Chapter V
A comparative account of Osho’s Philosophy of Tantra with that of Sir John Woodroffe.
Both Osho and Sir John Woodroffe came from two hemispheres of the globe. One from the East and other from the West. Western civilization has been based on a rational way of thinking, where as the Eastern civilization has been based on an aesthetic way of thinking. Rational thinking has contributed to the great advancement of Western civilization, while an aesthetic way of thinking has given rise to creative advancement in Eastern civilization.

Most of Tantric literature by western authors is purely based on sex. It has a reason to it; western world is completely stressed out of modernism in comparison to east.

Where as Indian Tantric literature, is not sex, but rather power -- power on all levels of reality, spiritual cosmic, physical and socio-political alike. Most Hindu Tantric traditions center around the Goddess Shakti, power or energy which circulates throughout all of the manifest universe; she is the creative energy or force which radiates out of the supreme consciousness of Lord Siva, generating the myriad forms of the phenomenal universe.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a few brave scholars made an effort to defend and re-valorize the Tantras, arguing that there is far more to this ancient tradition than mere illicit sexuality. The most important figure in this moralizing reform of Tantra was Sir John Woodroffe, a.k.a. Arthur Avalon, the enigmatic High Court Judge and secret Tantrika, who made it, his life's work to defend the Tantra against their many critics. In Woodroffe's rather sanitized and rationalized account, He says "Tantra is a noble philosophical
tradition, basically in line with the Vedas, and even comparable in its symbolism to the liturgy of the Catholic Church (20). More on the background of Sir John Woodroffe has been discussed in chapter III.

Osho had studied numerous books and was tremendously knowledgeable. He himself had practiced many spiritual ways and was a master of oration, and to argue on any subject he was not lesser than any lawyer in the world. For more on the background of Osho see chapter IV.

After studying the works Woodroffe I can say that it is unfortunately very difficult for the beginner, but it has served as the inspiration and chief reference text (usually without acknowledgment) for many Western occult-esoteric writers. The language, which he uses, is of a much higher standard. That is because of his British background. Where as if you compare it with that of Osho, the language is very simple yet profound.

Woodroffe has dealt with the subject of the Tantras in several papers. Woodroffe says that ‘the Tantra’ as it is called was wrongly considered to be synonymous with the Shakta Tantras; that in respect of the latter, the whole attention was given to the Vamacara ritual and to magic (Shatkarma); that this ritual, whatever may in truth be said against it, was not understood; that it was completely ignored that the Tantras contained a remarkable philosophic presentment of religious teaching, profoundly applied in a ritual of psychological worth; and that the Shastras were also a repertory of the alchemy,
medicine, law, religion, art and so forth of their time. It was sufficient to mention the word "Tantra" and there was supposed to be the end of the matter.\textsuperscript{2}

Where as Osho says, “that even in left hand path of Tantra can lead one to the self, when practiced with awareness.”\textsuperscript{3}

While Woodroffe is aware of many of the texts and traditions of the Shaivite and Vaishnaivite groups, often invoking Trika texts and metaphysical postulations, he restricts himself predominantly to the Shakta texts.

Where as Osho discusses Tantra as a whole in itself or complete science to enlightenment. In this he includes Buddhist tantra also.

Woodroffe has given details of both but has not highlighted the contrast between the two where as Osho has this to say about the difference in both Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Tantra.

Osho says, “If love appeals to you, and Vigyan Bhirava Tantra will be your bible. If meditation appeals to you, then Buddhist tantra (The royal Song of Sahara) will appeal to you. It depends on you.”\textsuperscript{4}

Woodroffe’s works is more of illustrations and less on its application on the contrary Osho’s philosophy is very much practical and seldom abstract.

Osho says, “Tantra means technique. So this treatise is a scientific one. Science is not concerned with why, science is concerned with how. That is basic difference between philosophy and science.”\textsuperscript{5}
Each sutra has a practical guide to it. It is like reading a how-to-series of books but tremendous depth in each of the statements. Each sutra can liberate one to the oneness of the whole.

Woodroffe's source is basically last century Bengali writings, hence it limits the expansion of knowledge other than that region and hence it gets boring. Woodroffe giving details in an illustrations format is difficult to imagine, he is very abstract, whereas Osho describes it in a very lucid way and very easy to understand.

Osho draws allusions and reference from all literatures of the world, which make his writings informative and also offer a glimpse into other great thinkers and cultures.

Woodroffe's tantric universe is non-dual (advaita). He describes it in more classical Vedantic terms with statements such as the following.

"In the beginning the nishkala Brahman alone existed. In the beginning there was the One. It willed and became many Aham bahu syam--"may I be many".\(^6\)

Where as Osho's tantric universe is also non-dual but he describes both in common language as well in philosophical terms.

Yet before any of this practice can take place, Woodroffe is fond of reminding us, the prospective Sadhaka must be deemed competent and receive Tantric initiation (Diksa) from a Guru.

"Guru is the root (mula) of Diksa (initiation). Diksa is the root of mantra. Mantra is the root of Devata; and Devata is the root of Siddhi."\(^7\)
"Initiation gives spiritual knowledge and destroys sin. As one lamp is lit at the flame of another, so the divine Shakti consisting of Mantra is communicated from the guru's body to that of the Sishya's."8

But he does not give direction in comparison to Osho. Whereas Osho gives each sutra with complete methodology, i.e. how one can practice it.

Woodroffe was self-reflexive about his relationship to his object of study. He believed that it was only from the perspective of an insider that a correct and just understanding of the Shastra could come about. Hence he failed in comparison to Osho in explaining the method in a lucid way.

Thus, we can say that Sir John Woodroffe was a great scholar of Tantra from the western world. He has true insight on the subject and a tanrika himself in the true sense.

While there are differences in their way they have told about Tantra but they reach the same goal. Their common platforms of both, are secular in their outlook, and they raise above provincial and religious limitations.

Other salient feature of Osho's philosophy is that which makes him unique is he includes lot of humor in his teachings.

To conclude we can say that no doubt Sir John Woodruff is undoubtedly a great scholar and true Tantrika. But he failed as a
teacher. Where as Osho has been great master himself. Hence there is more appeal in what Osho says than what Sir John Woodruff says.


4 Osho Times, Sadhana Foundation. P.23.


