1. Tantra probably begins around the 4th or 5th century.

2. Tantra combines yoga and ritual. That is, it uses rituals to effect the altered states of consciousness often attributed to yoga.

3. Tantra like Bhakti, also cuts across all lines.
   - there are Buddhist Tantrics (that's Tibetan Buddhism today);
   - also Jain Tantrics.
   - also Hindu Tantrics

4. All Tantrics tend to give more emphasis to the feminine principle.

5. Tantric practices also, like Bhakti were something of a social protest movement against the authority of Brahmins.

6. In general, Bhakti transcends the rules, Mirabai gets absorbed in love for Krishna and so society's rules don't matter. Tantrics on the other hand, actively break the rules.

7. Tantrics are generally non-dualists. This means that ultimately everything is the nature of the highest reality.
   - In Bhakti, this happens by being so in love with God that you don't care about other things.
   - In Tantra, though, Tantric practitioners try to bring about this state by other, ritual means.
8. And like bhakti traditions, Tantra doesn't discriminate between castes.
   • What makes a person worthy is not their caste status but their attainment.
   • Tantra was not democratic like bhakti, but Tantrics, like the bhakti movements, did say that spiritual advancement was not based on caste.
   • For Tantrics, it was based on how adept one was in dealing with subtle and spiritual forces,
   • and the level of fearless one displayed.

9. There are 3 levels of Tantrics:
   • **Pashu**-- the level of the ordinary bound person, avoiding things that are taboo. desiring good things and wanting to escape from bad things.
   • **Vira**-- the level of the hero
     • he or she is fearless
     • not afraid to go beyond dualities,
       • this is the kind of person who will go to the cremation ground at night and sit meditating on top of a corpse.
   • **Divya**- the divine level,
     • this person goes beyond dualities of good and bad, pure and impure,
     • but she or he does this on an inner level, not on an outer level.

10. In Tantric thought itself there is also the distinction between different paths, not related to levels of advancement so much
    • **right handed path**-- people who don't use illicit substances.
    • **left handed path**.
• The Left hand means the use of illicit substances.
• These are called the 5 m's.
  • Meat (Mamsa)
  • Wine (mada)
  • Fish (matsya)
  • Sexual practices (maithuna )
  • the 5th is obscure: mudra, which can mean parched grain--or more likely, it means going into a state of trance.

11. Important for Tantra is the idea of the Kundalini:
  • the Kundalini is the Goddess who dwells at the base of the spine in every human being.
  • She has 2 forms:
    • the dormant form which gives general energy to the whole body
    • and the awakened form when one begins on the path to enlightenment.
    • When she gets awakened she starts to rise up the spine breaking through the knots of our karma
      • Brahma Granthi
      • Vishnu Granthi
      • Rudra granthi
    • and enlivening different powerful centers called chakras.

12. In one system of thought, the Kubjika mata, there are 6 chakras plus the 7th at the top of the head. This is the system that's popular today.
  • But there are several different versions and numbers of chakras.
  • The chakras are
    • Muladhara- base of spine
• Swadhisthana- at the area just above the genitals
• Manipura -at the navel
• **Anahata** - "the unstruck sound" the heart chakra
• Vishuddhi- the throat chakra
• **Ajna**- the 3\textsuperscript{rd} eye
• Sahasrara- the 1000 petalled lotus.

13. The **Guru, the teacher** is very important in Tantra because the Guru has the capacity to awaken the Kundalini.

14. **mantra**= words of power.
   • usually in Tantra, mantras have some words which mean something, usually something like: honor to such and such a deity"
   • and also words which are just potent sounds which have no meaning= these are called **seed mantras**, bija mantras, bijaksharas.
   • For instance students who want to pass an exam say the mantra: Om gam ganapataye namah. Meaning: Om, gam, honor to Ganesha!
   • Gam doesn't have a semantic meaning.