



An General Introduction Of Tantrism And Tantric Art In India

What is "Tantric Art Forms?"

Tantric Art forms a considerable portion of all traditional art in India. This in spite of the fact that tantrism as a religious practice has always been confined to minor religious sects and cults, ones that were severely proscribed in certain points of history. It is perhaps a consequence of this character of tantric sectarianism that tantric art is pervasively symbolic and presupposes a particular reading community, one that, in the past, put the art to specific cultic uses. In the modern period, however, Tantric Art has decisively delinked itself from cultic practice of any sort and has become secularly oriented. Modes of representation employed by the modern tantric movement in India, nevertheless initiate continuities with the earlier period. Geometric patterns and symbolic forms with conventional lines, shapes and colors are among representational elements that continue into the modern period.

There were many theories about tantric cult from various scripts with many people based on three basic scripts: **Tantra**, **Mantra**, and **Yantra**.

TANTRA: "**Loom, methodology.**" 1) Most generally, a synonym for sastra, "scripture." 2) A synonym for the Agamic texts, especially those of the **Sakta** faith, a class of Hindu scripture providing detailed instruction on all aspects of religion, mystic knowledge and science. The tantras are also associated with the Saiva tradition. 3) A specific method, technique or spiritual practice within the **Saiva** and **Sakta** traditions. For example, **pranayama** is a tantra. Tantra generally involves a reversal of the normal flow of energies. Its perspective is that the inner self is most important, and outer life is secondary. Tantra causes the life force to flow up through the sushumna. Many are the methods for overcoming the unovercomeable. Fallen into the hands of the unscrupulous, these techniques **black magic (abhichara)**.

MANTRA: "**Mystic formula.**" A sound, syllable, word or phrase endowed with special power, usually drawn from scripture. **Mantras** are chanted loudly during **puja (worship, adoration)** to invoke the Gods and establish a force field. Certain **Mantras** are repeated softly or mentally for **japa (Recitation)**, the subtle tones quieting the mind, harmonizing the inner bodies and stimulating latent spiritual qualities. Hinduism's universal **Mantra** is **Aum (Often spelled Om - The mystic syllable of tantrism)**. To be truly effective, such **Mantras** must be given by the preceptor through initiation.

YANTRA: "**Vesel; container.**" A mystic diagram composed of geometric and alphabetic figures - usually etched on small plates of gold, silver or copper. Sometimes rendered in three dimensions in stone or metal. The purpose of a **yantra** is to focus spiritual and mental energies according to computer-like **yantric** pattern, be it for health, wealth, childbearing or the invoking of God or another. It is usually installed near or under the temple Deity. Psychically seen, the temple **yantra** is a magnificent three-dimensional edifice of light and sound in which the **devas** work. On the astral plane, it is much larger than the temple itself.

Siddha Cult: The Tamil Siddha school, had a fully defined system in the eighth century itself. It was at this time that **Tirumular (An illustrious siddha yogi)**, himself one of the 64 canonized Shaivite saints or **Nayanars (The 63 canonized Tamil saints of South India)** of the Saiva Siddhanta sect, authored the **Tirumantiram (Tamil scripture; written ca 200 BCE by Rishi Tirumular)** which fully defined the nature of the Tamil Siddha cult up until the present era. All of the writings of the Tamil Siddhas, whether defining philosophical viewpoints, yogic practices, or presenting alchemical recipes for herbal tinctures and base metal amalgams were presented in poetic form, often employing the more difficult meters that darkened back to the ancient Tamil Sangam Age.

above resources taken from: 1. "Dancing with SIVA" by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, 2. "An Introduction to the Tamil Siddhas: Their Tantric Roots, Alchemy, Poetry, and the True Nature of their Heresy Within the Context of South Indian Shaivite Society" by Layne Little 3. The Doctrine of Recognition by K.N.Kaw

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