

The Path of Tantra versus Vedanta

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Sundari: Hello, Jonathan, I replied in detail to your inquiry regarding the aptly named "Blisslove," and for some reason it did not save. I don't think there is much need to rewrite it. I am en route to Spain to join James for the Spanish seminar starting this weekend. There is not much to say about it really, that you do not know.

Whoever wrote what you sent me does not understand Vedanta, because he is a *bhakta*, a *tantric*. Some *bhaktas/tantrics* even go so far as to hate Vedanta because they believe it denies the world, and experience. They are for the most part experience-based inquirers after the "feeling." Of course Vedanta does not deny *mithya*, feeling or experience, it simply explains it in light of Self-knowledge and negates it as real. Tantra is not a proper means of knowledge, but it is informative up to a point and can be what Vedanta calls "a leading error." *Bhaktas* are not wrong to worship Creation of course, as it is all *Isvara*, the Self, but the problem is they are generally identified with it as *jivas*.

I have copied in an explanation which should help you. The only really bad word in the excerpt is "inert," although it doesn't mean inert. Consciousness is not inert; although it is actionless, it contains all powers, nothing can manifest without it.

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Shiva represents consciousness. By himself, Shiva is inert. Shakti is creation; she provides movement and dynamism to Shiva. Neither can create without the other; thus Shiva is often depicted as Ardhanariswara: half Shiva and half Shakti. Shiva is the "nothing" while Shakti is the "everything," yet the nothing and the everything exist simultaneously, inexorably entwined. Yoga is the path of Shiva, starting with the viewpoint that Shiva and Shakti become as though separated in the process of creation. The purpose of yoga is to bring them back together (yoga = to join).

Tantra is the path of Shakti, starting with the viewpoint that Shiva and Shakti exist together, and that the most effective way to experience Shiva is through Shakti in her infinite manifestations (*tantra*; *tanoti* = expansion, *trayoti* = liberation). While the *yogi* renounces in order to know Shiva, the *tantric* embraces the totality of life experiences knowing them to be Shakti, the Divine Mother Herself. Not one aspect of life is shunned; everything from the subtlest to the grossest experience that arises is seen to be Her.

The traditional practice of *tantra* lies in the effective use of *mantra* (name) and *yantra* (form) to know the nameless and formless *Brahman*. While Advaita Vedanta sees all of Creation to be an illusion, the *tantric* (from the point of view of the embodied *jiva*) sees Creation to be very much real, a play of the Divine Mother on the fabric of immutable consciousness that is the Divine Father. Shakti is simultaneously seen as being benign and beautiful as well as ferocious and terrible; there is no aspect of Creation that it is not Her. Tantra teaches one to see Her beauty and to love Her in Her infinite forms, no matter how depraved or heinous.

If the *tantric* can expand the limited mind beyond the dualities of good/bad, beautiful/ugly, right/wrong, like/dislike, the *tantric* arrives at the same place as the adept *yogi* or the Vedantin: oneness; seeing that *Brahman* is the nondual reality, in and through the mirage of duality.

~ *Om*, Sundari