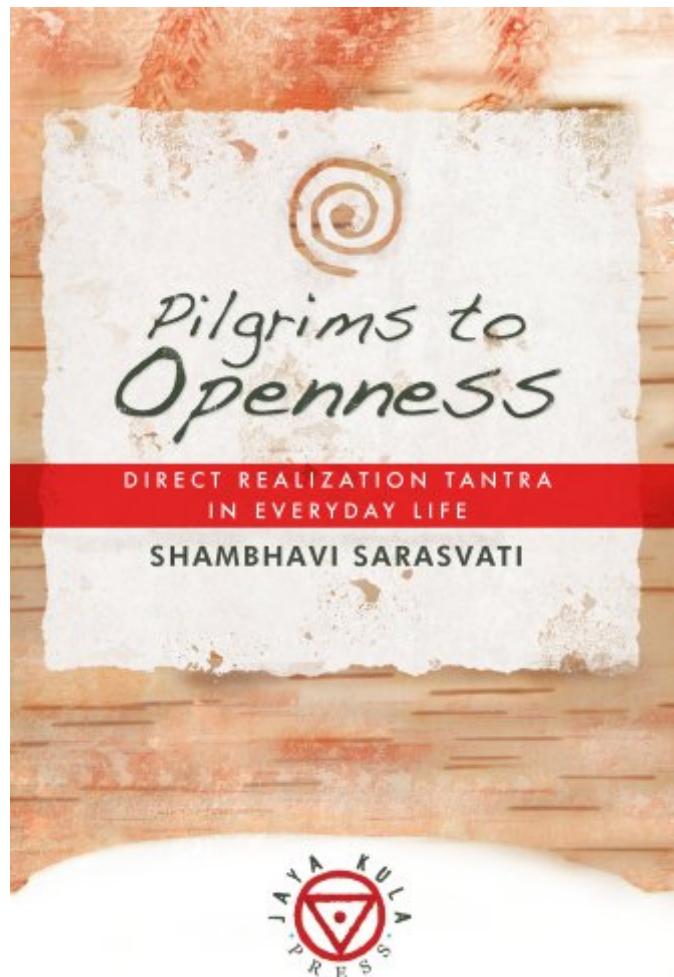


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Pilgrims To Openness: Direct Realization Tantra In Everyday Life



Synopsis

In nearly 70 heart- and mind-opening teachings, Pilgrims to Openness lays bare the compelling world view of authentic Indian Tantra (Kashmir Shaivism) and offers the reader direct and powerful guidance for embodying greater freedom and fulfillment in human life. Shambhavi Sarasvati is a gifted teacher who has been deeply engaged in the practice and study of Indian Tantra (not neo-Tantra) for nearly twenty-five years. With compassion, wry humor, and insight, she leads the reader to understand precisely how our everyday lives can function as spiritual practice-eating, sleeping, moving, working and relating to other people. "We don't have to concoct, contrive or conceptualize a 'spiritual' life. The life-process is the process of awakening, and it is already underway." To read the book is to enter into a transformative conversation with wisdom, world, and Self. Shambhavi begins by presenting a fresh view of Tantra that is true to the classical tradition, but speaks powerfully to the lives of contemporary people. At the heart of this view is uncontrived naturalness: the profound relaxation of body, energy, self-concept, and mind. Such relaxation leads inevitably to a life filled with freshness and wonder. The book is alive with personal anecdotes and encounters. Along the way, no subject is off limits, from difficult emotions, such as loneliness, to love relationships, death, kundalini, chakras, boredom, and how to wake up in the morning and for all time. The final pages offer detailed instructions for three key practices aimed at beginners and more seasoned practitioners alike.

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Customer Reviews

This is a straight-forward presentation of the generic View (with some practices as well) of the Direct Realization "tradition." As the author notes, such a "tradition" or approach is included in both Buddhist and Hindu Tantra as well as Taoism. I like the author's use of "Daoism" which is truer to the actual pronunciation. The author does seem to be basically a Hindu Tantrika (e.g. Shiva Nature vs. Buddha Nature), which is fine--in fact from my POV better since I know far less about Hindu Tantra, making this book more interesting to me. However, the down side is her use of numerous, unfamiliar (at least to me), Hindu/Ayurvedic terms (e.g. Maharastrian, pitta, kapha) which are not generally explained--and without a Glossary. Of course, as in virtually all Eastern origin books aimed at the West, it includes some Eastern beliefs/myths (e.g. the 6 Realms & ancestor puja/rites), but this book has FAR less than most--though I find mythology (per Joseph Campbell) of considerable value. There are some very profound, yet simple, words of wisdom such as: p. 117: "People in Tantrik relationships pay less attention to their stories about the past, the present and the future." p. 126: "The litmus test of any spiritual experience is what did I learn about Reality and how am I showing up in the world now," p. 133: "letting go of our expectations of other people," andp. 166: "you simply cannot derive benefit from complicated practices if your energy is depleted." The author aims at practicality--for example, on p. 168, she suggest gentle Hatha yoga prior to seated practice (e.g. meditation) and more vigorous exercises afterwards. This agrees with Western psychological findings (both theoretical and experimental) of Activation or Arousal Theory.

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