

SYMMETRY IN PAUSKARA SAMHITA MANDALAS

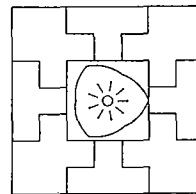
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The concept of an ordered, symmetrical and stable, yet evolving cosmos is expressed symbolically in diagrams variously in Indian ritual art. The diagrams called *Mandalas*, *Yantras*, *Chakras* - as well as many other motifs are representations of some aspect of the cosmic process. Concentricity and symmetry are common characteristics of these diagrams.

Universally inherent in man's consciousness, the *mandala* has continually appeared in his constructions, rituals and artforms. Primarily used as meditative tools, the symbolic syntax of *mandalas* reveal a 'universe-pattern' of the totality of existence, a synthesis of hierarchical, apparently heterogeneous planes of existence. This synthesis allows one to discover the underlying unity of the world and at the same time become aware of one's own destiny as an integral part of the world.

The use of *mandalas* in worship is the central theme of '*Pauskara Samhita*' - which is one of the three main canonical texts of the *Pancaratra* doctrine - a Vaishnavite religious sect in India. This text dates back to 3rd Century A.D. - and describes in great detail the technical construction of *mandalas* to be drawn for the purpose of '*Mandalaradhana*' (*Mandala* worship) as part of the initiation and progress of the spiritual aspirant seeking admission to the cult, with the final aim of attainment of *moksa* (liberation).

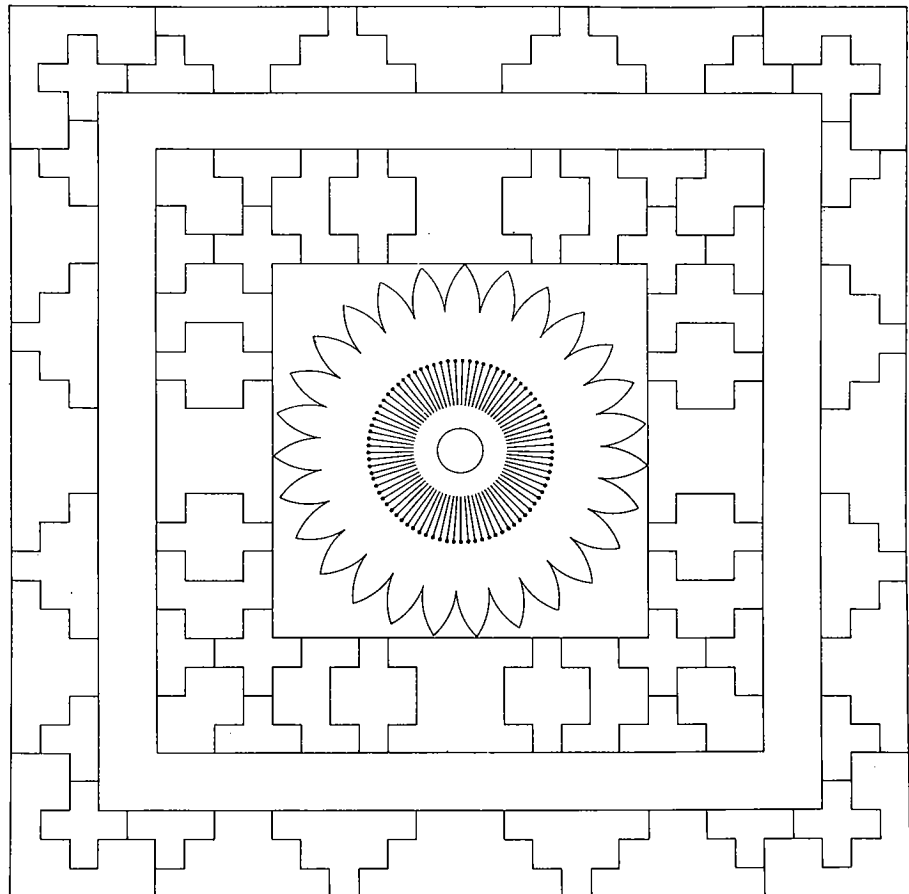


Bhadra (The first mandala of $7 \times 7 = 49$ square units)

The *Pancaratra* religious sect is still one of the most important religious sects in the South India. However, the elaborate procedure of '*Mandalaradhana*' as an independent institution as described in *Pauskara Samhita* has been relegated to the background in the course of centuries and forgotten.

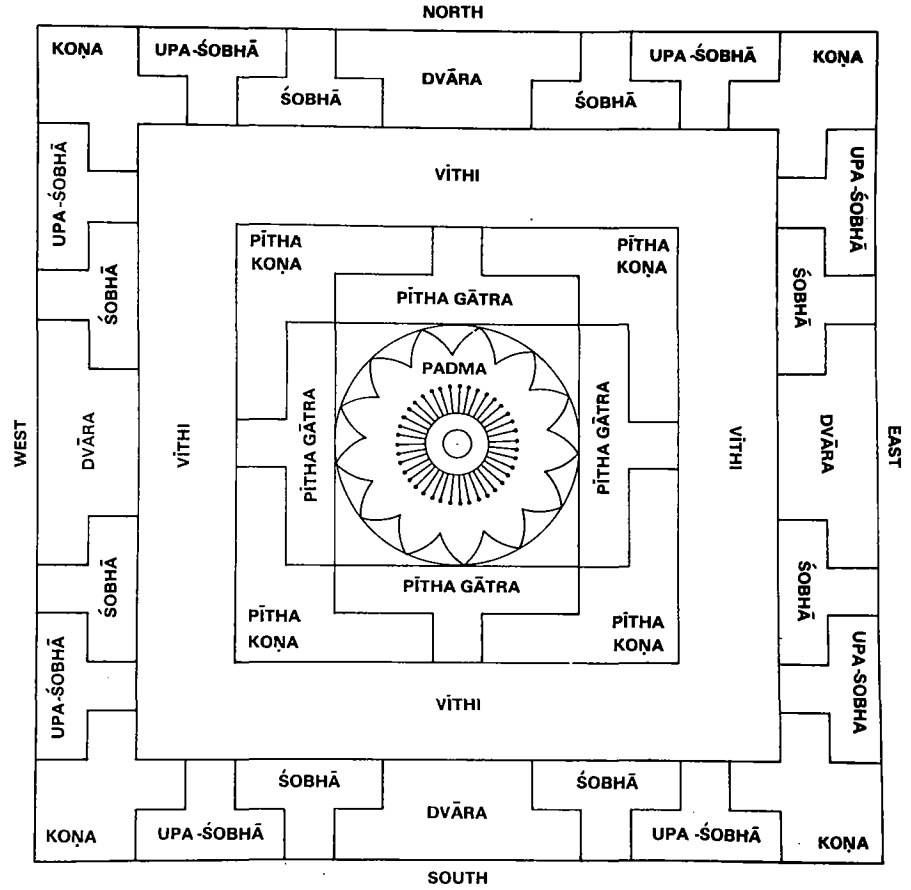
The series of 25 *mandalas* described in *Pauskara Samhita* reconstructed with the help of original textual description by Dr. P.P. Apte and K. Trivedi at Industrial Design Centre, Bombay; represent an important addition to *mandala* literature, as the date of *Pauskara Samhita* makes them among the oldest available description of *mandalas*.

Pauskara Samhita provides a description of four pattern-set classes of *mandala* designs, prescribed for a four year progressive course of spiritual graduation. The four classes are called : 1. *Padmodara* or lotus-hearted; 2. *Anekakajagarbha* or multi-lotus 3. *Cakrabja* or lotus-surrounded by circle; and 4. *Misra-cakra* or of complex-wheels.



Paramananda (The twenty-fifth mandala of $31 \times 31 = 981$ square units)

The first class has a lotus at the centre and this category gives twenty-five *mandalas* beginning with *Bhadra* of $7 \times 7 = 49$ square units and increasing by arithmetical progression up to *Paramananda* of $31 \times 31 = 961$ sq. units. The central lotus correspondingly grows in number of petals from 3 to 27 also by arithmetical progression. Apart from religio-spiritual aspects and the symbolism; the sketching, colouring and the architectural implication of these *mandalas* are of great interest. From architectural point of view, one may evaluate these diagrams as potential ground-plans of 25 patterns of temple-structures as many of the words used to describe *mandala* components are same as those used in temple architecture.



Component parts of the mandala as described in *Pauskara Samhita*

Also of interest are the verbal descriptions of geometrical techniques involving construction of square-grids, division of square units, equilateral triangles, the technique of concentric circles, drawings of spokes of wheels and the lotus designs with various number of petals and filaments, budding and blooming petals - all based on geometrical devices.

It is proposed to introduce and illustrate with colour slides the various aspects of this series of 25 *mandalas*, showing the evolution of design and structural pattern, and the various symmetries - of colour and of structure, present in these *mandalas*.

References:

1.
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2.
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3.
Khanna M., (1979), *Yantra*, London, Thames and Hudson.