The Dance of Shakti:  
An Introduction to Goddess Tantra  
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According to the core Tantric philosophy of Spanda, the ‘Vibration’ of Divine Consciousness manifests as the whole universe, including the physical and subtle bodies of every human being. Tantra teaches us that there is a unifying continuity between our physical bodies, the activities of our mind and emotions, and all forms of interior awareness. All of these are manifestations of the one source; thus, we are all microcosmic pulsations of the whole, expressions in bodily form, within the illusory dimension of time and space, of Universal Consciousness (Parama Shiva).
According to (12th century) Yogini Hridayam ("Heart of the Yogini") from which the Shri Cakra image (above) derives, the Goddess (below) takes form as all of the duplicitous forms of the universe, represented as the pairs of triangles in the Shri Cakra ("Auspicious Circle"). She continually re-enfolds the manifest totality of all that exists back into the supreme light of her own awareness. Called ‘Lalita-Devi’ ("The Playful Goddess") She is the very power (Shakti) of consciousness, flowing into condensed expressions of Herself, into waves of contraction (nimesha) that we recognize as the constituents of the world around us, including bodies, feelings, and thoughts. When Lalita seeks to again expand (unmesha) into Her infinite potential, to identify with more expansive levels of awareness of itself through our own intention, we practice yoga. Yoga then is represented as the movement back into the center of the Shri Cakra, into Unity Consciousness.

The Goddess’s movement is often called sphuratta, the ‘scintillating pulse’ of the Supreme Light which continuously trembles within its own incandescence. This very vibration makes up the totality of all beings. Thus the Play of the Goddess is one of blissful vibration, as she becomes all aspects of one-Self. Even ‘negative’ feelings and thoughts are part of Her; when She contracts (nimesha) into the form of negative thoughts and feelings, these are used as a spring-board to move into an expanded (unmesha) state, thus completing the dance of life. But this very doctrine teaches that contraction-expansion is the pulsation of the divine. We can only discover our true Being as one with the Universal source when we have balanced action between these two states. Then the ‘arising’ (udyama) of consciousness comes, in the still point (bindu) at the center of the Shri Cakra when our breath, heart, and mind become one pulsation.

Lead inwards, the yogi discovers that the most delicate and powerful tendrils of individuality merge with the infinitely vast vibration (Spanda) of Divine Consciousness. Mantra recitation (especially ‘om hrim namah shivaya’) and meditation serve as the inner beacon to light the path through the subtler vibrations of inner awareness, leading to the experience of parispanda, which the tradition calls the ‘blissful pulsation of enlightenment.’ It is called the ecstatic throb that stirs the stillness of the Absolute. To attend consciously to this inner pulse is to unfold deeper and deeper experiences of meditative absorption (samavesha) until the experience of limitation of any kind is forever broken.

In this state, we have become spiritually awake to the illuminating light of consciousness (prakasaha) that dawns as the source of our beings. It is experienced as totally free, ever-expanding, completely new waves of bliss that continually impact the consciousness of the awakened yogin. The ‘recognition’ of Supreme Spanda within the Self, as the Self, uncovers the well-spring of the nectarean
consciousness which streams forth in waves of energy. These ‘waves’ (the triangles of the Shri Cakra) are merely the energies that cause the pulsation of consciousness. They are the dynamism, the *vimarsha*, the ‘self-consciousness’ of inner light divine. This light is the light of all beings. We are all deeply connected as sacred vibrations of one Eternal, blissful, and Absolute Consciousness (*Shiva*).

In Tantric Yoga, we do not seek, therefore, to ‘change’ ourselves; rather, through practice we gradually begin to recognize that everything we have sought outside of ourselves—peace, love, contentment, security, etc., vibrates as the heart energy (*hridayam*) of the universe within our own hearts. Yoga simply unveils this reality as your true nature at the moment that the Shakti (Divine Energy-Consciousness) begins to expand outward once again in the form of your own awakening. It cannot be otherwise. Our awakening is merely this: we recognize our own heart to be one with the central point of Supreme Consciousness, the point from which all things ebb and flow in the bliss-dance of the Universe.
Śhrī Lalitā Devī