

## MANDALA A RITUAL FOLK ART TRADITION

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### Abstract

Mandala art is a form of ritual folk art practiced generally by Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. It is sacred symbols usually made up of natural substances or traditional colors which are available in nature. Mandala in Jainism is drawn before some ritual activity like in Pooja, Vidhana. It could be a symbolic representation of deity, a map of some kind of celestial formation like Samavasarana. It could be a geometrical representation of sound or mantra. Mandala and Yantra looks similar but basic difference is Mandala is overview of construction while Yantra is the characteristics of divine forces. Mandala is a favourite Architectural elements in the construction of temple tower for example Dilwara and Ranakpur Temples have one of the finest example of Mandala in its wall, ceiling . This study focused on how our ancestor depicted the complicated structure in its simplest form of Mandala so even the illiterate people with zero knowledge about script could easily understand gist behind the script, establishing its ritualistic significance and Also finding the fact about use of this age old traditional art form in contemporary society .This study employs content analysis and is based on Primary source like Samosaran Vidhana (Manuscript dated samvat 1843 present in the Digamber Jain Shashtra Bhandar, Secondary source used are website article, journal, book etc. However need of the hour is to explore in depth about the Mandala making tradition, Yantra significance in Jainism

**Key Words:** Mandala, Ritual, Vidhana, Folk, Samavasarana, Siddhachakra

### INTRODUCTION

India a country in which in every twenty km language changes at the level of communicative style, Attire changes , ritual changes or even the food get changed. If one travel from North to South and East to West, One could see lots of different tradition, vibrations, colors, arts etc. This variation or vibrant culture are the possible root cause of origin of various Folk art tradition in India. Every region of India has its own style of art which they inherited from one generation to other. Some of the folk art tradition which are still practiced or have survived in spite of all odd circumstances are Madhubani, Miniature painting, Phad painting, Warli ,Gond , Kalamkari, Tanjore, Cherial scroll, Kalighat , Patachitra. In fact some art form is practiced by generation of only one family like Cherial scroll. Traditionally art could be divided into three type vise ritualistic, utilitarian and individualistic. Folk art connects with ritual or religious folk arts are patachitra, pichuai, alpna, kolan, mandala etc. Folk art connect with utilization

are decorative wood carving, embroidery, basket work, earthen ware etc. embroidery are among the utilitarian folk art. (Folk art of India)

Mandala is one of the most popular ritual Folk art; its popularity could be seen all across the world. Its presence in English dictionary and also in encyclopedia shows its popularity among western world. Actual origin of this tradition cannot be identified yet but every religion claims their own history or purpose of making mandala. Evidence of Making Mandala could be seen in pre historic art, folk art, in religious text of Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism, in Ajanta Cave (Example Cave2).

### **CONCEPT OF MAKING MANDALA**

It could be said that the origin of Mandala is as old as the human civilization on the Earth. But actual origin is a subject of debate among the scholars. Mandala word has its roots in Sanskrit which means circle or a group of circles (for example Mahila Mandal, Yuva Mandal). Mandala could be a dot, a seed, a cell or a rain drop. It is well known fact that earliest origin of life on earth was a cell like structure; our body itself is made up of complex combination of cells. A flower, The earth on which we live, The Sun and Moon, The Solar system and our universe expanding up to infinity is also a form of circle called sphere. The very possible reason behind all these naturally existing symmetrical bodies could be a circle. Circle in itself represent unity, it symbolize completeness, it is free of any direction or dimension the first and foremost meaning of this shape is the eternity since they have no beginning and ending. The circle has a long association with the Sun and the Earth as well as other cosmic objects while ellipse is similar to the whole universe. That's why round shapes may give the feeling of magic and mystery. In addition, unlike the previous shapes circles don't have angles it makes them softer and milder (Arhipova)



Plate1 Shape of flowers is sphere or round

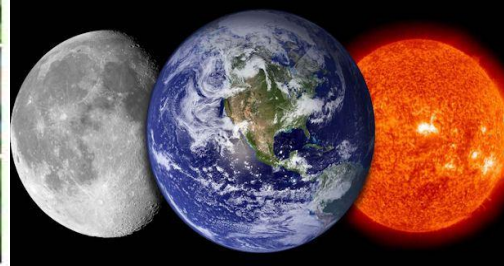


Plate 2 Shapes of Planets are also circular



Plate3 Mandala like painting from Cave2 of Ajanta



Plate 4 Anegudi pre historic site (Hampi Bellari)



Plate5 Sonbhadra prehistoric site

Circle as a basic shape has always enchanted the human mind. Many mathematicians and philosophers considered it the most perfect of all geometric shapes, while theologians felt it supernatural or divine. For the artist the mysterious circle was always a thing of beauty and a joy forever. For them the mystery element combined with the aesthetic one, producing varied meanings in various semiotic conventions. Circles appear in paintings either as a circles themselves or as their derivatives such as the sun, the moon and other stellar orbs, as wheels, sundials, clock faces, as domes, vaults, spiral stairs, circular paths and what not. (Niveditha)

## **JAIN MANDALA: EARLIEST APPEARANCES OF JAIN MAṆḌALAS AND YANTRA**

Jains likely began to develop the types of maṇḍalas and yantras around the 6th century CE which were used for rituals along with Hindus and Buddhists. By the 7th century CE, the Śvetāmbara Prakrit text the Āvaśyakacūrṇi had recorded a story of a miraculous recovery of a girl from illness after her future husband constructed a maṇḍala on which the names of some Jain monks were inscribed. By the 8th century CE, the Śvetāmbara monk Haribhadra in his Pañcāśakaparakaraṇa had described the use of a modala of the Jina's preaching assembly as an initiation, and by the 10th century CE, the construction of maṇḍalas and yantras for temple worship and meditation was common place in Śvetāmbara and Digambaratexts (gough).

Mandala word has its origin in Sanskrit which means a circle . Drawing Mandala before any religious act like Pooja ceremony is a tradition in jain society because it is a symbolic diagram to represent their deities whom they worshipped. Mandala and Yantra are interrelated basic difference between them according to Digamber Jain sect is Mandala is impermanent drawing basically done with naturally obtained color materials, on cloth which they remove just after finishing ritual while Yantra is permanent, small in size, symbol made up on copper. Not only mandala represents deity but also it symbolically represents many celestial lands which are beyond reach of human civilization according to their beliefs or Jain script. Some of these celestial maps are Nandiswardweep Mandala, Teenlok Mandala, PanchMeru mandala, Samosaran, etc.

Mandala follows a symmetrical structure with concentric circles. Main focus area of any Yantra and mandala is a centre where deity resides represented anthropologically or symbolically. Devtas or creatures surrounding the central point become less and less powerful as it moves farther from the centre. Generally the principle deity or Tirthankara (24 Jain principle deities are called Tirthankar) always shown sited in a lotus like structure, or could be star like structure with concentric circle. Square structure could be seen as protecting the mandala inside, having four entrance gates in each cardinal direction



Plate 6 24 Samavsaran Mandala

Components of these eight concentric rings from outside to inside are as follows:  
 Each cardinal four direction has 20,000 stairs each. This mega structure has boundary wall with four Gopuram in each direction knows as kot. Moving from outside to inside this structure is divided into eight concentric circle representing eight earth or land .Eight land of Samavsarana are 1. Chaitya Prasad Bhumi 2. Khatika Bhumi 3. Lata Bhumi 4. Upvan Bhumi 5. Dhavaj Bhumi 6. kalpa Bhumi 7. Bhavan Bhumi 8. Shri Mandapa. Middle part of the first earth and between the four lanes Manstambh is present. Sanskrit praises Mantra and hymes for each concentric eight lands are chanted while performing the ritual of Samavsarana Vidhana

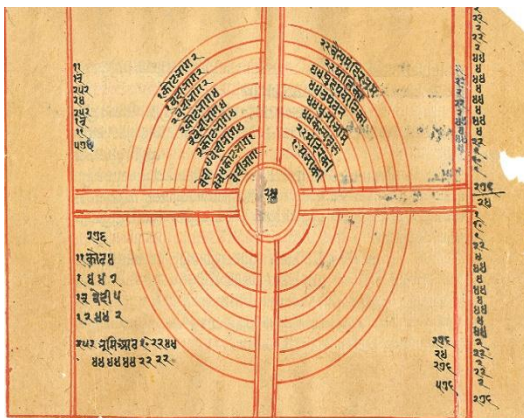


Plate 7

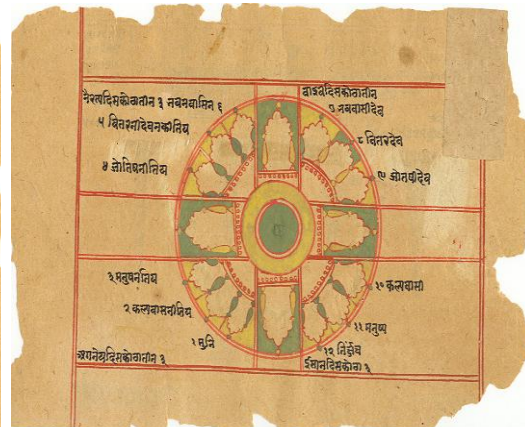


Plate 8

Folios from Samavsarana vidhan (Samvat 1843) present in Vidisha Shashtra bhandar showing eight concentric earth and Sitting arrangement creature in the eighth land Sri Mandapa.

These two folio example from 236 year old manuscript consisting of 24 drawings to explain the Samavsarana. This style of representing such mega 3d structure showing its different part with different drawings makes things easier to understand even to those who are not well acquainted with script. This simple representation of complicated mega structure with simple circle and line work was an outstanding work by the author of this manuscript. Mostly primary colours naturally availed were used like black, red, green, yellow. Measurements of these lands are also present.

### **USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL MANDALA ART IN CURRENT SCENARIO**

In the early twentieth century, Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carl Jung noticed how mandala making was used by many cultures to represent wholeness and healing through ritual. In his book Man and His Symbols (1968), Jung saw this process as a way to facilitate healing through creating art, which would “restore a previously existing order.” He saw mandala as a way for individuals to experience or find wholeness (Louise gale). But this fact was already known by our ancestor. Using Siddhachakra Mandal Vidhan as reference

Siddhachakra" means group of Siddhas. On the obverse of the three worlds, eternally perfect saints reside. All of them have been paid through the Siddhachakra Vidhan. Siddhachakra Vidhana are often held everywhere in Ashtahnika festival because Maina Sundari duly worshiped this festival, because of this divine act her husband and seven hundred leprosy patients get cured after performing rituals of Ashtahnika. The festival comes, Ashada, Kartik and Phalgun, this festival comes thrice a year from Shukla Ashtami to Purnima of these three months. It is belevied that Devas from heaven goes to Nandishwar dweep for performing Pooja rituals . but as human cant go their jain replicate this in their temple and do such vidhana (ji)

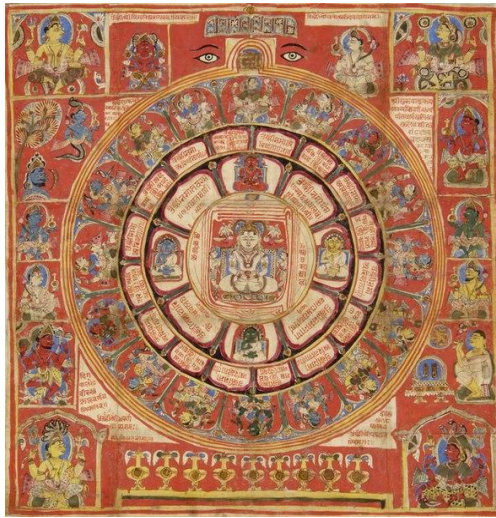


Plate 9 Siddhachakra from Gujarat, India, c. 1500 a Jain aid to meditation, ink and watercolor, 19½ x 19¼

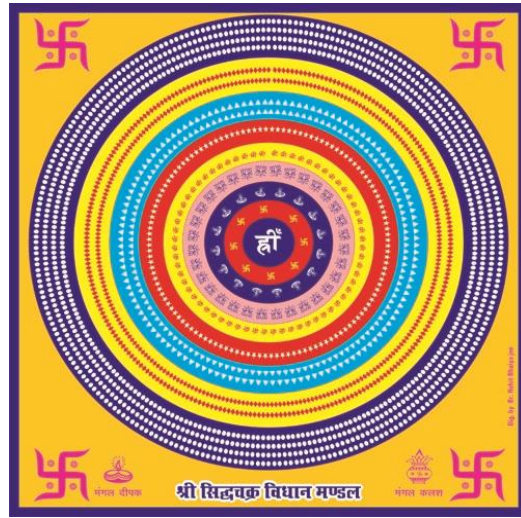


Plate 10 Siddhachakra vidhan mandal drawing are used while performing rituals during in. Asthanika (49.5 x 48.9 cm), Ackland Art Museum

This two Plateure no 25 and 26 are Mandala of Siddhachakra Vidhana. Plate 25 having base colour red with centre resides a deities called Siddhas. It is a typical Jain miniature painting created atleast 500 year ago . The motif of making mandala was then is also to serve a ritual. Our Ancestor also knows that performing such rituals has healing nature. Whenever a person were asked after the ritual like siddha chakra vidhana they always says they are feeling peace and relaxed. This is what all human wants. But all these are not merely a superstitious talk , there is a deep science hidden behind every such mandala , Yantra, rituals. As it was proof by the Carl Jung experiment on Healing nature of Mandala. Now a days even doctors use this technique for treatment of emotional or psychological illness. Plate 26 is a simplest drawing which jain society is still using for their ceremony. But most of the people are unaware that all process or mandala itself is a power storage which ultimately makes people living easier by fixing their mental state with positivity



Plate 11 Siddhachakra vidhan done in this Ashtahnika festival at imli vala fatak jaipur. Photo by author

Mandana of Vidhana is done in a cloth. Here the symbols get hide by the offerings of Bhakta on it. Till now the charm of this ritual doesn't get fade. People worshipping or taking part in this ritual wore orange colour Dhoti Dupatta Attire. Females also equally take parts in such kind of ceremony. Currently the jain society have still protected the age old tradition. Jain people rarely alter the process which is written in their sacred text called Shashtra or Purana. They believed in strictly following the traditional rituals. Because of this still one of the oldest religions could manage to survive till now. Currently Jaina is one of the Minority communities in all over the world. Point of worry is that Younger generation are get deviated with their values and tradition. They found all these as myth or of no use. Now its getting difficult to handle the rich heritage culture

## CONCLUSION

Jaina used different kind of mandala 1. Diagrams constructed for festivals; 2. diagrams used in daily lay ritual; 3. Diagrams worshipped eually as deity means Yantra 4 diagrams used to consecrate (Panch kalyanaka )temple icons5 diagrams used as map for showing celestial creation. . More than fourty Mandala vidhana is known to jain society each mandala hides a secret knowledge needed to explore this ocean of knowledge. Some of the vidhana which still in practice are chobish Tirthankar Vidhan , Yagmandal Vidhan, Bhaktamber Vidhan, Panch Permeshti Vidhan, Ratantraya Vidhan, Trilok Vidhan, Trikal Chobisi Vidhan, Panch permeshthi Vidhan, Panchmeru vidhan, Jinsahashtranaam vidhan, Nandishwar dweep Vidhan etc .It is necessary to protect, preserve and propagate the rich jain heritage. For this purpose Government and NGO must have encouraged program like scholarship for Jain studies. Exploring, rejuvenating, Jainism not only



benefits the jain community but also the whole world. Jain society must have to take intensive effort for bringing into light the vast knowledge written inside a jain scripture. If jain didn't wake up then one day jain tradition or ritual would be vanished and jain also.

According to an article Understanding Jainism published in national magazine Frontline there are relatively few works on Jainas in history when compared with other traditions. And if more and more people, especially in the West, are now turning their attention to Jainism, the credit goes to scholars such as Padmanabh Jaini, Paul Dundas and Peter Flugel.H. And within Jainism, Western scholarship laid more stress on the Svetambara Jaina tradition than on the Digambara tradition. There is hardly anyone working on the Digambara tradition in the West. Though scholarship on any area of Jainism is welcome and needed, the Digambara tradition has most certainly been neglected. We also need more research in regional histories of Jainism which scholars working on Jaina studies will do. (Maheswari). This paper is an effort to fetch a drop from the ocean of rich culture of Digamber sect of Jainism.

### LIST OF PLATES

- Plate1-[https://www.123rf.com/photo\\_416855\\_a-group-or-collage-of-flowers-in-a-grid-pattern.html](https://www.123rf.com/photo_416855_a-group-or-collage-of-flowers-in-a-grid-pattern.html)  
Plate2-<https://tallbloke.wordpress.com/2012/12/10/why-earths-surface-is-so-much-warmer-than-the-moons-part-1/>  
Plate3-<https://www.photodharma.net/India/Ajanta-Caves-2/Ajanta-Caves-2.htm>  
Plate4- <https://travel.bhushavali.com/2017/04/anegundi-pre-historic-rock-art-ballari.html>  
Plate5-<https://sonbhadra.nic.in/>  
Plate6- <http://www.jainsaar.in/Samavsaran.html>  
Plate7- Image clicked from the manuscript of 236 year old samosaran manuscript  
Plate8- Image clicked from the manuscript of 236 year old samosaran manuscript  
Plate9-[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siddhacakra\\_from\\_Gujarat,\\_India,\\_Ackland\\_Art\\_Museum.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siddhacakra_from_Gujarat,_India,_Ackland_Art_Museum.jpg)  
Plate10- <http://www.vidyasagar.net/mandal-vidhan-mandna/>  
Plate11- Photography by Author

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