.
107. TH, p. 18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoni</td>
<td>Šakti&lt;sup&gt;108&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liṅga-Yoni</td>
<td>Šiva-Šakti&lt;sup&gt;109&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical line</td>
<td>Causal Brahma&lt;sup&gt;110&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal line</td>
<td>Effect Brahma&lt;sup&gt;111&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardhanārisvāra</td>
<td>Šiva-Šakti&lt;sup&gt;112&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dot</td>
<td>Ultimate point of power&lt;sup&gt;113&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>Yoni&lt;sup&gt;114&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Šakti&lt;sup&gt;115&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward point of triangle</td>
<td>Šakti&lt;sup&gt;116&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward point of triangle</td>
<td>Šiva&lt;sup&gt;117&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols are of essential necessity for all religions. The major portions of Tantric works are busy with giving in details of Sādhanā through symbols. Symbols are in different kinds including the images and the diagrams called the Yantras.

### 12. TECHNICAL TERMS

Tantra is full of technical terms<sup>118</sup>. An uninitiated person cannot easily understand these terms. Some of the technical terms are mentioned here.

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110. TMSB, p. 4.
111. Ibid, p. 4.
113. TW, p. 55.
114. LG, p. 19.
116. TW, p. 57.
117. Ibid, p. 57.
118. POT, p. 8.
Mantra – Mantra is so called because it is achieved by mental process.

\[ \text{mananānmantramāṇityāḥ} \]^{119}

Yantra – Yantra is that object which protects a Sādhus from fear of Yama, ghosts etc.\(^{120}\)

\[ \text{yamabhūtādi-sarvebhyaḥ bhayebhyaḥ 'api kuleśvarta} \]
\[ \text{trāyate satatancaiva tasmāt yantramāṇityāḥ} \]

Kaula – Kaula is so called as it checks Kaumāra and other stages, abolishes birth and death and makes never-ending relation with Kula.\(^{121}\)

\[ \text{kaumāradinaḥ-dhatvā laya-janmādi – bhaṇjanāt} \]
\[ \text{aśeṣakula – sambandhat kaula ityabhidhyate} \]

Dīkṣā – Dīkṣā is a ritual that infiltrates divinity, removes sins and frees from worldly bondages.\(^{122}\)

\[ \text{dīvyabhūva – pradānācca kṣālanāt kalmaśasya ca} \]
\[ \text{dīkṣetī kathitā sadbhirbhavabandha – vimocanī} \]

Abhiseka – Abhiseka is a ritual that removes ‘egoist mood’, churns fear, sprinkles water purified by uttering Mantras and produces shivering and joy.\(^{123}\)

\[ \text{ahambhūvaharādbhūtimathanāt secanādapi} \]
\[ \text{kampānandādi – janannaḥabhiseka iti smṛtaḥ} \]

Nyāsa – Nyāsa is so called because it places the wealth earned by honest means in the part of the body and protects all.\(^{124}\)

\[ \text{TTT, p. 91.} \]
\[ \text{KNT, 17/61.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid, 17/45} \]
\[ \text{Ibid, 17/51.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid, 17/52.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid, 17/56.} \]
Mudrā – Mudrā is so called because it pleases gods and dissolves mind.¹²⁵

\[\text{mudāṁ kurbbanti devānāṁ manāṅgasi drāvayanti ca} \]
\[\text{tasmān mudrā iti khyātā darśitavyā kuleśvari.} \]

Pūjā – Pūjā is a ritual that is done for calming the consequence of the previous birth, preventing birth and unnatural death and giving the total result.¹²⁶

\[\text{pūrba-janmānuśamanājjana – mṛtyu – nivāraṇāḥ} \]
\[\text{sampūrṇa – phala-dānācca pujeti kathitā priye.} \]

Pañcatattva – Wine, Meat, Fish, Grains and Copulation are called Pañcatattva.¹²⁷

\[\text{madyāṁ māṁsāṁ tathā matsyaṁ mudrā maithuna-meva ca} \]

Ṣaṭ Karma – Śānti, Vaśya, Stambhana, Dveśana, Uccātana and Māraṇa are called Ṣaṭ Karma.¹²⁸

\[\text{śānti-vaśya – stambhanāṁ dveśanoccātane tathā} \]
\[\text{māraṇāṁāṁ śāṁsanti śāṭkarmanāṁ maṁśīṁaḥ.} \]

Yoga – The union of Śiva and Śakti is called Yoga.¹²⁹

\[\text{śiva-śakti – samāyogo yogah} \]

Ṣaṭ Cakra – Mūlādhāra, Svādhiṣṭhāna, Manipura, Anāhata, Viṣuddha and Ājñā are called Ṣaṭcakra.¹³⁰

¹²⁵. KNT, 17/57.
¹²⁶. Ibid, 17/70.
¹²⁷. YOG, 1/6/14.
¹²⁸. KRN, 1/9.
¹²⁹. KN, 17/137.
¹³⁰. KNT, p. 418.
13. SECRET DOCTRINE

The secrecy of worship and doctrine is specially enjoined by Tantra. The open forms of worship of other Hindus are compared to harlots who give themselves up to dh and the secret Tantric form to a lady of noble birth.131

The following passages from Tantric texts show the importance Tantra attaches to secrecy –

(a) This hymn is very mysterious and rare. Oh ! Pārvati ! Conceal it like own vagina (Yoni).132

\[ \text{idāṁ rahasyaṁ paramāṁ stotraṁ paramadurlabham} \]
\[ \text{gopanīyaṁ prayatnena svayoniriva pārvati.} \]

(b) This Mantra cannot be disclosed before a Paśu (uninitiated).133

\[ \text{na prakāśyamidaṁ devi paśoragre kadācana.} \]

(c) Liberation cannot be achieved without the knowledge of Pañcatattva, O Mahesvar. Conceal it carefully.134

\[ \text{tattva-jñānam vinā devi tatḥā muktirna jāyate} \]
\[ \text{ata-eva maheśāni gopanaṁ kuru yatnataḥ} \]

(d) I am telling you the most secret Pūjā-Sūtra.135

\[ \text{athāṁ sampravaksyāmi sūtraṁ parama-gopanam.} \]

(e) Conceal this Kālī-Kalpa which I have told you.136

131. HCM, p. 31.
132. GUP, 9/38.
133. KUT, 4/28.
134. NV, 11/19.
135. TOĎ, 5/31.
136. KUM, 9/18.
(f) You must guard it (Kuladharma) carefully. It should not be given to any person.

(g) The Knowledge of Brahma is very secret. It should not be imparted to all.\textsuperscript{138}

(h) The Vedas and all other Vidyās are open like public women. Among all the philosophies, it is secret.\textsuperscript{139}

(i) This truth is most secret and it cannot be expressed to anybody.\textsuperscript{140}

(j) Don’t make it (Śrī Vidyā) public.\textsuperscript{141}

(k) This Kāmakalādhyaṇa which is most secret, should not be given to an uninitiated and non-devoted person.\textsuperscript{142}

(l) What is seen, auspicious or inauspicious, in Cakra, is not to be disclosed in the morning.\textsuperscript{143}

(m) This Cīnācāra can never be disclosed.\textsuperscript{144}

14. IMPORTANCE OF BODY

Tantric doctrines are based on the maxim ‘sarīramādyam khalu dharmasā dhanam’.\textsuperscript{145} According to Tantra, body is to be prepared and sanctified first so that it can be the seat of Śādhanā. Tantra has drawn up a regular routine for the Śādhakas for this purpose.

\textsuperscript{137} KNT, 2/6.
\textsuperscript{138} JNS, 95 sl.
\textsuperscript{139} PRK, 30. s.
\textsuperscript{140} NET, 14/11; YOH, 3/210.
\textsuperscript{141} JN, 24/63.
\textsuperscript{142} GAND, 30/61-62.
\textsuperscript{143} KN, 8/237-238.
\textsuperscript{144} MCKC, 1/6.
\textsuperscript{145} ROT, p. 71.
In the second half of the last quarter of the night the Sadhaka should arise from sleep. Having shaken off drowsiness, he should seat himself in appropriate posture and meditate on the Guru as being in his head.146

Then he makes water, discharges his bowels, cleanses his teeth and bathes. These produce a soothing effect on his nerves. When he sits for worshipping Devi, he sanctifies the different parts of his body, his seat, the objects of his worship.147 These are primarily meant to produce an effect on the mind that the Sadhaka is pure and without blemish and his body has become fit for the abode of the deity. Then he fixes his mind on some part of his own body or any outward object like an Image or Yantra. The Yantra or Image is necessary only for the fixing of mind. Thus the mind is brought under control.

At this stage he thinks that he has been transformed into the deity.148

After performing all the necessary rituals, the Sadhaka takes wine, meat, fish and grains.149 These help the Sadhaka in gaining physical strength.

Moreover, Tantra establishes the relationship between microcosm (Pinda) and macrocosm (Brahma).150

Tantra says that all the substances available in this universe are found in human body.151

Tantra looks upon the body as the primary requisite of all kinds of Sadhanas. Various attempts have been made to analyse the various elements constituting the body.
bones, flesh, sinews, veins, arteries, various organs (internal and external).\textsuperscript{153}

Means have been prescribed to keep the body fit in every way. The torture of the body by penance is not ordinarily accepted by Tantra.\textsuperscript{154}

\textit{Kulārṇava Tantra}\textsuperscript{155} says that Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa can not be achieved without body –

\begin{quote}
\textit{vina dehena kasyāpi puruṣārtho na vidyate}
\end{quote}

Tantra also says that human beings always try to protect their bodies\textsuperscript{156} –

\begin{quote}
\textit{śarīra-rakṣāyaśyāsaḥ kriyate sarvadā janaīḥ}
\end{quote}

\textit{Gandharva Tantra}\textsuperscript{157} says that all the rituals are to be performed in sound health

\begin{quote}
\textit{nirāmaye śarīre tu sarvakarmāṇi sādhayet}
\end{quote}

\textit{Kaulāvaliṇīṇa Tantra}\textsuperscript{158} says that the body is a temple –

\begin{quote}
\textit{deho devālayo devi}
\end{quote}

\textit{Gāyatri Tantra}\textsuperscript{159} says that the body is the Supreme Brahma –

\begin{quote}
\textit{śarīrāṁ paramāṁ brahma.}
\end{quote}

\textit{Jñānaśaṅkalinī Tantra}\textsuperscript{160} says that as fire exists in wood, perfume in flowers and \textit{amṛta} or nectar in water, so the Deity or the Supreme Being that is free from all virtues

\textbf{References:}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{153} TIB, p. 152.
\item \textsuperscript{154} Ibid, p. 152.
\item \textsuperscript{155} KNT, 1/18.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 1/21.
\item \textsuperscript{157} GAND, 34/14.
\item \textsuperscript{158} KN, 9/126.
\item \textsuperscript{159} GĀT, 3/31.
\item \textsuperscript{160} JNS, 10 sl.
and vices remains in the body –

\[
kāṣṭhamadhye yathā vahniḥ puspe gandha payo 'amṛtam
dehamadhye tathā devaḥ punya-pāpa-vivarjitaḥ.
\]

15. IMPORTANCE OF HOUSEHOLDER’S DUTIES

Tantra stresses much importance on the duties of householders. The duties of the householders are the main duties of human beings.\(^{161}\) The state of a householder is for all the descendants of Manu the first duty.\(^{162}\)

\[gārhaṣṭhaṁ pṛathamāṁ dharmyāṁ sarveśāṁ manuṣyaṁ manuṣyaṁ\]

A householder\(^{163}\) should not tell an untruth or practise deceit and should ever be engaged in Devatās and guests. Regarding his parents as to visible incarnate deities, he should ever and by every means in his power serve them.\(^{164}\) He should offer seats, beds, clothes, drink and food to mother and father.\(^{165}\) They should always be spoken in a gentle voice. The good son whoever obeys the behests of his mother and father hallows the family.\(^{166}\) If one desires one’s own welfare, all arrogance, mockery, threats and angry words should be avoided in the parents’ presence.\(^{167}\)

If a householder intoxicated with the pride of learning or wealth, slights his parents, he is beyond the pale of all Dharma and goes to a terrible Hell.\(^{168}\) Even if the vital breath were to reach his throat, the householder should not eat without first feeding his parents.

161. HP, p. 231.
162. MN, 8/22.
163. Ibid, 8/23.
164. Ibid, 8/25.
165. Ibid, 8/28.
166. Ibid, 8/28-29.
167. Ibid, 8/30
168. Ibid, 8/32.
mother, father, son, wife, guest and brother. The man who, to the deprivation of his elder and equals, fills his own belly despised in this world, and goes to hell in the next.

*Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* says that the householder should cherish his wife, educate his children and support his kinsmen and friends. This is the eternal duty.

The householder should never punish his wife, but should cherish her like his mother. If she is virtuous and devoted to her husband, he should never forsake her even in times of greatest misfortune.

Tantra warns that a householder, whilst his own wife is living, should never touch another woman with wicked intention, otherwise he will go to hell. He must please his wife by riches, clothes, love, respect and pleasing words. He should never do anything to displease her.

Tantra advises that a father should fondle and nurture his sons until their fourth year, and then until their sixteenth, they should be taught learning their duties. In the same manner a daughter should be cherished and taught with great care, and then given away with money and jewels to a good husband.

The householder should in the same way also cherish and protect his brothers and sisters and their children, his kinsmen, friends and servants.

169. Ibid, 8/33.
170. Ibid, 8/34.
171. Ibid, 8/35.
172. Ibid, 8/39.
173. Ibid, 8/40.
174. Ibid, 8/42.
175. Ibid, 8/45.
176. Ibid, 8/47.
The householder should always maintain his fellow worshippers, fellow villagers, guests and unexpected strangers.\textsuperscript{178} Chivalrous to his foes, modest before his friends, relatives and elders, he should neither respect those who deserve censure nor slight those who are worthy of respect.\textsuperscript{179} He should employ himself in the acquisition of what is necessary and in the protection of the same. He should be judicious, pious, good to his friends. He should be moderate in speech. He should hold his senses under control, have a cheerful disposition, think of what is good, be of firm resolve, far-sighted and discriminating in the use of his senses.\textsuperscript{180}

\textit{Nirvāṇa Tantram}\textsuperscript{181} says that the householder in the form of Sādhu, is like a father of all Āśramas and Varṇas.

\textit{sarvesāṁ pitṛ-rūpo 'asau grhaṣṭhaḥ sādhuḥpacah}

\section*{16. MONISM – DUALISM}

Vedanta schools differ from each other on the question of the nature of Brahma. Thus arose Absolute Monism, Qualified Monism, Doctrine of Identity-difference and Dualism. Tantra does not teach Absolute Monism. It embraces both Dualism and Monism. Worship advocated by Tantra, involves the dualistic idea. Spiritual experience gained through Upāsanā, merging the Individual Soul into the Absolute, involves the idea of one-ness between the worshipper and the worshipped.\textsuperscript{182}

In this context \textit{Kulārṇava Tantram}'s remarkable view is worth-mentioning. This Tantra says that some long for Advaita (Monism), some desire Dvaita Tattva or Śiva.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, 8/49.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, 8/53.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, 8/60-61.
\textsuperscript{181} NV, 4/4.
\textsuperscript{182} MT, vii, Introduction, 6.
\end{flushleft}
which is beyond Dvaita and Advaita.¹⁸³

advaitaṁ kecidicchanti dvaitamicchanti cāpare
mama tattvāṁ na jānanti dvaitādvaita-vivajitam.

17. REVOLUTIONARY

Tantra has been able to draw the attention of all the philosophers for its revolutionary nature. The introduction of Pūjā with all the necessary rites like Bhūtaśuddhi, Nyāsa, Prāṇapratiṣṭhā, Bali etc. is a revolutionary step in the history of Indian Śādhanā. Moreover, the introduction of Pañcātattva in Pūjā is a revolutionary step towards the history of Hindu Śādhanā.

In all religious specially in the Vedānta system of Hindu Religion, sex relation has always been regarded as opposed to spiritual progress. In the Śrīmadbhagavatagītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa decries it.¹⁸⁴

"Thus, Arjuna, knowing that which is higher than the intellect and subduing the mind by reason, kill this enemy in the form of Kāma (Lust) that is hard to overcome." But Tantra prescribes Maithuna as a means of spiritual progress.¹⁸⁵ Maithuna¹⁸⁶ which is one of the Pañca Makāras is declared by Tantra to be most helpful in the path of Śādhanā. Indeed, it is revolutionary.

According to a scholar¹⁸⁷, Tantra positively cultivates and bases itself on what most people dismiss as the pleasures of life. It does not say solemnly, "you must

¹⁸³. KNT, 1/110.
¹⁸⁴. BG, 3/43.
¹⁸⁵. KNT, Introduction, 6; KN, 4/16.
¹⁸⁶. KN, 4/26.
¹⁸⁷. TICE, pp. 8-9.
abstain from all enjoyments, mortify your flesh, and obey the commands of a jealous Father-God.” Instead it says, “Raise your enjoyment to its highest power, then use it as a spiritual rocket fuel.” This, of course, seems a dangerous revolutionary doctrine to the orthodox in any religion.

We may quote the view of another scholar.188

The highest contribution of the Tantras towards human knowledge is, however, the discovery and location of the centers of energy, technically known as Cakras in man. This discovery which is even more revolutionary in character than that of the atomic bomb.

18. INFLUENTIAL

Popular Hinduism is very much influenced by Tantra. Household and temple rituals and the observance of fasts and feasts are also influenced by Tantra.189

It is rightly remarked by Hastings in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics that, it has been estimated that two-thirds of Hindu Religion are Tantric.190

A scrutiny of our daily practices, forms of worship, social manners and customs, glorification of matrimonial life, initiation etc., will show to what great extent our activities are guided by Tantric principles.191

It is the central truths of Tantric thought and rituals that form the backbone of Hindu Religion today. The rituals, especially of the collective nature are pronounced Tantric in character. Even in the lines of individual Śādhanā there enters a good deal

188. TPS, p. 9.
189. OH, p. 181.
190. TH, p. 5.
191. TPS, p. 9
the wisdom of the mysteries of Tantra.  

The Tantric influence exists in all the Indian languages. Its influence is prominent not only in social functions, but in religious ceremonies as well, due to the influence of the Tantric gods and goddesses.  

A scholar observes,  

It would not be too strong to say that for long after Buddhistic times the Tantras held their own as the finest spiritual discipline. Even in the monasteries established by Sāṅkara one can see the influence of Tantric discipline; and even at this day it can be asserted without hesitation that the Tantras form the main background of spiritual culture amongst the Hindus.  

'The Tantric influence permeates every system of worship in India at the present day, including Vaiṣṇavism. Only the Vaiṣṇavite Acharyas have introduced certain changes in the mode of worship of Tantra.'  

A scholar writes  

'Ācārya Sāṅkara took to the worship of Tripurā Sundarī and arranged to install the Śrīyantra in all his monasteries. Buddhism also abounds in Tantricism. All this shows the wide and all pervading influence of the Tantras in our national life.'  

Tantric influence is found in classical Sanskrit. In Bhojaprabandha

192. LOT, p. 48.  
193. DOT, I, p. 156.  
194. LAM, p. 67.  
195. STUT, p. 4, Article – The Tantric Mode of Worship.  
197. BPR, pp. 211, 238.
Mālatīmādhava, Harṣacarita, Kādambarī and Prabodhacandrodaya, we find Tantric elements and references to Tantric practices like human sacrifice, wine, meat, human flesh-eating, Śaṭkarma, Bali and criticisms against Tantric practice.

Tantra's Śākta Cult has influenced Assamese Literature. In Assamese literature, its influence is found in Āi-nāma, Apecarā-nāma, Lakhimi - Sabaha - Gīta, Varamāhi Gīta, Tokārīnāma etc.

Manasā Literature entitled as Manakarṭ, Durgā Varī and Sukanānī bear Tantra’s Śākta Cult’s influence.

In Hindi Literature, Tantra’s influence is felt in Durgā – Calisā, Vindhyeśvarī Calisā, Rāmcarita mānasa, some Padas of Dādu, some Dohās of Kabira, some writings of Bharatendu Harischandra and Balamukunda Gupta, Maithili Sarai Gupta, Himmat Simha, Bharatinandana Ramananda Tiwari

198. MTM, V. Act.
199. HC, 3 uc.
201. PRC, 3 Act.
202. AŚAS, p. 201.
203. BŚŚ, p.376.
206. BSS, p. 383
207. Ibid, p. 386.
211. Ibid, p. 399.
212. Ibid, p. 401.
Tantra's Sākta Cult's immense influence is marked in Bengali Literature also in Mangalakāvyā,215 Saktapadāvalis,216 writings of Madhusudana217, Nabin Chandra,218 Hemachandra,219 Bhairilal,220 Rabindranath,221 patriotic songs222 composed in the 19th century etc. are much influenced by the Sakti Cult of Tantra.

Tantra223 has also influenced Oriya Literature.

19. PSYCHO-SYNTHESIS

Tantra's aim is not only the physical development of an individual but also psychological development. It gives much importance of Mantra which makes psychological effect. Some Tantric rituals like Kumārī Puja, Ādānā and Satkarma are most effectual.

According to Tantra, there are different grades of consciousness working through the different layers of being.224

Tantra is psycho-synthetic. Psycho-synthesis is the new knowledge that Tantra affords us by over-stepping the vital mental experience. It extends beyond itself to still higher knowledge in transcendence. This is the real spiritual consummation which is revealed when we get at the root of existence.225

218. Ibid, p. 304.
221. Ibid, p. 327.
222. Ibid, pp.310-322
224. TSO, pp. 30-41.
225. TAG., p. 85.
Parāśurāma's Kalpa Tantra speaks of seven layers of mind. They are Ārambha, Yauvana, Praudha, Praudhānta Unmana, Anavasta.\[226\]

*Kulārṇava Tantra*\[227\] speaks of the following seven layers or stages –

Ārambha, Taruṇa, Yauvana, Praudha, Praudhānta, Unmana, Manollāsa.

**20. NON-SECTORIAN**

Tantra is non-sectarian. It provides methods of self-realization. It throws open the gates of heaven to all men and women irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Man must now begin to live with the superficial aspects of inward and outward nature. He must penetrate deeper into the abysmal depth of the ultimate nature, Ādyā Prakṛti, to discover or rather uncover his true nature by diving beyond the limiting forces of space, time, causality, attachment and desire without which liberation would be meaningless.\[228\]

Though Tantric sects have separate identity and Tantric followers are divided into many sects,\[229\] Tantra, in the real sense, is non-sectarian.

**21. MATERIALISTIC OUTLOOK**

The utility of material knowledge is preached by Tantra. Tantra has given much importance on material knowledge. To the working people Tantra means something more than a mere religious system. To them knowledge means worldly knowledge. It guides them in their multifarious practical and productive works and the repository of these is Tantra which supplies them with the materials for achieving professional success and satisfaction.\[230\]

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227. Ibid, 8/4
228. CPI, ii, p. 22.
229. PPG, X, p. 8; TSRL, pp. 50-57; TANS, pp. 40-41; TAD, p. 35.
230. HTR, p. 22
Some of the sciences like Anatomy, Physiology, Alchemy and Chemistry are contributed by the Tantrics for their materialistic outlook.  

22. OCCULT SCIENCE

Occultism is the knowledge of the subtle forces functioning in us, which the human mind with all its scientific skill has not been able to fathom. It renders a three-fold service — (i) It unearths our hidden being, (ii) It reveals a correspondence between the psyche and the cosmic forces, (iii) It discovers our central being which regulates the forces in such a way as the slavery to nature may be shaken off and the divine will and the power be activated in us.

Tantra is an occult science. It is sometimes characterized as Rahasya Sāstra.

The occultism of Tantra is founded on the impregnable rock of intuitive experience. In the mystic exultation, the Śādhaka lives and moves and has his being in Parama Śiva.

Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, awakening of this Śakti, the union of Śiva Śakti and dreams etc. are the elements of occultism in Tantra.

23. SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Most of the Tantra works are written in cryptic language. An uninitiated person cannot understand this language easily. But some Tantra texts are written in comparatively simple language.

231. LOK, p. 335.
232. GOT, p. 75.
233. TAG, p. 83.
234. LOT, p. 50.
Tantra texts written in comparatively simple language are –

Yogini Tantra, Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, Kulārṇava Tantra, Guru Tantra, Jñānasaṅkaliṇī Tantra, Saubhāgyalakṣmi Tantra, Kumārī Tantra, Mahācīñcāra Tantra etc.

24. WORD-FORMATION

One of the most important features of Tantra is that it has formed many new words and compounded words. We may mention some Tantra texts in which these new words are formed. These Tantra texts are – Tārā Tantra, Gāyatri Tantra, Bagalamukhi Tantra, Bhuvanesvarī Tantra, Gautamiya Tantra and Kangkalamalini Tantra. Moreover, in Dhyānamantras of the Tantric Goddesses, long long compounded words are formed. All the Bijamantras except AUM are not Vedic. HRĪM, KLIŅG etc. Bijamantras are of Tantric origin.

Words like Dakini, Rākini, Lākinī, Kākinī, Śākinī, and Hākinī are not probable Sanskrit words. These words have been Sanskritized in Tantric Literature.

Thus Tantra has enriched the vocabulary of Sanskrit.

235. TRT, pp. 136-147.
236. GĀT, 5/10-154.
237. BM, p. 319.
238. BHUV, p. 206.
239. GAU, 10 Ch.
240. KAG, 5/211-217.
241. BTS, p. 334.
25. ABSENCE OF PRIESTHOOD

The priestly class in the Vedic age gradually came to the forefront when the sacrifices became too much complicated, centering round prescribed formulae which could have been known only to the experts, especially in the age when the Brahmanical works (1000-800 B.C.) were composed.244

Tantra does not make any provision for priests for the performance of Tantric rituals. The Guru instructs. The Sādhaka also performs all the Tantric rituals.

Ultimately the Gurus occupied the position of the priest class.245

26. SYSTEMATISATION OF SANSKRIT ALPHABET

The systematization of Devanāgarī Script has been recorded in Tantra. From this record we find that this systematization was made in accordance with sounds. We find five groups of alphabetic letters. These are – the earth, fire, water, air and the sky.

\[\text{vāyvagni-bhū-jalākāśaḥ pañcāśițaliṣṭpayah}\]246 Following are divisions of these letters.247

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vayu</th>
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244. ROT, pp. 6-7.
246. KNT, 15/95.
27. ALWAYS CONTEMPORARY

The emergence of Tantra was the need of the Yuga. But it does not mean that Tantra has no importance in this present age. Tantra's principles are always contemporary. Importance of body, universal religion, materialistic outlook, psycho-psycho-synthesis, right of women and the sudras to rituals, non-sectarian approach, rational analysis, all-embracing nature – these are the undying features of Tantra. These were relevant to society in the ancient period when Tantra emerged. These are also relevant to this Modern Period. These are also the guiding principles for the future world. In these senses, Tantra is always contemporary. A scholar has rightly commented,

'The path of Tantra is the same yesterday, today and forever.'

28. UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Hindu religion stands on the Vedic Cult and the Tantric Cult. The Tantric Cult and Tantra Literature accumulated all the energies and potency from the soil of Hindu Religion. Hindu Religion without Tantra cannot be imagined. The basic principles of Hindu Religion are universal. Tantra is also universal. Naturally Tantra and Hindu Religion are inseparable. But it does not mean that Tantra preaches only a particular religion. Generally, it stresses on the Mother Cult which was common to all the countries of the world.

'There is a great universalism in the Tantric doctrine and it can flourish in any country without Ganges, Hardwar and the Himalayas, without Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, neither does it require a pilgrimage to Benaras.'

Tantra is the essence of all religious faiths that are followed and practised by all.

248. IJTO, V, I., p. 68.
250. KĀM, Introduction, p.7
It preaches Mānavadharma which is the other name of Hindu Religion. In that sense Tantra preaches Hindu Religion or Sanātana Dharma.

Moreover, Tantra sings the song of love which is most important feature of universalism. Instead of fearing, it loves all philosophies and sciences.251 There is enjoyment higher than that of love.252

29. SHORT AND EASY METHOD

One of the important causes of Tantra's immense popularity was that Tantra preached an easy and short method of spiritual achievement and sought to provide persons of all grades of equipment with suitable courses of discipline.253 But it is not easy for an uninitiated person as the Tantric method of Śādhanā is of a highly mystical type and much of it is expressed through dark symbols, the key to which rested only with the initiated.254

30. FOR ALL STAGES OF LIFE

According to Kulacūḍāmaṇi Tantra, a householder should take initiation from a Guru who is also a householder, and a Yati should take initiation from a Yati.255

\[
\text{yaṳ̃nā́c̣a yatiḥ \ p roktō g h as i h ūn̄n̄m\ g u r u r g h i̤}
\]

There were Tantric householder Gurus with their families. The respect was shown to the family members of the Gurus.256

This injunction of Tantra shows that Tantrism pervades all the stages of human life.

251. IJTO, V, I, p. 4.
252. Ibid, p. 43.
253. PHS, p. 83.
254. Ibid, p. 83
255. Kulacūḍāmaṇi as quoted in BTS, p. 10.
256. GUR, 45, 143 Sl.
Thus Tantra links the Śādhaka to the Guru for the whole of life that is divided into different stages.

31. ART OF ALL ARTS AND SCIENCE OF ALL SCIENCES

Tantra philosophy definitely marks out a unique place in the hierarchy of the philosophical evolution of Indian thought. It is the science of all sciences, so far as it teaches us to know the nature of Ultimate Reality permeating the universe of matter to mind and spirit.

It is the art of all arts, so far as it lays down the practical and practicable means of self-realization or awakening of the Kuṇḍalini Śakti.257

32. INSTRUCTIVE

Tantra texts are full of instructions. The Guru, the Śiṣya or the Śādhaka can get instructions from Tantra in performing different Tantric rituals. Though Tantra is basically a Śādhanā Śāstra, a householder, the wife of a householder, a king, subjects and others, can obtain instructions other than Śādhanā. A few examples are given here.

(a) TO A HOUSEHOLDER

Regarding his father and mother as to visible incarnate deities, a householder should ever and by every means in his power serve them.258

mātarāṁ piśaraṅcaiva sāksāt prayakṣadevatām
matvā grhī niśeṇeṣa sadā sarvaprayatnatah.

(b) TO AN ASCETIC

No one should retire from the world when he has an old father or mother, devoted and chaste wife, or young and helpless children.259

257. CPI, ii, p. 34.
258. MN, 8/25
259. Ibid, 8/17
mātaraṁ pitaraṁ vṛddham bhāryāḥcaiva pativraśāṁ
śīṣuḥca tanayaṁ hitvā nāvadhūtāśramaṁ vrajet

(c) TO A KING

A king should not covet the wealth of his subjects or levy to his promises. He should ever be in the observance of his duty to protect his subjects as though they were his own children.260

alobhiśyati prajāvitte gṛhṇyāt sammitāṁ karam
raksanāṁīkṛtāṁ dharmaṁ puravat pālayat prajāḥ

(d) TO A SERVANT

A servant should carefully conceal his master's dishonour, the family dissensions, anything said in private or which should hurt the mind of his master.261

apamānaṁ gṛhacchidraṁ guptyarthāṁ kathitāṁc cayat
bhārturgānīkaraṁ yacca gopayedatiyātnātaḥ.

(e) TO A GURU

A Guru should be free from grief and resentment, equal to friend and foe, patient in the endurance of cold and heat, and to him both honour and disgrace are one and the same.262

śoka-dveṣa-vimuktah syāt satrau mitre samo bhavet
śīta-vātātapa-sahāḥ samo mānāpamānayoḥ

(f) TO A SISYA

A Śiṣya should live for the Guru, earn money for the Guru and serve the Guru even...
at the cost of his own life.\footnote{263}

\begin{quote}
gurvarthaṃ dhārayerdhehaṃ tadarthāṃ dhanamarjayet

nijapṛṇān parityayya guru-kāryāṃ samācaret.
\end{quote}

\textbf{(g) TO A HUSBAND}

A husband should please his wife by riches, clothes, love, respect and pleasing words. He should never do anything displeasing to her.\footnote{264}

\begin{quote}
dhanena vāsasā premnā sraddhāyāmṛta-bhāṣanaih

satataṃ toṣayeddārān nāpriyān kvacidācaret.
\end{quote}

\textbf{(h) TO SUBJECTS}

The subjects of a king should actively protect the kingdom, property, and life of the just king; otherwise they will go upon the downward path.\footnote{265}

\begin{quote}
rājyaḥ dhanaiḥ jīvaniḥca dhārmikasya mahāpateḥ

saṁrakṣeyuh prajā yatnair anyathā yāntyadhogatim
\end{quote}

\section*{33. ALL-EMBRACING NATURE}

The greatest merit of Tantra lies in its all comprehensive and all-embracing nature.\footnote{266} It is really an epitome of all the scriptures of the Hindus and contains within it compass almost all the special characteristics of the various forms of Sādhanā.\footnote{267} Tantra contains the essentials of the Vedic sacrifices and oblations, the essence of the monotheistic philosophy of the Upaniṣads, the essence of dualism preached by some of the

\begin{itemize}
\item KNT, 12/53
\item MN, 8/42
\item Ibid, 11/28
\item MT, Introduction, p. 12
\item PHS, p. 290.
\end{itemize}
Purāṇas, the Bhakti cult preached by the Purāṇas and the Yoga method propounded by Patañjali.

34. PAṆCA-MAKĀRA

Paṇca-makāra literally means five words and each of these words begins with the letter 'Ma'. These five words beginning with 'Ma' are Madya (Wine), Māṁsa (Meat), Matsya (Fish), Mudrā (Grain) and Maithuna (Copulation).

\[ \text{madyam māṁsāṁ ca matsyāṁ ca mudrā maithunameva ca} \]

Tantra prescribes Paṇcamakāra for Divya and Vīra Sādhakas.²⁷⁰

\[ \text{idamācaraping devi pasorna divya-vīrayoh} \]

Oh! Goddess! Wine, Meat, Fish, Grain and Copulation—these Paṇcamakāras are prescribed only for the Divya and Vīra Sādhakas, not for the Pasus.

Some Anukalpas of Paṇcamakāra are prescribed for ordinary Sādhakas.²⁷¹

Paṇcamakāra is prescribed for salvation.²⁷²

\[ \text{paṇcatattvamidaṁ devi nirvāṇa-mukti-hetave} \]

Out of five makāras, the first four makāras, i.e., Madya, Māṁsa, Matsya and Mudrā are meant for gaining physical strength and the last one Maithuna is for the awakening of the dormant energy through magnetic charges of two opposite sexes. Besides Mudrā, all the four Makāras have been objects of bitter criticism.

²⁶⁹. KĀM, 5/8; KNT, 10/5
²⁷⁰. YOG, 1/6/14
²⁷¹. ROT, p. 25.
²⁷². NV, 11/3
Virgin worship or Kumārī cult is one of the most unique features of Tantra. Sādhaka worships virgins or Kumārīs with great devotion. Kumārīs are specially worshipped on the auspicious occasions of great festivals, holidays and Mahānāvami. Kumārī Pūjā is also performed during the Navarātri festival. In Durgā Pūjā, a group of virgins is worshipped. The most beautiful girl is selected Chief Virgin. She is worshipped at first. Other virgins are also worshipped later on. Tantra has categorised Kumārīs on the basis of their ages and named them.

According to Tantra, Virgins belonging to the age group of and from one to sixteen are called Kumārīs if they do not reach the period of menstruation. Following are the age group of one to sixteen.

Sandhyā, Sarasvatī, Tridhāmūrti, Kālikā, Subhaṅgā, Umā, Mālinī, Kubjika, Kālaṁkarsā, Aparājīta, Rudrāṇī, Bhairavī, Mahālakṣmi, Kulanāyikā, Kṣetrajnā, Candikā.

36. IMPORTANCE OF GODDESSES

Tantra works and Sākta works have much in common, the main point of difference being that in Sākta Cult, Devī is worshipped as the Supreme Reality while in Tantra she is treated as the same with Śiva as there is no difference between the power (Śakti) and the power-holder (Śaktimān).

Yet Tantra and Sakti Cult are inseparable. The rites and practices of Saktism as well as its ideals are expounded in the extensive Tantric Literature that has grown up from quite an early period. Tantric works generally deal with the details of the worship of different aspects of Śakti or the Divine Mother.

273. ATV, p. 640; RUY, 6/98.
274. KNT, p. 240
276. STM, p. 29.
An important point in the Divine Mother theology is the Devī's tendency to display or manifest Herself in a great variety of forms. Many myths about the Devī describe Her as producing goddesses from different parts of her body and She often announces to Her petitioners that She assumes different forms at different times in order to maintain cosmic stability.

Tantra generally deals with the ten major manifestations of Divine Mother. These are - Kālī, Tārā, Śoḍāśī, Bhuvanesvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Dhūmāvatī, Bagalakūṭa, Mātāṅgī, Kamalā.278

Kālī has a fierce countenance. She is naked.279 She dwells in the cremation ground.280 She holds a severed head and a bloodied cleaver. She has disheveled hair and wears a garland of decapitated heads.282 She has a girdle of severed arms.281

Tārā is dark. She rests her feet on a corpse. She wears a tiger skin and a necklace of severed heads. She laughs terribly and has her hair in a single matted braid. She stands on a funeral pyre and is pregnant.284

Śoḍāśī is the third Mahāvidyā and is as resplendent as the newly rising sun.285 She is also three-eyed and holds in her four hands noose, goad, arrow and bow.286 She is seated on a pedestal comprising of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara and Sadasiva and the altar...

278. Cāmunḍa Tantra as quoted in PT, p. 374.
279. Kālī Tantra as quoted in BTS, p. 387.
280. Ibid, p. 387
283. HG, p. 162.
284. Phetakāśīya Tantra as quoted in ATV, p. 1125.
285. BTS, p. 357.
286. Ibid, p. 357.
which she takes Her seat is Śiva Himself. She is identified with Tripurasundari also. Bhuvanēśvarī is the fourth Mahāvidyā. She takes care of the three worlds and feeds them, that is why she is called Bhuvanēśvarī. She is seated on the red lotus. Her breasts are large. She has a bright light complexion. She smiles pleasantly and holds a goad and a noose.

Bhairavī, known as Tripura Bhairavī has a reddish complexion and wears a garland of severed heads, holds a rosary and a book in two of Her four hands and makes signs of fearlessness and conferring boons with Her other two hands. Her breasts are smeared with blood.

Chinnamastā is as effulgent as tens of millions of the suns together. Her mouth is expansive, terrible to look at, with tongue emitting out. The Goddess is drinking the blood that gushes forth from Her throats. Her hair is dishevelled and beautified with many varieties of flowers. In Her right hand she holds a cutting instrument and wears a garland of human heads. She is naked and fearful in appearance. She wears a garland of bones and a serpent in the shape of a sacred thread. She is on a standing posture on Rati and Kāma who are in the attitude of sexual embrace. Her appearance is that of a woman sixteen years with heavy and rising breasts. On the left and right handside of Chinnamastā are two nayikās called Ğākinī and Barṇīḍī.

287. ŚCAI, p. 156.
288. HG, p. 163.
289. ŚCAI, p. 157.
290. ATV, p. 939.
293. Ibid, p. 932.
294. Ibid, p. 1215.
295. BTS, p. 374.
Dhumavatī is pale in complexion. She is tall and has a stern, unsmiling expression. Dressed as a widow, she wears dirty clothes. She has no teeth. Her breasts are long and pendulous. She is afflicted with hunger and thirst. Her nose is large and crooked. She has a quarrelsome nature. She holds a winnowing fan and she rides a crow.

The Goddess Bagalā is seated on a throne of jewels. She is of yellow countenance and puts on a yellow cloth and is adorned all over with garlands. In one hand, she holds a club with which She beats an enemy while another of Her hands is pulling Her enemy's tongue.

Mātaṅgī is black. She has three eyes. She is seated on a throne of jewels. In Her four hands, She holds the sword, Kheṭaka, noose and goad.

Kamala is described as a beautiful woman of golden complexion. She is surrounded by elephants pouring pitchers of water over Her. She is seated on a lotus and holds two lotuses in Her hands. She is in most respects portrayed like Goddess Lakṣmī.

Besides these Ten Mahāvidyās, names of many Tantric Goddesses are found in Tantra works. They are also manifestations of the Divine Mother. Some of them are Durgā, Kāmākhya, Gāyatrī, Kubjikā, Kātyāyanī, Lakṣmī, Annapūrṇā, Sarasvatī and Cāmuṇḍā.

In Sundarī Khapḍa of Śaktisahgama Tantra a group of Tantric deities is described. They are fifteen Nityā deities. These Nityā deities are named here as -

296. ATV, p. 1355.
297. HG, p. 163.
298. BTS, p. 374.
299. ŚCAL, p. 159.
300. DASAM, Kamalā.
301. SASA (Sundarī Khapḍa), Introduction, p. 8.
Kālī, Kapālinī, Kullā, Kurukullā, Virodhinī, Vipracittā, Ugrā, Ugraprabhā, Dīpta, Nīlā, Ghanā, Balākā, Mātrā, Mudrā, Mitā.

Regarding the feminine divinities, a scholar comments,302

‘In Tantra we see finally the bankruptcy of the male divinities of the Veda pantheon, the ultimate bankruptcy also of the life-denying philosophers. ........... The life affirming Tantra also broke with the Aryan tradition of the patriarchal Vedas and restored the pro-Aryan worship of the Mother Goddess ‘whose cult is rooted in the Neolithic past of India, but had been overshadowed for more than a thousand years by the male divinities of the Aryan-Vedic pantheon.’

In this context, we may also quote a few lines303 - “No nation can rise without the worship of Śakti, Swamiji (Vivekananda) used to say. Saints like Ramaprasad and Sri Rama Krishna, heroes like Sivaji and Guru Govinda Singh, poets and writers like Bankim Chandra and Bharati and saint – philosophers like Sri Sankara and Swami Vivekananda, were all worshippers of Śakti. Our country is Matribhumi, we worship her with the mantra ‘Vande Mataram’. The whole atmosphere is saturated with this Mother idea. And this is the contribution of the Tantrics, the mother-worshippers of our Mother country.”

37. CONSORT OF UNITY

Saktapithas that are important parts of the Tantric Cult reflect the national unity of India. A scholar comments,

‘If one looks to ................................................ the Śāktapithas denoted in the larger map by triangles it is clear that unity of the country was uppermost in the mind of the seers of our country from time immemorial’304

302. SOI, p. 139.
303. HSO, p. 47.
304. LG, p. 10.
All the Saktapithas are based on the myth of Sati's self-destruction at Daksha's sacrifice.

"Each pīṭha represents a part of Sati's body or one of her ornaments. Taken together, the pīṭhas found throughout India constitute or point toward a transcendent (or perhaps better, a universally immanent) goddesses whose being encompasses underlies and unifies the Indian subcontinent as a whole. In short, the Indian sub-continent is the Goddess Sati."\(^{305}\)

All these characteristics of Tantra are the main causes of Tantra's survival in spite of all forms of criticisms and oppositions. Indian scholars, philosophers and religious teachers have expressed their wondrous feelings about the features of Tantra. Even many foreign scholars have also expressed their keen interest in Tantra for its unique features.

To sum up, we may quote a great scholar,\(^{306}\)

"Tantra's fundamental characteristic was a full, unconditional acceptance of life and the world of creation as they are, whereas the jñāna intellectual denied their reality. The former was life - affirming and the latter life - denying ...... From the 'Apollonian' attitude of the Vedānta, the Tantric devotee travels all the way to the 'Dionysian' acceptance of life with its joys and sufferings, with its refusal to make a cowardly escape from the coils of a new venerated matter (Prakṛti)...... More than anything else, Tantra has given free rein to the development of the powers of the imagination. And nowhere in India has the power of imagination been able to recreate, in art and in other metamorphosed devotee himself, a whole phantasmagoric world."

\(^{305}\) HG, p.187.

\(^{306}\) SOI, pp. 139-140.