

YANTRAS AND MANDALAS

INTRODUCTION

In Yantras and Mandalas we find some similarity with the chakras, and their symbols.

MANDALA is Sanskrit for circle and centre.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary definition reads:

“Symbolic, circular figure, as a religious system of the Universe. Such symbol, in dream, representing (the) dreamer’s search for completeness and self unity.”

The poet William Blake wrote:

*“The vegetative universe opens like a flower from the earth’s centre, in which is eternity.”
“To see a World in a grain of sand,
And Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an Hour”*

A Mandala has three properties:

1. Centre
2. Symmetry - sometimes fluid in form
3. Cardinal points - sometimes pictorial

It can be composed from many substances, for example, metal, wood, skin, stone, paper, silk, or coloured powder, in a design on the ground. ‘Rose’ windows, Celtic designs, are examples in Western culture.

PURPOSE

UNITY OF SELF WITH THE UNIVERSE

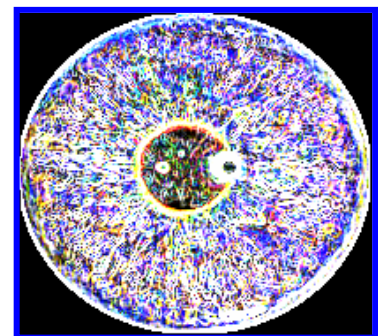
This is effected by concentration on the form.

This concentration has different cultural interpretations.

An Internal Meditation on Mandala

The eye is a Mandala form. A circle, the sun, a light, the light within. The eyes (when closed) become like a single lens, reflecting the light within.

Try this, keeping the forehead high and wide, visualising your own iris.



AN IRIS, SHOWN IN NEGATIVE

YANTRA

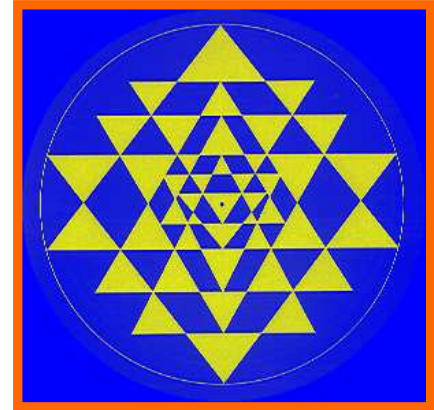
This is a geometrical composition, the whole or part of which is contained in a circle. It is a power diagram. One has to recognise the power in each form and its interaction. It is used in the Tantric tradition and the Chakras have geometric symbols which are used to bind and absorb the mind.

The Yantra has four properties:

1. The centre point, 'bindu'
2. Symmetry, but sometimes surrounded by mandalas
3. Triangle or a square, contained in a circle
4. Use of sound, internal or external

COMPOSITION

It can be of paper, silk, a ground plan or a building itself.



THE SRI YANTRA

PURPOSE

A Yantra is used to tune in to the power of the universe and awaken the power within. This form of meditation is very powerful in focusing the mind. It is not suitable for those with mental instability, as it can become hypnotic. This type of Yoga is not taught in the West in its full form, as it is a very difficult path to follow. However, we may benefit from a simplified form. There are sometimes reverse colours or movements seen in the design, this is a normal physiological response and has the effect of stilling and focusing the mind away from the external. This is not an end in itself. To get addicted to this level is not healthy, it is simply to give an initial impetus to the concentration.

Eventually the eyes are looking at an external form but with an 'inward' gaze, connecting to our inner perceptions.

The most famous Yantra is the Sri Yantra. The practitioner needs to have mental stability or be within a firm spiritual tradition. It can appeal to the creative, mathematical and mystical in people as these are archetypal forms.

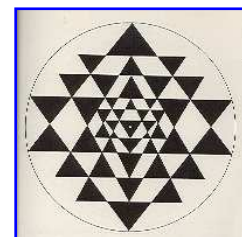
Many religious buildings are built using Yantra and Mandala as the foundation layout.

The study of Yantra and Mandalas can give us aesthetic pleasure and bind our minds. We cannot however reach the full revelation in this type of yoga as it needs intense study and the direction of a guru.

You may be able to think of other traditional or western forms for yourself.

Recommended Books

Purce, Jill	(1980)	The Mystic Spiral, Thames & Hudson
Arguelles, JM	(1972)	Mandala, Shambhala



Khana, Madhu

(1979)

Yantra,
Thames & Hudson