

# SACRED ECOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS IN HINDUISM

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There exists a state of order and unity in the world, referred as cosmos, that 'includes the invisible spirit as well as the tangible earth and skies'.<sup>1</sup> Together with the physical order exists an invisible principle of order linking the human soul to the Earth and further up to stars. This way, one can propose a micro-, meso- and macro cosmos. The harmonic integrity of cosmos spirit human has been a major issue of debate in ancient mythologies, however, because of their interpretation through the lens of modern religions. The basic meanings were misunderstood in many ways, under the purview of anthropocentrism. But it does not mean that theology and religion have played a negative role. Historian Lynn White argues:

What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of man nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink of old one.<sup>2</sup>

From the viewpoint of practice and thought, ecology is generally grouped into two divisions: *Deep Ecology*, referring to feelings, emotions and sensuous activities, and *Shallow Ecology*, explaining experimental observations. Individuals do not exist in isolation, but in

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1 Oates 1989: 1.

2 White 1967: 1207.

relationship to their community, and so they function with traditions, thought and belief systems – all shaped over the long run of time. In this way, deep ecology becomes a better narrative in cosmological thinking for searching out harmony and seeking ground for humans’ psychic relationship to the cosmos.

For India, where there is a long history of deep faith in human psychic development, which is still accessed through sacred performances, I propose that we also use the concept of *Sacred Ecology*. It is not identical, but very close, to the concepts of deep ecology and *ecospirituality*. When an order of divine manifestation is realised, it turns to sacralisation. Hindu mythology describes the *Sky* as father and the *Earth* as mother, and that is how whole world is a family and we all are brothers and sisters, as said in *Mahā Upanishad*: ‘For those who live magnanimously, the entire world constitutes but a family’ (*Udāracharitānām Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*).<sup>3</sup> Within this context, I offer some viewpoints for us to understand the transformative consciousness of Hinduism.

#### *Primordial Frame of Evolution and Unity*

The first reference to cosmic evolution is given in the Purushasukta of the Rig Veda, which is considered to be the earliest description of the mystery of the cosmos.<sup>4</sup>

According to this hymn:

At first there was only darkness wrapped in darkness.  
All this was only unilluminated water.  
That One which came to be, enclosed in nothing,  
arose at last, born of power of heat.<sup>5</sup>

The *Rig Veda* explains that, in the beginning, there was the golden germ (*hiranyagarbha*), the primal seed.<sup>6</sup> Other Vedic sources state that the first seed was the sound, known as Omkāra – a combination of *A*, *U*, *M* – the primeval sound from which the world and other planets came into existence (Figure 1). The three basic sound letters (*A*, *U*,

3 *Mahā Upanishad* (6.72). This is further elaborated in the *Hitopadesha* (1.3.71).

4 *Rig Veda* 10.129, see also Balslev 1990: 48.

5 *Rig Veda*, 10.129.3.

6 *Rig Veda* 10.121.1.

M) represent the three Vedas – *Rig*, *Yajura*, and *Soma*, symbolising the three states: waking, dream, and sleep. Parallel to this, in the *Gītā*, there is the threefold symbol of absolute reality, described as supremacy (*aum*), universality (*tat*), and reality (*sat*).<sup>7</sup> This mystical idea is similar to the theory of the Big Bang, which deals with the expanding universe and is the root cause of evolution.<sup>8</sup>

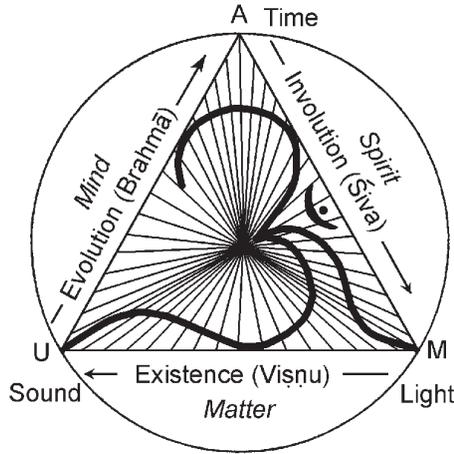


Figure 1: The Triad of Omkāra.  
 Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 28.

Table 1: Indian Cosmic Time Cycle

Yuga / time epoch	Divine Year (length), DY	Human Year (HY), HY = DY x 360
Satya/ Krita	4,800	1,728,000
Tretā	3,600	1,296,000
Dvāpara	2,400	864,000
Kali	1,200	432,000
Mahāyuga/ Divyayuga	12,000	4,320,000
Manvantara (71 Mahāyuga)	852,000	306,720,000
A day of Brahmā, a Kalpa	12,000,000	4,320,000,000
A day-night of Brahmā, 2 Kalpa	24,000,000	8,640,000,000

Source: *Mahābhārata* 3.12.826.

7 *Gītā* 17.23.

8 cf. Radhakrishna Rao 1982: 79.

Following Edwin Hubble's law, it was believed that the universe came into being about 10,000 million years ago.<sup>9</sup> However, the recent researches of the Planck Collaboration re-examining the Big Bang model estimate that the universe came into existence almost 13,799 million years ago.<sup>10</sup> According to Hindu cosmology, it began 8640 million years ago, equivalent to Brahmā's day and night, or a *kalpa*. The *kalpa* is an unimaginable time span between the beginning and end of one creation. Indian time is divided into four epochs (*yugas*), initially defined as multiples of 4:3:2:1 of a Kali Yuga of 1200 human years. Later, they were explained by replacing a human year with a divine year, which equalled 360 human years.<sup>11</sup> One cycle of the four yugas is called *Mahāyuga* (Table 1). A thousand *Mahāyugas* are known as a *kalpa*, or 4320 million human years.<sup>12</sup> Physicist Fritjof Capra writes: 'Experiencing the universe as an organic and rhythmically moving cosmos, the Hindus were able to develop evolutionary cosmologies which come very close to our modern scientific models'.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of endless cycles is described as *līlā*, the divine play of the Absolute Brahman: '... the One becoming the many and the many returning into One'. The *Bhagavada Gitā* states: 'All beings pass into nature which is My own at the end of the cycle; and the beginning of the next cycle, I send them forth'.<sup>14</sup> The Vedic cosmology describes the universe in respect to three vertical levels: heaven, atmosphere, and earth.<sup>15</sup> Being associated with the top of the human body, the head, the earth is associated with its bottom, the feet.<sup>16</sup> The description goes on as to how, from the Absolute Brahman, the first man was created and, in a process of self-transformation, the various forms of microcosmic body and macroscopic universe came into being.<sup>17</sup> However, on the other end, the unified form of cosmos is also perceived, says the *Gitā*: 'Here

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9 Fritjof Capra 1991: 197.

10 Ade et al. 2016.

11 Thompson 2000: 228.

12 See Eliade 1991: 114.

13 Capra, 1991: 198.

14 *Bhagavada Gitā* (9.7).

15 RV 10.90.11–14.

16 Lincoln 1986: 5.

17 Lincoln 1986: 32.

today, behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving and whatever else thou desirest to see, all united in My body'.<sup>18</sup>

The vision of all in One is comparable to the quantum theory which 'abolished the notion of fundamentally separated objects' and forces to see 'the universe as an interconnected web of physical and mental relations whose parts are only defined through their connections to the whole'.<sup>19</sup> Nature (as cosmic soul) is the *mother* and God is the *father* of all living forms.<sup>20</sup> 'As Nature is also the nature of God, God is the father and mother of the universe'.<sup>21</sup> Nature springs from the Divine and the entire activity of the world is traceable to it.<sup>22</sup>

At the outermost reaches of human consciousness, Indian mystics experienced the universal unity between microcosmic man and macrocosmic planetary system. Says philosopher Sri Aurobindo:

We have to see all becomings as developments of the movement in our true self and this self as one inhabiting all bodies and not our body only. We also to be consciously, in our relationships with this world, what we really are – this one self becoming everything that we observe. All the movement, all energies, all forms, all happenings we must see as those of our one and real self in many existence.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, physicist Albert Einstein also expressed:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe' – a part limited in time and space. He, experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

The unity and mutual interrelation of all things is central to Hindu tradition. The *Gītā* mentions: 'The world is a living whole, a vast interconnectedness, a cosmic harmony inspired and sustained by the One

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18 *Gītā* (11.7).

19 Capra 1991: 142.

20 *Gītā* 14.4.

21 Radhakrishnan 1970: 315–316.

22 *Ibid.*: 137.

23 Aurobindo 1957: 993.

24 12 February 1950, as in Calaprice 2005: 206.

Supreme'.<sup>25</sup> This is comparable to Bell's theorem, which demonstrates that the universe is fundamentally interconnected, interdependent, and inseparable.<sup>26</sup> The picture of an interconnected cosmic web, as portrayed by modern atomic physics, also existed in the ancient past, as Hindu mystics experienced a similar reality. Says the *Munḍaka Upanishad*: 'He on whom the sky, the earth, and the atmosphere are woven, and the wind, together with all life breaths, Him alone know as the one Soul'.<sup>27</sup>

The philosophic dialogues from the Vedic to Upanishadic ages explain religion as a transformative consciousness that refers to connectedness to the cosmos as a whole, as well as a quest or way to understand this concept. This idea is similar to that of modern particle physics. It is affirmed that 'religious faith addresses the whole human beings, as a human being, in the context of other human beings and the whole cosmos'.<sup>28</sup> It seems 'certain that the physical realities of the earth, as well as the psychological and spiritual needs of its human inhabitants, will guarantee an interacting and creative future for the worldview of ecology'.<sup>29</sup> One of the symbols and deep thoughts involved can be explained with the help of the notion of the 'triad'.

### *The Triad and Chakras*

The origin and unity of organic life in nature are perceived as the product of *Purusha* (male energy: *yang*) and *Prakriti* (female energy: *yin*), each represented by a triangle: one with its apex up, and the other with its apex down. Together, these two triangles make a hexagon, which symbolises the continuity of creation and existence.<sup>30</sup>

The symbol of triad, or triangle, is a reduced form of the upper layer (transmental) of the Chakras, as described in Kuṇḍalini Yoga. The seven *Chakras* system 'is probably the most archetypal paradigm of existence ever devised'.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, life-energy is activated in seven layers, oriented to the human body (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

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25 Gitā (10.20).

26 Capra 1991: 313.

27 *Munḍaka Upanishad* (2.2.5).

28 Capra and Steindl Rast 1991: 14, 15, 25.

29 Oates 1989: 208.

30 Singh 1992: 141.

31 Wilber 1990: 162.

Table 2: Chakras System and Associated Elements (see Figure 2)

Chakra	Associative Organ	Plexus	Element	Colour	Consciousness	Lotus Petal Symbol
7. top of head <i>Brahmarandhra</i>	pineal gland	brain	supreme	light	spirituality	1000
6. brow <i>Ājñākhyā</i>	pituitary gland	medulla	great <i>tattva</i>	white	thinking	2
5. throat <i>Viśuddhākhyā</i>	thyroid	carotid	Sky, space	smoky	will, communication	16
4. heart <i>Anāhata</i>	thymus gland	cardiac	air	red	love, compassion	12
3. Solar plexus <i>Maṇipūraka</i>	pancreas	epigastric	fire	blue	assertion, community	10
2. chi <i>Svadhishthāna</i>	spleen	hypo-gastric	water	vermilion	creativity, emotion	6
1. spinal base/ Kundalini <i>Mūlādhāra</i>	sexual glands	pelvic	earth	bloody	power, pleasure	4

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 34.

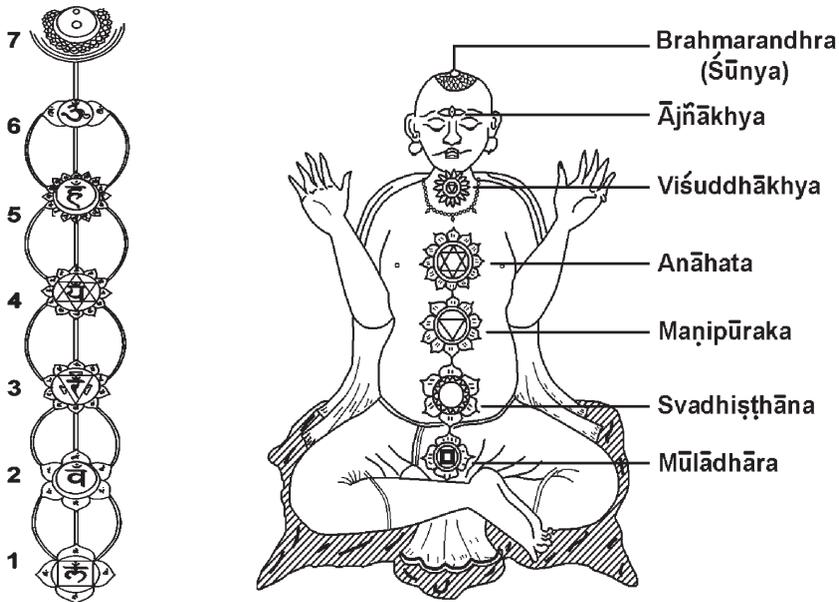


Figure 2. The Seven Chakras: (a) Iconographic-symbol, (b) Body symbol.

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 35.

Among the seven Chakras, the lower four (1, 2, 3, 4) are the premental state, while the higher three (5, 6, 7) represent the transmental state (Figure 2). The upper three represent matter (5), mind (6) and spirit (7), comparable to the three stages of human consciousness – sub consciousness (instinct), self consciousness (reason), and super-consciousness (intuition), in other words *sensibilia*, *intelligibilia*, and *transcendelia*. According to transpersonal psychology, ‘each higher level cannot be fully explained in terms of a lower level... All the lower is in the higher but not all the higher is in the lower. A three-dimensional cube contains two-dimensional squares, but not vice versa’.<sup>32</sup>

Those three states are parallel to the gross-realm, animic-realm, and causal-realm (Figure 2). The interactions of these states form five levels of simple sensory-material perception. The number five refers to five fundamental organic elements of nature (*Mahābhutas* or *Mahātattvas*). The *Mahābhārata* states that the Supreme God created Primordial Man, who first made *sky*; from sky, *water* was made and from the seed of water, *fire* and *air* – these latter two made the *earth*.<sup>33</sup> Hence, in a metaphysical sense, these elements are not separated from each other.<sup>34</sup>

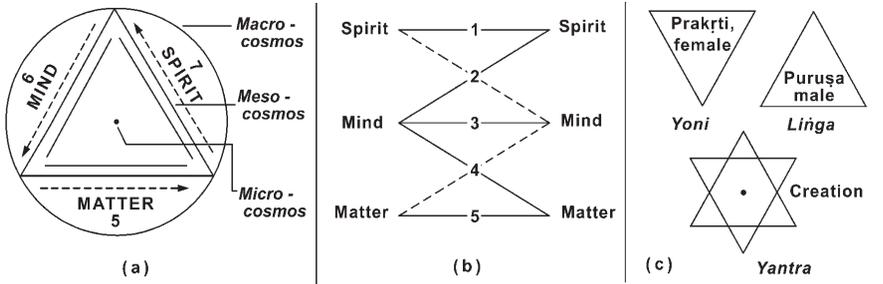


Figure 3: The triad association of spirit, matter and mind.

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 35.

The triad phenomenon is described in the *Gītā*, in a variety of contexts, such as faith, food, sacrifice, penance, gifts, mystical utterances, knowledge, work, action, understanding, steadiness, and happiness.<sup>35</sup> The trio-state of low-middle-high is considered in describing various

32 Wilber 1990: 163.  
 33 *Mahābhārata* (12.182.14-19).  
 34 Singh 2009: 35.  
 35 *Gītā* (17.1-28), *Gītā* 18. 20-39.

qualities and their associated characteristics. And there is the trinity of Hindu gods – Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the protector) and Shiva (the destroyer) who together, in symbolic form, make up the *trimurti*, or three situations of the cosmos – evolution, existence, and involution.<sup>36</sup>

The apex-up triangle (as phallus) and apex-down triangle (as vulva) together make a cosmic-design (*yantra*) of creation (Figure 3c). This design is frequently used, in advanced form, in the Tantric tradition, for explaining creative energy, the mystery of the universe, and several associated myths and symbols. Popularly, this is perceived as the symbol of the mother goddess (*Ādi Shakti Devī*).

According to the mystic philosophy of the Upanishads, the human drama is basically an interaction between matter (*Prakriti*) and spirit (*Purusha*). But both are regulated by a mix of the two, known as *māyā* – a central mystery of life, parallel to mind. *Māyā* ‘is derived from the root, *mā*, to form, to build, and originally meant the capacity to produce forms’.<sup>37</sup> The creative power of the Supreme Lord is *yā*, as identified in yoga. ‘*Māyā* is the power which enables Him to produce mutable nature. It is *shakti* or the energy of *Ishvara*’.<sup>38</sup> This is the cosmic aspect of *māyā*, worshipped in Hinduism as divine mother. Says Easwaran: ‘It is a feminine face of the Godhead, ever creating, sustaining, destroying, and recreating the endless web of life’.<sup>39</sup>

### *Earth and the Mother Goddess*

Hinduism is not a well-defined religion. It is instead a very large and complex socio-religious-organic-belief-system, having many practices, sects and performances, and countless gods and goddesses. The most popular way to approach the Divine is to worship one or many forms of a god or goddess, although Shiva, Vishnu and the Divine Mother (*Devī*) are most worshipped. The idea of a female divinity has its roots in ancient times, when goddess Earth (*Bhū-Devī/ Mā Prithvī*) was perceived as the mother and nourisher of life and the receiver of the dead for rebirth. This natural/biological aspect developed transcendental/mystical forms over the course of time.

36 cf. Singh 1992: 141.

37 Radhakrishnan 1991: 40-41.

38 Ibid.: 42.

39 Easwaran 1989: 31.

The image of Father-Sky and the Mother-Earth is very old and serves as a model for human behaviour. ‘That is why human marriage is regarded as an imitation of the cosmic hierogamy. “I am Heaven”, the husband proclaims in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (6.4, 20), “thou art Earth”’.<sup>40</sup> As early as in the Atharva Veda, the Earth is vividly prayed to as mother goddess:

Truth, greatness, Universal Order (*rita*), strength, consecration, creative fervour (*tapas*), spiritual exaltation (*brahman*), the sacrifice, support the Earth. May this Earth, the mistress of that which was and shall be, prepare for us a broad domain!<sup>41</sup>

O mother Earth, kindly set me down upon a well-founded place! With (father) Heaven cooperating, O thou wise one, do thou place me into happiness and prosperity!<sup>42</sup>

Following the view that the Earth is a life-support entity made up of a biosphere and atmosphere capable of maintaining stability (homeostasis), atmospheric chemist James Lovelock proposed the Gaia hypothesis (Gaia being the Greek goddess of the Earth).<sup>43</sup> However, this view has even more ancient links to the early Vedic tradition (c 2000 BCE). In Hindu mythology, Earth (*Prithvi*) is eulogised as the mother of all divinities, in the form of integrative energy between the sky and earth, which is how the Earth came to be seen as the ‘first creation’. In more common imagery, the Earth is symbolised as *Gai* (‘cow’) – a witness of universal order (*rita*) and truthful action (*satya*), as well as nourisher of life (*pālak*).

Ecosystem ethics and ecosphere (or Gaian) ethics are often referred to ‘as *ethical holism* since they are seen as emphasising the value of entities that are generally perceived as wholes’.<sup>44</sup> This idea of wholeness is vividly described in the *Upanishads*. Among the five fundamental organic elements of nature (*Mahātattvas* – earth, water, fire, air, and ether), water serves as a unifying fluid between sky/heaven

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40 Eliade 1959: 146.

41 *Atharva Veda* (12.1).

42 *Atharva Veda* (12.63).

43 Novelist William Golding suggested the name Gaia.

44 Fox 1990: 177.

and earth.<sup>45</sup> As Capra reminds us: ‘the new vision of reality ... is based on awareness of essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena – physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural’.<sup>46</sup> One may call it the *Gaia*, *Gai* or *Prithvi*, but the idea of wholeness and unity always exists.

The exterminating aspect of the Mother of the World is represented in the Great Goddess Kālī as eulogised in the *Devī-Mahātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*.<sup>47</sup> She (Devī, the Great Goddess) ‘is described as an unconquerable, sublime warrior-maid, who came into being out of the combined wraths of all the gods gathered in council ... . For her the whole course of this universe, including her own apparition in the role of its rescuer, is but part of a cosmic dream. It is only a feature of the universal display of Māyā’.<sup>48</sup>

Kālī (Figure 4) is the symbol for the infinite diversity of experience and represents the entire physical plane. For Kālī is ‘usually pictured with all the old symbols of the devouring Great Mother – sacrificial knife, skulls, blood, the serpent – but in her worship by the true saints and sages (e.g. Ramakrishna) and in her pure metaphysical form, she was always the Great Goddess, never demanding human blood sacrifice but always calling for the interior sacrifice of the separate-self sense’.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, ‘the old and terrifying imagery of the devouring Great Mother is retained as a reminder that the life of the separate self is indeed surrounded by pain, suffering, and ultimately death, and that one must transcend the self to transcend that anguish. Kālī, then, is the perfect Great Goddess: she preserves but transcends the Great Mother, and thereby integrates the lower with the higher’.<sup>50</sup>

There are innumerable characteristics, metaphors and myths related to Kālī. Science writer Gary Zukav feels that ‘these powerful metaphors have application to the developing drama of physics. Although most physicists have little patience (professionally) with metaphors, physics

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45 RV 10.90: 11–14

46 Capra 1982: 285.

47 *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna* (81-93).

48 Zimmer 1993: 190, 196–197.

49 Wilber 1986: 188; Fig. 3.

50 Ibid: 188–189.

itself has become a powerful metaphor'. Moreover, 'the Wu Li Masters know that physicists are doing more than 'discovering the endless diversity of nature'. They are dancing with Kālī, the Divine Mother of Hindu mythology'.<sup>51</sup>

The prominent colour symbols involved in the Kālī-image are red and black. Red represents creation, a form of primordial energy and planning that produced the evolution of the universe. Her face is black, showing death – the ultimate drama of time. Her skull-garland contains 51 pieces, symbolising the integration of a triangle, of which each axis contains 16 letters, thus, in total, 48. And, by adding the three intersecting points (symbolising light, sound and time), it equals 51. The number 51 denotes the total Sanskrit (*Devanāgarī*) letters and 51 Shakti Pithas (holy sites associated with different parts of the body of the Great Goddess), which are in turn associated with 51 places in the Indian Subcontinent.<sup>52</sup> This way, the garland identifies the unity and wholeness of the cosmos and nature (in the form of spatial manifestation).



*Figure 4: The Great Goddess Kālī of Hinduism.*

*Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 1993, p. 121.*

51 Zukav 1979: 315.

52 cf. Singh 2013: 135–138.

The triad symbol ultimately emerges as a circle, where its centre is identified as the primordial seed (*bīja*). The most dynamic symbol of interconnectedness and wholeness is the mystic design, the Shri Yantra – summarising in a glance the whole sense of the Hindu world of myth and symbol.<sup>53</sup> There are three structural elements in the Yantra: (1) a squared outer frame, composed of two straight lines turned according to a regular pattern; (2) an enclose arrangement of four concentric circles and two stylised lotus petals (16, and 8); and (3) a concentric composition of nine intersecting triangles converging to form 45 smaller triangles in three series (Figure 5). The Yantra therefore is a symbolic design conveying a sense of energy through its complexity.

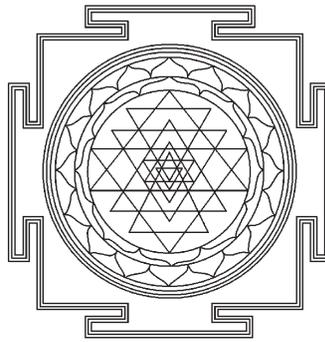


Figure 5: Shri Yantra.

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 41.

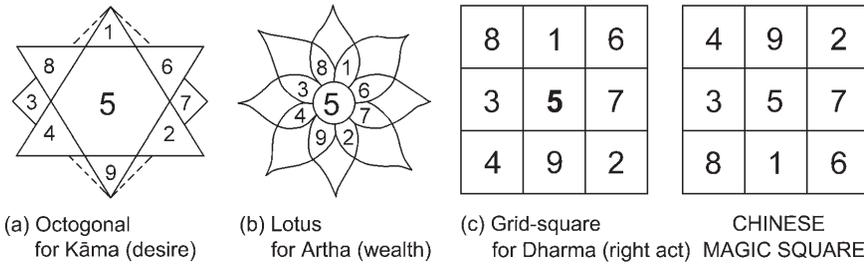


Figure 6: Three Forms of the Surya (Sun) Yantra.

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 2009, p. 42.

The convergence of 45 triangles into three series unifies the concepts of symmetry and asymmetry. According to the *Shiva Purāna*

53 Zimmer 1993: 140; Fig. 4.

(c ninth century CE), the *Surya Yantra* (*Sun-Yantra*) has the highest religious merit. It is similar to the Chinese magic square of three, which is based on the asymmetrical proportions of 7: 5: 3, where, from any straight-side, the total comes to 15, and, thus, finally, 45 (Figure 6). In Taoism, the proportion 7: 5: 3 arranged in a magic square provides an image that illustrates the harmony of the universe, around which royal buildings and landscape environments were oriented.<sup>54</sup> There is much possibility that either Brahmanic cosmology went to China with the dispersal of Buddhism, or, in the course of time, it might have arrived in India from China and merged into Brahmanic thought. In general, these mystical designs, or cosmograms, are soteriological – seeing the universe as a network and stage for the drama of salvation.

#### *Deity, Direction and Cosmic Unity*

If, for archaic mentality, reality manifests itself as force, effectiveness and duration, the variety of symbols and forms should be assumed to be representations of various characteristics. According to the Vedic tradition there are 33 *koti* (groups) of supreme divine beings in ancient Sanātan Dharma (Hinduism), viz. 8 Vasus + 11 Rudras + 12 Adityas + 2 Heaven and Earth.<sup>55</sup> Following the mythic tradition of ancient India, the deities are placed as controllers of different directions (*dikpālas*). With their manifestive power, they look after the well-being of humankind and the organic world in the rhythm of space and time. The earliest reference to *dikpālas* is found in the first century CE, but it is only by the eighth or ninth centuries that they were described in complex forms.

The *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa* mention eight directional regents, which are an advanced form in the development of these guardians.<sup>56</sup> The earliest reference to directional protectors (*lokapāla*) is in the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyana*, *Atharva Veda*, *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, and *Manu Smṛiti*.<sup>57</sup> (See Table 3 and Figures 7 and 8).

Hindu temples manifest the concepts of sacred space, directions, and associated divinities. According to Hindu architecture, the ground

54 See Johnson 1991: 179; also Cammanan 1961.

55 Singh 1993: 123.

56 *Agni Purāṇa* (51, 56, 96) and the *Matsya Purāṇa* (260–261).

57 *Mahābhārata* (8.45.31), the *Rāmāyana* (6.131.64), the *Atharva Veda* (1.31), the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (5.5-10) and the *Manu Smṛiti* (5.96).

plan of a place of worship is made in a square pattern, with nine outer grids on each side, including four open grids, with cardinal gates and the inner portions divided into nine grids. Thus, altogether, there are 41 grids, each representing a part of the body of the divine image. ‘My temple is considered here as Human Body’, states the *Vāstu Purusha Mandala* (see Figure 9). Sometimes, the Sun-god (Surya), the source of light and warmth, and the Moon-god (Chandra), the essence of life and immortality, are also described. In fact, the plan represents the symbolic merger of body, space and cosmos.<sup>58</sup>

Table 3: Directional deities and their associated symbols

Direction	Dikpala	Divinity	Vehicle	Weapon	Divine realm/function
East	Indra	storm	elephant	<i>Vajra</i> (thunderbolt)	heaven, storm, lightning
Southeast	Agni	fire	ram	<i>Danda</i> (staff)	head of ancestors
South	Yama	death	buffalo	<i>Gada</i> (club)	infernal regions
Southwest	Nirutti	evil	female	<i>Gada</i> (club)	leader of elves (nairritas)
West	Varuna	ocean	fish	<i>Pasha</i> (noose)	ocean/ watching demons
Northwest	Vāyu	wind	deer	<i>Pattaka</i> (flag)	destroys violent desires
North	Kubera	wealth	horse	sword	richness/metal in earth
Northeast	Ishāna	purifier	bull	<i>Trishula</i> (trident)	Shiva, embodiment of air

Source: Singh, 1993, p. 125.

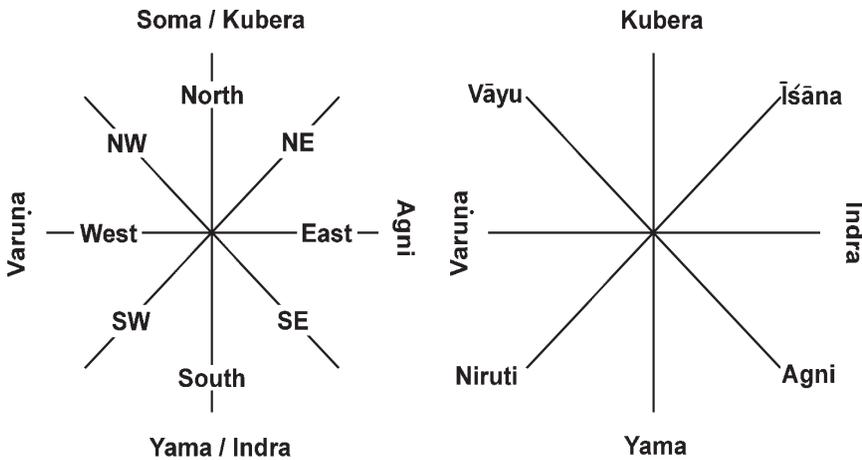


Figure 7: Directional deities (Dikpālas).

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 1993, p. 123.

58 See Singh 1988: 445.

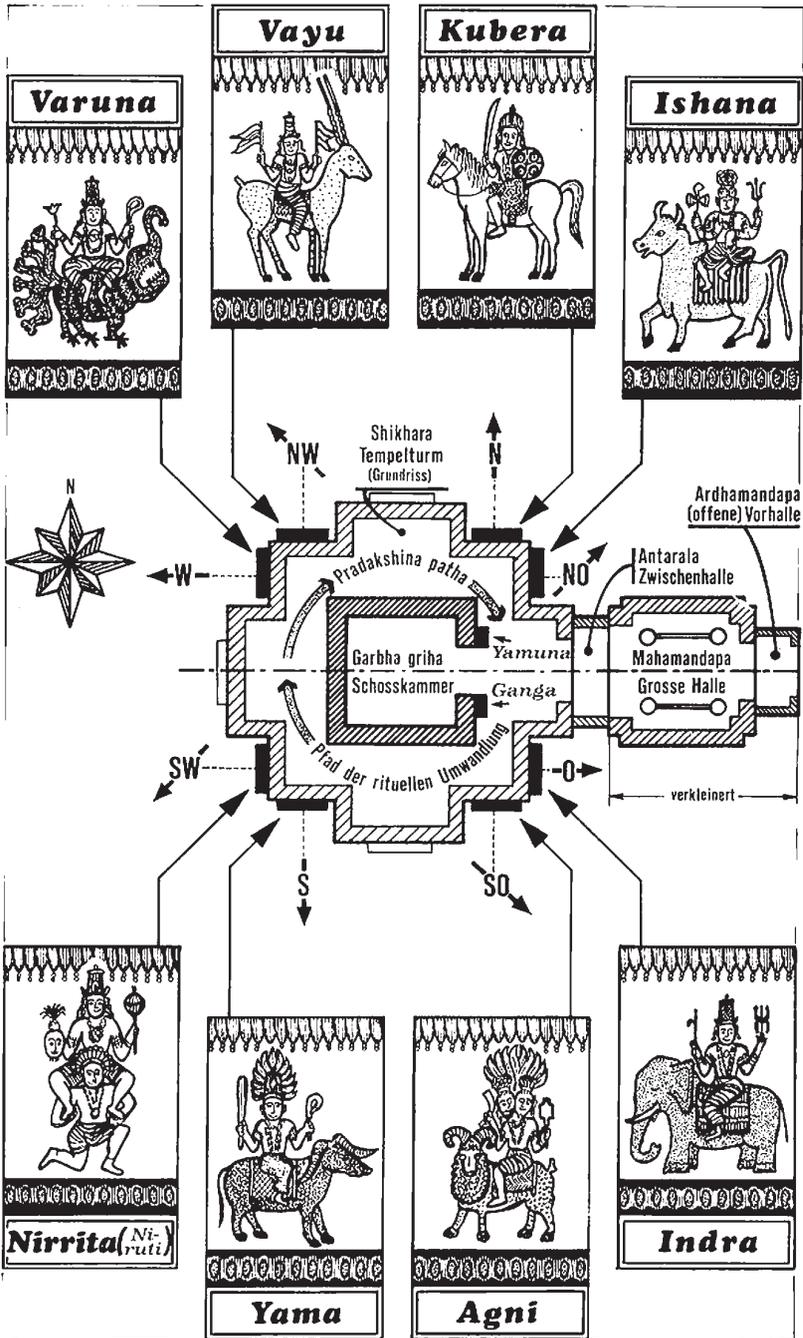


Figure 8: Images and temple affiliation of Directional guardians.

Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 1993, p. 124.

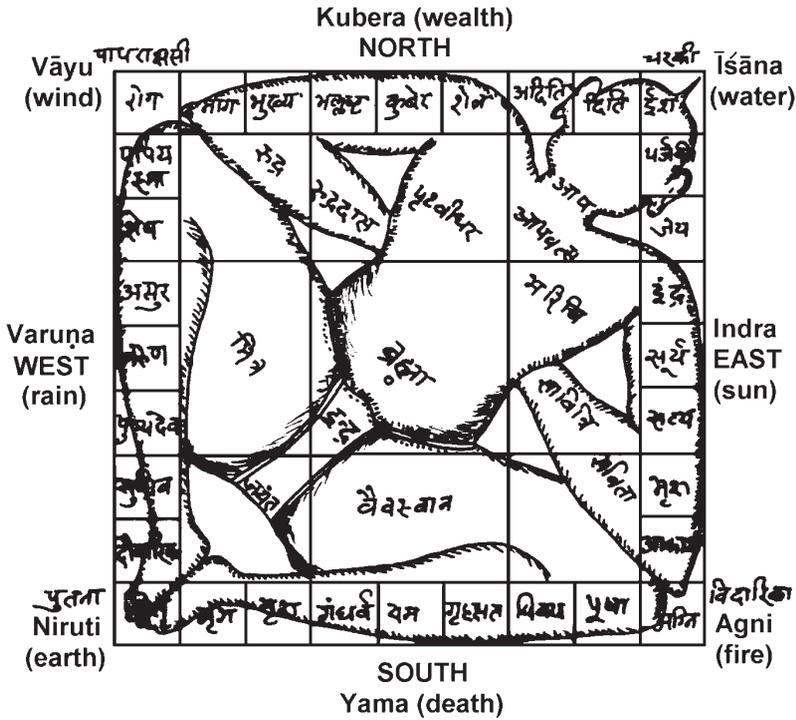


Figure 9: Vāstu Purusha Mandala (The temple as human-body).  
 Source: Rana P.B. Singh, 1993, p. 125.

Full knowledge of the whole is certainly impossible, yet it is only with this ‘whole-sense’ that any part is comprehensible. The transformative aspect of a supreme lord is described in the *Gītā*: ‘Behold, My forms, a hundred-fold, a thousand-fold, various in kind, divine, of various colours and shapes ... . But thou canst not behold Me with this (human) eye of yours; I will bestow on thee the supernatural eye. Behold My divine power’.<sup>59</sup> Afterwards, the great lord of Yoga, Krishna, revealed His Supreme and Divine Form.<sup>60</sup>

Radhakrishnan notes that ‘this is Krishna’s transfiguration where Arjun sees all the creatures in heaven and earth in the Divine Form’.<sup>61</sup> This is the overall form of the universe (*Vishvarūpa*).<sup>62</sup> The *Vishvarūpa*

59 *Gītā* (11.5), and 11: 8.  
 60 *Gītā* 11.9.  
 61 Radhakrishnan 1972: 273.  
 62 A similar myth of Vishvarupa is in the *Rig Veda* and later epics/myths, cf. Maxwell 1973.

icon is ‘a theological statement in the sense that it is a cosmograph to which is lent the powerful dynamics of the Vishvarupa (archaic) – myth become (classical) legend, the element which distinguishes it from a mere cosmic *yantra*. Its purpose is not instruction, but revelation’.<sup>63</sup> (see Figure 10). This revelation, in fact, is the ‘sacred unity of the biosphere’, what anthropologist Gregory Bateson calls an earth-oriented affirmation of the innate goodness of life.<sup>64</sup>

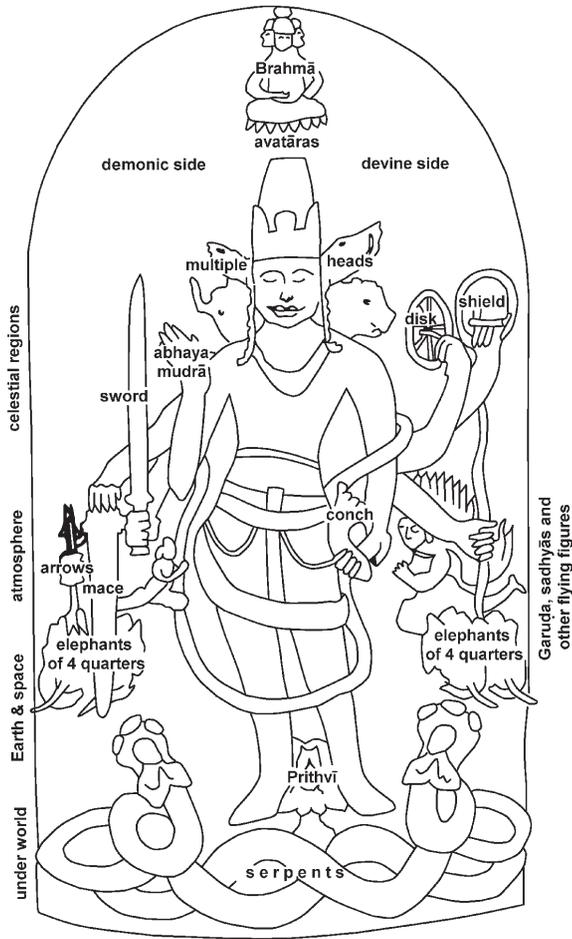


Figure 10: *Vishvarupa (archaic) image*  
 Source: After Maxwell 1973, p. 65.

63 Ibid: 65.

64 Bateson 1979: 17.

*Transformative Consciousness: Harmony with Nature*

The whole of human life, says Schumacher (1973), is a dialogue between humans and the environment, a sequence of questions and responses. We threaten the universe with our actions and progress, and, in consequence, the universe reacts in an effort to harmonise the cosmic order with its laws, or even to violate them.<sup>65</sup> If, in spite of repeated warnings, we continue our threats, the consequences lead to loss of order, resulting in disharmony. Presently we are facing this situation.

Inner human vision sees us as a manifestation of the divine being, representing the totality of the cosmos. Says the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*: ‘That person indeed is the great lord, the impeller of the highest being. (He has the power of) reaching the purest attainment, the imperishable light’.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Sri Aurobindo writes that ‘if nothing in all the universe is frail as man, nothing likewise is so divine as he!’.<sup>67</sup> Commenting on the ecological crisis and its historical root, Lynn White remarks: ‘Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny’.<sup>68</sup> The father of ‘deep ecology’, philosopher Arne Naess closes his book, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, with a message of transformative consciousness, hoping for an ordered and harmonic unity between humans and nature in the future:

It is my hope that beings endowed with a brain like ours, developed through hundreds of millions of years in close interaction with all kinds of life will inevitably support a way of life not only narrowly favourable to this species, but favourable to the whole ecosphere in all its diversity and complexity. A uniquely endowed part of this ecosphere will not turn into its eternal enemy.<sup>69</sup>

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65 Chaitanya 1983: 131.

66 *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* (3.12).

67 Aurobindo 1979: 14.

68 White 1967: 1207.

69 Naess 1989: 212.

*Closing Down*

The Sky above: Father.  
The Earth below: Mother.  
The mind above, matter below,  
Spirit transforms together with consciousness.  
Cosmos: Order and Unity — the elixir of life.  
Sacred Geography— as a Sacred Ecology.  
Cosmos—Theos—Anthropos—/

Let us re-interpret, re-orient and re-appraise the deep issues of Indian thought, so as to make its prophecy a reality – as computer engineer and Indianist Subhash Kak saw:

There are several reasons for us to believe that India will be a key player in the events of the 21st century. This will be due partly to the economic power that India will wield in world affairs. But more than this India's unique role will be address humankind's yearning for knowledge of self. The idea that knowledge is everyone's basic right will let people from all over the world recognize that all are equal citizens of the global village.<sup>70</sup>

This 'spirit' is a blessing from the Mother Earth/Mother Nature that the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* commends us to 'Proceed from darkness to Light, from falseness to the Truth, and from death to Immortality' (*Tamso mā jyotir gamaya, Asato mā Sad gamaya, Mritur mā Amritya gamaya*) ....<sup>71</sup> Let us keep this spirit always awakened and pray the Mother to always direct us on the right path. Think universally, see globally, behave regionally, act locally but insightfully. This is an appeal to walk on the path of transformative consciousness.<sup>72</sup>

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70 Subhash Kak 2002: 105.

71 *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, 1.3.27–28.

72 The essay is based on author's earlier publications (Singh 1993 and 2009) with updating.

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