TANTRA
INTRODUCTION

Tantra is expansion: expansion of consciousness. Tantra lures us along a luminous path granting us from time to time vision of effulgent height and wholeness. At the very end of this path is the promise of our deliverance through surrender of self to the supreme energy that governs the universe. Tantra is concept of realization of the totality of life along a well defined and strictly discipline path.

Tantra is a Sanskrit word derived from the root tan-to expands. Tantra means knowledge, which offers the possibility of expanding, mans consciousness and faculties. Tantra provides a synthesis between spirit and matter to enable man to achieve his fullest spiritual and material potential. Tantra is not a withdrawal from life, but the fullest possible acceptance of ones desires, feelings and situations as human beings. It is neither a
religion nor mysticism but an empirical experimental method valid to every one and not limited to any exclusive group or section.

Tantra art is a sign language, which symbolizes the man universe relation. Tantric art can be regarded as a form of yoga. To penetrates the enigmatic silence and mystery of the universe. According to Tantra the cosmos is evolved out of fifty matrica sounds. These sounds in course of time undergo various changes, giving rise to various forms. The common practice in Tantra ritual is to make a mantra out of each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and to associate each with a different part of a body.

Tantra is both an experience of life and a scientific method by which man can bring out his inherent spiritual power. In this way the Tantric rituals are the basis of many a philosophy—Saiva, Sakta, Jaina, Buddhist or vaishnava; Jains, for example, developed to a very high
degree of an atomic theory, space time relationship, astronomical observation and a concept of the universe.

It is difficult to determine the exact origin of Tantra but its ritual symbols are found in Harappan Culture [Indus Valley Civilization], [C.3000 B.C]. Its base is determined as Indo-Aryan.

In the early medieval period the reference of Tantra is found in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain literature. Tantric practices are also found in Nepal, parts of South-East Asia, Mediterranean cultures such as Egypt. In India the most important centers of tantric worship is Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, and Kashmir. The foothills of the northwestern Himalayas, Rajasthan and parts of south India.

The basic tenets of Tantra could be started both in ascending and descending order, from cosmic plane at tantras precepts concerning the ultimate reality and come
down to its notion of creation and the constitutions of the objective world, and finally arrive at its understanding of the human body and its properties, and the psychic process which inter-link man and universe, or through man-world-cosmos, culminating in the nature of the ultimate reality. It could be achieved either through the human body [Kundaliny-Yoga] through performance of rights and rituals, or visually through mantra, mandalas and deities, or verbally by the repetition of seeds syllables [mantra]. Tantras divers methods, which evoke the involvement of all senses, at different levels—physical, mental or psychic, in, consent or singly, are directed towards self-enlightenment and a realization of the vision of unity.

Tantric art has always tried to integrate forms into geometrical and architectural patterns, the archetypes. Geometrical forms dominate the whole range of Indian symbolisms, particularly in tantric diagrams and formulae. The geometrical symbols in tantric art
interpreted in the forms of straight line, the triangle, and the circle.

The mathematical zero, discovered in the yogic process, was born out of reduction and it is with this number that duality comes into existence.

Tantric text emphasizes the necessity of inner visualization and the hidden meaning of things. The vision, which enables the artist so to visualize reality, is the supreme form of concentration.

Consciously or unconsciously every mode of expression, whether artistic, religious or scientific, is struggling to reach that ultimate reality, the one without a second. Indian artist or more precisely, tantric shilpy- yogins, have conceived this realization in terms of dimension sabda [the primordial sound substratum as a form of monosyllabic mantra, the Om and Bhamanda as the vital key form of a super sensuous world, the egg. Om aims at
the total elimination of the subject-object by the expression of sound rhymes, while brahmanda epitomizes the eternal reality in an absolute form. The formless gets a time element, a dimension, a permanent shape, the abstraction of which is aimed at incorporating spatial values conditioned by sound and light.

In tantric thought, sound without vibration does exist, this under struck- sound, is only heard by the yogi whose senses are withdrawn from the external and turned inwards. The tantras mention that cosmos evolved from the fifty-matrica sounds, embedded within these sounds are possibilities of new forms; these potential forms materialize when, in the process of evolution, basic matrica sounds undergo permutations.

Sound, according to tantric view, is classified broadly into four stages, Para, Pasayanti, Madhyama, and Vaikhari. The theory of sound is the basis for the unique and magnificent mantra-shastra, through which repletion
of mantras [thought-forms] and their japa [rhythmic mental concentration on them], one can remodel one's entire physical, mental, and psychic nature.

A mantra is primarily a mental sound and regarded as fundamental in both the creation and dissolution of all forms.

The power of mantra consists in the effect of its pattern of sound waves. Under vibration small particles of matter, as one can prove by experiment, group themselves into definite geometrical patterns and figures, corresponding exactly to the quality, strength, and rhythm of the sound. The physical sound patterns produced by mantras are capable of coming into sympathetic vibrations with sound patterns, which constitute physical phenomenon.

The common practice of tantra ritual is to make mantra out of each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and to
associate them with different parts of the body; the purpose or aim is to feel that the different parts of the body are merely the manifestation of the different aspects of the great power. The whole body with all its biological and psychological processes becomes an instrument in and through which the cosmic power reveals itself.

According to tantric principles, the individual being and the universal being are one; all that exist in the universe must also exist in the individual body. The first and most important monosyllabic mantra is the sound Om, generally considered to be the sound -symbol of the supreme one. Even the conception of the sound Om, which is the combination of the three mantras a, u, and m, presupposes geometrical patterns corresponding to a straight line, a semi-circle and a point.

Though tantra there is a possibility of new approaches to give concrete meaning to the abstract expression in the
Contemporary art movements of the country. Contemporary Indian artists like G. R. Santosh, Biren De, S. H. Raza, K. C. S. Paniker, Prabhakar Barve, have adopted many aspects of tantric art quite frequently. G. R. Santosh represented the meditative poses, creation of life and the union of shiva – Shakti. Undoubtedly, G. R. Santosh was the most well known tantric painter. His vast compositions consist of curvilinear forms, which are partly lost in mystery.

In Biren De’s each work a central point is found, the concept of Garbha-Griha, the union of purusha and prakriti and approaches with an individual abstract language. He is more dynamic and his new imagery transforms of colour have a very unique order.

S. H. Raza found his niche in the concept of a Bindu- the origin of life, the central point of the whole world, beginning and a compressed or concentrated point of every thing.
In Paniker’s work we find what seems to merely script graph appearing like a manuscript page enlarged to the size of a canvas. Barve’ paintings are more symbolic but the effect it produces is in the nature of ‘pop’ art. His colour is more of matter than spirit, but the image he produces is something unique in the search.

Art is not a profession but a path towards truth and self-realization both for maker and spectator. Tantra has a great message for this awareness. Thus, tantric artist dedicate themselves to the task of integrating their vision. In India tasks were regarded as a branch of yoga and involved, like every other spiritual activity, a discipline and a ritual by which artist might become identified with their creative sources.