

Thread, Stretch, Expand

By James Bone

Is life going the way you would like?
Are you in pain and suffering?
Are you limited by your current beliefs, fears or ways of doing things?

Well you are not alone; many of us feel this way, at least some of the time.

So much in life is unknown. The danger is we can forget this and limit ourselves to what we know, or become stuck with our current beliefs.

What you don't know would fill a great book.

Sydney Smith

Danger, cause, pain

Pain can be a clear example of this: physical pain is usually associated with injury, but in truth pain is a consequence of perception of "danger", and our stress, emotions, beliefs, social situation and past experience can all play a part in the process. If we only saw pain as a consequence of injury, we would constantly seek to heal an injury to solve our pain and become frustrated when the pain did not go away, when in fact we needed to deal with other issues to address the cause of pain.

This is also a truth of other life situations. We can limit our ability to solve life issues or experience the best from life, because of the limitations we place upon ourselves.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

Ralph Waldo

Embrace, desires, expand

There is a process called Tantra, meaning "a thread, to stretch, to expand". It is an eastern way of living which draws upon many sources, which intriguingly accepts and embraces our desires. Tantra considers that desire is the cornerstone of the universe, not something to be suppressed. Tantra embraces the feminine principle that life is about expansion, creativity, playfulness, experience, prosperity and unlimited potential. Tantra sets no external ideals for perfection, as one's inner potential is already present in everyone, being part of the beauty of nature and only needs to be uncovered.

In Tantra the feminine energy is called "Shakti".

'Shakti' can be celebrated as the creative principle of universe, the playful feminine principle connected to prosperity, wisdom and plenitude that can be welcomed into and honored in one's spiritual life. She is not an obstacle to spiritual life, but rather its very completeness.

Quote

Tantra is not so much a philosophy but a practice, which is designed to expand our awareness, increase our wisdom, and reduce our limitations.

Accept, celebrate, passion, play

In Tantra it all starts with the concept of "acceptance" – accept all you are rather than fight or suppress it. One celebrates life and nature, approaching life in a playful way, being open to learning, change and expansion forward. Tantra is the path of passion; Passion for living.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Power, Meaning, Practice

The power of anything is how meaningful it is for you. Sounding 'Omms' without passion or meaning has no real power. The Tantric masters recognized this and recognized the need to create meaningfulness to any action. For example they empowered the use of mantra mediation through the process of initiation.

We may not always have access to initiation in the west, but we can still utilize the principle by working with practices which have meaning for us. In the classic text the "Vignana Bhairava", 112 practices are given on meditation because it is understood that power comes in doing a practice which feels right and has meaning, not just doing something rote like.

DO sweat the small stuff

Tantra's basis is practice or ritual – by doing something regularly it helps to remind you and keep you on track. Also it is the little things, which keep us going. Though the big things are exciting and something to look forward to; in the expanse of life they don't occur that often. It's pleasure in the little things, which helps us get by.

*No endeavor is in vain;
Its reward is in the doing,
And the rapture of pursuing
Is the prize the vanquished gain.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Tools of trade

The tools of tantra can include the following in varying degrees:

- Awareness - in every sense; to support or ground ourselves
- Hatha Yoga - to strengthen the body and breath
- The cornerstone to Tantra is Meditation.

"The Tantric meditation is contained in the ritual. The Tantric ritual consists of methods which continuously occupy the mind, leaving the thoughts to do as they please and drift by in the background. There is no need to struggle with them. You have something else to do. And, if for a moment you become preoccupied with a thought, then all you need to do is realize it, remember what it was you were doing, and return to your practice."

Swami Janakananda

- Mantra - The most powerful meditation in Tantra is Mantra (pronounced not like "man", but like "mun" in mundane). Mantra is the power of vibration and the use of special "words". There are special mantras which are believed to have transforming ability to consciousness.
 - Yantra - Symbols called Yantra are also used in Tantra. Traditionally they are characterized by the dot (called the bindu), the triangle, lines, squares, lotus leaf and the ancient writing of India, Sanskrit. Yantras often represent icons of ancient India. In modern times Yantra can be seen in branding. We all recognize the golden M of McDonalds.
 - Mudra - is used to amplify the effects, working powerfully on the brain and consciousness.
- Iconology - is the use of meaningful icons. Icons are symbolic of important things in life, such as prosperity, wisdom, compassion, letting go, creativity etc. The past icons from the Hindu and Buddhist tradition were used due to their meaning at that time.

Helpful Hints

- Develop a regular ritual to help lift yourself up – aim to meditate and contemplate daily. If so inclined giving thanks for all you have.

Celebrate life and do what is Meaningful

Be Open to the unknown and expand to your full potential

Try it for real

Come try at the Workshop on 30th October. (See *What's On*).

How do you translate what you already have – your body, breath, mind – into Tantric consciousness?

Learn the tools of altering your body into the body iconology of the Cosmic Dancer, using your own body as the instrument. The entire Cosmic Dancer sequence will be taught. Methodologies used will be Hatha

Yoga practices, pranayamas for breath and energy, tantric meditations, with readings from the Vijnana Bhairava.

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