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Self-Realization through the Yoga Sutras, Vedanta, Samaya Sri Vidyā Tantra

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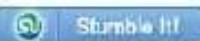
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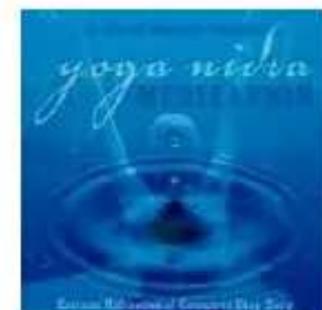
## Schools of Tantra

by Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati

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Tantra considers the universe to be a manifestation of pure consciousness. Through this process of manifesting, consciousness divides itself into two parts, which cannot exist without one another (though *appearing* to divide, they actually remain one and the same). One aspect remains as a static, formless quality (shiva), while the other is a dynamic, creative aspect (shakti). The two eternally coexist, like ink and the written word, which, though one and the same, are different. The journey of Tantra is to know them both, at once, as one. Through a process of [kundalini awakening](#), the two are eventually experienced in their state of union. In the Himalayan tradition, [Yoga, Vedanta, and Tantra](#) are companion practices.



[Audio Podcast: The Secret of Shiva and Shakti](#) 

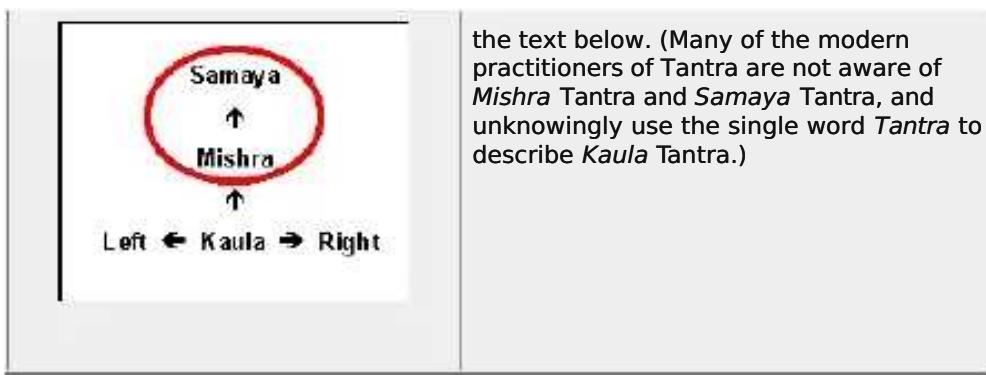
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	<p>In most modern descriptions of Tantra, two types are mentioned, Left-Handed Tantra and Right-Handed Tantra. (Many are not aware of this division, thinking that all Tantra is Left-Handed.)</p>
	<p>However, this view of Tantra is incomplete. The Left-Handed and Right-Handed Tantras are both aspects of <i>Kaula</i> Tantra, which is only one of the three major schools of Tantra. (There are many within those three)</p>
	<p>The higher Tantras are <i>Mishra</i> and <i>Samaya</i>. The differences between these three schools of Tantra are described in</p>



the text below. (Many of the modern practitioners of Tantra are not aware of *Mishra Tantra* and *Samaya Tantra*, and unknowingly use the single word *Tantra* to describe *Kaula Tantra*.)

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### **Introduction**

It is often taught that there are two schools of Tantra, the *left-handed* path and the *right-handed* path, depending on the nature of the practices. However, these two are actually divisions within one school, that of *Kaula Tantra*. The other two are the *Mishra* and *Samaya* schools of Tantra. All systems or methods of Tantra fall into one of these three schools, though there may be many subdivisions within these three.

The *Kaula Tantra* school utilizes external practices and rituals, while the *Samaya* school is completely an internal process. The *Mishra Tantra* school mixes the external practices and rituals, along with internal practices. The three schools are progressively higher, with *Kaula Tantra* being the lower, *Mishra Tantra* going further inward, and *Samaya Tantra* for those who are prepared to do the advanced practices.

By being aware of all three schools of Tantra, one can more wisely see how Tantra might fit into his or her personal spiritual practices, not limiting one's scope to ~~the choice between the two Kaula Tantra paths~~.

Each of the three schools of Tantra believe in purifying of the body, breath, mind, and the latent impressions called *samskaras*, which are the driving force behind karma. The purifying process is called *bhutashuddhi*, which means purifying of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space in the various ways in which they manifest.

Each of the schools of Tantra also practice methods for awakening the spiritual energy of *kundalini*, though the methods and the height attained in that [kundalini awakening](#) may differ. Some of the methods of Tantra are taught under the names *Kundalini Yoga* or *Kriya Yoga*.

**Shiva and Shakti are like  
Ink and the Word (or Pictures)**

With one bottle of ink, we can write countless different words or draw countless different objects. Thus, there are only two things:

- 1) **Static:** The static, fixed, or unchanging aspect is the ink. Whatever form it might take, it is always ink. We have not changed a single molecule of ink, but rather, have only moved it around, changing the shape.
- 2) **Active:** The active, fluid, or changing aspect is the shape in which we might form the ink. We can write or draw this or that. We can mix and match, move here and there, or put layer upon layer. We can create beauty or ugliness and, yet, the ink is the same.

friend... love... good...  
foe... hate... bad...  
1,000,000,000+

The ink forms lines.  
Then, the lines form a more complex object called house.  
Then, those houses form still more complex objects called neighborhoods, towns, or cities.  
Yet, all along, they are only ink!

Lines      House      Neighborhood, town, city

**So too, consciousness changes form:** First, it is pure, undivided. Then, it individuates, and takes on I-am-ness. It rests in bliss, while any would-be distractions of attraction and aversion lie latent. Then, it looks outward through the veil of wants and wishes, using the instrument of mind and mental senses, seeing the ever-flowing countless objects of the subtle, which is like the dreaming state. Then, still further, it looks outward through the physical instrument it has formed, seeing the countless objects of the external, gross world. Mistakenly, consciousness says, "I am this or that."

- 1) **Shiva:** The static, fixed, or unchanging aspect of consciousness is called Shiva. It is the latent, formless principle, the stuff out of which we, and the whole of the universe are manifested.
- 2) **Shakti:** The active, fluid, or changing aspect of consciousness is called Shakti. Shakti manifests outward as kundalini, prana, nadis, chakras, the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, space), mind, senses, and personality, along with the physical brain and body.

One way of describing the entire journey of spirituality or Self-realization is tracing the manifestations of Shakti, which appear to be "I" or "me" back through the layers of appearances, to the point where Shiva and Shakti are seen as one and the same, as they were all along, like the ink and the word.

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### **Awareness of the 3 schools**

To give an idea of how little public awareness there is of these schools of Tantra, a search was done in the Google search engine for how many web pages contained these various terms (October, 2002). Here were the results:

<b>Keyword of search:</b>	<b>Number of web pages with those keywords:</b>
Tantra	429,000 (2,480,000*)
"Kaula Tantra"	38 (284*)
"Mishra Tantra"	2 (84*)
"Samaya Tantra"	4 (24*)
All of the 4 words: Kaula, Mishra, Samaya, Tantra	8 (31*)

\* Updated March, 2005

[top](#)**Kaula Tantra**

*Kaula Tantra* is external Tantra that focuses on concrete practices and rituals. The left-handed Tantrics perform their worships with the use of meat, fish, intoxicants, mudras (certain gestures), and sexual contact. The right-handed Tantrics perform these rituals only symbolically.

*Kaula Tantra* focuses its practice on the Muladhara chakra, the first chakra, at the base of the spine. The *Kaula Tantra* practices are training for having control over the lower desires and physical needs of the body. The energy of the [kundalini awakening](#) is considered the divine feminine force, and is to be revered rather than used for mere sensual gratification.

Some right-handed *Kaula Tantra* practitioners explain that their practice is higher than the left-handed, by virtue of the right-handed practices being only symbolic. Some of the practitioners of left-handed Tantra explain that their practices are higher than the right-handed by virtue of their secrecy, pointing out that it is harder to find a teacher of these processes.

However, both schools of *Kaula Tantra* will sometimes miss the fact that *Mishra Tantra* and *Samaya Tantra* schools are still more advanced than either of the *Kaula Tantra* schools. Possibly this is because of human nature that wants to justify a current level of attainment as higher than it really is. Swami Rama has explained that *Kaula Tantra* is for those who are not very intellectual and have less awareness, that it is for the third class student, while *Mishra Tantra* and *Samaya Tantra* are for the second and first class student.

Much has been written about *Kaula Tantra* practices (though much more is not written). The Sanskrit scholars have access to many thousands of hand-written manuscripts about the mantras and rituals that go along with these practices. Some of these are reportedly useful, while others have been called little more than gossip.

For the student seeking this path, there appears to be many choices of places to go, people to learn from, books and manuscripts to read, and rituals to perform. It is no wonder that *Kaula Tantra* is the Tantra that has become so well known in these modern times.

However, the student would do well to be wary when choosing a teacher, as there seems to be a great deal of less than authentic guidance available. Some of the modern behaviors that have been labeled Tantra are only hedonism given a spiritual name, and are taught by people with little knowledge or experience of authentic *Kaula Tantra* or the higher schools of Tantra.

[top](#)**Mishra Tantra**

Higher than the *Kaula Tantra* school is the *Mishra* school of Tantra. *Mishra Tantra* performs both external and internal rituals. *Mishra* means Tantra. *Mishra* means mixed.

*Mishra Tantra* focuses its practice on the Anahata chakra, the fourth chakra, at the heart center, where there is devotion practiced to the mother, feminine, or creative principle of the universe.

The *Mishra Tantra* practices are inner practices (*antaryāga*), and direct the one-pointed mind inward. The pujas, or rituals are done in the field of mind, and are thus referred to as *manas puja*, or mental rituals. These pujas are done with feelings of devotion and non-attachment, and do not involve any external objects.

The energy from [kundalini awakening](#) is brought upward from the root chakra to the heart chakra, the space between the breasts, where it is experienced as a relationship with the divine.

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Higher than both the *Kaula* Tantra and *Mishra* Tantra schools is the *Samaya* school of Tantra. It is a purely yogic practice, without any external rituals. Its entire purpose is Self-Realization, ultimately leading to *moksha*, final liberation.

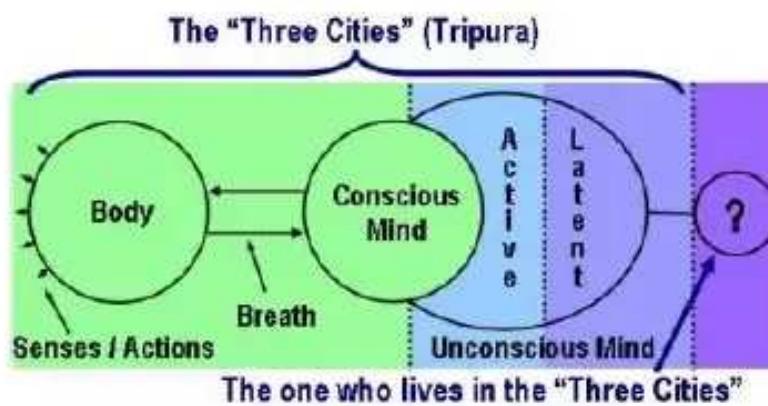
The word *Samaya* literally means "*I am with you*," referring to the bestowing of *shaktipat* (not that an external person is *with you*). Through meditation and this divine inner companionship, the aspirant is guided in non-attachment to the external pleasures, channeling the energy of *kundalini awakening* ever upward to spiritual union.

*Samaya* Tantra seeks to practice at the *Sahasrara* chakra, the seventh of the seven major chakras, at the crown of the head. Along the upward journey (*urdhva retas*), each of the other chakras is illuminated by the awakened *kundalini*. The meditators of the *Samaya* Tantra school focus on the *Ajna* chakra, in the space between the eyebrows, after which the *antaryaga*, inner practice, is done in the *Sahasrara*, crown chakra.



*Samaya* Tantra and *Raja Yoga* (*Yoga Sutras*) are similar, though the *Samaya* Tantra practice is subtler, and is a path practiced by very few people. It is the most advanced of the schools of Yoga and Yoga meditation. *Samaya* Tantra practices *Sri Vidya*, the mother of all the *vidyas* (ways of knowing). Because of its subtler nature, and the fact that the higher teachings are imparted *in* meditation, rather than *on* meditation, there is far less written about *Samaya* Tantra than *Kaula* Tantra or *Raja Yoga*. The aspirant purifies the *samskaras* through the fire of *guru chakra*, as well as receiving the downward flowing intuitions.

**Tripura:** In the *Himalayan tradition*, the aspirant clears the mind through the practice of *Yoga* meditation as codified in the *Yoga Sutras* by *Patanjali*, does self-enquiry of *Vedanta*, and then breaks through the final barrier with *Samaya Tantra* and *Sri Vidya* (The practices of *Sri Vidya* are said to have been known to the more esoteric practitioners of the world's most known religions, although they have been lost publicly over time). Central to the practices is **Maha Tripura Sundari**, the great, beautiful one, essence, consciousness, or reality that dwells in the three "cities" (*tripura*, or three cities including: gross, subtle, causal; waking, dreaming, sleeping; conscious, unconscious, subconscious).



[\(More videos by Swami Jnaneshvara\)](#)

After the aspirant is fully prepared, the meditation in the eyebrow center, Ajna chakra, eventually reveals the channel called brahma nadi, which is an extension of the sushumna channel of the subtle spine. Awareness travels up that nadi, and encounters and meditates on the point called bindu, which is like a pearl, and is the point of emergence of the mind itself. Then, when the student is ready, the pearl is pierced, or exploded through the gift of consciousness or shakti, which is called [shaktipat](#), and is the grace of the teaching spirit called Guru. Like crashing through a series of walls, one experiences many layers of consciousness, and finally emerges into the realization of the Absolute Reality, the union of the static and dynamic principles.

**See also** the article:

[Bindu: Pinnacle of Yoga, Vedanta and Tantra](#)

*Samaya Tantra* is ultimately more like a deep communion with the creative force of the universe, than worship in a ritualistic sense. It brings an intense and inexplicable joy that is beyond time, space and causation, as one becomes like a divine child, frolicking in the union of the mother and father principles of the universe, which is the oneness of all. Not only is there realization in itself, but there is also an outward flowing of the effect of this through each of the [koshas](#).

**See also** these pages relating to **Tripura**, the one in the three cities:

[Tripura Upanishad](#)

[Bavricha Upanishad](#)

[Tripura Tapini Upanishad](#)

[Saundaryalahari](#)

[Gayatri](#)

[Mahamrityunjaya](#)

[Secret of Shiva and Shakti](#)

[Om Mantra](#)

[Mahatripurasundari dimahi](#)

[Levels articles](#)

**See also** these links on Sri Vidya (from shivashakti.com):

[Philosophy of Tripura Tantra](#)

[Sri Vidya Ratna Sutras](#)

[Lalita Tripurasundari](#)

[Lalita's Paradise Island](#)

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### **Choosing a Tantra path**

Tantra has to do with the subtle energy that is behind, or is the ground of the entire physical and mental aspects of our being. On the spiritual journey, the sincere seeker will ultimately encounter the energy of [kundalini awakening](#), regardless of what path is chosen. This encounter is unavoidable for the simple reason that this energy truly is at the root of the grosser realities. Therefore, many spiritual practitioners choose to consciously work with this powerful force.

For those with a theistic leaning, who enjoy the ritual aspects of practice, Tantra is there to serve. For those whose inclination is to go directly into the inner energy, diving to the core of our own being, that too is there, within the teachings of Tantra, for those who are prepared.

The choice rests with each individual, whether to pursue spirituality to this depth, or to stay in the shallow waters of mere belief systems. If the seeker decides to dive deep into the inner being, the different schools of Tantra offer the means to do so, in line with one's individual predispositions.

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### **Tantra, Yoga, and Vedanta**

In the [tradition](#) of the sages of the cave monasteries of the Himalayas, the [kundalini awakening](#) of Tantra does not stand alone as a practice. It is built on a foundation of purifying the mind through Yoga, as codified by [Patanjali](#) in the [Yoga Sutras](#), and the practices of self-enquiry from Advaita Vedanta.

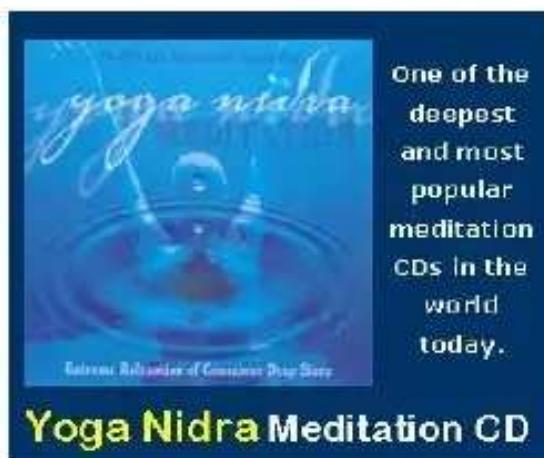
(See the paper on [Yoga, Vedanta, and Tantra](#).)

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### **Mantra, Yantra, and Tantra**

In addition, there are three other principles that go together, Mantra, Yantra, and Tantra:

- Mantra has to do with sound vibration, at both its gross and subtle levels.
- Yantra has to do with light vibration and its form, both at gross and subtle levels.
- Tantra has to do with the methods of dealing with, and going beyond both light and sound.



This site is devoted to presenting the ancient Self-Realization path of the Tradition of the Himalayan masters in simple, understandable and beneficial ways, while not compromising quality or depth. The goal of our sadhana or practices is the highest Joy that comes from the Realization in direct experience of the center of consciousness, the Self, the Atman or Purusha, which is one and the same with the Absolute Reality. This Self-Realization comes through Yoga meditation of the Yoga Sutras, the contemplative insight of Advaita Vedanta, and the intense devotion of Samaya Sri Vidya Tantra, the three of which complement one another like fingers on a hand. We employ the classical approaches of Raja, Jnana, Karma, and Bhakti Yoga, as well as Hatha, Kriya, Kundalini, Laya, Mantra, Nada, Siddha, and Tantra Yoga. Meditation, contemplation, mantra and prayer finally converge into a unified force directed towards the final stage, piercing the pearl of wisdom called bindu, leading to the Absolute.

