2

Secret of Tantric Rituals

Table of Contents

Introduction **2-1**

Lecture 1: Tantra and the Web of Life (Parts 1 and 2) **2-3**
- Outline 2-3
- Lecture Notes 2-5
- Study Questions 2-13

Lecture 2: The Dynamics of Tantric Rituals (Parts 1 and 2) **2-15**
- Outline 2-15
- Lecture Notes 2-17
- Study Questions 2-25

Lecture 3: The Tantric Way of Invoking the Forces of Nature **2-27**
- Outline 2-27
- Lecture Notes 2-29
- Study Questions 2-33

Lecture 4: The Tantric Method of Building a Sacred Fire **2-35**
- Outline 2-35
- Lecture Notes 2-37
- Study Questions 2-41

Lecture 5: The Dynamics of Sacred Fire (Parts 1 and 2) **2-43**
- Outline 2-43
- Lecture Notes 2-45
- Study Questions 2-55

Lecture 6: Rudra Yaga—Tantric Rituals for Healing Ourselves and Healing the Planet (Parts 1 and 2) **2-57**
- Outline 2-57
- Lecture Notes 2-59
- Study Questions 2-71

Secret of Tantric Rituals Bonus **2-73**
- 15 Questions on Secret of Tantric Rituals 2-73
- Extra Bonus Questions from Students of Tantra 2-75

Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources **2-77**
- Prana Dharana Practice 2-77
- Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra 2-79
- Secret of Tantric Rituals Practices Online 2-81
  - Ritual Invocations and Prayers
  - Constructing the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra
  - Fire Ritual Manual
  - Preparations for Fire Rituals
  - Living Tantra Havan
  - Trikhanda and Samhara Mudras
- Recommended Reading 2-82
- Supporting Practices Online 2-82

Introduction

This seminar explores the sacred nature of our body and the world around us. We'll study the fundamental principles of tantric rituals involved in awakening both the subtle forces of our body, mind, and soul; and the mysterious forces contained in tantric rituals, mantras, yantras, and herbs. By understanding the basis of tantric rituals, we'll see how they can awaken the subtle forces of nature and ward off obstacles that obstruct our progress in fully experiencing the joy of who we are. Tantric rituals can help us create a sacred space within us and outside us, creating the conditions for our spiritual and worldly endeavors to bear fruit quickly and effectively.

At a practical level, we'll learn how to build a sacred fire, select and combine ritual ingredients, apply appropriate mantras, and infuse the entire ritual practice with the inner fire that resides at our *manipura chakra* (the navel center). We'll explore the mystery of both the inner fire, which leads to personal empowerment and inner awakening, and the sacred fire, which leads to the empowerment of collective consciousness and the healing of our natural world.

The theoretical and practical information in this seminar provides the foundation for the following seminars in the Living Tantra series, particularly seminar three: Forbidden Tantra.

Lecture 1: Tantra and the Web of Life (Parts 1 and 2)

Outline

1. Summary of first seminar, Tantric Tradition and Techniques
    a. Success in life's endeavors and in spiritual practice requires inner strength and vitality
    b. How Tantra empowers personal transformation
2. Tantric understanding of the relationship between our vitality and the forces of nature
    a. How rituals help us nurture the natural world and be nurtured in turn
    b. Using rituals to benefit from the gifts of our natural environment
    c. Story of how Earth was burdened and contaminated, and how it was saved by the boar incarnation of Vishnu
3. Realizing our connection with the world around us and our mutual interconnectedness
    a. Story of a practice showing interconnectedness of all
    b. Need to protect ourselves from negativity
    c. Story of snakes in Allahabad illustrating ritual as communication across species
    d. Finding freedom in the world, not from the world
4. Essence of tantric rituals is gaining access to the force of nurturance and healing and to the whole web of life
    a. Must understand the relationship of vitality in us and in the forces of nature that nurture us: soil, air, water, plants
    b. Proper performance of rituals is communication with different aspects of nature
5. Understanding the power of mantra in rituals
    a. Sound is the unique quality and characteristic that defines space
    b. Sound pollution is the most subtle and long-lasting pollution; nature of sound pollution
    c. Much of efficacy of rituals depends on use of mantra
    d. Importance of maintaining purity of atmosphere and thoughts and speech for rituals

6. How impurities accumulate in the body and mind according to Ayurveda
    a. Psychological and physical conditions regulated by the first three chakras are most susceptible to impurity
    b. Formation of *ama*—impurities, source of illness, and toxins
    c. Different sources of ama
    d. Improperly processed emotions affect *doshas* (constitutional qualities)
    e. How symptoms appear not only in our bodies but also in the outside world
    f. Tantric rituals as a means to restore balance within and without

Lecture Notes

Summary of Tantric Tradition and Techniques

- Success in life's endeavors and in spiritual practice requires inner strength and vitality.
- Awakening *prana shakti* results in vigor, self-confidence, motivation, and insight, and this is what is needed for success in any endeavor, worldly or spiritual. This is the "enlivening" discussed in the first seminar, Tantric Tradition and Techniques, and needed for tantric rituals.
- The basic prerequisite for tantric rituals is to intensify, refine, and direct pranic shakti. Then infuse all other practices and disciplines with that pranic shakti. This is how Tantra empowers you in personal transformation.

Tantric Understanding of the Relationship Between Our Vitality and the Forces of Nature

- Rituals are the external counterpart of the yogic practices which access energy centers in the body. Just as we concentrate pranic shakti with *prana dharana* at the navel center, and learn to take advantage of the vitality at this center, so with rituals we will breathe life into nature's forces and learn to use them.
- Rituals help connect us to the subtle forces of nature and arrange them in our favor.
- If we nurture the forces of nature, they nurture us. This is a fundamental truth in tantric practice:
    - Story of how Earth was burdened with filth and contamination. The presiding force of Earth tries to heal it, but finally invokes the fundamental source of healing, nurturance, and maintenance—Lord Vishnu.
    - Vishnu is the all-pervading force of *kundalini shakti*. His bed is a serpent named Shesha, one who never dies. Vishnu sleeps in *yoga nidra*. He is the Preserver.

    - Earth's prayers to Vishnu caught the attention of Brahma, the Creator. From his exhalation is born Varaha Avatara—the boar incarnation of Vishnu—whose body is made of wisdom.
    - Varaha circumambulates Earth and plunges into the ocean. The splash washes over the land. Millions of boars like Varaha emerge from the splash and roam over Earth devouring garbage and jumping into water to cleanse themselves. Finally the ecology of the planet comes back into balance.
- Lessons from this story:
    - Earth is a living planet, imbued with intelligence; it suffers when treated as a commodity. Earth becomes imbalanced when human beings feel entitled to own it and its resources; and justify their greed, selfishness, and possessiveness.
    - Because of distorted understanding, there is no enforcement of law and order in society to support and protect the rest of creation, and nature is thus left unattended by higher intelligence.

Realizing Our Connection with the World Around Us and Our Mutual Interconnectedness

- All spiritual traditions of India share the view that all life and nature are part of one whole:
    - Example from the first verse of the *Isha Upanishad*: "Everything is made of Isha, everything exists in Isha, everything is meant for Isha." Isha is that which pervades and permeates everything; and manifests in the sun, the moon, in you and in everyone and everything.
    - This realization is at the core of any spiritual growth and development.
- Panditji's personal experiences of this underlying connection and unity:
    - The *neti, neti* ("not this, not this") practice—self-reflection on thoughts, speech, and actions to dis-identify with ingrained, limited self-identifications: "I'm not a man;

- I'm not a woman; I'm not Hindu; I'm not Christian"; etc. After 90 days, the opposite practice: "I'm a man; I'm a woman; I'm Hindu; I'm Christian; all forms, shapes, and names, natural or man-made, are saturated with my inner consciousness."
- After this practice, he experienced sadness and questioned his teacher, Swami Rama. Swamiji explained, "The reason lies in the way this practice (*pranava sadhana*) is done. After prana dharana at the ajna chakra (see Tantric Tradition and Techniques), you establish *Om* there and bring it to the crown chakra (*sahasrasara* chakra). *Om* flows with the inhale and exhale, and because of the "I am everything" contemplation and the pranic connection, you are connecting yourself to the collective consciousness. Billions of people are living in misery. Thus you experience the misery of the collective consciousness."
- We must learn to protect ourselves from negative influences, and yet realize the interconnected nature of everything. Tantra tells us how to do this:
    - Without seeing yourself as an integral part of the vast web of nature, you remain spiritually poor, and inner poverty reflects into the world around you, making you a source of misery to yourself and others.
    - To experience the integration and yet be protected from the negative, Swami Rama explains, "In meditation visualize yourself as a complete entity although fully connected with everything." You are a finite vessel in the ocean of infinity. Protect and nurture the finite vessel of the body and mind so it is strong, clear, and confident; reside in the infinite pool of non-duality.
- Another example of a spiritual practice connecting to the subtle forces of nature:
    - Panditji and his family recited a set of mantras dedicated to the thousand forms of Rudra, the life force, and humbly requested the cobras infesting the Institute's land in Allahabad, India, to leave the premises and make room for the Institute. A few months later, no snakes were to be found anywhere.

- Human beings, animals, plants, rivers, mountains—all are infused with consciousness and prana shakti. But they don't understand each others language:
    - A new reality is created when the interconnection of all is realized. Example of creating new situations when you meet and can communicate with someone from a different culture.
    - The mutual language of all is the language of the heart, which allows you to feel each other's presence and importance. This is the realm of Tantra, and the foundation of tantric rituals.
- The Spirit of Tantra:
    - Realizing our perfection and fulfillment contributes to the perfection and fulfillment of others, and vice versa.
    - Skillfully using everything inside and outside of us for the mutual benefit of all.
    - Then our mutual interconnectedness and dependency becomes a source of freedom, not of bondage, and gives us freedom in the world, not from the world.

Essence of Tantric Rituals is Gaining Access to the Force of Nurturance and Healing and to the Whole Web of Life

- Need to understand the relationship of vitality in us and in the forces of nature that nurture us: soil, air, water, plants.
- Example of dogs on Allahabad campus. When the staff stopped beating them, all the dogs in the whole area stopped crying at night in response to the howling of the jackals, and started barking instead (a normal response).
- *Dhuti vijnana* is the science of reading signs in nature, and understanding messages about the health and well-being of your surroundings. Jackals, ants, crows, and other birds are particularly good messengers.

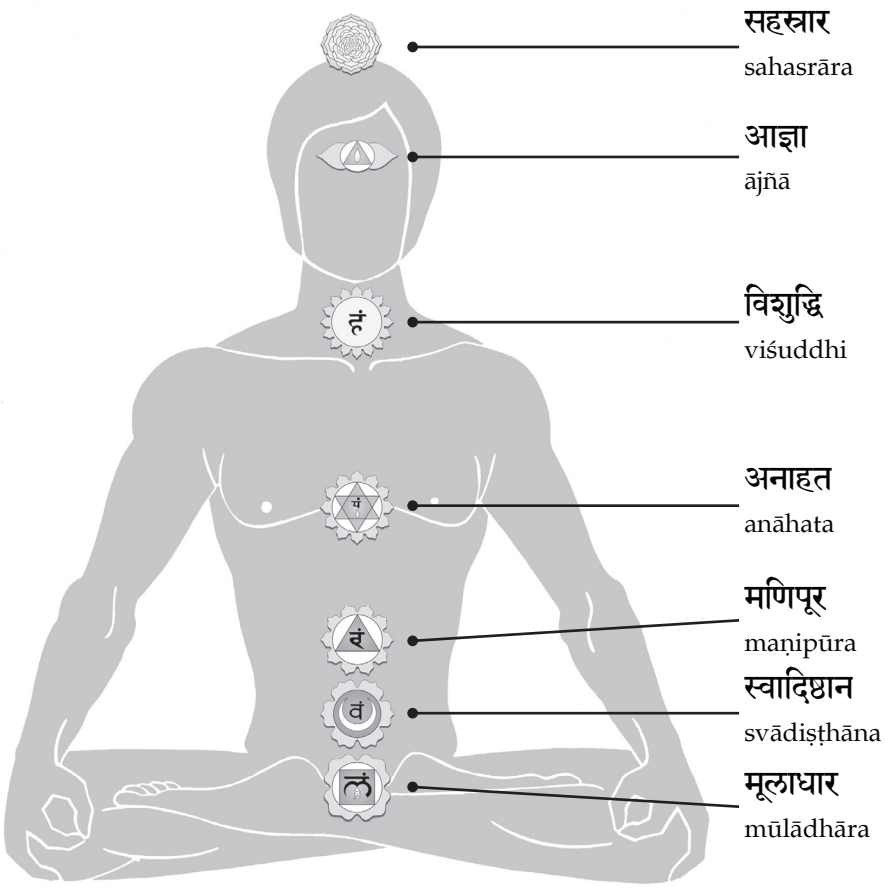
- Example of solar eclipse at Vindhyachal: temperature dropped, wind came up; and birds and monkeys exhibited confused, uncharacteristic behavior because the normal law and order of nature was disturbed.
- Proper performance of rituals is like communicating with different aspects of nature.

Understanding the Power of Mantra in Rituals

- Tantric practitioner Bhuta Baba's unique description of "human"—one not bound by anger, greed, lust, etc.; whose actions are not propelled by instinctive urges.
- Bhuta Baba explains how sound is the unique quality and characteristic that defines space. The sound principle is the most subtle of all, and from it evolves mantra and language:
    - If inauspicious sounds fill space, that is the most serious kind of pollution with the most long-lasting impact on the whole of creation. The meaning and feeling behind sound creates a subtle reality which is a product of our thoughts, and which can't be recalled.
- Control over the tongue is important for concentrating our inner power and energy. An impure tongue is an expression of impure thoughts which pollute the mind and heart. Energy gained from rituals is consumed and neutralized by impure thoughts and speech, making it difficult to see the fruits of the practice.
- Much of the efficacy of rituals depends on how we speak, and the use of mantra. The science of mantra is part of how we breathe life into rituals.

How Impurities Accumulate in the Body and Mind According to Ayurveda

- In the body, the psychological and physical aspects of being regulated by the first three chakras are the most susceptible to impurity:



Chakras in the Subtle Body

- Impurities are *ama*, which occurs in three stages:
  a. *Sanchaya*—the accumulation of impurities from food, air, water; and also from thoughts, speech, actions and interactions.
  b. *Prasara*—the movement of impurities which erupt in a weak spot in the system, e.g., the lungs, or the skin. If ama is removed at this stage by the process of *prashama*, or calming, disease process is halted.
  c. *Prakopa*—the aggravation and manifestation of dysfunction or illness.

    - Food-related ama accumulates in the digestive system. Breath-related ama accumulates in the lungs and blood. Sleep-related ama accumulates in the endocrine system. Relationship- and thought-related ama accumulate in the brain and nervous system.
    - Example of eating bad food. If body manages to process it and eliminate the toxins, it doesn't cause illness. But if you can't process it, it becomes prakopa, and manifests as some illness.
- Mental, emotional toxins, such as anger, repressed thoughts, conflicts, and unfulfilled desires, derange *doshas*, depending on the type of emotion: attachment and delusion aggravate *kapha*; anger pushes *pitta*; and worry and fear aggravate *vata*. If one dosha is disturbed, the others are also affected—they support each other and are intermingled.
    - Aggravated doshas affect the systems governed by the first three chakras.
    - Mental behavior affects the purity of the heart; and strongly affects the first three chakras.
- If the desire to possess and consume is stronger than common sense, there is a negative impact on the energies of the first three chakras and the organs residing in their domain, and the negative impact will appear not only in our bodies, but also in the outside world.
    - Law and order in the outer world begins to disintegrate when intended relationships between different aspects of nature, like human beings and animals, are disturbed. The subtle governing forces of nature are disrupted.
- Unhealthy conflict between desire to own, consume, possess, and not wanting others to have the same comforts and conveniences if their viewpoints are not the same as ours; unhealthy conflict between ourselves and nature; between ourselves and those who are different from us.
- Perennial disease of the human race: confusion over right and wrong, just and unjust; and it predisposes us to illnesses related to the first three chakras.

- Tantric rituals are the means to restore balance within and without. Tantric philosophy overcomes confusion. In the short term, we need yogically inspired tantric techniques, or tantrically inspired ritual techniques, to heal the first three chakras.
    - First chakra: fear, insecurity, doubt, sloth.
    - Second chakra: desire, conflict, attachment, killing the conscience.
    - Third chakra: power, possession, position, prestige.
- Tantric rituals are designed to help the concerns of these three chakras, and to bring us to the love at the heart center (anahata chakra) and the clarity of mind at the eyebrow center (ajna chakra).

Study Questions:

1. What is the purpose of tantric rituals?
2. Does the world today resemble Earth at the time of Varaha's incarnation?
3. Does the prevailing worldview conform with the tantric perspective?
4. Do you see any evidence of changes in perspective in the world at large with regard to the environment?
5. With regard to global warming, what kinds of solutions would a tantric worldview reject, and what kinds of solutions would arise from a tantric perspective?
6. Why are the ingredients and tools used in rituals important?
7. What is the foundation of tantric rituals?
8. What difficulties must be overcome to perform tantric rituals effectively?
9. What is the nature of the thoughts and words we are collectively broadcasting throughout the world today? Consider the content broadcast through radio, television, and the internet.
10. Why is it important to maintain purity of thought and speech when conducting rituals, or doing practice?
11. How is Ayurveda related to yoga philosophy?
12. What is ama and what are the pathways for its accumulation?
13. Why do you think the pelvic energy centers are so easily disturbed and contaminated? Consider Bhuta Baba's description of a "human."

Lecture 2: The Dynamics of Tantric Rituals (Parts 1 and 2)

Outline

1. Fundamental difference between a ceremony and a tantric ritual
    a. Differences between tantric ritual and ceremony
    b. Example of recent war protests and Gandhi's salt march
    c. Rituals need concentrated energy, focus, and understanding
2. Understanding the anatomy of rituals
    a. Knowing what you want to achieve and why
    b. Determination and concentration of energy are essential for success
    c. Knowing the proper means, tools, and ingredients
    d. Breathe life into the ritual with *prana dharana*
3. Proper communication with the forces of interest
    a. The subtle world is unfamiliar; we infer its existence, but usually do not experience it directly, and there is existence at an even more subtle level than our inference
    b. Rituals are designed to reach the presiding force, the essence itself
4. The tantric concept of *apurva*: giving birth to a new reality through tantric rituals, and reshaping our destiny
    a. Understanding goals: worldly or spiritual, and focusing goals
    b. Steps in apurva: having a plan of action and the implementation of the plan
5. How apurva works in accordance with the law of karma and how tantric rituals create apurva
    a. Groups of similar karmas are stored together in a *karmashaya*—a package of karma
    b. The fruits of the broad categories of pleasant and painful past karmas are connected to our overall destiny and result in our current birth

6. Tantric rituals create a karmashaya, which may counter a particular habit or problem
    a. Punya karmashaya—virtuous, precise, and focused karma created by a tantric ritual
    b. Punya karmashaya can change a troublesome inclination or habit by creating a new reality that is independent of past karmas
    c. This is how tantric rituals create apurva—a new, desirable, concentrated reality that has the power to ensure that past actions bear fruit in accordance with your plan in the future
7. The main components of tantric rituals
    a. Precise procedure, clear intention, unwavering faith, correct ritual ingredients, proper way of invoking the divinities, building a fire correctly, and channeling the energy engendered by ritual to the right place at the right time
    b. In tantric rituals, mantra, yantra, visualization, and fire offerings are the main forces—the factors which fortify the rest of the ritual procedure and processes and awaken the dormant force of the herbs, gems, or ritual materials

Lecture Notes

The Fundamental Difference Between a Ceremony and a Tantric Ritual

- The protest of war with Iraq involved millions of people, but they were expressing their opinion, and their protest was not focused enough to make a difference; they went back to their normal life at the end of the day.
- Mahatma Gandhi's salt march protest is an example of action with intense determination, clarity, focus, and understanding, which made a difference.
- Similarly, a ritual has this deep level of understanding and intense concentration of energy. It is not expressing a desire or opinion; it is not symbolic; it is not cultural or custom-driven.
- A ritual is methodical and energetically concentrated.
- Another example given is of the heat in a room. If you compress all the heat in the room into a small space it is very hot and will boil water and cook your rice; or if further concentrated, it will weld metal; but if it is diffused in the room, it will never cook your rice.

Understanding the Anatomy of Rituals

- Rituals are purpose-driven and well-planned. They require the appropriate tools and means and ingredients:
    - Example of how transportation by land and transportation by air need different vehicles. The energy is the same, but the means must be different.
    - The nature of your goals and objectives and the space, time, and kind of society or individual you are all factor in the ingredients and means used for the ritual.
- First, you must understand what you are trying to do and why:
    - Understand what is required in order to do what you want to achieve. Example of trying to move a chair without using the appropriate force. You could spend much energy over 20 years without overcoming the initial inertia in the chair.

- Another example of jogging—the first 5 minutes just warms up the muscles; only after 15 minutes or more does the metabolic rate change and the benefits accrue. And you must exercise again the next day, because this is the way the body is designed.
    - Rituals are directed either to personal unfoldment, empowerment, and enlightenment; or they are directed toward the well-being of others, of nature, or the society or environment.
- Second, intensity, force, willpower and determination are needed for rituals:
    - Prana dharana can be done internally to concentrate this energy.
    - Prana dharana can also be done by the ritualistic method using *prana pratishtha* and mantras, yantras, herbs, and other tools.
    - Only after life has been breathed into the physical components of rituals do such rituals of sprinkling water, ringing bells, etc., have any power.
    - The yogic style of prana dharana was studied in the first seminar, Tantric Tradition and Techniques, and breathes life into our own body, mind, senses, thoughts, speech, and actions. It involves concentrating the pranic force at the navel center and then transporting it into the different parts of the body, or into mantras, yantras, or deities, or into our ritual. Prana pratishtha is breathing life into a locus, in this case, the ritual itself.

Proper Communication with the Forces of Interest

- We can communicate with that which we know and understand:
    - Example of not being able to speak the language of another culture, though we would like to conduct business with them.
    - We are familiar with the material world and have trained the senses and mind to understand it; but we have a hard time understanding anything outside the domain

    - of our perception. So we have extended our perception through tools like microscopes and telescopes to expand our understanding.
    - We infer existence and understanding of some phenomena through observation and reasoning.
- Another level of reality exists beyond inference and the experience of the material world:
    - This extremely subtle force is the guiding, presiding essence of something—a mountain, a person, turmeric, garlic—whatever makes it what it is and propels its actions: its essence, its definitive quality.
    - This is the divinity, according to tantrics.
    - In humans, this inner divinity is what propels our thoughts, speech, and action, and guides and governs the power of will, the power of knowledge, and the power of action.
    - That same inner divinity may be regarded as a devil from some perspectives. Example of Kamadeva versus Manmatha. It is the same force, but is seen as Manmatha—the churner of the mind, a problem maker—by non-tantrics, while for tantrics Manmatha is Kamadeva—the primordial master who sits deep in the cave of our heart and drives the chariot of life to its destination. He is the spirit of guru shakti, the seer of the Sri Vidya mantra, and the teacher and primordial master of the most exalted yantra of the tantric tradition, the Sri Chakra.
    - Examples of inner essence using garlic, turmeric, and artificial food.
- Rituals are designed to reach and convey a message to that presiding force, that ruling divinity, of whatever is the object of the ritual.
    - With ritual, you communicate with the essence of something, the presiding force, the inner divinity, in its language: you must first identify the inner divinity—the gods and goddesses.

- We suffer by not having realization of our own inner deity, by not knowing our own essence, our own "active ingredient." All the forces within you are under the leadership of the presiding deity that is you.
- To communicate with that presiding deity in ritual, also address those deities under the rule of the presiding deity. Different ingredients and procedures, different mantras, different tools—all these organize and create the structure that allows access to the presiding deity:
    - Example of the president of the Himalayan Institute greeting the president of IBM. Everyone at the Institute needs to know who the president is, and who is the appropriate person to greet IBM's president.
    - In tantric rituals, the methodology is well-defined, so the communication is clear.

The Tantric Concept of *Apurva*: Giving Birth to a New Reality Through Tantric Rituals, and Reshaping our Destiny

- Need to understand your purpose and goal—whether it is for worldly or spiritual personal benefit, or for the benefit of a larger aspect of creation:
    - Worldly personal goals may be healing, either physical or psychological, for yourself or for someone else; or for protection.
    - Spiritual personal goals need to be focused and precise as to what you want to achieve, and which type of divinity you seek to reach. General prayers may be lost in the oceanic existence.
- Apurva is created by tantric ritual:
    - *A* means "not;" *purva* means "before." *Apurva*: something that did not exist, now exists by virtue of your practice. A ritual-created apurva creates a new pattern which projects into the future and creates a new reality.

- Example of the Institute changing its management style and business structure.
- Steps in apurva: 1) a plan of action; a map; and 2) implementation of the plan.
- Then at some point, the new reality begins to exist and it has the ability to either neutralize the effect of the old reality, or to modify the pre-existing situation, or give birth to something new. This is changing destiny.

Apurva and the Law of Karma

- Apurva works in accordance with the law of karma. Every action leaves a subtle impression in the mindfield, and though this cannot be destroyed, it can be changed and transformed.
- The process of the storage of impressions in the mind is methodical, and if not, then the retrieval of those impressions will be hodge-podge and unorganized. The thoughts, speech, and actions of a disturbed, distracted, or stupefied mind will have unclear, disturbed, and distracted effects and impressions, and will be stored in an unorganized way:
    - Example of a warehouse: objects are stored in groups. Best-selling objects are stored in the front to be easily accessed. There is a system and a reason for how things are stored.
    - In the mind, a group of similar karmas are stored together in a system called *karmashaya. Ashaya* means “pouch, basket, package, or container.” *Karmashaya* means “the container for karma.”
    - As in the warehouse analogy, intense, significant karmas, which must be discharged in the near future, are stored near the front. The more general karmas, with less urgency, are stored further in the back. This is how karmashaya works.

- The fruits of the broad categories of pleasant and painful past karmas are connected to our overall destiny and result in our current birth. There is not much freedom to change these karmic experiences, which are normally a combination of both good and bad karma:
    - Usually one group of karmas takes the lead. You can mitigate some undesirable manifestations by taking medicine, seeing a therapist, changing your lifestyle, practicing hatha yoga, etc.
    - But some less than desirable situations seem not to change, despite all the efforts you make. That's because there may be a more subtle cause, needing a more subtle solution.

Tantric Rituals Create a Karmashaya, Which May Counter a Particular Habit or Problem

- Patanjali describes karmashaya in the *Yoga Sutra*—the master textbook of all aspects of yoga. Because of karmashaya we are where we are today.
- Tantric rituals create a unique kind of karmashaya, called *punya karmashaya*. Punya karmashaya is very precise, focused, and virtuous:
    - The ritual creates a unique karma in a unique package with a unique delivery system. Example of overnight delivery of packages versus standard delivery. Punya karmashaya is targeted.
    - The ritual produces a focused result that removes one negative train of thought, for example, one tiny defect; but with freedom from that, your life changes for the better, and you can continue your sadhana.
    - From then on, you just need to remind yourself not to fall back into that pattern.
- This is how a tantric ritual works—it creates a new entity with purpose and function, and it is so concentrated that the effect of the practice cannot be neutralized by the bad karma of your past.
- The ritual creates a new stand-alone set of karmas.

- The karmas of the past may provide obstacles during the ritual, and for that it is important to have layers of protection—to have secondary and auxiliary practices to protect you and the ritual. These are as important as the main practice. The secondary practices protect you from your own karmic influences.
- Tantric rituals create apurva—a new desirable, concentrated reality that has the power to nullify or modify your past, and ensure that your past actions bear fruit in accordance with your plan in the future, regardless of how ill-performed they were in the past.

The Main Components of Tantric Rituals

- The main components are a precise procedure, clear intention, unwavering faith, correct ritual ingredients, the proper way of invoking the divinities, building a fire correctly, and channeling the energy engendered by the ritual to the right place at the right time:
    - Precise procedure. This includes purification of yourself, the atmosphere, the environment around you; protection from undesirable forces in the environment; and knowing what kind of divinities to invite and invoke, and where to place them.
    - Clear intention. Know exactly why you are doing the practice.
    - Unwavering faith. Understanding the concepts and the basis for the rituals helps you cultivate this faith, as does understanding that rituals are not ceremonies or cultural events:
        - Faith is due to a continuous unbroken stream of knowledge. This is true of business and science as well.
        - Need trust in the ritual and in the divinities. Example of understanding turmeric and its essence, knowing the mantra to communicate with it, and being sure of the appropriateness of the yantra or mandala to use for the soul of the turmeric invited to the ritual. There is an entire practice that is done with the maha mrityunjaya mantra and turmeric to release the healing power of turmeric.

        - You are not looking for the symbolic meaning of the yantra or of the turmeric, any more than you are thinking that your husband has a symbolic meaning. He is real.
    - Correct ritual ingredients.
    - Proper way of invoking the divinities.
    - Building the fire correctly.
    - Channeling the energy engendered by the ritual to the right place at the right time.
- In tantric rituals, the mantra, yantra, visualization, and fire offerings are the main forces—the factors which fortify the rest of the ritual procedure and processes:
    - The purpose of the application of these factors is to awaken the dormant force of the herbs or gems or whatever materials you are using in your ritual, and the divinities being invited.
    - This is just like the yogic practice of prana dharana, where the purpose is to infuse space at the navel center with the pranic energy from the eyebrow center. In this way the ingredients which are an integral part of the ritual are living ingredients.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between a tantric ritual and a ceremony?
2. Why are the tools, ingredients, and procedures in a ritual important?
3. Why might our ritual not be successful even if we are determined and focused?
4. Explain the meaning of *apurva.*
5. What is a *karmashaya?*
6. What kind of a karmashaya do rituals create?
7. How can a karmashaya created by a ritual help us?
8. What must we do to stabilize and continue reaping the benefits of a ritual?
9. How is the effect of a ritual related to your previous karmas?
10. Describe the purpose of tantric rituals in light of karma, karmashaya, and the concept of apurva.

Lecture 3: The Tantric Way of Invoking the Forces of Nature

Outline

1. Introduction to the three main components of rituals
    a. Invocation of the force or divinity which is the focus of the ritual
    b. Preparation for greeting and managing the divinity that is invited
    c. Procedure for building the fire and making offerings
2. Invocation using the Vishve Deva Sukta
3. Creating an infrastructure to support the presiding and other deities during the ritual, using the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra
4. Additional invocations
    a. To forces that remove obstacles (Ganesha)
    b. To provide a conduit for revelation (Batuka Bhairava)
    c. To connect and unite us (the 64 yoginis)
    d. To the guardians of the place and the directions

Lecture Notes

The Three Main Components of Rituals

- The three components are invocation, preparation, and appropriate greeting, offerings and procedures:
    - Infrastructure and protocol support and make the ritual work. The more important the guest is, the bigger the infrastructure needs to be. Example of weekly meetings of the local Rotary Club versus a visit by the governor, or the president of the United States. Example of preparation for the Olympics.
    - Part of protocol is knowing what kind of ingredients to use, in what proportion, how to mix them, where to build the *kunda* or altar, and what the size and composition of altar should be.
    - The system of introduction, greeting and honoring—nonverbal communication of placement and stance. Example of the seating arrangement and greeting arrangements for the president.
    - Understanding the proper way to greet and invite is essential to achieve your purpose. You must understand the nature and reality of that which you are inviting in order to give the proper invocation and invitation.

Invocation Using the Vishve Deva Sukta

- First invoke the presiding deity of rituals, and the group of 33 divinities who maintain law and order in our personal life and in the natural world. This invocation is used for rituals with high aspirations and the intention to bring lasting transformation to the inner and outer worlds, regardless of the exact focus or main deity of the ritual.
    - This group of 33 divinities is called *gana*, meaning that countless divinities are included in this group of 33. All are invoked by the 10 mantras of the *Vishve Deva Sukta*. (For more about the *Vishve Deva Sukta*, visit HimalayanInstitute.org/resources)
    - When this sukta is recited properly, the main deity, accompanied by 33 other

deities, must come, because this is the governing law. Example of the president of the United States being made up of all the citizens of the United States, and representing a powerful idea which is governed by the Constitution. The Constitution defines truth and justice, and the president and Congress, etc., are the physically manifest forms of the Constitution—they embody it.

- This sukta is like inviting the White House; you invite the White House, not a particular occupant; and the White House figures out who to send. The main deity is some form of pure consciousness in you, and it comes in a form that is appropriate to the nature of the particular ritual you are performing.
- The *ritam*, or the constitution or law of tantric rituals, authorizes the Vishve Deva Sukta to invoke these forces.

Creating an Infrastructure to Support the Deities—the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra

- *Sarvato* means "in every respect, in every manner, for every purpose."
  Bhadra means "that which is auspicious, good, appropriate."
- This yantra becomes the residence of the invoked deities during the ritual. Just as your mind has space for an infinite number of thoughts and ideas, the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra has space for an infinite number of deities.
- For instructions on how to construct the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra, and how to purify the space around it, and protect it, visit HimalayanInstiture.org/resources.

Additional Invocations

- Additional invocations are made to Ganesha, Batuka Bhairava, the 64 yoginis, and the guardians or protectors of the place and the directions, offering them a seat in the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra:
  - Invoking the force that identifies or removes obstacles. In tantric practice, this force is Ganesha, and he can create or remove obstacles, all with the intention of helping you. He is the force of your own intelligence, your own conscience, your

own determination, and your own guide. He helps, guides, protects from all dangers and obstacles before and after the practices. And he is also the gatekeeper at the door of your own conscience.

    - Ganesha is a popular deity, but the simplistic depictions of him are the result of ignorance creeping into religion. In the tantric tradition, he is the visionary within you, the indomitable will within you who always playfully accompanies you and is delighted when you are inspired to reach the home of his parents—Shiva and Shakti.

- Invoking the force that serves as a conduit to revelation—Batuka Bhairava. He makes sure the flow of revelation and direct experience emerging from the depth of your own being is not blocked or confused or contaminated by your own inferior mind or the habits of your senses. He is another aspect of your intelligence, the aspect that channels the vast unconscious mind into the mortal frame of your body and mind.
- Invoking the mother that integrates, unites, and nourishes us in her 64 aspects—the 64 yoginis. They are 64 in number for many reasons, including the 64 arts and sciences.
- Invoking Kshetrapala—the protector of sacred place, the yantra, and our body and mind. *Kshetra* means "field," and *pala* means "protector or guard." The body and mind are the ground for our practice, like a field in which we are cultivating spiritual crops. In the yogic aspect of sadhana, the *Samaya* school of Tantra, the body itself is the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra.
- Invoking Dashadikpala, the protector of the 10 directions (8 cardinal directions, plus up and down). Correlates on the mental level to the direction in which we are moving, or the lack of direction when we are unclear or full of doubt. So, Dashadikpala gives us direction in the physical sense as well as in life itself, and is invoked in the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra.

- See www.HimalayanInstitute.org/Resoucres for all of these invocation mantras.

Now we are ready to build the sacred fire for the final phase of the ritual.

Study Questions

1. What are the three components of any ritual?
2. Describe each of the three components.
3. What is the concept of *ritam?*
4. What is the role of Ganesha in ritual? What is the role of Ganesha in the life of a practitioner?
5. Briefly describe the roles of the following:

   Batuka Bhairava

   The 64 yoginis

   The protectors of the place and of the directions

Lecture 4: The Tantric Method of Building a Sacred Fire

Outline

1. Ritual procedures: invocation, infrastructure, and greeting with respect
2. Fire offering format versus non-fire offering format
3. Fire offering procedures and infrastructure
    a. Building a kunda (fire pit)
        1. General size and shape
        2. Selecting the proper location
    b. Selecting firewood
    c. Igniting and propitiating the fire
    d. General instructions
    e. Offerings to the forces of interest

Lecture Notes

Ritual Procedures: Invocation, Infrastructure, and Greeting with Respect

- Example of a guest accompanied by an entourage: how you arrange services and accommodations, and have a staff with assigned roles to play to take care of the others while you entertain the main guest. Important to choose appropriate activities and entertainment, depending on the nature and status of the guest. This is expressing your respect.
    - This on-the-spot interaction and communication includes recognizing and acknowledging the nature and identity of the guest (deity). Must acknowledge and know how much and what kind of respect to offer. One of the biggest mistakes in tantric ritual is not to offer the right kind of treatment. This is why tantric rituals are kept secret. The wrong behavior at a ritual ruins the effectiveness.

Fire Offering Format Versus Non-Fire Offering Format

- Some acknowledgements and offerings are cultural and not in the form of a fire offering. The non-fire offerings may be built into the infrastructure; that is, you prepare ingredients like flowers or incense. Or you have mudras which are used to greet, like shaking hands:
    - Example of Queen Elizabeth visiting a king in Cameroon, Africa, where the king doesn't shake hands or speak. There is another way of expressing respect. This is the non-fire offering format.
    - Another example given of being able to wash feet in India, but not in Tibet, where it is cold; and having to take off shoes in India before entering a sacred space, but not in Tibet. All of these are cultural aspects, and may or may not be important to the ritual of interest.

Fire Offerings Procedures and Infrastructure

- Fire offerings have a set structure which is very methodical and not a culturally based procedure:
    - Building the kunda, or fire pit (see a video of Panditji building a kunda online at HimalayanInstiture.org/resources):
        - The shape and size depend on the nature of the ritual. Triangular, rectangular, and circular kundas have different purposes and different kinds of fire which will be invoked in that particular kind of kunda. Rituals of a general nature for peace and prosperity at both a material and spiritual level can use a general shape and size (square).
        - Selecting the proper location for the kunda: certain rituals may require a riverbank or a mountain top, or a barn. Some you can do in your home or wherever you are.
    - Selecting wood for the fire:
        - The best wood is from a tree that used to bear fruit or has a fragrance. But use common sense.
        - The proper way of arranging wood in the kunda allows for ventilation and air circulation.
    - Igniting and propitiating the fire. (Visit HimalayanInstiture.org/resources to learn these mantras.)
        - Mantras to ignite the fire and invite the fire to the kunda.
        - Then a set of mantras (Agni Sukta) to propitiate the fire itself.
        - These mantras are used with the offering of *ghee* (clarified butter) from a cow.
        - If you are doing a very specific kind of fire offering, then after the general offerings to the fire with ghee, you may offer a specific ingredient with a specific mantra to invoke a specific tongue of the fire which is needed for

the particular ritual you are doing. In that case the butter of a goat, camel, or sheep; or sesame oil with aromatic oil; or buffalo fat; or other unique oils and fats can be used for different specific purposes. (Not all tantric rituals are for spiritual development; tantric rituals are a science not dependent on good intentions. They are best used for personal transformation, sharpening the intellect, purifying the heart and mind, and invigorating the body.)

- After the fire has been propitiated, make an offering to the secondary divinities, and to the main divinity.

- General Instructions:
  - If you are using a yantra (Sarvato Bhadra Yantra) or altar as part of the fire ritual, make sure no one sits or walks between the yantra and the kunda.
  - No one should sit between the main person performing the ritual and the fire.
  - Other participants should sit on the sides of the kunda other than the one the main person sits at; and other than the one with the yantra (if using it).
  - Use common sense—if on the bank of the river, don't sit between the fire and the river, as the river is also a divinity.
  - Have water at hand: if the fire gets out of control, sprinkle the water in the direction of the fire to invoke the presence of water, but do not dump the water on the fire, or get up to extinguish it.
  - Once you are seated and have started the ritual, do not get up, except if you need to put more wood on the fire.
  - If the fire comes out of the kunda to consume the offerings which have spilled or landed on the sides of the kunda, allow it to have these leftovers.
  - Otherwise, these leftovers, which have fallen outside the kunda during the fire offering should not be picked up and put in the fire. Unconsumed ingredients belong to some other divinities, and should be collected and given back to nature.

- The last offerings are for the life force, the pranic shakti. These offerings complete the ritual.
    - Then ask the divinities to return to wherever they have come from, which is right from inside you and around you. You may use the *samhara mudra* to return them to your heart, if you had done *prana pratishtha* and brought them from your heart at the beginning of the ritual.
    - Otherwise, if you used the ritual to invoke pranic shakti from outside, and had no intention of bringing it from inside yourself to the outside, then simply let the divinities go back to wherever they have come from at the end of the ritual.
- *For video instructions on building the kunda and selecting and mixing the ritual ingredients, visit HimalayanInstiture.org/resources.*

Study Questions

1. Are the fire ritual procedures culturally determined?
2. What are the considerations for selecting the location for the kunda?
3. What is the most appropriate ingredient for propitiating the fire itself?

Lecture 5: The Dynamics of Sacred Fire (Parts 1 and 2)

Outline

1. Difference between physical fire and sacred fire
    a. Summary of the components of tantric rituals, of which rituals using sacred fire are the most important
    b. The nature of physical fire and how it helps humans
2. Subtle and metaphysical aspects of fire
    a. Solar energy, enlivening both plants and animals (breathing beings)
    d. Prana, the life force and source of animation, connected to the breath
    c. The energy and consciousness residing in and between cells
    d. The sacred entity endowed with the powers of will, knowledge, and action, whose existence is not dependent on anything else
        1. Mother Nature or Providence at the cosmic level
        2. Our own soul at the individual level
3. Aspects of the sacred fire
    a. Sacred fire residing in every cell makes us breathe, move, and think
        1. Kundalini shakti is the vast but dormant and unknown fire in every cell
        2. Prana shakti is the active fire which we have conscious access to
    b. Sacred fire determines destiny
    c. Awaken sacred fire with the internal practices of yoga, or with external rituals
    d. The science of prana dharana and prana pratishtha is used to transform an ordinary fire into a sacred fire with a well-defined purpose and meaning; and that is what the sacred fire is all about

4. Different forms and functions of the sacred fire
    a. Role in birth and death
    b. Concentration of the pranic force, infusion of meaning and purpose, and self-awareness make it divine
5. Internal fire rituals and external fire rituals
    a. Internal rituals are done at the shrines inside the body—the chakras
    b. The inner shrines, altars, and kundas of the human body are designed by nature and are perfect; unlike the outer kundas and shrines made by human intelligence. Thus internal fire rituals are more fruitful than external rituals, provided one has access to the inner shrine
    c. Outer rituals need to strictly follow the procedures set down by the lineage of practitioners with direct experience and knowledge of the sacred fire
6. The sacred fire and its subdivisions, their attributes and functions, and how they work inside and outside the body
    a. The external fire in rituals works like the inner fire of our being, which digests food (offerings) and transforms it to the form needed by the body
    b. For external rituals, offer to the fire in its totality first, then to the particular aspect or tongue for a particular purpose
    c. Jatavedas Agni, the knower of all who are born, is the fire in its totality and is the priest who presides over the whole ritual
7. The use of rituals
    a. Some rituals are more cleansing-oriented, and some are more healing-oriented. Use different ingredients in the offerings
    b. Rituals may be used for removing obstacles if obstacles are overwhelming. Otherwise use rituals for moving forward in the intended direction, and don't focus on the obstacles

Lecture Notes

Difference Between Physical Fire and Sacred Fire

- The fire offering is the most important aspect of tantric rituals.
- Summary of the components of tantric rituals:
    - Invocation of the deity.
    - Building the infrastructure.
    - Seating, propitiation, and communication with the forces of interest:
        - In the case of the fire ritual, the deities have been invited to a yantra, and the fire ritual is done in the presence of the yantra.
    - Follow-up after the ritual is over.
- Physical fire consumes fuel and produces heat, light, smoke, and ashes. We use it in daily life to cook food, run industries, etc.:
    - Because humans can use fire, they learned to dominate other species. In the evolution of intelligence, humans began to understand fire, meaning they could produce it, control it, and use it.
    - Fire became an extension of their intelligence, a tool, a means to accomplish something.

Subtle and Metaphysical Aspects of Fire

- The function of fire is also more subtle. Different forms of fire operate differently. The sun brings heat, and photosynthesis begins in plants; animals begin to move. Both are animated by sacred fire.
- The *Atharva Veda* describes the sun touching the leaves of the tree, which then suddenly wakes up.

- In our bodies, the equivalent is the movement of the breath which is connected to prana—the life force that moves inside us and makes us move:
    - The phenomenon of breathing defines a living being. The phenomenon of breathing, movement, animation, pulsation is prana—the very basic, fundamental, primeval force of animation.
    - This is the subject of the *Kena Upanishad*, in which six great yoga masters asked the sage Pippalada, "What makes things move? Propelled by which force does a thing come into motion?"
    - The answer is also explored in the *Mundaka, Katha*, and *Shvetashvatara Upanishads*, and in the *Atharva Veda*, and is further elaborated in the tantric scriptures, especially the Svacchanda Tantra. It is fully expanded in the Sri Vidya tradition, which is the subject of the sixth and final seminar in the Living Tantra series.
- The science and practice of Tantra began to blossom with the discovery of this unique kind of consciousness with its self-contained pulsation found in the minutest entities of the universe. It is called *anga*, that which moves:
    - Anga endows purpose, reason, intelligent pulsation, and purposeful movement and meaning; it exists in every cell and every atom.
    - A point of reference in space and time, propelled by its own inherent *kama*—will—splits and unfolds. This process is shown in a yantra using a *bindu*, from which evolves a downward-pointing triangle, which is the *yoni*, the womb from which the entire universe evolves. The force that resides there is the principle of animation—consciousness saturated with intelligence (*chit*), as well as bliss (*ananda*):
        - That force is called *angushtha*, the one who lives in the anga—that is consciousness saturated with intelligence and joy.
        - That angushtha resides in every cell; it is self-awareness, the soul, the living entity.

- Each cell breathes with purpose, to unite and embrace other cells, to connect with them. This inherent urge is called *kama, kama kala,* or *kama tattva*:
    - The primordial will, intention, desire to embrace the life force, and the locus of the life force—that is kama, also known as Manmatha—the force that churns the mind and drives us to breathe and to connect.
    - At the cellular level, cells breathe (cellular respiration) with purpose, and connect with each other, multiply, and form organs and tissues.
- The one who breathes resides inside the cell and existed before the cell. Because of the one who breathes, matter was drawn to form a body.

- This same process describes the origin of the universe at the cosmic level:
    - From the Big Bang came matter and energy and time itself, and all were equally distributed.
    - Pure *atman*, pure consciousness, the basic fundamental principle of energy, does not depend on any form of matter or energy for its locus. It exists independently and is the source of all other forces, having its own will and intelligence.
    - Because of that, a body of matter collects and evolves into stars, planets, etc.
- Similarly, in our own body exists a sacred entity whose existence is not dependent on anything else:
    - This is consciousness—the sacred fire. And it is actually prana. The animated, radiant aspect of our own soul is *prana shakti*.
    - *Jnana, bala,* and *kriya*—intelligence, vitality, and the power of action—are innate and intrinsic to prana shakti.
    - These three powers—the power of will, knowledge, and action—we call Mother Nature.
    - This moving force, the fire of intelligence, the fire of consciousness, is sacred because it leads to the total revelation of itself, and it is present in everything.

- The realization of the sacred nature of fire—a natural manifestation of that force which moves by its own intrinsic virtue—is the highest spiritual experience of the East.
- Our own soul is that which moves and makes everything move. Our own prana shakti pulsates and makes everything move.
    - A living being is a *prani*—one who breathes.
    - Tantra distinguishes the different kinds of living beings or pranis on the basis of the nature of their movement and their function and purpose.
    - Some creatures are aware of their intelligence and purpose, but some are not. All are pranis.

Aspects of the Sacred Fire

- The sacred fire resides in each cell as angushtha. It also resides between the cells and is that which relates two cells. It makes them multiply and assigns function, purpose, and organization to the groups of cells, and so forms organs and tissues.
- That which makes us breathe, makes us move, makes us think, makes us speak, the tantrics call “fire” and shakti:
    - The vast but dormant form of shakti residing in each cell, limb, and organ is kundalini shakti, the unknown part of ourself.
    - The part of that enormous power and intelligence which is active and which we have conscious access to is called prana shakti.
    - Both kundalini shakti and prana shakti are aspects of the sacred fire.
- The sacred fire of prana shakti determines the course of life through our thoughts, speech, and actions.

- Tantrics try to awaken that sacred fire in two ways:
    1. Apply the yogic process of tantric kriya in the Samaya path:
        - This involves prana dharana to gain direct experience of the pranic fire and the field of pranic shakti.
        - Anything brought into that field begins to vibrate and becomes alive.
        - Bring gods and goddesses from different chakras or marma points—the ideas, images, or beliefs from various aspects of your mindfield which are inert and asleep—and drop them into that animated pranic field, the sacred fire, at your ajna chakra to enliven and awaken them.
    2. Awaken the sacred fire in the external fireplace, the kunda:.
        - To awaken the fire at the navel center in the internal yogic manner requires much yoga sadhana, but this external method does not.
        - Light the fire in the kunda, and imbue that fire with meaning and purpose.
        - The purpose of fire at a crematorium is to burn bodies. Another fire burns down your house. Another fire needs a person educated in the spiritual science of fire to ignite it properly. Some fires are for weddings, some for other ceremonies, and some for tantric rituals.
        - The bottom line is that the fire you are trying to ignite outside for tantric rituals is the same fire lit inside us by Mother Nature.
- The sacred fire lit by our Divine Providence resulted in the formation of our body, which is a beautiful yantra and an altar that includes many yantras and mandalas:
    - Seven or nine of those altars are particularly important. They are the chakras.
    - Mother Nature did prana pratishtha and prana dharana on our behalf.
- Great enlightened souls discovered the science of prana dharana and prana pratishtha and shared their knowledge of how to transform an ordinary fire into a sacred fire with a well-defined purpose and meaning; and that is what the sacred fire is all about.

Different Forms and Functions of the Sacred Fire

- Fire in stars, in the digestive system, in anger, in love, that burns down a house, that accepts oblations—all this is the same fire with different functions.
- See *The Pursuit of Power and Freedom*, Panditji's translation of the *Katha Upanishad*, and *At the Eleventh Hour* for more details on the spiritual significance of fire.
- Life and death are defined by the purposeful functioning of fire within:
    - In life, fire leads the body and mind, keeping the conglomerate of cells alive and working with a common purpose.
    - In death, the fire is still there, but with a different purpose; and there is still a kind of life in the cells themselves that feeds the web of life as the body decomposes.
- The life force is everywhere; the concentration of the pranic force, and the infusion of meaning and purpose bring it into a completely functional state. This is prana pratishtha.
- The sacred fire is that which has purpose and knows its meaning and purpose, is aware of its existence, and gives meaning and purpose to everything it touches.

Internal Fire Rituals and External Fire Rituals

- The procedures for propitiating the fire are the same whether it is an inner or an outer fire.
- An internal fire ritual is for the fire lit in the chakras of the human body and fed by pranic and mantric firewood.
- The shrines and different altars of the human body are designed by the Perfect One—your innate intelligence and karma—and they are perfect:
    - Example of a cell—designed by the sacred fire and perfect in its function.
- External altars, churches, yantras, icons, etc., are not as perfect as what has been designed by the eternal Divine Being in our own body. Therefore, if we can gain access to the kunda in the body, the fire offerings made there are more successful and more fruitful than external offerings.

- External rituals will have greater perfection and accuracy if instructions from the scriptures are exactly followed with no distortion. They are based on the direct experience of a long line of experienced practitioners. Once you have gained direct experience and understood the basic dynamics, then you can add to this great body of knowledge. Otherwise, you create confusion for others, and may even harm yourself.

The Sacred Fire and Its Subdivisions, Their Attributes and Functions, and How They Work Inside and Outside the Body

- Fire in the digestive system knows how to handle offerings of food, based on what is needed to digest it. Example of a cow with a huge capacity for food. The intelligent fire in the digestive tract knows which food to send on to the cow's second stomach, which to keep for cud-chewing; and how much saliva to add.
- From its seat at the navel center, the fire manifests in many forms with many functions:
    - The fire that pervades every nook and cranny of the body is *vaishvanara agni*.
    - The fire that digests food is *jathara agni*.
    - Similarly, there are other fires in the bloodstream, the liver, etc.
- The way the digestive system works is the same way the external fire ritual works. The taste buds trigger different responses, which result in the secretion of appropriate enzymes and digestive juices to accept the offering of food to the stomach. In this way, nutrients are transformed into the form the body can accept, and are taken to the right place, for the right purpose, and with the right function and meaning:
    - The fire that permeates the body also resides in concentrated form in different parts of the body, where it performs the unique function of accepting our offerings and transforming them into the kind of energy needed by the divinities to whom we are making the offering.
    - In return, those divinities—the brain, nervous system, kidneys, pituitary gland, heart, etc.—go on giving gifts to us.

- We pour oblations, make offerings into the great kunda of *jathara agni* at the navel center, and the tongues of fire accept our offering (food) and transform it into the appropriate state of energy for the divine forces that rule our body.
- The offerings and gifts we receive in return are health, happiness, vitality, strength, enthusiasm, well-being.
- In external offerings, we first invoke the fire in its totality and make offerings to it; then invoke the particular aspect or tongue for a particular purpose:
    - Analogy of when you are sick, you make unique offerings of medicine—such as ibuprofen or Tylenol for arthritis or pain. It's not a general offering like food.
    - The general offering is a large variety of food to nurture the totality of the body and mind with a balanced diet. Likewise, you first give a balanced diet to all the tongues of the fire.
        - The Upanishads and many tantric texts describe the various tongues of the fire.
        - The name of all seven tongues together is *Jatavedas Agni*.
- Jatavedas is the one who knows all living beings; the one who existed before, during, and after life in the physical body; who knows your destiny, your karma, your intentions, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Invoke Jatavedas because with the knowledge of all this, the ritual bears fruit.
- Jatavedas is like a guru, a guide, a friend, and a parent. As an example, the all-knowing Jatavedas Agni directs the healing power of turmeric to the inflammation in the body. Jatavedas knows you, your intention, your problem, and the healing quality of turmeric.
- In external offerings, the gross is transformed into the subtle—matter is transformed into heat and light and even more subtle energy. Energy is released:
    - The energy may appear diffuse, but as in the medicine analogy, it still finds its target.

  - Medicine in its most final state is transformed into intelligence, feelings, experience. Whatever is not transformed, from the standpoint of the physical body and nervous system, is waste to be eliminated.
  - Similarly, in the external offering of sesame seeds, dates, sugar, ghee, etc., with mantra recitation, upon hearing the mantra and understanding the intention, seeing the nature of the ingredients offered, and seeing the nature of the divinities invoked, the fully awakened sacred fire then directs the subtle energy of intelligence to the right place with the right intention.
- The first mantra of Vedic literature acknowledges this function of the sacred fire:

  om agnimīḍe purohitam ।
  yajñasya devamṛtvijam ।
  hotāraṁ ratna dhātamam ।। *Rig Veda I:1*‖

  I meditate on Agni, the forerunner, the Lord of the grand ceremony of life, the one who sponsors the ceremony, the one who makes the offerings, the repository of gems.

- The fire is the real priest that presides over the whole ritual, making sure that everything is properly conducted and that the energy released from the offering reaches the right place and returns in the form of the desired effect.

The Use of Rituals

- Some rituals are intended for cleansing purposes, and some are more for healing. The ingredients used vary accordingly. See Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources for a list of these ingredients.
- Removing obstacles may be the main goal when the obstacles are overwhelming. Otherwise, make an effort to move forward rather than focusing on the obstacles.

Study Questions

1. What makes us move? What makes the lungs move?
2. What defines a living being?
3. What is *anga*? Describe what connects the cells of the body and relates them to each other and gives them purpose.
4. What is *kama*?
5. What are the three innate characteristics of consciousness?
6. What is the difference between kundalini shakti and prana shakti?
7. What two methods do tantrics use to awaken the sacred fire? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
8. What are the defining characteristics of the sacred fire?
9. Why are external fire offerings more subject to imperfections?
10. Which fire permeates the entire body?
11. Describe the dynamics of fire using the example of food and the human body. How is a medicinal offering different from a food offering, and how is the medicinal offering related to an external fire ritual?
12. Why is the totality of the sacred fire invoked first, before a specific tongue of the fire?
13. What is *Jatavedas Agni*?
14. When might you use rituals to help remove an obstacle? Would this be a "medicinal" application of ritual?

Lecture 6: Rudra Yaga—Tantric Rituals for Healing Ourselves and Healing the Planet (Parts 1 and 2)

Outline

1. Rudra Yaga: a tantric ritual for healing ourselves and the planet
   a. It can be done as an internal yogic practice, or as an external ritual, or as a combination of the yogic and ritualistic practices
   b. *Yaga* means "an offering; an unconditional giving." Rudra is the compassionate, nurturing, healing power residing in the cosmos and in us
2. To benefit from this practice, preparation is essential
   a. It creates the field that can nurture the practice
   b. It allows it to bear fruit
3. Relationship of Rudra Yaga to prana shakti and kundalini shakti
   a. Rudra Kuta—the range of powers at the three lower chakras
   b. How Rudra Yaga nurtures those powers
4. A daily yogic (internal) practice of Rudra Yaga
   a. Invoke the appropriate divine forces for the practice
   b. Using prana dharana, establish pranic shakti infused with the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra at the navel center
   c. Meditate on the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra (do japa) at the navel center
   d. Mentally do a fire offering at the navel center
   e. Surrender the fruits of your japa, and then return to the eyebrow center
5. A Mishra approach to Rudra Yaga: a combination of internal meditation and external ritual
   a. Build the kunda (fireplace) and gather the firewood and ritual ingredients for the offerings
   b. Invoke the appropriate divine forces

Internal aspect

a. Using prana dharana, establish pranic shakti infused with the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra at the navel center
b. Do japa of the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra at the navel center
c. Transfer the shakti from the navel center to the kunda through the use of *trikhanda mudra*

External aspect

a. Ignite the external fire with a simple mantra
b. Make offerings to the fire and the divine forces using specific mantras and ingredients
c. Make offerings to the main deity with the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra
d. Make final offerings to the fire itself with a prayer that all offerings be accepted for the well-being of all

6. A complete (Samaya) Rudra Yaga practice using the Shata Rudriya mantras

First Part

a. Invoke the divine forces
b. Do *prana dharana* and establish that shakti at the navel center
c. Invoke the 33 divinities with Vishve Deva Sukta at the navel center
d. Recite the Shata Rudriya mantras with your focus at the navel center
e. Do japa of the maha mrityunjaya mantra at the navel center
f. Surrender the fruits of the practice to Rudra

Second Part

a. Do *prana pratishtha* of agni at the navel center to begin the fire offering
b. Ignite the fire with mantras
c. Make mental offerings to the fire and the divine forces
d. Make offerings with the Shata Rudriya mantras
e. Surrender the fruits of the practice with a prayer for the peace and prosperity of all

7. Shata Rudriya as a master practice:

a. It can be done internally or externally; the map is the same
b. Success depends on prana dharana, and potent use of the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra

Lecture Notes

Rudra Yaga: a Tantric Ritual for Healing Ourselves and the Planet

- In the Kaula school of Tantra, Rudra Yaga is ritualistic. In the Samaya school, it is purely yogic and internal. In the Mishra school, it is a combination of both ritualistic and yogic.
- What is *yaga*? Yaga, from the root *yaj* means "to give, to offer unconditionally."
- Rudra Yaga means surrendering or giving to Rudra. In Rudra Yaga, a healing energy emerges. Rudra Yaga creates an atmosphere conducive to the total healing of the natural world and of ourselves.
- What is Rudra? Generally Rudra is said to be a form of Shiva.
    - A common misunderstanding is that Rudra is a fierce, violent aspect of Shiva who makes one cry.
    - Rudra is actually the one who cries upon seeing suffering. Rudra is full of compassion, mercy, love, and forgiveness. He sits at the summit of Mount
    - Kailash (at our own *sahasrara* chakra) and sees the pain, the ignorance, the fear, the cravings, the illness, etc., and feels bad. (The enlightened aspect of ourselves feels bad to see the destructive behavior of ourselves and others.)
    - From compassion, tears fall, and the wind carries these tears of compassion everywhere, and from them all forms of life-sustaining entities, like herbs and grains, fruit and vegetables, arise. Rudra's tears are the love, kindness, intelligence, and power of will, knowledge, and action that reside in all the different forms of sustenance. They are the healing essence in herbs, in water, in fire, and the healing power that resides in the sun, moon, stars, in our thoughts, speech, and action, and in our intentions.
- Rudra Yaga means to surrender ourselves to Rudra, the embodiment of the greatest of all healing powers.

- This practice can be done to heal ourselves—our body, breath, mind, thoughts, actions, and intentions; or to help heal others; or to help heal the natural world.
- The bigger the goal, the bigger the size of the practice. A group practice is needed for healing the larger world around us; but even then, we are the first recipient. Others are not separate from us; they are part of you, and you are part of them.

To Benefit from This Practice, Preparation is Essential

- The light of the sun shines equally, but the forms of life differ in how they use it or benefit from it. Rain falls on rocky as well as permeable soil; but the permeable soil absorbs the rain and sprouts seeds and blooms, whereas the rain runs off the barren, rocky soil. Likewise, we must prepare ourselves to be able to make the best use of the healing energy of the Rudra Yaga.
- Rudra Yaga engenders deep transformation which we may not even be aware of; and that transformation begins to take place in the society, culture, community, and the natural world. This is the longest lasting service we can offer.
- Do your practice as selflessly as possible. Offer the fruits of your actions to everybody and the whole of nature. When the fruits come back to you, then share them with others.

Relationship of Rudra Yaga to Prana Shakti and Kundalini Shakti

- Rudra is the most primordial form of Divinity, and the presiding force of the total sum of pranic shakti within us.
- Rudra breathes life in us. Rudra is the prana that animates, that makes someone or something alive.
- Rudra is depicted as having a consort, a shakti, who has many different names: Durga, Kali, Tara, Chinnamasta, Kamala, etc. Rudra and his shakti are always shown together, either side by side, facing each other, or in embrace.

- Kundalini shakti and prana shakti are like Rudra and his shakti—they go together. Rudra is the total sum of manifest and unmanifest energy. Rudrani is his inherent shakti, which is active (prana shakti), and kundalini shakti is his inactive, dormant aspect:
    - Prana is the dynamic, awakened form of shakti and constitutes the life force; and kundalini shakti is the dormant, out-of-reach pranic force. We access the vast reservoir of dormant shakti by using the pranic shakti already at our disposal.
    - By the grace of Rudrani, and under her guidance, we gain access to the vast reservoir of Rudra.
    - Analogy of fire and its heat—they can't be separated from each other; the same is true with prana shakti and kundalini shakti.
- Rudra Yaga is a ritual to restore and nurture kundalini shakti.
- The sum total of energy and consciousness is divided into three major "peaks" called *kuta*. The Rudra Kuta is the range of powers at the first three chakras. The Vishnu Kuta is the middle peak, and the Brahma Kuta is the top peak. Rudra Yaga restores and nurtures the energy of the Rudra Kuta.
- One chakra is not inferior or superior to another:
    - When the energy of the muladhara, the root chakra, is deranged, you suffer from fear, sloth, fatigue, confusion, and inertia.
    - The power to command and the revelation at the sixth chakra, the ajna or eyebrow center, are constantly affected by instinctive urges and primitive feelings.
    - Rudra Kuta, the life force that governs and guides the first three chakras and their related organs and functions, is very important.
    - Most problems we are trying to overcome are related to the first three chakras: anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, attachment, desire, etc.

- Rudra Yaga is the practice to invoke, awaken, and receive the blessings and guidance of Rudra:
    - Three ways of practicing Rudra Yaga:
        - The Samaya school of Tantra is a purely yogic method with the body as a temple, and the chakras as shrines and kundas. The ingredients to be offered are our thoughts, sentiments, memories, karmic problems and virtues, along with wisdom and the pranic force:
            - The beginning point is prana dharana. Bring that pranic force to the navel center and energize it there, making the *manipura* chakra the locus of the pranic force; and from there nurture the entire body. First infuse the space with the pranic force, and
            - then infuse it with your mantra, your yantra, or your imagery; then meditate on it.
        - The Kaula school of Tantra is purely ritualistic. Need to understand how to select and prepare the ingredients, make the kunda, and follow the rules for time and place.
        - The Mishra school of Tantra combines the external Kaula rituals and the internal practices of the Samaya school. It allows practitioners to get the benefits even if they lack the mastery of yogic practices, or of the ritual practices.
    - Rudra Yaga is flexible in application; practices can be simple or complex, short or long. Some steps are complex, others are simple. Some practices require days or months, in the case of group practices; but in the case of daily methodical practice, may take only 30 to 40 minutes.

A Daily Yogic (Internal) Practice of Rudra Yaga

- Sit with relaxed breathing.
- Mentally offer your love and respect to the guide of all guides, the teacher of all teachers, the inner intelligence.

- Pay homage to the remover of obstacles, Ganesha.
- Offer love, respect and gratitude to that great force that invites revelation and empowers you to receive intuitive understanding, Batuka Bhairava.
- Offer homage to:
    - Kshetrapala, the lord of the field of the body and mind.
    - Dashadikpala, lord of directions.
    - The 64 yoginis, the compassionate mothers.
- Mentally invite and invoke the group of 33 divinities.
- Offer your homage to your own pranic shakti, the life force that keeps you alive and inspired.
- Now do bhastrika pranayama, and then prana dharana (see Resources for instructions).
- As part of prana dharana, infuse the energy at the eyebrow center with the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra. This mantra is the highest mantra for health and healing, and for nourishment and healing at every level (see Resources to learn this mantra). Repeat this mantra three times.
- Then using the power of will and intention, bring that pranic force and the mantra enlivened by that pranic force to your manipura chakra (the navel center); and stabilize this awareness there.
- Meditate here at the navel center on the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra for however long you have decided to meditate.
- To finish the practice, do a fire offering at the navel center:
    - Invoke the sacred fire known as Jatavedas with the mantra:

      Om agnaye namah svāhā

      Repeat three times as you visualize the fire shining, with the kunda in your pelvis, and the tip of the flames at your sternum, or your throat, or the flames filling your whole body.

- Make offerings mentally to this fire in your own navel center.
- The sticks the fire consumes are your own karmic sticks stored at the first, second, and third chakras.
- The offerings you make of ghee are actually your self-identity accompanied by attachment and possessiveness. Hold this ghee in a bowl of love and devotion, and with determination as your spoon, offer this self-identity to Jatavedas—the fire which knows the past, present, and future.
- Repeat the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra followed by *svaha* as you make the offerings. Continue for about 5 minutes, if your preceding meditation was about 15 minutes. The voice of your own heart, your own inner feeling, will tell you whether you should make more offerings.
- When you realize you are done with your fire offering, mentally surrender the fruits of the *japa* (mantra recitation), as well as the fruits of this fire offering, to Jatavedas, the sacred fire, with a request to accept the fire offering for the peace and prosperity of all.
- Now bring your attention from the navel center to the eyebrow center. Again pay attention to the pranic force at the eyebrow center and then gently open your eyes.

- If you have a regular meditation practice, this practice just adds the steps of doing prana dharana, meditating at the navel center, and making a fire offering at the navel center that captures your own sense of self-identification with your attachment to it, turning it into love and faith and devotion as you offer it to the fire. This can be part of your daily practice; it takes your practice to the next level.

A Mishra Approach to Rudra Yaga: a Combination of Internal Meditation and External Ritual

- Start with the internal, then move to the external.

- First build the fire kunda, collect the firewood, and prepare the ingredients. Then invoke the forces as before for the fire ritual (mantras for the guru, Ganesha, Batuka Bhairava, the 64 yoginis, Kshetrapala, and Dashadikpala; and the Vishve Deva Sukta).

  a. Internal Aspect of Rudra Yaga:

  - Go to the eyebrow center mentally, and do bhastrika and prana dharana to get the feeling of the pranic field there. (There is no need of doing the pranayama if the feeling is already there.)
  - Next, inhale and retain the breath, recall the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra, and when the energy field at the eyebrow center and the mantra have blended, then bring that energy to your navel center.
  - Do japa of the mantra with awareness at the navel center. See the fire that fills the navel center.
  - When the mantra and the image of the fire become stable at the naval center, form the trikhanda mudra and bring it to the heart.
    (See HimalayanInstitute.org/resources for how to do the trikhanda mudra.)
  - Exhale the pranic force, the agni (the fire), and the mantra (*maha mrityunjaya*) from the navel center out through the nostrils and into the trikhanda mudra with the intention of placing that essence into the mudra.
  - Bring the trikhanda mudra near the kunda and gently dissolve it, letting the energy of your navel center enter the kunda.

  b. External Aspect of Rudra Yaga:

  - Now, ignite the fire. You can use the simple mantra:

    Om agnaye namah svāhā

  - Add small sticks to get the fire going.
  - Make three offerings to the fire itself with ghee, reciting this mantra as you make each offering:

    Om, agnaye svāhā

- Make five more offerings to the five different forms of pranic shakti:

  Om prānāya svāhā

  Om apānāya svāhā

  Om udānāya svāhā

  Om vyānāya svāhā

  Om samānāya svāhā

- Then make offerings to Ganesha, Batuka Bhairava, the 64 yoginis, Kshetrapala, Dashadikpala, and the sun and the planets:

  Om gaṇeśāya svāhā

  Om batuka bhairavāya svāhā

  Om yoginibhyaḥ svāhā

  Om kṣetrapālāya svāhā

  Om indrādi daśha-dikpālebhyo namaḥ svāhā

  Om ādityādi nava-grahebhyo namaḥ svāhā

- Next, make offerings with the main mantra; in this case, *maha mrityunjaya*. Do a mala (108 repetitions of the mantra with 108 offerings).

- Make the final offering with all the ingredients left to the fire itself with a prayer that all the offerings made be accepted for the well-being of all. (Offer in amounts that don't overwhelm the fire, and with each, mentally request that this offering as well as all the previous offerings be accepted for the peace and prosperity of the whole world.) Do the same with any leftover ghee.

c. This completes the short version of the Mishra (part internal and meditative and part external and ritualistic) style of the Rudra Yaga. The Mishra path brings together the internal Samaya path and the external, ritualistic Kaula path. Rudra Yaga can also be done in a purely Samaya internal way, or in the purely external, ritualistic Kaula manner.

A Complete (Samaya) Rudra Yaga Practice Using the Shata Rudriya Mantras

- Rudra Yaga in the Samaya school of Tantra is a more elaborate version which includes many more mantras: once mastered, a bigger Rudra Yaga, involving many people and lasting for days or months or years, can be done. The more elaborate practice is as follows (visit HimalayanInstitute.org/resources for these mantras):

a. First Part:

- Recite the complete invocation mantras for the guru lineage, Ganesha, Batuka Bhairava, the 64 yoginis, Kshetrapala, and Dashadikpala.
- Do prana dharana and then prana pratishtha, sending the energy from the eyebrow center to the navel center.
- Invoke the group of 33 divinities with the Vishve Deva Sukta.
- Then, with your focus at the navel center, recite the Shata Rudriya—a set of mantras dedicated to Rudra. This group of mantras is treated as one mantra. A practitioner who has done a special practice (*purashcharana*) consisting of 1,100 recitations of these mantras in 1,100 days followed by 110 recitations accompanied by fire offerings, another set of 11 repetitions (*tarpana*), followed by one repetition for *marjana*, and an act of charity, has a great responsibility to use the practice with very special care, since even a single recitation of it will now have an unfailing result. Indiscriminate use of it will have negative consequences. To use it correctly, you must have purified the environment, invoked the protectors, and executed the process correctly. These mantras are usually recited out loud.
- The next step is japa of the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra at the navel center—do however much you want.
- Then surrender the fruits of the japa to Rudra who is the presiding deity of the Shata Rudriya. (One recitation of the Shata Rudriya is equal to 100 malas of the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra.) This finishes the first portion of the practice.

b. Second Part (see mantras for fire rituals in Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources, and also online at HimalayanInstitute.org/resources):
    - Do prana pratishtha of agni at the manipura chakra to begin the fire offering at the manipura chakra. Invoke the fire with a special intention by reciting the mantras for lighting the fire (see mantras for fire rituals in Resources).
    - Then offer to the fire ghee in the form of your self-identity accompanied by possessiveness, along with karmic sticks dipped into this ghee, while reciting the mantra for nourishing the fire. Do this three times: once for your physical body, once for your subtle body, and once for your causal body.
    - Make nine offerings of ghee to the fire mentally while reciting the Agni Sukta.
    - Then invoke the seven tongues of fire, the seven sages.
    - Make offerings into the fire at the navel center to Ganesha, the sun and all the planets, and other presiding deities and protectors, as in the mantras for fire rituals
    - Make offerings to the fire at the navel center using the Shata Rudriya mantras, this time saying *svaha* after each mantra.
    - Internal offerings and practices take much more concentration.
    - To finish, surrender the fruits of the fire offering to the sacred fire with a prayer for the health, peace, and prosperity of the whole world.
    - A person who has done this kind of internal practice becomes like a Rudra Yaga itself, and the feeling of fire becomes a living awareness. If such a person invokes the fire externally, then all the imperfections in the external ritual are removed and overcome, because the perfectly awakened fire is sitting right there in that person.

Shata Rudriya as a Master Practice

- This same ritual can be done in the actual kunda instead of at the navel center. The map for the external and the internal is exactly the same.
- The secret lies in two things:

  1. A good established practice of prana dharana; and

  2. A practice of the *maha mrityunjaya* mantra and the potentization of it, particularly by combining it with the Shata Rudriya.
- Shata Rudriya is a master practice of Tantra; and a person who does either the short version or long version, or the internal or external version, is qualified to undertake any tantric practice. That person is automatically grounded in his own personal practice and knows her duties and direction in life.

Study Questions

1. What does the word *yaga* mean?
2. Explain the concept of Rudra.
3. How is Rudra Yaga related to kundalini shakti?
4. How is Rudra Yaga related to prana shakti?
5. What is a *kuta*? Describe Rudra Kuta.
6. How is Rudra Yaga practiced in each of the three schools of Tantra—Samaya, Mishra, and Kaula?
7. In the Samaya method of Rudra Yaga, what is the first step?
8. What constitutes the sticks, ghee, and implements in the Samaya method of Rudra Yaga?
9. Which mantra is suggested for meditation as part of Rudra Yaga? And why is this mantra preferred?
10. What precautions must be taken by someone who has completed a *purashcharana* of Shata Rudriya? Why?

Secret of Tantric Rituals Bonus

15 Questions on Secret of Tantric Rituals

(Answered online at HimalayanInstitute.org/resources)

1. What are tantric rituals and how are they different from other kinds of rituals?
2. I'm a history student and so it is apparent to me that rituals and other external forms of religious ceremony are an obstacle to inner transformation. Rituals encourage us to seek infinity in the finite and the eternal in the perishable. What is even worse, rituals empower priests and place them between us and the highest consciousness. Why do I need rituals which, in effect, take me further from the deeper reality I wish to experience?
3. Are rituals and meditative techniques compatible? Are they complementary paths or completely different paths?
4. Can you describe a simple ritual that I can use to calm and center my mind so that I can focus on my mantra in meditation?
5. What are the major differences between Kaula, or left-hand, Tantra and Samaya, or right-hand Tantra? How do the rituals in these two tantric paths differ?
6. What is the significance of alcohol, meat, fish, mudra, and sex in the rituals of left-hand Tantra? How are these objects and experiences used?
7. In right-hand Tantra, the rituals consist of using water, flowers, sandalwood paste, turmeric, rice, black sesame seeds, lamps, incense, sweets, fruits, clothes, ornaments, etc. Are these ingredients absolutely necessary? If they aren't available, are there any substitutes?
8. In some depictions of tantric gods and goddesses they appear to be similar to us, and in others quite different from us. Sometimes they are beautifully dressed, and at other times, they are nude. What is the basis of their personification? How do tantrics explain the all-pervasive nature of divinity that is personified in such detail?

9. When tantrics from India perform rituals, they recite mantras and prayers in Sanskrit. Tantrics from Tibet recite their prayers in Tibetan and tantrics from Southeast Asia recite in Pali or in their local languages. When the ritual is the same and the ritual ingredients are the same, does the difference in language bring different results?

10. I have heard a tantric can perform rituals for others. How can a person reap the fruits of a ritual performed by someone else?

11. Some of the tantric rituals are completely foreign to me—for example, Kumari puja, the ritual worship of a virgin girl. Is this ritual worship more than symbolic? Is it a reflection of some element in Indian culture or is it a road map of a spiritual process and experience?

12. How do you worship or meditate on a yantra or a mandala? Do you visualize every triangle, circle, and deity? Do you visualize the yantra in an upright position as though it is hanging on a wall? Do you visualize it inside you? Is it part of you or are you part of it?

13. Does it make a difference if you make a yantra or a mandala with colored rice or with grains of sand? Does it make a difference if you draw a yantra on a wooden board or on a gold plate? Does it make a difference if the geometrical form is replaced by a cluster of deities corresponding to the yantra or the mandala?

14. What is your favorite tantric ritual? Do you practice it in your daily life? If the answer is yes, will you share it with us?

15. If you had to pick just one tantric ritual to heal human hearts and heal our planet, which practice would it be, and why?

Secret of Tantric Rituals Bonus

Extra Bonus Questions from Students of Tantra

(Answered online at HimalayanInstitute.org/resources)

1. You mentioned that there are different forms of or aspects of sacred fire. Why are there so many and what are their functions?

2. As part of Tantra, especially left-hand Tantra, all we hear and read is that you drink alcohol, be romantic, and even enjoy sex. Common sense tells me that being wild can't lead you to inner peace, and indulgence cannot lead you to freedom, and yet this is what normally attracts people to Tantra. Does this getting drunk and being romantic really constitute tantric spirituality, or are we missing something here? I hope you can explain this thoroughly.

3. You mentioned that there is a way of protecting yourself, or that there is a way of not being affected by your environment despite the fact that you are fully connected to the outside world. In other words, at a spiritual level, you know and experience yourself to be part of the world and the world to be a part of you. And yet, at a mental and emotional level, you are completely untouched by the undesirable, unwanted thoughts, feelings, and conditions which fill this world. How do you do that, especially when you are doing your spiritual practices?

4. I understand air pollution, water pollution, and contamination of soil. I also understand the body being affected by toxins. But I have never heard of sound pollution. I understand that a deafening sound can disturb us. But that sound can pollute the earth's atmosphere, and that sound can pollute the celestial realm baffles me. Once a sound is over, it's gone. How does it pollute? What is left to pollute anything?

5. What are the tongues of fire? How many are there, and what are their functions?

Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources

Prana Dharana: The Living Tantra Master Practice

(Visit HimalayanInstitute.org/resources to see a guided practice of prana dharana, taught by Pandit Tigunait.)

Prana Dharana—infusing the sixth chakra with the life force—in three steps:

Step 1. Bhastrika

After establishing a stable sitting posture and a smooth, relaxed breathing pattern, practice bhastrika pranayama with awareness in the nostrils. (Bhastrika is a rhythmic, vigorous pranayama in which both the inhalation and the exhalation are forceful. Visit HimalayanInstitute.org/resources for instructions.)

Step 2. Pracchardana

While practicing bhastrika, slightly constrict the throat to direct your energy and focus to the roof of the mouth (the soft palate). This is *pracchardana*—striking and vibrating the soft palate with the breath.

Step 3. Vidharana

When your focus is drawn to the *ajna chakra*, the eyebrow center, and intensifies there, finish with a strong exhalation and a deep inhalation through the spot of intense feeling. Retain the breath (*kumbhaka*) with your focus at the eyebrow center, and fill this activated space (the ajna chakra) with intention, purpose, and meaning. Fill the space above and around the focal point at the ajna chakra with awareness. Retain the breath for as long as it is comfortable, intensifying and concentrating the pranic force. This is *vidharana*—anchoring prana in a special space.

Now you can bring that pranic force anywhere you want, inside or outside your body, and use it any way you want.

Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources

Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra

(Visit HimalayanInstitute.org/resources to hear a guided practice of the maha mrityunjaya mantra, taught by Pandit Tigunait.)

The *maha mrityunjaya* mantra is a healing and nourishing mantra and is, in a sense, the heart of the Vedas. The healing force awakened by this mantra sends forth its ripples from body to psyche and from psyche to soul. It strengthens our powers of will, knowledge, and action, thus unblocking the flow of enthusiasm, courage, and determination. The vibration of this mantra awakens the internal healing force while attracting nature's healing agents, creating an environment where the forces from both origins converge. This mantra connects us to the healer within and helps us receive the full nourishment from food, herbs, or any discipline undertaken for our total well being.

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे	om, tryambakaṁ yajāmahe
सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।	sugandhiṁ puṣhṭi-vardhanam
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्	urvā-rukamiva bandhanān
मृत्योर्मुक्षीय माऽमृतात् ॥	mṛ(i)tyor-mukṣhīya mā'mṛ(i)tāt

Translation: I meditate on, and surrender myself to, the Divine Being who embodies the power of will, the power of knowledge, and the power of action. I pray to the Divine Being who manifests in the form of fragrance in the flower of life and is the eternal nourisher of the plant of life. Like a skillful gardener, may the Lord of Life disentangle me from the binding forces of my physical, psychological, and spiritual foes. May the Lord of Immortality residing within free me from death, decay, and sickness and unite me with immortality.

Secret of Tantric Rituals Resources

Online Resources at HimalayanInstitute.org/resources

Secret of Tantric Rituals Practices Online

- Ritual Invocations and Prayers (audio)
  - Invocations of Ganesha and Batuka Bhairava
  - Prayer to the 64 Yoginis
  - Invocation of Kshetrapala and Dashadikpala
  - Invocation of group of 33 divinities
- Constructing the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra
  - Panditji and Meera Tigunait showing how to construct the Sarvato Bhadra Yantra (video)
- Fire Ritual Manual
  - The mantras, translations, and instructions for conducting fire rituals (text)
- Preparations for Fire Rituals
  - Panditji showing how to build a *kunda* (fire pit), and how to make *samagri* (the ingredients used in fire rituals) (video)
- Living Tantra Havan
  - Panditji explaining and conducting a fire ritual (video)
- Trikhanda and Samhara Mudras
  - Panditji demonstrating how to form two important mudras for rituals (video)

Seminar Two — Secret of Tantric Rituals

Recommended Reading

From Death to Birth, by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

At the Eleventh Hour, by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

Tantra Unveiled, by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

The Pursuit of Power and Freedom, (Katha Upanishad), by Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

Path of Fire and Light, by Swami Rama

Yantra, the Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity, by Madhu Khanna

Any translation of choice of the following Upanishads:

Kena, Shvetashvatara, Mundaka, and *Prashna*

Heal Yourself, Heal the World: A Mantra for Peace and Prosperity," by Rolf Sovik, *Yoga + Joyful Living* magazine, Nov/Dec 2007

Supporting Practices Online

Hatha Yoga Sequences (video unless otherwise noted)

Hatha Yoga Sequence 1

Hatha Yoga Sequence 2

Hatha Yoga Sequence 3

Asana in Preparation for Bhastrika Pranayama

Strengthening the Lower Belly

Other Supporting Practices Online (video unless otherwise noted)

Diaphragmatic Breathing: The Foundation for Pranayama

Bhastrika Pranayama

Anuloma Pranayama

Ujjayi Pranayama

Agni Sara

Nauli Kriya

Three Sitting Postures for Pranayama and Meditation

Nadi Shodhanam Pranayama (audio)