CHAPTER NINE

TANTRA'S RELEVANCE TO MODERN TIMES

Tantra emerged, spread, flourished, flooded, declined, but still survives. We have already discussed the background of Tantra’s emergence in India. Tantra’s emergence and popularity surpassed other philosophies and cults. Tantra’s arrival was due to the demand of the age.

In the whole Tantric Period we find some common features. These are agricultural backwardness, lack of scientific and technological appliances, occurrence of natural calamities, attacks by various diseases, poverty, early death, theft, burglary, infertility of women, social disputes, monarchical oppression, feudal suppression, foreign invasions, religious conversion etc.

Tantra was a ‘panacea’ for all problems during the entire Tantric Period.

Many changes have taken place from the emergent period of Tantra to the Modern Period. Indian History has witnessed many ups and downs of rulers, kingdoms and empires, changes in society and the living condition of the people.

Naturally the pertinent question arises – Is Tantra relevant to modern times?

Before going to reply to this vital question, we have to cast our eyes on the features of modern times.

Features of Modern Times

Modern age is an age of science and technology. Modern life without science cannot be imagined. From morning to night and from birth to death, people are accustomed to the benefit of science and technology. Science has made people’s life better and more secured. People have become the Lords of all the creatures. The application of
Science and technology is felt in all sectors including transportation, communication, and medical science, entertainment, education, defence, space flight, and research works.

Modern age is also characterized with knowledge—exploration, economic development, political consciousness, cries for humanity and peace, slogans for women freedom and equality for all. On the other hand, the present age is also characterized with poverty, terrorism, communalism, regionalism, provincialism, regional imbalance, sex indiscrimination, casteism, corruption, violence, pollution, ill-health, juvenile delinquency, political instability and over-population. Subjects studied in this period are Physics, Chemistry, Bio-Science, Medical Science, Political Science, History, Geography, Modern Indian Languages, Classical Languages, Mathematics, Philosophy, Engineering subjects, Art, Architecture, Law and Commercial subjects. Specialization of these subjects is one of the important features of the present Education System.

But most of the fundamental problems of the Tantric Period and the Modern Period are almost all the same. Poverty, diseases, natural calamities, tension, horror, violence, exploitation, sexual crimes, infertility etc. are common to both these periods.

It is seriously observed that despite revolutionary changes made by science and technology, the problems faced by the modern Indian people are not solved.

Now let us see whether Tantra has any relevance to modern times that are characterized with the above-mentioned features.

**Science, Commerce and Tantra**

It is generally accepted that the application of science and technology cannot be proper without balanced mind. The success in trade and commerce depends on the successful management groups that require physical and mental stability and personality.

1. BUS, p. 27.
Tantra helps a person to bring in physical and mental strength, balanced mind, strong determination, will force, firmness and dynamic personality.

**Computer and Tantra**

Sanskrit Alphabet is of Tantric origin. Modern Computer scientists have acclaimed Sanskrit Alphabet and figures to be universally adaptable for Computer.²

**Pollution and Tantra**

The vibration of Mantra and flame of fire of sacrifice can control environmental pollution, which has been the fatal cause of all diseases.³

**Diseases and Tantra**

Modern Medical Science is a boon to human society. Surgical operations and transplantation of human organs can save the people from sure death. But diseases like Cancer, Asthma, Liver Cirrhosis, and Psoriasis are not fully curable in Allopathic System of Medicine.

On the other hand, Tantra Yoga and Tantric medicine can cure people of these diseases.⁴

Moreover, most of the people suffer from stress, tension and anxiety. They use various kinds of medicine. Even they become drug-addicted in order to relieve of these problems. They may get temporary relief.

Tantra Yoga can relieve people of stress strain, anxiety and tension and other neurotic problem.⁵

**Modern Surgery and Tantra**

Anaesthetic gas is used to make a patient unconscious at the time of any major

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2. SSI, p.15.
3. ET, ii. P.158.
5. Ibid, p. 115; YSN₂, p. 13 ; STB, pp. 44-45
surgical operation. Now some surgeons are advised by some magicians to apply the technique of hypnotism, which is applied by famous magicians. According to them, this technique is less costly and less risky.₆

Tantra’s Stambhana of Śāṭkarma is at the root of hypnotism of Indian Magic.

**Political System and Tantra**

Throughout the whole Tantric Period, there were the monarchical governments in different parts of India.₇ Tantra reminds the kings of their duties. These have still relevance to those countries where still monarchy exists. These have also much value in democratic and republic countries like India.

**Class-struggle and Tantra**

India frequently witnesses the division of the Hindus into forward and backward classes on the issue of the reservation system in Government jobs.

Tantra’s principle of caste-ism may lessen the distance between these two classes.

**Communalism and Tantra**

Communalism is one of the greatest problems in India at present. Tantric Philosophy can solve this problem. Tantra stresses on human body.₈ The Supreme Being resides in human body. This philosophy may prohibit one community from hating other community.

**Woman Freedom and Tantra**

Now-a-days ‘women freedom’ is a common ‘table talk’. The exalted position of women in Tantra₉ is the best proof of ‘woman freedom’.

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₆. ETV, News Telecast, 2006
₇. ANCl, pp. 120-358.
₈. SĀKT,1/10.
₉. KN. 10/71.
Auspicious time of Ceremonies and Tantra

In this scientific age, inaugural functions of various institutions and foundation-laying ceremonies of different establishments are mainly performed according to the injunctions of Tantric rituals.

Most of the political leaders wait for the auspicious moments for the submission of nomination papers for elections. The auspicious time of sworn-in-ceremonies of almost all the political dignitaries is fixed according to the Indian Almanac. All these are related to the Tantric Astrology and Astronomy.

Modern Education System and Tantra

In this scientific age, Physics and Chemistry are considered as most important subjects. Modern Physics finds out Tantra’s relevance to modern times. Tantra’s view that Energy (Sakti) lies everywhere, is also proved correct by modern Physicists.\(^{10}\)

Tantra’s Mantra Theory is considered to be relevant to the modern period on the basis of the Einstein’s famous formula “\(E = Mc^2\)”.\(^{11}\)

Tantra’s Alchemy has strengthened the plinth of the modern Chemistry. Alchemists still find Tantra’s relevance to the modern Alchemy.\(^{12}\)

Modern Anatomy and Physiology are much indebted to Anatomy and Physiology of Tantra. These have much relevance to the modern centuries.\(^{13}\)

Sex Education and Tantra

Tantra recognizes Kāma Šāstra\(^{14}\) as one of the subjects for studies. Indian school boards and universities have entered some topics of sex education in their curriculum.

\(^{10}\) SC, 5/32; BTV, p. 7.
\(^{11}\) HISK, p. 124.
\(^{12}\) HCAM, p. 113.
\(^{13}\) ET, ii, p. 176.
\(^{14}\) PT, p. 65.
Para-Psychology and Tantra

The benefits of Yoga in Tantra are many. Telepathy, Clairvoyance and Clairaudience are the results of the Tantra Sadhana.

Para-psychology is one of the most recent developments of Psychology. It deals with problems like Extra-sensory Perception, Telepathy and Clairvoyance etc.15

Method of Memorization

In the pre-primary stages, the method of memorization of Alphabet of different languages is like the Tantric method of memorization which was introduced by the Tantric Sadhakas in ancient times.

Modern Architecture and Tantra

The Tantric Architecture is followed in constructing various temples.16

Modern Sculpture, Iconography and Tantra

The themes of modern Sculpture, Iconography sometimes are indebted to Tantric themes.

History, Geography and Tantra

Tantra17 is still one of the sources of History and Geography of ancient Assam as well as India.

Philosophy and Tantra

The Philosophy of Tantra is still studied along with other philosophies of India. A large section of the Indian people still follows the basic principles of Tantric Philosophy. Probably most of the Hindus are influenced by this Philosophy of Tantra. The Philosophy of Tantra is a living kernel in the Hindu Religion.18

15. EPG, p. 7.
16. HTR, p. 347.
17. HA, p. 1; YOG, 1st & 2nd Pts.
18. CHI, iv, p. 228; Article: Tantra as a way of realization.
Indian Economics and Tantra

Indian Economics is directly linked with Tantra. The articles used for the performance of Tantric rituals are produced and supplied by a large section of people. Thousands and thousands of people are engaged in it. During the observance of Tantric festivals, merchants, industrialists, middle men-cum-businessmen and many others are connected with the production, distribution, sales, purchases and other transactions.

Modern Hindu Law and Tantra

(a) Marriage

'Saptapadi' is an essential rite of marriage, according to Tantra. Hindu Marriage Act 1955, section 7 (2), lays down that Saptapadi is an indispensable rite among all classes of Hindus and the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken.

(b) Dowry

An approved marriage (Brahma) among Hindus has always been considered a Kanyādāna. According to Hindu Dharmaśāstra, the meritorious act of Kanyādāna is not complete till the bridegroom is given a Dakṣiṇa. It is called Varadakṣiṇa. In course of time, Vara-dakṣiṇa was turned into 'Dowry' and it became a widespread evil. It has now become a curse to Hindu society.

Tantra prohibits dowry and advocates for punishment.

In India the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed in 1961. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act was also passed in 1986.

19. MHL, p. 89.
20. Ibid, p. 78.
21. Ibid, p. 79.
(c) Prohibition of Marriage

Tantra recognizes two types of marriage (i) Brāhma and (ii) Saiva. In case of Saiva marriage, there is no restriction of caste. Any woman who is not Sapinda and has not already a husband, may be married.

According to the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act (Removal of Disabilities), 1946 and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, inter-caste, inter-sub-caste and also inter-religious marriages are valid.

But the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, section 5 (V), lays down that the parties to marriage should not be Sapindas to each other.

Void, Voidable Marriage

According to Tantra, the woman who is delivered of a child within six months of her marriage or after the lapse of a year following her husband's death, is not a wife.

According to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Section 12 (iii), the concealment of the pre-marriage pregnancy by the respondent is a ground of voidable marriage.

Adoptions

Tantric injunctions regarding adoptions are almost the same as the Hindi Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, lays down.

Abortion

Tantra strictly prohibits abortion and advocates for punishment.

22. MN, 9/267, 270.
24. MHL, pp. 93-94.
26. MN, 11/68-69
27. MHL, pp. 118-119.
28. MN, 12/76-78; MHL, pp. 223-225.
29. MN, 11/69-70.
Though the modern Indian law does not declare abortion completely illegal, the Government of India and the State Governments think of banning the pre-natal-sex-determination-test.

Besides these, in cases of partition, pre-emption, succession and inheritance and religious endowments, Tantric injunctions have relevance to modern Hindu Laws.

Sexual Offences and Tantra

Sometimes many known and prominent figures come to the headlines in newspapers and mass media in connection with sex-offences. In most of the cases, unhappy union of husband and wife leads them to involve in these offences.

Here lies Tantra's relevance. Only Tantric Yoga can give all persons the key to happy union.

Samskāra and Tantra

Tantric Samskāras have much relevance to the Hindus. Almost all the Hindu families perform sacraments that are Tantric. Now the Hindus in some states mostly and widely follow Ten Samskāras of Tantra.

Modern Magic and Tantra

Some scholars blame Tantra for its magical rites. The cult of Magic is very ancient. People of the Tantric Period were fond of Magic. Tantric Sādhakas studied the psychology of the masses and included Magic in Tantra.

Now Indian Magic has earned fame throughout the world. Indian Magic owes to Tantric Magic. Now Magic is considered as science. Even some universities think

31. MCKC,p. 38.
32. CHI,ii, 392-413; MN, 9/4-265.
Mother India and Tantra

The concept of Mother India is mainly indebted to Tantra's Mother Cult. All the Sakta-Pithas scattered throughout India are built on the different parts of Sāri. Tantric Goddesses are worshipped in these Pīthas. Thus the concept of the Divine Mother is transformed into the concept of Mother India.34

In the song Vande Mātaram, Mother India is identified with the Tantric Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.35

\[
\begin{align*}
tvāṁ hi durgā daśa-praharaṇa - dhārīṇī \\
kamalā kamala-dala-vihārīṇī \\
vāṇī vidyādāyini namāmi tvāṁ \\
namāmi kamalānamamalām atulām \\
sujalāṁ suphalāṁ mātaram \\
vande mātaram
\end{align*}
\]

Durgā bold who yields her arms
With half a score of hands,
The science-goddess. Vani, too,
And Lakshmi who on lotus stands –
What are they but, mother, thou,
To thee in all these forms I bow!

To thee! Fortune-giver, that art
To fault unknown, beyond compare,
Who dost with sweetest waters flow
And on thy children in thy are
Dainty fruits dost rich bestow,
To thee, mother, to thee I bow!

34. HG, pp. 184, 187.
35. Ânandamaṭha, BR, I, p. 607; HG, p. 183; PRN, p. 45.
It is curiously noted that national heroes like Shivaji were either Tantric or their Gurus were Tantric. Sri Aurovinda observes.36

"Those who struggled for the freedoms of the country are Shivaji, Pratapaditya, Kedar Roy etc., and they were either Tantric or their Gurus were Tantric".

In modern India of the 19th and 20th centuries we find that Raja Rammohan Roy, father of modern India, was a Tantric practitioner.37 Swami Vivekananda, one of the pioneers of the Renaissance and also the father of nationalism in India,38 was initiated by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa who was a great Tantric Sādhaka.

So Tantra and Mother India is inseparable. The concept of Mother India, which is basically a Tantric concept, is also relevant to modern times.

Besides these, thousands and thousands of people rush towards Tantric Sādhakas and the Sākta-pīthas for the solution to problems in connection with marriage, job, disease, accident, infertility, conjugal matter, election etc.

Still now snake-bitten persons are mostly treated by the Ojhas and Gunins who follow the Tantric systems of treatment.

Thus we find Tantra’s relevance to all directions in modern times in India.

Our discussion will remain incomplete if we do not touch the philosophies and ideologies prevalent in India. Some of them also are considered as relevant to modern times. If we compare the basic principles of Tantra with the basic principles of those philosophies and ideologies, it will be clear to us that Tantra has still much relevance to

36. SAJ, p. 300.
modern times in comparison with other prevalent cults.

Veda and Tantra

Indian culture stands on the Vedic Cult and the Tantric Cult. These are complimentary to each other.

The Tantric devotees at all times acknowledged the supreme authority of the Vedas39 which was an integral part of Hindu orthodoxy; ‘Indeed, the mixture of Tantric and Vedantic traits in modern Hindu life, ritual and thought is so intimate that they present themselves as an organic whole.’

Yet some differences are marked between the Tantric Cult and the Vedic Cult. We shall point out those differences that are relevant to modern times.

(i) Right of Women and the Sudras:

The right of women and the Śūdras is generally denied in the Vedic Cult. On the other hand, the door of the Tantric rituals is open to women and Śūdras.40

(ii) Performer of Rituals

The Śādhaṅka himself does not perform the Vedic rituals. These work on the assumption of a division of labour among the participants. On the other hand, the Śādhaṅka himself under the guidance of the Guru41 performs Tantric rituals.

(iii) Yajña and Puja

Yajña is the contribution of the Vedic Cult. On the other hand, Puja is the contribution of the Tantric Cult.42

40. TIB, pp. 160-164.
41. UM, p. 105.
42. CC, p. 94.
(iv) Mantra

Throughout the Vedic tradition, the Mantra stands as a means to the ends of sacrifice. On the other hand, the Tantric Mantra, as the essence of the ritual procedure, is an object of value in itself, being in theory the subtlest manifest form of the deity.43

Buddhist Tantra and Hindu Tantra

Both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra works emerged in large numbers and a very large number of subjects came to be included in Tantra works. Buddhist and Hindu Tantra are alike in some respects but they differ in the topics discussed, philosophical doctrines and some religious principles and practices.44

The aim of the most Buddhist Tantras is to indicate a short path for attaining Buddhahood through Yoga practices and they introduced the elements of Śakti for Yogic practices and for securing miraculous powers.45

Following are the names of some published Buddhist Tantra works.46

_Advaya-vajra-samgraha, Ārya-maṅjūśrī-mūla-kalpa, Guhya-samāja Tantra, Jñāna-suddhi of Indrabhuti, Nispanna-yogāvalī of Abhayakara Gupta, Prajñāpataka-nirūpaṇa, Sūdhanamalā._ Of them Guhya-samāja Tantra and Āryamaṅjūśrīmūlakalpa are the oldest, according to scholars.

Some scholars do not find any basic differences between Buddhist and Hindu Tantras.

A scholar writes,47

"The names Śiva, Durgā etc. of the Hindu Tantras are simply transcribed in the

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43. UM, p. 118
44. HOD, v, ii, 1048.
45. Ibid, 1051.
46. Ibid, 1050.
47. As quoted in LOK, p.326.
Buddhist Tantras as names of Vajra-sattva, Vajraśākinī etc. In the Buddhist Tantras, too, is prevalent the worship of Cāṇḍī, Tārā, Vārāhi, etc. As in the Tantras revealed by Śiva, bizarre deities are imagined, so in the Buddhist Tantras we come across deities like Heruka and others .......... In the Buddhist scriptures expounding the views of the Buddha (i.e. genuine Buddhism) the five ma-s are strongly denounced. Buddhist Tantrikas, however, behave differently. The practice of the five ma-s constitutes a basic feature of the Buddhist Tantras. The indulgence in wine and meat, so severely denounced in the Buddhist scriptures, is extolled in the Buddhist Tantras...... The Buddhist Tantras, too, call him who has succeeded in the Tantra practices, a Vīraṇāyaka. The Buddhist Tantrikas also maintain that this world is born of the female (Vāmodbhava)’.

Neither are the Buddhist Tantras, wanting in the practices of Cakrapūja, Vīrayāga. Bhagaṇuja etc.

In spite of this view and similarities, some scholars find out differences between Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Tantra. These are as follows –

(a) Concept of Saktism

Buddhist Tantra does not accept the concept of Śaktism. On the other hand. Hindu Tantra (specially Śākta Tantra) in based on Śakti.48

(b) Static and Dynamic Aspects

Buddhist Tantra assigns static aspect to the female principle and dynamic aspect to the male principle.

On the other hand, Hindu Tantra (specially Śākta Tantra) assigns the static aspect to the male principle and the dynamic aspect to the female principle.49

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48. TAN, p. 53.
49. RET, p. 47.
(c) Violence and Non-Violence

According to Buddhist Tantra, non-violence is the highest religion. On the other hand, Hindu Tantra believes that violence is indispensable for self-preservation.50

(d) Cakras

In Buddhist Tantra, Prajñā and Upāya are anthropomorphically portrayed as an ideal married couple. They are ever together in the cosmic uṣanisakamal (Sahasrāra).

On the other hand, in Hindu Tantra, Sahasrāra is said to be the abode of Śiva and the lowest Mūḍādhāra Cakra is said to be the seat of Sakti.51

Islam and Tantra

Islamic Cult was also nourished in the soil of India when the Tantric Period was continual. Moreover, Islam was the state religion during the Mughal Period.

Some of the basic differences between Tantra and Islam are as follows –

(a) Religion and Cult

Islam is a religion.52 On the other hand, Tantra is not a religion like Islam. It is a cult and a part of Hindu or Buddhist religion.53

(b) After Death

Islam believes in resurrection,54 on the other hand, Tantra believes in rebirth.55

(c) Method of Worship

Islam does not believe in Pūjā.56 On the other hand Pūjā is an essential part of...

50. TIB, p.28.
51. TMSB, p. 28.
52. MDL, p. 3.
54. CR, p.155; ISLP, pp. 15-16.
55. POT, p. 562.
56. CR, p. 155.
Tantric rituals.\(^{57}\)

\((d)\) **Women's Participation**

According to the Islamic tradition, women cannot offer their prayer in mosques (bedsides Mecca) along with male devotees. On the other hand, women play the most important role in all Tantric rituals.\(^{58}\)

\((e)\) **Method of Korbani and Bali**

In Islam, *Korbani* is performed by the *Jabai* method. The animal's head is not chopped off by a single stroke. On the other hand, in Tantra in *Bali* method the animal's head is chopped off by a single stroke.\(^{59}\) The animal is killed by inflicting the least possible pain on it.

\((f)\) **Female Animals**

Both male and female animals are sacrificed in the name of *Korbani* in Islam. On the other hand in Tantric animal sacrifice, female animals are spared.\(^{60}\)

\((g)\) **Identification**

Islam believes in differences between Allah and an individual.\(^{61}\)

Tantra believes in the doctrine of the identity of the individual and the Absolute.\(^{62}\)

**Marxism and Tantra**

The political philosophy of Karl Marx is termed as Communism. Some states in India are much influenced by Communist Philosophy. Though it was propounded by Karl Marx in ‘Communist Manifesto’\(^ {63}\) in 1848, it was also advocated by Plato in his

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57. CC, p. 94.
59. ATV, 239.
60. SRC, 24/25.
63. RPT, p. 352.
monumental work entitled 'The Republic'. Plato advocated the communism of property and women.64

There are some basic differences between the Philosophy of Tantra and the Philosophy of Communism. We have picked out only two main differences.

(a) Driving Power

According to Karl Marx, the economic motive is the driving power behind all human activity.65 Economic factor is the only one which moves the whole world.66

The scope of the Philosophy of Tantra is much wider than the Philosophy of Communism. Tantra stresses on physical, psychological and spiritual factors that are behind all human activity.

(b) Religion

The communists stand for the abolition of all religions. According to Marx, ‘Religion is the opium of the people’ and ‘Man created God’.67 On the other hand, Tantra does not think so. Tantric rituals are the main organs of the Hindu religion. Moreover, Tantra believes that the Supreme Power assumes human form.68 The Divine Mother in the form of the Kundalini Sakti resides within the body.69 So God is not created by man.

In connection with Tantra’s relevance to modern times, we may sum up it with the following observation of a great Tantric scholar.

64. Ibid, p. 352.
66. HWPT, p. 185.
68. NV, 2/6.
69. RUY, 26/27.
“Thousands of great and accomplished Sadhakas still illumine all India with the glory of their austerities. In every Indian cremation ground the refulgent and divine halo of Bhairavas and Bhairavis is yet to be seen mingling with the light of the flames of funeral pyres, rending about the waves of nocturnal darkness and illuminating the wide expanse of Heaven. Dead and putrefying corpses submerged near cremation grounds are still brought to life by the force of the Sadhakas’ Mantras and made to render aid to Sadhanā and Siddhi. Tantrik Yogis even now and in this world obtain, through the potency of Mantras, direct vision of the world of Devas, which, lies beyond our senses. She, with dishevelled hair, the Dispeller of fear from the hearts of those who worship Her, still appears in great cremation grounds, to give liberation to Her devoted Sadhakas who, fearful of this existence, make obeisance to and supplicate Her. Sadhakas still merge themselves in the Self of Brahman, leaving their Brahmarandhra at those lotus feet of Brahmamayī, which are adored by Brahma and other Devas. The throne of the Daughter of the Mountain is still moved by the wondrous, attractive force of Mantras. This, in the eyes of Sadhakas, is the ever broad and royal road upon which they travel untiring to the city of liberation. May be there is nothing but darkness for the bed-ridden and dying blind man. Yet know that of a surety, Oh blind man! that the darkness exists only in your eyes.”

70. TTT, p. 81; POT, pp. 247-248.