

Kundalini and Yantra



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A Brief Introduction for Inquiring Minds

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Introduction



You may have seen Tibetan mandalas, painstakingly drawn with colored sand in the utmost detail, then utterly destroyed. Did this act of destruction suggest impermanence, or did the mystical symbols suggest something far more enduring?

There are many texts that you can read on the subject of mandalas, yantra, and other *mystical symbols*. The American Indians had them. Jung thought that they were profound archetypes. Perhaps they are associated with deep mysteries rooted in a collective unconscious mind. Perhaps they are like lamps calling out to us through the wilderness of confusing events that color our lives. Perhaps they represent something that we have seen before, some place that we have been.

Do you seek a guru, someone to lead you? There are many interpreters of magic symbols. Every religion has them. If you search, you can find holy crosses, divine wheels, and in a quiet pool of bottomless water that only you can visit, a perfect lotus of eight-fold symmetry.

One thing that all mandalas have in common is movement. You can move in toward the center, in the direction of the infinite microcosm. You can move outward, in the direction of the infinite macrocosm. Both infinities are equal.

If you understand *General Relativity*, then you may already have an understanding of the non-Euclidean geometries that are suggested by this *inward and outward* movement. For this text, we will focus on *the practical use of this movement*.

Religion



Religions are organizations. If they do not perpetuate themselves, they disappear. Surviving religions are the ones that perpetuated themselves. Religions thrive on reverence for culture, even though culture is impermanent. This guide is not about religion.

Because *kundalini* and *yantra* are caught up in the historic practice of religion, you can find many cultural trappings. Mostly, kundalini and yantra are either revered or cursed, but seldom understood. One of the reasons for this is that the truth that can be spoken is very small. So small, you can give it away. So small, the receiver may not even see the gift. So small, you can even find it by yourself.

The truth that can be spoken is very small, not enough to fill even a small book. But there is no end to seeking.

Here we will celebrate the mystery of unfathomable form and infinite being. We will briefly discuss the self and the the non-self, the microcosm and the macrocosm. Mostly we will introduce a simple practice. There is no dogma to advance here, no organizational agenda. There is only personal discovery.

Kundalini

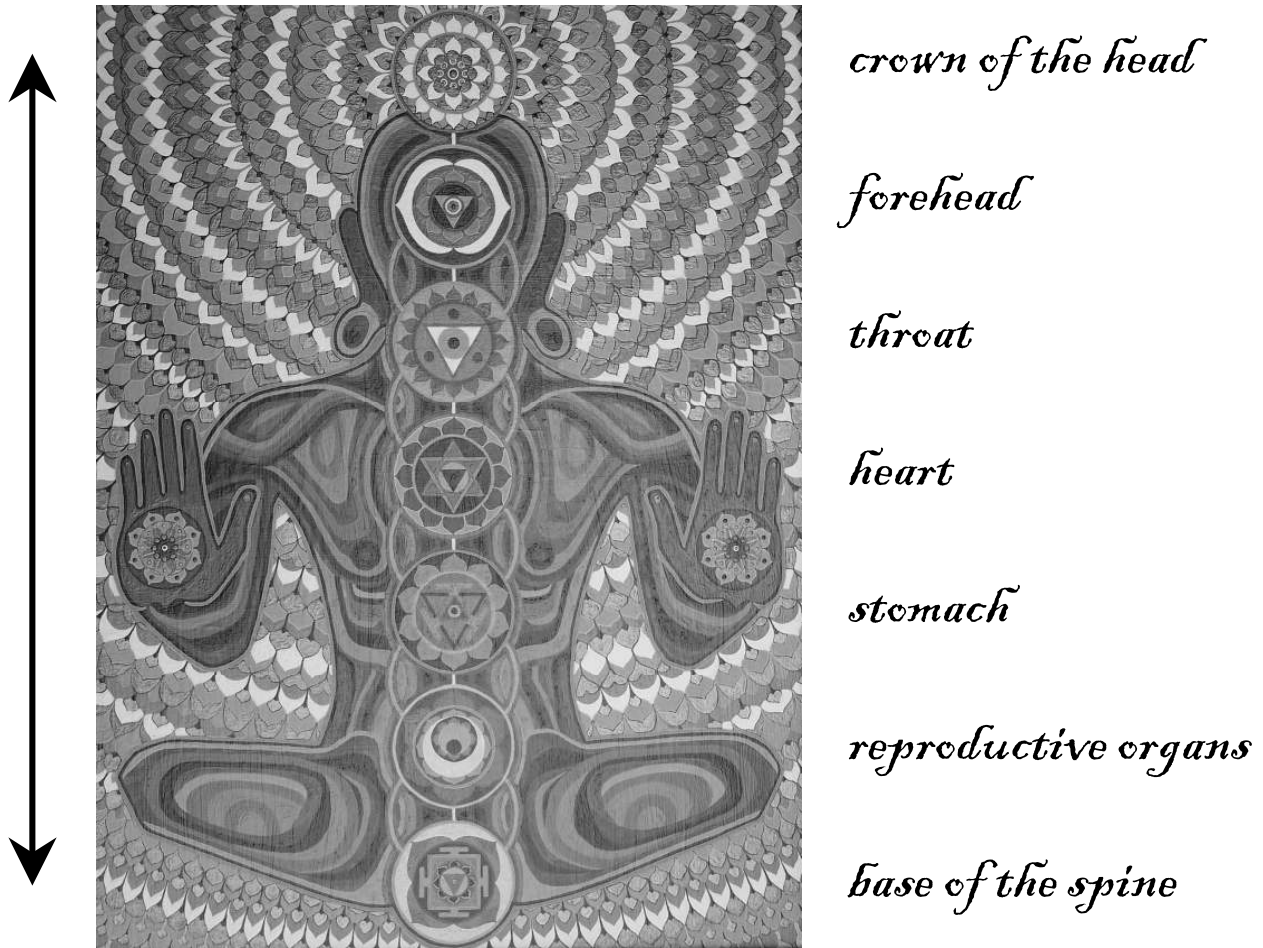


You are conscious mind, restless and moving from one point of attention to another. Pleasure calls on you to follow. Pain drives you to run away.

Pleasure and pain are the voices of a human body, one that developed from other bodies via a physical process of reproduction through many lineages, over many ages. Pain says, stop. Pleasure says, go. Your relationship to this body is very close and intimate. You may even think that you are this body. The body calls to you, even coerces you, because your will or desire makes things happen. You are the mediator of countless demands.

You can move this point of attention from one part of the body to another. For example, you can concentrate on the right knee. You can move this attention to the left knee. Practice this movement. How far can you move? Can you move this point of attention outside of the body?

What are you moving? This has been called life force, or *prana*. The words really don't matter, just the practice.



If you continue to practice, you should find that it is easier to move your point of attention to certain locations, points that you associate with specific parts of the body. These have been called *chakras*, or psychic centers. They have been formally associated with various parts of the body. Can you find other locations that you can move your attention to? Try moving to the nose, then to your teeth and your lips.

Kundalini has been called *the serpent*. Practice moving your point of attention up and down between the base of the spine, and the crown of the head. Move through each successive chakra in turn. Continue moving up and down until you can do this without effort, as a smooth rhythm of up and down movement. Is anything happening? This movement up and down is *kundalini*.

Many people do breathing exercises, but observe that *the movement of prana or kundalini is not breathing*. You can coordinate breathing with this movement, but *they are not the same thing*.

When you practice, you are said to be *awakening kundalini*. With practice, you will be able to move your point of attention to the crown of the head (*crown chakra*) and stay there.

The *crown chakra* is a different kind of place. All the way up to the forehead, there are many accompanying bodily sensations and movements. At the forehead, there is a lot of thought and concentration where your mind meets the body. In some cultures this location is marked with a *bindu*. The forehead is *the gateway*, and the crown is *what lies beyond*. What lies beyond is not the body, it is the cosmos.

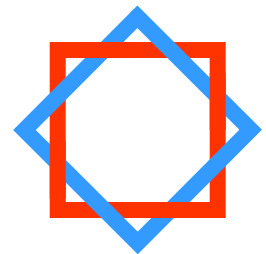
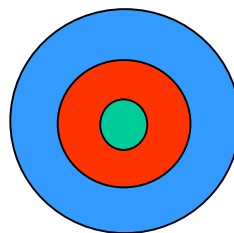
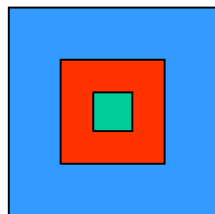
Yantra



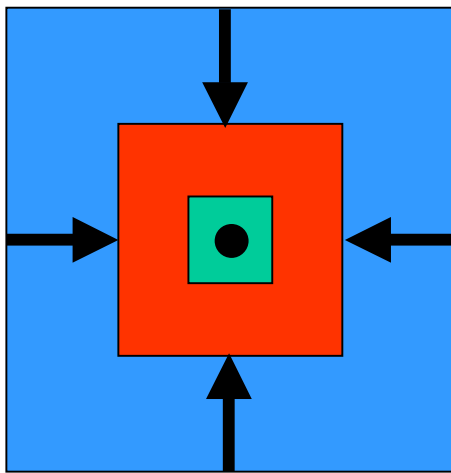
Yantra are symbols that are often considered to be *holy* or *sacred*. Many people see these as curiosities of interest to holy men, archaeologists, or art historians. For us, they are tools that are used in the ancient and often lost art of *visualization practice*, or *visual tantra*.

Visualization practice is very similar to kundalini practice. It is also based on your ability to actively control the movement of attention, or prana. Here your attention is focused on a diagram. Instead of moving your attention between parts of a body, you will be moving between different visualizations supported by the yantra, or diagram.

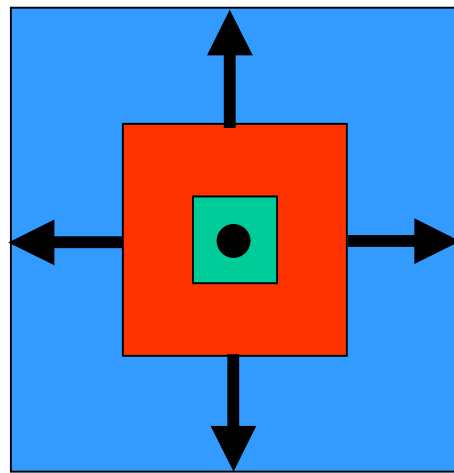
There are two primary movement techniques, both of which can be effective. One technique is associated with *inward and outward movement*. The other technique is associated with *shape selection*. Which of these techniques do you think applies to each of these diagrams?



With inward and outward movement, you keep your vision centered at the center of the diagram, and move from visualization of one object (here, a square), and then move either in or out to the next square:



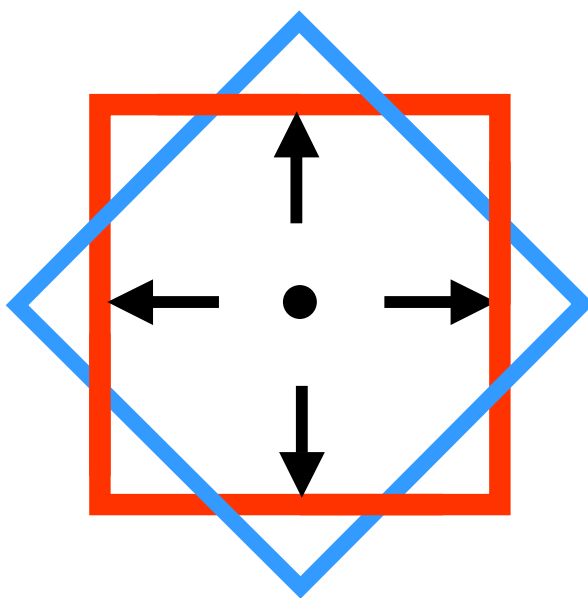
INWARD



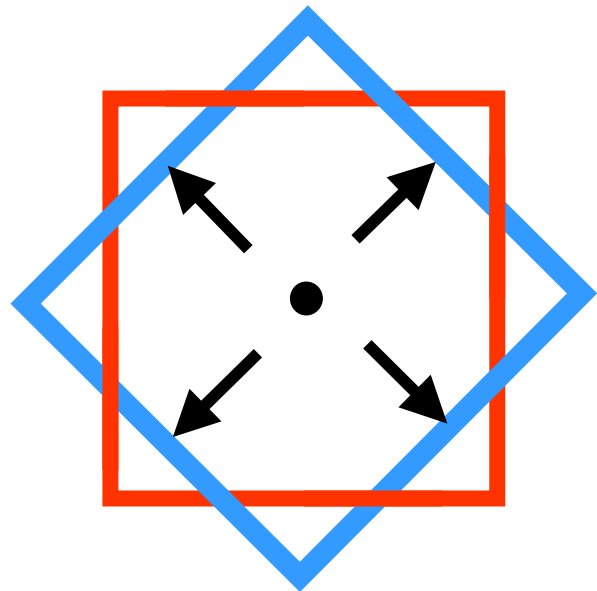
OUTWARD

You should do this repeatedly, until a rhythmic pattern of alternating inward and outward movement is established.

To practice shape selection, you also keep your vision centered on the center of the diagram. In this case, you alternate between visualization of each of the two shapes. In this example, you alternate between visualization of the red square and the blue diamond:



SQUARE



DIAMOND

Yantra and Mandala

A *mandala* is usually, but not always, a more elaborate diagram that incorporates the basic yantra. You can find examples of both in-and-out and shape selection movement in these examples:



Some yantra by themselves are viewed as highly auspicious, or sacred. In fact, one that supports shape selection between one upward-pointing triangle and multiple downward-pointing triangles has often been described as the most sacred of all.

Beyond the yantra elements, what about the rest of the design of a mandala? Some designs facilitate movement of these elements, and some are purely ornamental. Others can be downright cluttered, or confusing. There are some, however, that can contribute in other ways to our experience, very much in the manner of fine music. *Much as you need to listen to music for yourself, you need to discover these effects for yourself.* The descriptions given here are intended only to share some of my own experience with you. As you look at different examples, use the centering and movement that you have learned.



Lord of Animals Mandala



Sacred forms including tridents and sceptres emerge from the microcosm. Outward movement is rapid, organic, and sentient in all respects. Awareness is signalled by eyes in many layers, and creatures of many forms under development from the creative explosion. As you practice with this, do you gain an appreciation for the universal force behind life and being?

Palace Mandala



This more traditional mandala is portrayed in four different color schemes, one for each direction. We can think of these as seasons, compass points, winds, or as rooms in a great palace. If you practice with this mandala, you should notice something interesting about these color differences. What happens to your perception of form versus color?

Sky Mandala



Beautiful lotuses emerge out of blue sky. This wheel does not appear to rotate, it creates complete order for all of the emanating and detached objects in the surrounding space. This is also called the wheel mandala.

Whirlpool Mandala



Like so many whirlpool galaxies, universes are created and drawn into their own strange dance of rotation and interaction. This is a celebration of spiral movement and interconnection.

Emergent Lotus Mandala



Beauty is contemplation of the lotus, emergent in perfect eight-fold symmetry. Somehow the yin and yang elements emerge as part of a larger design, as lotuses appear from other lotuses *ad infinitum*. Here we also peer inwards, into the microcosm. In this kind of mandala, square and diamond patterns can be alternately visualized in each circle of eight eyes, beginning near the center.

Groundwork Mandala



Everything is surrounded, and new surrounding forms continue to emanate outward. Moving inward, we see that lining forms emerge continuously toward the center, in the direction of the microcosm. There is no empty space, and every form is surrounded. This is the fabric upon which we map forms and surfaces. It is the ground upon which we walk.

Intertwined Mandala



All events are interlinked in a grand scheme of cosmic linkage. The knots cannot be broken. Events that appear to be chaotic are part of the fabric of the cosmos, and linkages continue to form without end. Stay near the center or you will get lost in the confusing appearance of things.

