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Presenting Tantra Yoga: “Thinking” to “Becoming-Woman” for a Psycho-Ecology of Planetary Regeneration

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Abstract

Europe and its influential knowledge systems are a late entry into the global marketplace of ideas, but they have had a far-reaching and, in many cases, devastating impact on our planet. Some Christian thinkers themselves now acknowledge that Anthropocene at least partially arose from an ego-centric reading of the Biblical narrative about Adam’s domination over the natural world. We desperately need philosophers of air, water, fire, earth, and sky today, and we require those who can translate thought into praxis to help us find a way out of the crisis. Tantra as a mechanism and praxis has been elaborately developed by master yogis and yoginis. They created what can be called a psycho-ecology of our being where the macrocosm and microcosm meet in profound easeful love of life that can save us from our hungry-ghost-infested minds. This paper presents Tantra Yoga and its Gynocentric systems to contribute toward ecosophical praxis.

Keywords: 5- Tantra, Deleuze; Heidegger; Goddesses; Vajrayana Buddhism

Introduction

Modern Europe’s influential techno-scientific knowledge systems are a late entry into the global marketplace of ideas, but they have had a far-reaching and, in many cases, devastating impact on our planet. Combined with a capitalist economy that arose out of an exploitative imperial system of boundless extraction, they denuded the natural world, especially the Global South, for the short-term and excessive material gain for the few. The colonizing imperative of this belief along with a proselytizing Christian missionary zeal that devalued all other world systems contributed to the inner and outer wreckage that we are witnessing today. Unfortunately, a big part of the world has come under its hypnotic spell, and the addictive power of its spectacular machines endangering organic life on Earth.

This techno-scientific system must be seen in its “provincial” perspective, not as a universal fact. Since the time of T.S. Eliot’s “Wasteland,” many prescient Euro-American thinkers themselves understood the danger, and modernist writers expressed quite early the alienated sensibility that this unconscious ideology had created (See McGilchrist 2019). Now that we see the consequences of our polluted environment and the climate crisis, we need to forge a path together utilizing all the world’s liberatory ways to cleanse the planet and our inner ecosystem. We cannot visualize the regenerative pathway unless we decondition our minds

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and “cleanse the doors of perception”, which some premodern cultures knew how to perform. We must reevaluate “primitive” knowledge systems like Shamanism and until recently demonized psychospiritual technologies like Tantra Yoga to help awaken the intrinsic intelligence that may guide us toward a balanced and more equitable life on Earth.

Anthropocene at least partially arose from an ego-centric reading of the Biblical narrative about Adam’s domination over the natural world and a disdain for what it saw as a fallen earthly life in favor of a disembodied postmortem perfection. Theologians like Calvin and even Thomas Aquinas believed that “Creation” is geared toward man and meant to serve the purpose of the elect few. Many other theologians including Moses Maimonides and Saint Augustine bemoaned the corruption of the often-feminized earthly life, body, and sexuality that have no space in the divine economy. Imperial Christianity also destroyed many ancient religions and their adherents including Native Americans who venerated the natural world and did not see themselves as lord and master of Mother Nature. Radical feminists like Mary Daly (1968) critiqued their own religions as irrevocably patriarchal and misogynistic. Pope Francis recently acknowledged that “Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures” and has issued statements to rectify the problem (Schnapf, n.d.).

Philosophy and scientism too as androcentric modernist endeavors culminating in a Cartesian dualism that radically separated mind and body (See Apffel-Marglin, 2020) rendered the world as dead and extractable “matter”. Francis Bacon’s language in his work is about the conquest of a mindless Nature. He and many others believed that man needs to use his instrumental rationality to extract Nature’s secret (See “Francis”). Thus, both a misinterpreted patriarchal monotheism and its doppelganger atheistic scientism degraded and exploited the “feminized” Earth. In this belief system that Dean Radin calls “scientism”, reductive rationalism was given supremacy and infallibility that culminated in a mechanized worldview that no other civilization ever dreamed of.

We need to collectively find a cure for this system that wants us to be nothing but mechanical consumers because its very existence depends on it. We also need to recognize the connection between this sweeping machinery and our minds in a world inundated with social media. Whether the “technological singularity” happens or not, unconscious consumption of technology is dangerous. (Saxena, “AI”, 2020). As John Naughton (2020) writes: “Having looted, plundered, and denuded the natural world, it has now turned to extracting and exploiting what’s inside our heads. And the great mystery is why we continue to allow it to do so.” Why, indeed. Perhaps we need a kind of awakening knowledge that books cannot provide. After all, we can easily get addicted to the information that AI is sending our way. Tantra Yoga’s deep wisdom about our interiority can come in handy in this global struggle.

Today, we desperately need philosophers of air, water, fire, earth, and sky, and we require those who can translate ancient thought into modern praxis. Fortunately, a thinker like Peter Kingsley is returning the West to its esoteric roots and re-visioning Empedocles and Parmenides and their “elemental” engagements. We need “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” (TEK) that never needed a theory of ecology, ecosophy, or eco-feminism as societies that developed this knowledge were not alienated from Mother Nature. Tantra arose from Indic shamanism and developed a psycho-ecology of our interconnected well-being. There are many eco-activists and spiritual seekers who are reinvigorating their own native pre-Christian, pagan, Wiccan, and myriad goddess traditions to find a spirituality (See Lowinsky, 2016, Chapter “My Lady Tree”) that is more conducive to ecological restoration. This paper



is advancing the insights of "Feminism's Fourth Wave" where feminist spirituality has been taking shape across all boundaries to transform both the inner and outer worlds (See Peay, 2005).

Methodologically this paper is interested in noesis rather than episteme. It is influenced by the "*Écriture Feminine*" of the French feminists, especially the work of Luce Irigaray, as well as intersectional and indigenous feminism, and what Craig Chalquist calls an "organic inquiry", a psychospiritual guiding principle that has no "objectivist" pretense, and that values the inquirer's subjective experiences (See Rose, 2022). However, the paper is primarily grounded in Indic Dharma viewpoints that are "Gynocentric" (Saxena, 2004, 2016) where the capital G denotes the presence of the Great Goddess as Shakti, energy, the active force in the universe that is one with the masculine principle called Shiva/consciousness. This viewpoint emerges from a nondual meditative realization that accepts all of life as sacred and infused by the pulsating numinosity of Devi, the Divine Feminine. (See Spivak, 1999, Saxena, 2006, 2011). Vandana Shiva uses this Shakti principle of her tradition to forge an Indic eco-feminism which also informs this paper.

From this perspective, we have lost our way in the melee of our excessive wants and self-centered control mechanism of the mind creating what are called hungry ghosts or *pretas* in Tantric parlance. According to Tantric texts, hungry ghosts are aspects of us who suffer amid plenty and are perpetually discontent. It is this discontent/unending suffering that is the first Noble Truth of the Buddha. Although this can affect anyone at any time, extreme extraction of Earth's resources to feed this hungry ghost and the wholesale destruction of our home is a consequence of what Donna Haraway, following Andreas Malm and Jason Moore, calls "Capitalocene" (Haraway, 2015). For them capitalism is more than an economic system; it is a violent way of organizing nature. We are now recognizing we cannot do that without harming ourselves. Since we are porous and interconnected entities in the woven cosmos, our addictions, mental health issues, and extreme violence in our interpersonal and community lives reflect that planetary degradation. We can no longer afford to feed the hungry ghosts and need to go beyond postcolonial critiques into various global therapeutic praxis.

A postcolonial and postmodern critique of a homogenizing universalism with its peculiarly Eurocentric patriarchal flavor has been legion at this point; however, it is also important to note that once a corporeal turn took hold of western philosophical landscapes, thanks to the challenges posed to trenchant ontotheology from poststructuralist and feminist thinkers, certain suppressed sensibilities began to re-emerge from the imperial corridors themselves. The synchronistic arrival of Nag Hammadi texts in 1945 also led to a reevaluation of dominant Christian dogma. At this point, women's ways of being and their role in understanding the Kenotic message of enlightened energies like Christ/Magdalene are receiving attention at least in some quarters of the "empire." We need other marginalized ways that know the skillful means of uniting Shiva/Shakti, Buddha/Prajna, Jalal/Jamal, Yin/Yang, or masculine and feminine principles that are attributes present in both men and women. Tantra can help transcend the limits of gender by dissolving the illusion of an individual self and join the global dialogue so that we can find a way out of our psycho-spiritual malaise.

Let us then explore the possibility of discovering the Tantric keys along with dynamic interaction with some prescient western thinkers for radical decolonization that can cleanse

the “doors of perception” for a restful solution to a stressful global crisis. Any simple Yogic observance of our minds can reveal that most of us are not present at any moment and are victims of our racing minds and emotions. Hence, this decolonization entails not just a critical cognizance of imperial violence, but a deeper emptying of our colonized minds. Tantra Yoga provides ways to cleanse and stabilize the inner world so that we can see through the veils of our conditioned selves. We may then discover that environmental humanities are a tautology as there is no such thing as humanity without the environment that has evolved us and with us. Our connections to the rocks and the invisible beings are a part of a perfectly synchronized web where each entity reflects everything else and is an integral part of the unknowable whole.

Thinking to Becoming Woman: An Ecosophical Interaction

Ecosophy is a kind of echo of our primal connectedness that excessive thought-oriented ideologies have lost. Influenced by Gregory Bateson, Felix Guattari defines “ecosophy” without borders in *The Three Ecologies* as “an alternative to the extremely limited, technocratic response to all-pervasive industrial pollution by the IWC (Integrated World Capitalism) through an alternative, de-localized and rhizomic mental ecology built on heterogeneity and deterritorialization.” What is interesting in this articulation is that it is not based on “active thinking subjects” but “focuses on fluidity and movement between singularities that are always in a state of immanent becoming other” (See Gardener, 2021, 46).

I would like to examine the activity of “thinking” that some, following Descartes, take as a mark of our humanity. Let us do so with Heidegger. Although the wise beings, oriental or occidental, have exhorted the dictum “Know Thyself” or “*Atmanam Viddhi*”, it has not been easy, perhaps because sometimes we mistake our thoughts for ourselves. Martin Heidegger quotes Holderlin: “We are a sign that is not read”. We need to read the sign that is us. Intriguingly, Heidegger points out that the meaning of the word “idea” is not about “ideas” buzzing in our heads, but it is about meeting face to face (1954, 41). We could be an idea that is facing the power of the natural world. Since neuroscience and a certain strain of *Advaita* (nondual) *Vedanta*, somewhat correctly, say it is all happening in our heads, Heidegger asks not to be too hasty: “while science records the brain currents, what becomes of the tree in bloom?” (1954, 42). He insists on letting the tree bloom because “to this day, thought has not let the tree stand where it stands” (1954, 44). How do we do that?

Heidegger proposes that although “man”, a rational animal, is supposed to know how to think, apparently “he” does not. In an oft-quoted line, Heidegger says repeatedly, “what is most thought provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking” (1954, 5-6). We need to learn to think by radically unlearning “what thinking has been traditionally” (1954, 8) and develop the capacity to listen. Perhaps that is a meditative ability to calm the brain chatter to hear the soft voice of the Goddess (See Leeming and Page, 1994). It is fascinating that Heidegger invokes a goddess, Mother of the Muses, Mnemosyne, a daughter of heaven and earth to unite “mythos” and “logos” that have been separated already in Plato, leading to the current “devastation.”

Heidegger makes a distinction between destruction and devastation: “Destruction only sweeps aside all that has grown up or been built up so far; but devastation blocks all future growth and prevents building” (1954, 29). Destruction is natural and is part of the duality of birth and death that we call life. In our fear of destruction/annihilation, we have created devastation. For Heidegger, “Devastation is the high-velocity expulsion of Mnemosyne”



(1954, 30). Could he mean that “thinking” as listening will recover the “memory” of our at-one-ment with the Mother Principle, whose other name is Mnemosyne?

“Thinking is thinking only when it answers to what is most thought-provoking (1954, 28), and that is a relatedness, a response to what calls us to “thinking.” So, for Heidegger thinking is an ingathering, a recollection, perhaps of our primal unity that Indic thinkers call *Pratyabhijna*. Or Greek anamnesis. Although Heidegger as a thinker of “B/being” with questionable associations can be problematic as Immanuel Levinas pointed out, in this meditative text, he compels us to face the thinking self and, in a way, dissolves it.

This brings us to Deleuze and Guattari who make “becoming” the central point of their engagement with life as they question the “being” centered philosophies. Historically “being”- centered thought has been about the self and his march toward a self-enclosed conquest over others including his own feminized body, emotions, and Nature. In dissolving this unitary being, philosophy enters a corporeal becoming. There is a molecular imperceptibility of egolessness in the experience that is described by Deleuze and Guattari as “Becoming-Woman”, a simultaneous multiplicity, based on their reading of writers like Virginia Woolf. (See 1987, Chapter 10). They are also deeply influenced by Spinoza whose “immanent sublime” is somatic as opposed to Kantian “transcendental idealism” (See Gardener, 2021, 46). Deleuze and Guattari were responding to Spinoza's conceptualization of bodies as a composite of many bodies; hence a multiplicity of forces rather than a unitary “subject.”

Ann Weinstein, a Tantric initiate, perhaps recognizes that experience when she writes in her *Avatar Bodies: A Tantra for Posthumanism*, “throughout their later work, Deleuze and Guattari position ‘becoming-woman’ as the key to all other becomings. Becoming-woman is a becoming-imperceptible, a becoming-indiscernible, a becoming-fugitive. The concept of becoming woman is also central to Tantra and informs its most significant practices” (2004, 89). If our hyper-masculine ego-driven unconscious “thinking” self has led to our current predicament, “becoming-woman” could be the way out. In Tantric parlance, this becoming-imperceptible, this becoming-indiscernible is the way to what is known as *nirvikalpa* samadhi, a deep sleep-like immersion into the Void, the Perfection of Wisdom. The Great Goddess is not a unitary being but always already multiple in her manifest aspects. For those who venerate her, becoming-woman is the desired goal as seen in some male Indian Tantric practitioners who don women’s clothing and mimic their ways. Deleuze and Guattarian becoming-animal too is not a great stretch. There are powerful goddesses with animal masks such as Vajravarahi, the sow-faced deity.

However, much of their thought is complex and has been misconstrued like Nietzsche’s who had quizzically asked in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Supposing truth is a woman—what then?” She does not allow a dogmatic philosopher to win her! (192). Rosi Braidotti clarifies that “Deleuze’s notion of Becoming is adapted from Nietzsche and is deeply anti-Hegelian. Becoming is neither the dynamic confrontation of opposites nor the unfolding of an essence in a teleologically ordained process of transformation. Both teleological order and fixed identities are relinquished in favor of a flux of multiple becoming”. She further explains how “Deleuze de-essentializes the body, sexuality and sexed identities”. For him, the body is not an essence but “a play of forces, a surface of intensities—pure simulacra without originals” (2014, 44).

Tantric methods can help one reach that imperceptibility where we are naturally aware of the burden of our carbon footprints and can act without stress because we are relaxed into the present moment with our innate (*Sahaja*) intelligence, that is not severed from our feelings, illuminating the way. This experience is the result of a Tantric method that James Mallinson and Mark Singleton call "ontological suicide" (2017), an experiential death of the self. Such an experience reveals the constructed nature of the S/self that frees one from the burden of an unconscious ego. In its highest stage, it leads to a Buddha's Nirvana which is about the extinction of the flame that the ego-ridden entity suffers from.

However, this is an experiential recognition, carefully orchestrated by Mahasiddha gurus, not an intellectual assertion. Such a being is porous with a body without strictly unitary organization and is not different from the non-human world. Tantras valorize the woman's body which it believes is neurologically wired differently and is more attuned to life's natural rhythm. Tantra also sees the woman as a perfected image of the totality of cosmic life. Female Tantric gurus that can effortlessly roam in the freedom of their skylike consciousness (See Dowman, 1996) and easily transmit that knowledge through the sensorium were hardly known until practicing scholars like Miranda Shaw (1994) discovered their existence.

This becoming is an entry into the feminine and the two of Luce Irigaray whose gnostic wisdom refuses the tyranny of the One and proclaims *To be Two*. She asks "Why is it said that the universe is the work of the father? Does it not, rather, resemble another mother?" and trusts that "Life's taste returns in her tenderness—sweet, warm, fragrant, also caressing and rustling" and rejects "those who forget her for disincarnate incitements, for conflicts without either consequence or motive, if not the artifice of an energy separated from life" (2000, 2). Irigaray painstakingly shows how the western world has forgotten the Mother. It is instructive to see how she turns the myth of Plato's cave upside down and shows how philosophy and theology have appropriated the Mother's generative power. (See Jones, 2011). She had also turned to Yoga and Tantra in her book, *Between East and West*.

In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, Ihab Hassan created a table of differences between the modern and the postmodern, and it is no accident that the Father God gives way to the Holy Ghost and transcendence to immanence. So, can we dissolve the thinking subject, re-member Mnemosyne in whom all opposites merge, and posit the praxis of an integral ecosophy for a planetary regeneration?

Consciousness, Tantra, and the "Body" of the Great Mother

The Indic world that invested its considerable energy into understanding "consciousness" from the very dawn of its civilization has many words to understand our interiority. The history of the subcontinent reveals diverse experimentations that later culminated in integral Tantric ways. Upanishads speak of *Mahavakyas*, great sayings, "Thou Art That", "I am Brahman" that reflect utterances like Jesus saying, "I and the Father are one" or the great Sufi master Al Hallaj proclaiming, "Anal Haq/I am the Truth". They were both slain because their voices were heretical in the exoteric monotheism and metaphysically dualistic system that sees divinity as utterly transcendental from the "material" body. Also, though the *Advaita* of the Upanishads is an astounding achievement of human awareness, somewhere the "thinking" beings lost their way and created a "nondualism" that denied the world its reality. There is often a gap between the realized beings' sayings and the followers who may misperceive the truth due to their limited visions.



Today most people have come to learn about physical Yoga in its western incarnation, but the text of Patanjali's *Yogasutra* speaks of Yoga as *chittavritti nirodha*, restraint of the fluctuations of the mind. Tantra Yoga, a different stream, provides quick, therapeutic, and somatic practices that lead to various stages of samadhi or complete absorption. Once Yogic praxis quietens the mind and the body, a practitioner may awake to that unity consciousness. So unconscious "thinking" is *chittavritti* that is now understood by neuroscience as the default mode network (DMN) that produces the egoic brain chatter. A neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor who experienced a left-brain stroke eloquently documented its effect on her being, realizing how the stroke quieted that obsessive chatter. Yoga teaches us how to quieten that chatter naturally through breath and awareness.

There is more to it than the activities of the divided brain structure (See McGilchrist, 2009), which is vital for our ordinary functioning, but this knowledge does not necessarily transform our consciousness. Ancient Yogis knew this in their laboratories of the self. Later Buddhist/Shakta/Shiva or Vaishnavites that revere Radha with Krishna, kept refining the ways, *Sahajya*, a path to spontaneity, that reveals a relaxed being. This being is at ease in the world savoring the Great Mother's bounty without excess, having overcome the unconscious obsession with sex, greed, and anger. It is necessary to note that Tantra does not see these as something evil or immoral but as energies that can be transmuted leading to a change in our brain chemistry. It is the passion that transforms into compassion.

In the 8th century, Padmasambhava, or the second Buddha's Tantric refinement would lead to the recognition of Mahamudra/Dzogchen, an effortless awareness of what the Greco-Egyptian Hermetic path called "as above so below". A practitioner here sees the geometry of the universe stamped in her/his own body/mind/spirit continuum. This recognition frees oneself from the deluded clinging to an identity of the "I" that is merely a function of language as the philosopher Wittgenstein had recognized. Now, s/he is free from the internal oppressor and can compassionately apply skillful means to combat external ones, whether Indic patriarchy or global capitalist establishment.

Tantra in its radical validation of the "body" and the "female" overturns the touch of Vedic Brahminic patriarchy and its caste, gender, and untouchability troubles. But the question arises: what is a "body" anyway and how does Tantra understand the Body of the Great Mother? This entire universe is the Body of the Great Mother, Mater. This understanding of the body is plural and multifaceted that includes gross to subtle aspects that need to be seen and integrated. Therefore, there are five Buddhas and five Shivas that represent different stages of awakening. Naked Kali as Space devours Time and frees one from all fear that our bounded temporality creates.

The combined image of Kali dancing on Shiva denotes the dynamic samadhi of an enlightened being who sees no difference between this divine cosmic dance and one's fragile and impermanent body. It is divine materiality, but it must not be confused with materialism. In this path, we learn to respect what "matters" most and so escape our unconscious attachment to stuff that a heady capitalism fosters. After all, the Latin root of the word *capit* denotes the head. Since the Cartesian revolution, we have learned to value our "heads"/minds over our feminized bodies that are nothing but trash/matter. Ironically this heady preference has made us truly "materialistic" in the sense of worshippers of stuff.

Tantra does not separate transcendental consciousness from the body and its goal is love, not knowledge. It is the same ordinary consciousness (*chetana*) that sparkles as *Chaitanya*, pure consciousness, as the gurus take the disciple through the valley of death to life. It is interesting to discover that the esoteric processes are very much the same in Sufi Islam, Gnostic Christianity, and Jewish Kabbala. All the mystical traditions of the world also venerate the Feminine in one form or the other. The skillful means take the adept through a cleansing process of all the elements in us until the yellow of the earth element mingles with the blue of the sky creating the luminosity of a Green Tara.

The luminosity of life begins to pulsate in one’s own fragile body when the truth of “being but nothing in becoming” (See Satpurananda, 2010, “Tantra”) suddenly reveals itself like the Satori of a Zen master. In the journey from Sanskrit Dhyana (meditation), Pali Jhan, and Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen, we see how the fire sermon of the Buddha turns into the flower sermon. When the fire element that is our mind is extinguished through deep meditation, one can experience the no-mind. In this articulation, the being is engulfed in the nothingness of the Great Mother’s womb and emerges in a becoming where anything is possible in every moment of acute presence.

One cannot fathom Tantra without recognizing the meaning of the goddesses that are symbols of recognition. Tara, Kali, and Tripurasundari are the three presiding deities of the three Tantric families. Each family is designed for a specific place and a stage in the ascent and descent of energy/shakti. Tripurasundari presides over Sri Vidya of the South. Ways of Kali were designed for the middle of the subcontinent, and Tara rules over Buddhist Vajrayana and the Himalayan layer. Tibetans have kept that secret alive due to their isolation, and they have now been spreading it around the world. Tantras also utilize sacred plants or entheogens available in each geography for alchemical purposes. Yantras and mandalas are used by teachers for deep meditative absorption and psychotherapy. (Saxena, “Mapping”, 2020). Rituals include the making and unmaking of a mandala like the Kalachakra made famous by the Dalai Lama. It is not too different from the making of the murti of Durga each year and drowning her in the water. (For the deeper significance of Tantric Durga worship, see Satpurananda, 2010).

In India, Tara is worshipped both within Shakta Hinduism as a Mahavidya (great mantra) and in Tantric Buddhism in both wrathful and peaceful aspects. Stephen Beyer points out an important aspect that is also born out in meditation practices that Tara “touches” emptiness: “In a universe where all events dissolve ontologically into Emptiness, the touching of Emptiness in the ritual is the re-creation of the world in actuality; where solid reality is but a fabric of constructions, the deity’s ritual gestation and birth are no mere imitation of her primal genesis, but the concrete formation of a symbolically potent reality” (1978, 69).

The practices taught by Tantric masters vary according to individual makeup. However, no discussion of Tantra Yoga is complete without touching upon the dreaded sexuality, especially female sexuality, the ultimate realm of patriarchal control. Tantra recognizes the power of our sexual energy and knows how to transmute it. Tantrikas also know that Kundalini Shakti is the creative power of the cosmos. These are serious Yogic practices and have nothing to do with exotic sex. Women as Shakti are revered in Tantric India, but Brahminic patriarchy has created a layer that has been oppressive because India too came under a kind of mentalized androcentrism. There is no fear of sexuality or death in Tantra as it can see them in their pristine suchness.



Mahanambata Brahmachari writes: "For ordinary people, discussion of *linga yoni* (phallus/vulva) may be obscene but for Tantra scientists, these are priceless because they give the clues about the roots of deep creative mystery" (2011, 7, my translation). This is an extraordinary Bengali book written by a contemporary master who knew that Shakti is not for anyone's consumption. Brahmachari also recognizes the trouble with Vedic Purusha (Masculine Principle) centered ideology. Invoking a famous Vedic creation hymn, *Nasadiya Sukta*, he critiques another one, the *Purusha Sukta*. "What was there when there was nothing? Vedic rishis say when there was nothing Purusha (the Witness) was there". Brahmachari responds: "Tantra is not content with this answer. Agama (ancient path, a precursor to Tantra) wants to know when Purusha is asleep who is there?" He says: "Nigama (Vedic path) cannot answer this but the essence of Agama, *Chandi* gives that answer: When Brahmapurush Mahavishnu is asleep, the entire universe is asleep. Only Yoganidra is awake" (2011, 40, my translation). The Tantric text of *Chandi*, a central text of Goddess worship says, it is the Great Goddess that keeps the Masculine Principle asleep while She is eternally awake.

Masters and Teachers of Tantra

The Tantric path is available only through the grace of the masters. The unbroken lineages continue with people who long for liberation regardless of gender, caste, race, or nationality. Many masters including my own mentor are making use of new technologies to help people find their way into this sublime path. Raja Choudhury gives a clear understanding of the path of Shakti and connects many dots along different traditions as well as current consciousness research. A Nepali Kaula master Sthaneswar Timalina runs an amazing teaching schedule of the tradition at his newly formed Vimarsha Foundation. A young Indian Tantric adept Arghya Dipta Kar is also an extraordinarily talented painter whose meticulous works can be seen on his Facebook page. Tantra engages with aesthetics because it valorizes the "body". A great 10th century Tantric master, Abhinavagupta masterfully theorized the aesthetics of Rasa. Indian art of music, dance, sculpture, painting, and temple architecture are all informed by Tantric knowledge.

Serious western Tantric practitioners like Ian Baker can see beyond the colonized lens that blinds even Indians. He speaks eloquently about his experiences with his female consort in his videos and as a non-celibate yogi, he also sees the pitfalls of monastic Tibetan Buddhism. He shows how in the completion stages of the practice one reaches what in Sanskrit is known as *sabajananda* or Mahamudra, Tibetan Dzogchen. Christopher Hareesh Wallis is another Tantric scholar-practitioner who teaches the Shaiva path. Daniel Odier teaches the dance of Shiva/Shakti through a meditative practice of Tandava and speaks with deep love and reverence for his female guru of the Kaula path. (See 2001). Female masters like my family's Shiddha Ma remain elusive and operate at local levels, but there are many who are teaching today including a profound teacher of the Tibetan path, Lama Lena. Practicing scholars like Baker, Wallis, Odier, and their disciples from the western world reveal that men and women from any part of the world can practice this path for a radical transformation of the human condition that is conducive to the praxis of ecosophy. (See their webpages in the reference section for more information about these contemporary teachers).

Conclusion

Our planet has been under the power of a technoscientific consciousness that has partially led to the Anthropocene. Unless one develops deep self-awareness, this machine world can turn us into mere puppets as they can tap into our deepest desires. This short essay has been an effort to articulate Tantra Yoga's possible contribution toward collective psychotherapy, to develop a psycho-ecology for planetary regeneration. We have argued that "premodern" knowledge systems that were devalued by imperial Christianity and scientism may have something to add to ecosophy. Following Heidegger's challenge to "thinking" and Deleuze and Guattari's articulation of "becoming-woman", we have tried to dissolve a reductive "thinking subject". A meditative absorption reveals the pitfalls of "thinking" that are still not being thought. Deleuzian "becoming-woman" is the step toward going beyond the limits of perception and recognizing a Tantric master's insight of "being but nothing in becoming" freedom.

Many ancient systems were more sophisticated than modernity gives credit to. We need to take the veil off the word Tantra and recognize that it is the refined essence of ancient Indic wisdom that gives us a taste of reality and helps us see life's immense beauty. It has given us the middle path between ascetic denial and extreme indulgence. Tantra emerged from Buddhist and Hinduist practices of elemental cleansing and uses diverse methods to reveal the illusory nature of a unitary "Self" through a sort of sacramental death experience.

In its psychotherapeutic stages, the method helps clean the doors of perception and decondition the mind of its preconceived notions and received concepts. Based on the reverence for the Great Goddess as the Void from whom male and female beings arise, Tantric praxis utilizes the feminine principle called Shakti to awaken our intrinsic Buddha nature. These meditative practices may quieten the incessant brain chatter and help develop deep listening skills so that we can attune ourselves to the sound of the non-human world. Such an experience may lead to an ecstatic celebration of our physical existence without mindlessly grasping and accumulating stuff.

India's Tantric wisdom is one more skillful means that can help people recognize their true humanity and the cosmic imprint in their psyches. Perhaps then together with many others joining feminism's fourth wave, we can create the psycho-ecology for a planetary regeneration and foster a generation capable of descent into life rather than escape into outer space for another planet to exploit.

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