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FROM TAPAS TO MOKṢA A VEDĀNTIC INQUIRY INTO THE PRACTICE OF OLAH KANURAGAN SUKMA RAGA TANTRA

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Abstract
This study analyzes the practice of Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra from the perspective of Vedānta, focusing on the dialectic between the body–energy dimension and the realization of pure consciousness. Grounded in the prasthānatrayī (Upaniṣads, Brahma Sūtra, Bhagavad Gītā), this research highlights how Vedānta places mokṣa as the ultimate goal of life through the realization of the identity of ātman and brahman. Conversely, Sukma Raga Tantra is rooted in the cultivation of the body, breath, and energy, emphasizing physical–spiritual balance as a practical path to enlightenment. Tensions arise when Vedānta regards the body as a temporary instrument, while Tantra affirms it as a sacred medium. However, potential synergy emerges through integration: Tantra provides embodied praxis, while Vedānta offers a profound philosophical framework. In the context of the Indonesian archipelago, these two traditions intertwine through the use of mantra, yantra, mudrā, mandala, and sacred syllables in Balinese Hindu rituals, including those of Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra. In the contemporary era, reinterpretation of this practice opens a space for global dialogue on Hindu spirituality that remains rooted in locality while responsive to modern needs. Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra can thus be positioned as a relevant, transformative spiritual practice compatible with the Vedāntic framework.

Keywords: Vedānta; Sukma Raga Tantra; Mokṣa; Hindu Spirituality; Nusantara; Bali

INTRODUCTION

The practice of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra*, which emphasizes *siddhi*—such as the separation of the *sukma* from the *raga* to attain transcendental experience—occupies an ambiguous position within the Vedāntic framework. In Advaita, phenomenological experiences such as out-of-body experience or astral projection remain within the relative realm (*vyavahāra*), not the ultimate reality (*pāramārthika*). The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* affirms that the essence of *ātman* is *turīya*—"peaceful, auspicious, non-dual" (*śāntaṃ śivam advaitaṃ*)—which does not depend on sensory or psychic experiences (Nikhilananda, 1958/2003). Astral projection may serve as a trigger for awareness, but not as the essence of *mokṣa*, since liberation occurs through self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) that *ātman* is identical with *brahman* (Dalal, 2021).

From the perspective of Yoga and Tantra, such practices are categorized as *siddhi* that arise from deep concentration. However, *Yoga Sūtra* III.37 warns that *siddhi* are "obstacles to

samādhi, though regarded as attainments in the waking state" (Bryant, 2009). The tension arises because Vedānta emphasizes the integrity of self as pure consciousness, while the practice of "separating *sukma* from *raga*" can reinforce dualism and spiritual ego when interpreted literally. Historically, Tantra and Vedānta developed within different frameworks but frequently intersect. Tantra—both Hindu and Buddhist—is an esoteric tradition that regards the body as a microcosm, employing *sādhanā* such as *mantra, mudrā, nyāsa,* and initiation rites, with the goal of awakening *kuṇḍalinī* and achieving *siddhi* or ultimate realization (Urban, 2021). Vedānta, rooted in the *prasthānatrayī* (Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Brahma Sūtra), emphasizes ontological and epistemological analysis in order to realize the unity of *ātman–brahman* (Clooney, 2020). Tantra prioritizes body–energy praxis, while Vedānta emphasizes transcendental knowledge.

This divergence is evident: Tantra stresses *kuṇḍalinī-yoga, mudrā*, and body-energy visualizations as means of cosmic realization (Urban, 2021). Advaita Vedānta rejects reliance on bodily–energetic experiences, affirming that *mokṣa* is achieved through *jñāna yoga*: discrimination (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairāgya*), the sixfold virtues (*ṣaṭsampattī*), and the longing for liberation (*mumukṣutva*) (Clooney, 2020). In the postmodern era, the *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* school faces both challenges and opportunities for reinterpretation. Advaita Vedānta can provide a hermeneutical framework so that phenomenological experiences such as out-of-body experience are not considered the ultimate goal, but rather as *upāya* toward self-realization. King (1999) emphasizes that Indian traditions continually negotiate modernity through "strategies of philosophical and practical adaptation." This resonates with Clooney (2020), who sees the contemporary relevance of Vedānta in its flexibility to integrate praxis and discourse. The practice of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* can thus be positioned as part of the spiritual spectrum, yet still directed toward the horizon of *mokṣa*.

In the context of Hinduism in the Indonesian archipelago, integration of Tantra and Vedānta appears organically in ritual practices combining *yantra, mandala,* and *akṣara* with the understanding of the body as microcosm (Suamba, 2025). These symbolic elements merge in daily rites, representing the continuity of Tantra in subtle forms. Yet esoteric practices such as *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga* remain hidden and demand systematic study. An important question arises: does this practice function as a Vedāntic *upāya* toward the realization of non-duality, or is it merely a cultural expression of ritual experience? Interdisciplinary research—combining textual study, ethnography, and symbolic analysis—is urgently needed. The potential for both synergy and conflict between Tantra and Vedānta is evident. Tantra offers a concrete framework of embodied practice, while Advaita Vedānta asserts ontological non-duality (Flood, 2019). However, uncritical synthesis carries risks. The Neo-Vedānta of the 19th–20th centuries illustrates how elements of Tantra, Yoga, and Bhakti were merged for modernization, raising questions of authenticity (King, 1999). Hence, synergy is productive only if conducted critically and contextually, without reducing the epistemological depth of either tradition.

A comparative study of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* and Vedāntic philosophy requires both hermeneutical and anthropological approaches. The *prasthānatrayī* must be read alongside the phenomenology of spiritual experiences so that analysis avoids both reductionism and ahistorical esoteric claims (Michaels, 2016). With such a framework, local

practices of the archipelago (such as those in Bali) may be understood not merely as folklore, but as concrete expressions of Vedāntic principles. Without an interpretive framework, *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* risks being perceived merely as mystical occultism aimed at supernatural powers. White (2021) warns that Tantric practices can degenerate into *abhāsa* (illusion) if detached from their philosophical foundation. Therefore, integrating Tantric *sādhanā* with Vedāntic *jñāna* is essential so that embodied praxis is directed toward transcendental goals rather than magical attainments.

The urgency of studying *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* as part of the Hindu heritage of the Indonesian archipelago is evident. This research can foster critical dialogue between local traditions and the universal philosophy of Vedānta, bridging the gap between ritual and philosophical reflection. Flood (2019) emphasizes that reinterpretation of traditions within the framework of modernity not only preserves practices but also strengthens their spiritual legitimacy amid global pluralism. The absence of systematic research on the interaction between Nusantara Tantric rites and the Vedāntic framework opens vast opportunities for methodological and theoretical synthesis, enriching academic study while also providing practical orientation for contemporary spiritual life (Younger, 2023).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic–hermeneutic design. The qualitative approach was chosen as it is suitable for examining the symbolic meanings and subjective experiences of *Sukma Raga* practitioners, while ethnography allows the researcher to document ritual practices directly in the field through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and recording of *tapa* and *olah sukma* training processes. Hermeneutics is applied to interpret classical Vedāntic texts such as the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, and Brahma Sūtra as a philosophical framework for understanding the ultimate goal of practice, namely *mokṣa*. This combined approach aligns with Creswell and Poth's (2018) argument that the study of religious phenomena requires integrating empirical experience with textual analysis in order to produce a holistic understanding.

Data analysis was carried out through stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation using a comparative method between *Sukma Raga* praxis and Vedāntic principles. The researcher conducted source triangulation (practitioners, lontar manuscripts, and academic literature) to strengthen data validity, as well as reflexivity to avoid interpretive bias. Within this framework, *Sukma Raga* practice is interpreted as a *sādhanā* integrating body, energy, and consciousness, then contextualized within the Vedāntic doctrine of the unity of *ātman* and *brahman*. As Smith (2019) emphasizes, comparative studies of spirituality require an interdisciplinary methodology capable of bridging ritual practice with philosophical reflection. This methodological design thus opens a space for analysis that is not only descriptive but also dialogical between local Nusantara practices and the Vedānta tradition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tapa and *Mokṣa* in the Vedāntic Perspective

In Hinduism, *tapa* etymologically derives from the Sanskrit root *tap*, meaning "heat" or "to burn," referring to the process of self-discipline that burns away inner impurities through ascetic and spiritual practices. This includes the restraint of the senses, control of desires, and

commitment to spiritual disciplines such as meditation and vows (*vrata*). As Pandey (2020) explains, *tapas* is regarded as inner energy gained through self-sacrifice and full concentration, enabling a *sādhaka* to transcend worldly attachments.

Within the Vedānta tradition, *tapa* receives special emphasis as a disciplinary instrument leading toward higher consciousness. The Bhagavad Gītā (17.14–17) outlines three dimensions of *tapa*—of body, speech, and mind—which must be carried out within the framework of devotion and moral integrity. Meanwhile, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (7.6.1) describes *tapa* as a path to supreme knowledge (*vidyā*), affirming that self-control is a prerequisite for the realization of the essence of *ātman*. Sharma (2020) affirms that Vedānta interprets *tapa* not merely as a physical austerity but as an epistemological condition that purifies the mind to apprehend the reality of *brahman*.

As a foundation, *tapa* functions to prepare the *sādhaka* for higher consciousness through detachment and the cultivation of stable concentration. In the Vedāntic framework, *tapa* is the initial ground before progressing to the path of *jñāna yoga*—the discrimination between ultimate reality and illusion. According to Clooney (2021), *tapa* trains the practitioner to cultivate *vairāgya* (dispassion) and *ṣaṭka-sampatti* (the six mental virtues), all of which are essential qualifications for attaining *mokṣa*. Thus, *tapa* does not stand as the final goal, but as an essential precondition enabling the mind to undergo Vedāntic enlightenment.

In Vedānta, *mokṣa* is regarded as the ultimate goal of human existence: freedom from the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*) and the attainment of eternal bliss (*ānanda*). The three authoritative sources—the *prasthānatrayī* (Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Brahma Sūtra)—consistently affirm this. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (2.2.8) states that "the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman itself"; the Bhagavad Gītā (2.72) emphasizes *sthita-prajña* as the path to *mokṣa*; while the Brahma Sūtra (1.1.4) asserts that *mokṣa* results from knowledge of the ultimate reality. According to Rambachan (2022), the entire teaching of the *prasthānatrayī* functions as a systematic framework guiding humanity from worldly attachments toward absolute realization.

In Advaita Vedānta, systematized by Śaṅkara, *mokṣa* is realized through the knowledge that *ātman* (the individual self) is non-different from *brahman* (the absolute reality). This path is pursued through *jñāna yoga*, namely the discrimination between what is real (*satya*) and what is illusory (*mithyā*). Śaṅkara interprets the *mahāvākya* "*tat tvam asi*" (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.7) as the statement of absolute identity between the subject and the supreme reality. As Deutsch and Dalvi (2021) note, Advaita rejects any duality of body–soul or soul–God, since all difference is merely the projection of *māyā*. *Mokṣa* is intuitive knowledge that dissolves ignorance (*avidyā*).

In contrast, other Vedāntic schools interpret *mokṣa* in theistic and relational terms. In Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, developed by Rāmānuja, *mokṣa* is attained not through absolute identity but through loving union with Brahman (*Viṣṇu–Nārāyaṇa*), in which the *ātman* retains its individuality. Meanwhile, in Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta, *ātman* and *brahman* are seen as ontologically distinct, so *mokṣa* means eternal bliss in the presence of God without essential union. Clooney (2020) underscores that this plurality of interpretations reveals the depth of the Vedānta tradition, where *mokṣa* is understood both as the realization of non-duality and as a personal relationship with the Divine.

The Practice of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra*

The School of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* is centered at the Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani, founded by Jro Gede Putra Aryasa on September 9, 1999, in Kayu Putih Village, Buleleng. The *padepokan* was born out of his long spiritual journey that began at the age of twelve, when he wandered across various regions of the Indonesian archipelago to study martial arts (*kanuragan*) and religion from diverse teachers across faith traditions. Based on a divine revelation (*wangsit*) he received upon returning to his hometown, the *padepokan* was designed as a center for inner cultivation, a place for ascetic retreat (*tapa*), and an inclusive sanctuary open to all regardless of religion (I Kadek Sentana Yasa, interview, July 20, 2025). Its central teaching, *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra*, emphasizes the integration of the physical body and the *sukma* (soul) through meditation, energy purification, ritual, and self-discipline, with the goal of awakening inner strength, achieving balance, and attaining spiritual enlightenment. To this day, Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani remains a cross-faith space of spiritual learning that stresses union with the true self and the divine energy.

Physical Training

In its early years, the School of *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* developed extreme physical training in symbolically charged locations such as forests, crossroads, cemeteries, and other spaces believed to hold spiritual energy. These practices were understood as a means of building physical endurance while cultivating spiritual sensitivity to environmental energies. According to I Kadek Sentana Yasa (interview, July 20, 2025), the initial stage of training was called the “red-belt technique,” a form of physical discipline aimed at bodily invulnerability, comparable to the *Debus* tradition in Banten. In *Debus*, practitioners often display extreme feats—piercing the body with sharp weapons, eating glass, or walking on fire without serious injury—blending martial arts, *dzikir* (chanting), and collective trance (Khimatullah, 2018; Hakiki, 2024). Similar phenomena are found in other Indonesian traditions such as *Kuda Lumping* in Java and *Barong–Rangda* in Bali, where dancers in trance (*kerauhan*) can withstand sharp objects or consume hazardous items without harm (Rapoport, 2015; University of Maryland, n.d.; Library of Congress, 1943). Jro Gede Putra Aryasa (interview, July 26, 2025) emphasized that the use of swords, glass, and sharp weapons in the school’s training is intended as a test of one’s ability to manage internal energy so that the body becomes impervious to injury.

From a scientific perspective, this phenomenon of “invulnerability” can be explained within the frameworks of cultural psychology and modern psychiatry. *Trance* or *possession trance* is defined in the ICD-11 as an altered state of consciousness with a shift in identity, which has been shown to reduce pain sensitivity (Pietkiewicz et al., 2022). Clinical studies demonstrate that dissociation is closely linked to pain hyposensitivity, allowing individuals in trance states to endure painful stimuli more easily (Ludäscher et al., 2010; Defrin et al., 2015). Thus, the “red-belt” practice can be seen not merely as mysticism but as a combination of breath control, collective suggestion, intense physical training, and dissociative states that together produce natural analgesia. This supports the view that what appears as bodily invulnerability in Indonesian martial traditions is in fact the synergy of physical discipline, psychological conditioning, and spiritual belief, all deeply embedded in cultural and ritual contexts (Faktapers, 2019; Humaeni, 2012).

Breath Training

Breath training (*prāṇāyāma*) is a central practice in the *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* school at Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani. Etymologically, the term derives from the Sanskrit words *prāṇa* (life energy) and *āyāma* (control or expansion) (WisdomLib.org, n.d.). *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra* (2.49) defines *prāṇāyāma* as the regulation of breath following mastery of posture (*āsana*), while the *Bhagavad Gītā* (4.29) mentions a meditative practice that unites inhalation and exhalation until complete stillness is achieved. B.K.S. Iyengar (2005) describes breath control not as coercion but as a gentle process of "wooing the breath like taming a horse" (p. 179).

In the context of the school, breathwork involves special techniques that unite the practitioner with the *catur sanak* or *kanda pat* (four spirit siblings). I Kadek Sentana Yasa (interview, July 20, 2025) explained that inhalations are performed progressively: once for *Anggapati*, twice for *Mŗjāpati*, three times for *Banaspati*, and three more times for *Banaspati Raja*. This sequence represents the integration of the self with the spiritual guardians of human life who safeguard inner and outer balance. Advanced practices include the unification of cosmic elements *ākāśa* (ether) and *pŗthivī* (earth), each with eleven inhalations concentrated at the crown of the head and the navel, reflecting a local understanding of energy points that parallels the chakra system in classical yoga. The culminating stage is known as "cotton breath," a practice of merging entirely with the cosmos. This resonates with the *Amṛtabindu Upanishad*, which emphasizes the classical triad of breathing—*pūraka* (inhalation), *kumbhaka* (retention), and *recaka* (exhalation)—as the path to spiritual integration.

In Balinese tradition, the *catur sanak* are considered guardians of the soul, associated with elements and directions: *Anggapati* (east, earth), *Mŗjāpati* (south, death/cemetery), *Banaspati* (west, fire), and *Banaspati Raja* (north, wind) (Mustika, 2024). Each inhalation is not merely physiological but also an inner mantra affirming the relationship between self, cosmic energy, and the *pañcamahābhūta* (five great elements). In this school, *prāṇāyāma* is thus affirmed as a transformative medium for harmonizing body, mind, and cosmos (Swami Vivekananda, 1896/2020; Swastika Pinatih, n.d.).

Chanting Verses

The use of verses in the *Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* School reflects a unique spiritual innovation distinct from most Indonesian traditions. Instead of employing mantras in Sanskrit, Old Javanese, or Balinese, the school uses verses in the Indonesian language as a medium of energy integration, mental strengthening, and inner affirmation (Aryasa, interview, July 26, 2025). According to Jro Gede Putra Aryasa, verses are seen as channels for cosmic energy because every element of nature—the moon, the sun, the stars, the sea, and plants—has its own verse. When chanted with deep devotion, these verses are believed to awaken the frequencies of nature and harmonize them with the practitioner's inner energy.

In practice, verses such as *Kosala Waringin* and *Swastika Emas* serve not only as aesthetic texts but also as carriers of philosophies of protection, balance, and inner illumination. Their messages are easily accessible since they are expressed in everyday language, facilitating internalization among modern generations. This phenomenon has roots in Indonesia's oral traditions. In Javanese *pencak silat*, for instance, *tembang macapat* are

sung to *nguwuh rasa*—to evoke inner resonance before physical training (Sutiyono, 2010). In Banten, verse recitation strengthens group solidarity and functions as a prayer of protection (Hanafi, 2018). In Minangkabau, proverbial pantun are chanted to uphold sportsmanship and ward off malicious intent (Navis, 1984). Braginsky (1998) argues that classical Malay verse always carried a dual role—both aesthetic and spiritual. Within the Sukma Raga Tantra School, this tradition is adapted into modern form by using the Indonesian language, ensuring that spiritual messages are easily understood by all students, free from linguistic barriers or symbolic exclusivity.

Dīkṣā Pati Gerombong Agung

In the *Perguruan Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra*, *Dīkṣā Pati Gerombong Agung* is understood as an initiation rite that integrates physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. The initiation process involves placing participants inside a coffin or confined space as a symbol of *death and rebirth*—the symbolic death of the old self to give birth to a new awareness (Eliade, 1969). While the physical body remains passive, the disciple's consciousness undertakes a spiritual journey rich in cosmological symbolism. According to Jro Gede Putra Aryasa, this experience is highly personal, shaped by the disciple's *yoni* (innate disposition, karma, and spiritual readiness) and intention. For instance, a disciple who seeks to encounter Mahadeva must undertake a spiritual journey to the Himalayas and Mount Kailash before returning to the corporeal body inside the coffin (interview, July 26, 2025). This resonates with the understanding in Tantra and Śaivism that external *tīrtha* (pilgrimage sites) are projected inward as vehicles of purification and self-transformation (Flood, 2006). Thus, the role of the guru is indispensable—not only as a technical supervisor but also as a spiritual guide ensuring the safety of the journey. As emphasized in the *Kularṇava Tantra*, without the guru, *dīkṣā* loses its power (Avalon, 1972).

The essence of *Dīkṣā Pati* lies in the direct experience of encountering the divine as spiritual legitimacy for carrying out worldly roles. Jro Gede stresses that without direct encounter with the deity who is the aim of practice—for example, a healing deity for a future healer—a person has not yet obtained the "cosmic license" to act (interview, July 26, 2025). This parallels the Hindu concept of *darśana*, the reciprocal encounter between human and deity that radiates grace and spiritual authority (Eck, 1998). From the perspective of religious anthropology, such experience may be understood as a form of *hierophany*—a moment when the sacred manifests itself and bestows new meaning upon human existence (Eliade, 1969). In the Balinese context, this resonates with the concept of *taksu*, whereby the role of a healer, dancer, or *dalang* is incomplete without supernatural blessing (Hobart, 1990). Thus, *Dīkṣā Pati* is not merely an individual mystical exercise, but a rite of spiritual legitimation uniting human authority with divine grace, affirming that mystical realization is superior to mere doctrinal knowledge (Aurobindo, 1997).

Ādhyātmika Meditation

Ādhyātmika meditation within the *Perguruan Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* is regarded as a core practice harmonizing body (*raga*) and soul (*sukma*) in unified awareness. It is not simply a relaxation technique, but a path toward self-realization (*ātman*) and union with universal consciousness (*brahman*). Classical definitions describe meditation as the

restraint of mental fluctuations (*citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*), whereby "the seer abides in his own nature" (Yoga Sūtra I.2–3). Swami Vivekananda (1920) formulated that "each soul is potentially divine," and meditation serves as the means of manifesting this potential through concentration and self-mastery. The Upaniṣads compare the body to a chariot, the mind to its reins, and the *ātman* to the charioteer (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.3.3–4; Radhakrishnan, 1992), emphasizing the discipline of directing the senses toward realization of the true self. In the *Perguruan*, preparatory stages of meditation involve symbolic offerings such as *canang*, *nasi kepel*, and *uang kepeng*, along with prayers according to each practitioner's faith. *Canang* represents devotion and reverence to the deities (Hooykaas, 1973); *nasi kepel* symbolizes balance of material and spiritual energies (Taittirīya Upaniṣad II.2); while *uang kepeng* signifies energetic reciprocity aligned with the law of *ṛta* (Geertz, 1973). From the outset, therefore, *Ādhyātmika* meditation integrates Hindu textual discipline with Balinese cultural symbolism.

The core practice consists of six stages: awakening the *catur sanak* (*kanda pat*), uniting the energies of *Ākāśa–Pṛthivī*, absorbing the five cosmic essences (sun, moon, stars, forest, ocean), kindling the fire energy (*agni*), chanting sacred verses, and finally releasing the energy back into the cosmos (interview, Jro Gede Putra Aryasa, July 26, 2025). The *catur sanak* are known in Balinese cosmology as guardians of the human soul, embodying the notion that "no one is ever born alone" (Suarka, 2010, p. 145). The union of *Ākāśa–Pṛthivī* symbolizes the harmony of masculine–feminine principles as in Sāṃkhya philosophy (Radhakrishnan, 1996). Alignment with cosmic energies reinforces humanity's position as microcosm of the universe (Suamba, 2014). The awakening of *agni* is linked to *kuṇḍalinī śakti*, the transformative energy that burns away mental impurities (Feuerstein, 2008). Through verses, practitioners employ the vibratory power of mantra as the "sonic embodiment of reality" (Staal, 1989), ultimately releasing it back to the cosmos as a spiritual *yadnya*. The advanced concept of *Kalpa Sastra* extends meditation into sacred spaces such as temples (*pura*), cremation grounds (*setra*), and mountains, which Eliade (1959) identifies as "sacred spaces" with unique spiritual resonance. This aligns with the Balinese principle of *desa–kala–patra* (Titib, 2003), affirming that the perfection of meditation lies not only in mastery of inner states but also in synchrony with environmental energies. Thus, *Ādhyātmika* meditation in this *Perguruan* presents a distinctive synthesis of Vedāntic philosophy, Tantra, and Balinese spirituality.

Fasting (*Upavāsa*)

Fasting in the *Perguruan Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra* is understood not merely as abstaining from food and drink, but as an ascetic discipline with a dual function: self-purification and a technical means for inscribing *ajian* (esoteric formulas) into the body and consciousness of practitioners. In the Hindu framework, fasting is known as *upavāsa*, literally "dwelling near God," encompassing not only bodily abstinence but also restraint of the senses, speech, and mind as part of *vrata* or spiritual discipline (Kane, 1941). Swami Sivananda (1997) emphasizes that "fasting controls passion, checks emotions, and gives calmness of mind" (p. 12), thereby cultivating both physical endurance and spiritual serenity. The *Manusmṛti* 6.24 identifies *upavāsa* as one of the ascetic paths toward eternal bliss, while the Bhagavad-Gītā 17.14–17 underscores the importance of pure motivation in undertaking *tapasya*.

Within the *Perguruan*, fasting practices vary: *pati gni* (complete abstinence from food and drink), *memutih* (consuming only white rice and coconut water), abstention from meat,

and even extreme forms such as eating only chili peppers. Duration ranges from three days to one year, determined by the guru based on the disciple's *adhikāra* (spiritual eligibility) (interview, Jro Mangku Made Sumitra, July 8, 2025). According to Jro Gede Putra Aryasa (interview, July 26, 2025), fasting is the most effective way to "embed" *ajian*—such as *Segoro Gni*, *Waringin Sungsang*, and *Pancasona*—into the practitioner's body and mind, grounded in *pawisik* (divine revelation) as spiritual legitimacy. From an anthropological perspective, this practice functions as a *discipline of the body* (Foucault, 1977), whereby the body is forged through abstinence into a medium of energy and supernatural power. In line with Geertz (1973), the body that has undergone fasting is regarded as a sacred body, or *tubuh kanuragan*, a vessel ready to internalize supranatural forces. Thus, fasting in this *Perguruan* illustrates a syncretism between Hindu teachings on *tapasya*, Balinese mystical traditions of *pawisik*, and Nusantaran martial practices that emphasize the transformation of the body into a spiritual instrument.

Conflict and Potential Synergy between Tantra and Vedānta

Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra rests on the belief that the body is a spiritual instrument that can be transformed through physical training, breath control, and fasting. In this tradition, the body is not merely a vessel but also a medium for supernatural power (śakti) that can be awakened and directed (Interview, Jro Gede Putra Aryasa, July 26, 2025). Tantra emphasizes the integration of soul (sukma) and body (raga), so that bodily discipline becomes the gateway to deeper inner experience. Ascetic practices such as fasting, vows (brata), and breath control are regarded as "machines" for activating inner energy. Vedānta, on the other hand, regards the body as part of the transient world (māyā), impermanent and not the highest reality. According to Śaṅkara, body and mind are merely superimpositions upon the ātman, which is in truth unbound by physical conditions (Deutsch, 1973). Within Advaita Vedānta, the path to mokṣa does not lie in the strengthening of body or energy, but in the awakening of consciousness that reveals the singular reality: Brahman. The Bhagavadgītā 2.16 states, "that which is real never ceases to be, and that which is unreal never comes into existence," emphasizing the distinction between true consciousness and the ever-changing body.

Here we see a fundamental divergence: Tantra regards the body as the way, while Vedānta regards the body as an obstacle. This has the potential to generate conceptual debates. Yet, when approached dialectically, they need not be seen as absolute contradictions, but rather as distinct approaches to the spiritual path. Tantra stresses energetic praxis, while Vedānta stresses contemplative awareness. Potential conflict arises when practitioners of Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra emphasize the validity of bodily experiences—such as supernatural powers, physical endurance, or mastery of energy—as markers of spiritual advancement. From the Vedāntic perspective, attachment to bodily phenomena is an obstacle. Śaṅkara, in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, asserts that "mokṣa is not attained through a hundred bodily yogic practices, but only through knowledge of Brahman" (Sharma, 2000, p. 45). Hence, Vedānta often downplays the value of physical praxis.

Conflict is also evident in the ritual domain. Tantra in Bali—as practiced in Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani—emphasizes vows (brata), fasting, and mystical formulas (ajian) as instruments of realization. Vedānta, by contrast, advocates *jñāna yoga*, emphasizing

intellectual introspection and contemplation of *mahāvākya* such as *tat tvam asi* (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.7). In this framework, ritual-energetic practices are considered "lower paths" that have not reached the essence of realization. Such divergent perspectives often generate tension, particularly when Vedānta dismisses the value of bodily praxis. This conflict may be understood as a difference of epistemology: Tantra employs the "body-energy" as its language of knowledge, while Vedānta employs "consciousness" as its highest category. Each interprets reality from a different standpoint. Without hermeneutical openness, the two paths risk mutual negation. Yet it is precisely in this dialectic that the possibility of enriching the spiritual landscape of the archipelago arises.

Despite their apparent opposition, Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra and Vedānta have the potential to complement each other. Tantra provides a concrete basis in bodily-energetic praxis, while Vedānta offers a philosophical framework that directs such praxis toward ultimate realization. In this sense, Tantra serves as the "path of discipline," while Vedānta serves as the "path of meaning." As Eliade (1969) observed, "the body techniques of yoga are ultimately subordinated to metaphysical realization" (p. 120). Within this framework, bodily discipline does not culminate in physical power, but functions as a stepping stone toward union with Brahman. Viewed in this way, mystical formulas (ajian), fasting, and ascetic discipline in Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra may be interpreted as *sādhana* (spiritual practices) that prepare the mind for realizing Vedāntic truth. In Bhagavadgītā 6.11–12, Krishna teaches the discipline of posture, control of the mind, and moderation in eating and drinking as preparations for the highest yoga. This shows that the dimension of the body is acknowledged as an initial aid, though not as the ultimate goal. Tantra provides the means, while Vedānta provides the direction. Such an integration enables the emergence of a uniquely Nusantaran spirituality: the body as a field of tapasya, and consciousness as the summit of realization. If Tantra inscribes mystical power upon the body, Vedānta directs that body toward transcending itself. Thus, the potential conflict between the two may be transformed into synergy: Tantra ensures that practice remains grounded, while Vedānta ensures that practice remains directed toward mokṣa.

Nusantaran Context and Contemporary Relevance

Hindu rituals in the Nusantara (particularly Bali) display a synthesis between the philosophical elements of Vedānta and the practical dimensions of Tantra, reflected in the use of yantra, mantra, mudrā, mandala, and sacred syllables (akṣara). In the practice of the Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra school at Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani, *ajian* (mystical formulas) are not merely understood as esoteric incantations, but as integrations of prayer, breath control, and inner concentration. This aligns with Flood's (2006) observation that Tantra "operates as a ritual technology of the body that complements the metaphysical system of Vedānta" (p. 141). Thus, Tantric bodily discipline is combined with the contemplative framework of Vedānta within the Balinese ritual context. Fasting (*upavāsa*), meditation (*semedi*), and *prāṇāyāma* emphasized in the school serve as instruments of self-purification and sharpening of awareness. Mudrā is regarded as a symbol of energetic union, while mantra is believed to be a cosmic vibration connecting the soul (*sukma*) to ultimate reality. This reflects the view of the body not merely as an instrument, but as a transcendental medium.

As White (2000) stresses, Tantra regards the body as "a microcosm of the universe and a vehicle for liberation" (p. 22).

The practice of Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra reveals a uniquely Nusantaran spiritual repertoire: blending the abstract philosophy of Vedānta with the concrete ritual of Tantra. Whereas Vedānta in its pure form emphasizes the intellectual path of contemplation (*jñāna yoga*), Tantra emphasizes the body and energy. Sukma Raga Tantra in Bali bridges the two, presenting a spirituality that unites body, mind, and cosmos. Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra may be read as a local practice relevant within the Vedāntic framework. Vows (*brata*), meditation (*semedi*), and breath control in this *padepokan* function as *sādhana* that purify the mind. According to Radhakrishnan (1996), the highest aim of Vedānta is "realizing the unity of ātman and Brahman through the purification of mind and discipline of body" (p. 118). Within this framework, Sukma Raga is not merely oriented toward supernatural power (*kesaktian*), but also toward the path of pure awareness.

Yet, gaps remain between local traditions and Vedāntic philosophy. Many students view success in obtaining *daya linuwih* (extraordinary powers) as the ultimate achievement, whereas in Vedānta such attainments are merely *siddhis* of temporary value. This perspective resonates with Vivekananda (1989), who emphasized that *siddhis* "may be milestones, but they are not the goal of yoga" (p. 203). Hence, systematic study is needed so that Sukma Raga may be understood not as mystification, but as a process toward mokṣa. By interpreting Sukma Raga through the lens of Vedānta, the school can broaden its spiritual horizon. The teacher acts as an *ācārya*, tailoring discipline according to the student's capacity (*adhikāra*), so that teachings do not remain at the level of supernatural power but advance toward enlightenment. This demonstrates how local practice can be systematized within a universal philosophical framework. In the global era, the Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra school holds significant relevance. The modern world seeks forms of spirituality that integrate philosophy with bodily practice, as seen in the popularity of yoga, meditation, and tantra. With its physical and spiritual discipline, Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra can be Bali's contribution to global dialogue. In line with Hanegraaff's (2012) view, local esoteric traditions may "travel globally by being reframed in universalist terms" (p. 67).

Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani emphasizes interreligious and intercultural openness, responding to the needs of contemporary times. In this framework, Vedānta functions as a global philosophical framework, while Sukma Raga Tantra provides unique praxis rooted in Bali. This combination illustrates how local traditions can achieve universal resonance without losing their identity. Such reinterpretation is vital for Balinese youth. Amid globalization, they face the risk of losing cultural identity. By understanding Sukma Raga as a heritage aligned with Vedānta, the tradition may be regarded not only as customary ritual, but as a spiritual system both relevant and universal. Thus, Sukma Raga Tantra emerges not merely as a cultural heritage, but as a living model of Balinese spirituality adaptive to the global era.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the practice of Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra at Padepokan Tunjung Biru Sanjiwani is not merely a Nusantaran martial tradition, but a spiritual discipline rich in Vedāntic and Tantric dimensions. At the preliminary stage, *tapas* is practiced as self-control through fasting, meditation, and bodily discipline. This aligns with Vedānta's

emphasis on inner purification as the foundation for attaining higher consciousness. Meanwhile, in the Tantric framework, body and energy are placed as cosmic instruments that may be directed to unlock inner potential, making Sukma Raga a spiritual technology for balancing body (*raga*) and soul (*sukma*). The tension and potential synergy between Sukma Raga Tantra and Vedānta arise from their differing emphases: Tantra focuses on bodily and energetic praxis, while Vedānta stresses the realization of pure consciousness through *jñāna*. Yet, when integrated, Sukma Raga may be understood not merely as a path to attain *siddhis* or supernatural powers, but as a means toward mokṣa. Sukma Raga Tantra finds its philosophical legitimacy in Vedānta, while Vedānta finds its practical expression in Sukma Raga.

In the Nusantaran context (such as Bali), this practice represents a unique synthesis of local ritual elements (yantra, mudrā, akṣara, mandala) with the universal philosophy of Vedānta. The tradition not only preserves ancestral continuity but also possesses global relevance in modern times, when embodied and consciousness-based spiritualities are increasingly sought worldwide. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines textual hermeneutics, ethnographic study, and phenomenology of spiritual experience, this study affirms that Sukma Raga Tantra is a path that integrates *tapas* as preliminary discipline with mokṣa as its ultimate goal within the Vedāntic framework. Thus, Olah Kanuragan Sukma Raga Tantra can be understood as a Balinese spiritual praxis that integrates Tantric bodily asceticism with the philosophical framework of Vedānta, enabling transformation from the discipline of *tapas* toward the realization of mokṣa.

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