

Some thoughts on the symbolism of the Spiral in our Ritual. (5 Nov 2006)

In mathematics, a spiral is a curve which emanates from a central point, getting progressively farther away as it revolves around the point.

Our Ritual

In the closing of our Ashayana, our Brother Guardian of the South says “The jewel of my office is a spiral within a circle, and may be attributed to Brahma. Brahma means, when literally translated, “That which grows”...In this Order it is the symbol of evolution; the descent of the atom or Ego into matter, and its re-ascend, towards a more perfect state of development, or equilibrium.”

Brother Guardian of the South outlines further qualities of this most beautiful shape; that all energy works in a spiral motion, that form and consciousness evolve in a “spiral” towards a state of perfection, that the cells of the human brain can only have arrived at their present state by the immense cycles of time, of existence, and that the consciousness of the Ego can only act through and comprehend its own environment by the perfection of the human brain cell, by their arrangement within the human brain and by their development in human form.

The Ego lives through and beyond time. It is this higher consciousness that is the object of evolution. The brain vibrates and rails against the limiting sphere of the laws of nature and its environment to achieve this.

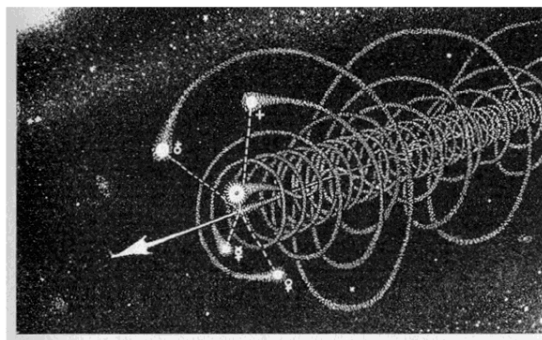
Therefore the jewel depicting the spiral within a circle represents the never dying Ego, gathering power through knowledge. Power that means its sphere of action exceeds the boundaries of matter. Ultimately resulting in a state where the human form is unnecessary.

The Ego will become “beautiful, free from the limitations of time, and beyond the realm of change called death”. In other words the Ego will emanate from a central point, getting progressively further away as it revolves around the point. Through knowledge the Ego can *spiral* from human form to arrive at that state.

Jill Purce writes of the spiral journey of the soul, and describes time as cyclic, with the spiral of its returning seasons enabling us humans to review our progress and growth and understanding. Here I believe she implies that in three dimensions rotating creates a circle, but when we circle in time the forward motion of the fourth dimension paints a spiral with a true return to the starting point made impossible. Merely to ‘circle’ and reflect on what was similar but never identical. Moving from our starting point and endlessly revolving to review and reflect but ultimately and hopefully moving forward towards perfection. To move directly, without circling or spiralling, from the beginning to perfection would be the straight line. The short cut called “The Path of Illumination” by the mystics. A route prohibitively steep for most of us.

The Solar System

The Solar System is now thought to have condensed from a disk of debris some 5 billion years ago to form a sun. Remaining heavier materials were attracted to each other and pulled inwards to form small asteroids and rocky planets. Lighter gases were blown further out by the solar wind to condense as the four gas giants Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune and Uranus. In the inner solar system asteroids grew into planets, pulling the final pieces into place with more and more energy – energy that today keeps the centre of some hot. The plane of our solar system is tilted at 30 degrees to the plane of the galaxy so that it corkscrews its way round the arm of the Milky Way, as depicted below. A beautiful spiral on a galactic scale. A macroscopic spiral mirrored within man the microcosm, providing the model for all things cyclic from sleep and emotions to time itself.

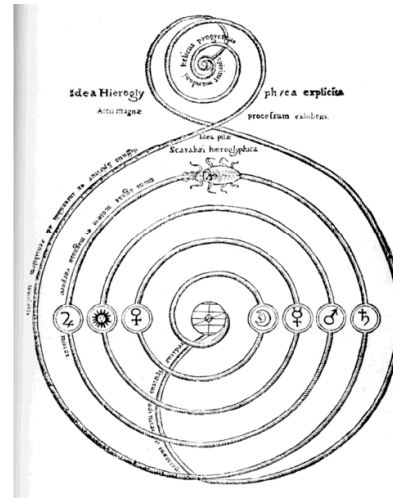


John Martineau (after Windelius & Tucker)

A universal vortex representing the symbol by which we can map our cosmic journey, as written by William Blake (1757-1827, an apprentice engraver in Great Queen Street from 1772-1779) in "Milton"...

*The nature of infinity Is this: That everything has its
Own vortex, and when once a traveler thro' eternity
Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backwards behind...*

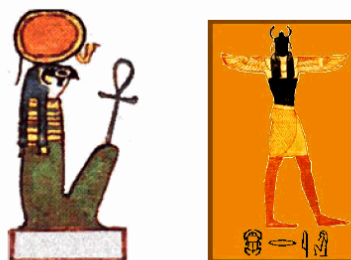
Egypt



Athanasius Kircher from Oedipus Aegyptiacus of 1652 – 54

Egyptian initiates were called scarabs. For the Egyptians the scarab was an insect, or more specifically a beetle, that pushed along their eggs and which contained their own regeneration. In this image, by Kircher, the path of the alchemist is a double spiral representing both the dissolution and coagulation, the expansion and contraction of the spherical vortex, and the phases of the subtle energies, or what the Egyptians called the "key to alchemy", namely the spiral progress of the mundane spirit passing from its source through all the planetary spheres to arrive perfected at the centre, from there to expand so he can see the centre from the outside and spirals into the upper world back to the divine source. The words in the small spiral at the top read "The spiritual progress of the mundane spirit", and those along the path leading from the centre to the base the "Return of the spirit to the center of unity".

This beetle familiar to us from the Vernal Equinox ceremony, where the ritual states that Khepera is a symbol of Regeneration and cyclic progression. Khepera is a form of the sun-god Ra. Khepera was specifically the god of the rising sun. He was self-produced and usually depicted as a human with a beetle on his head, or sometimes with the beetle *as* his head. His name comes from the Egyptian word, *kheprer* or "to become". Khepera is the manifestation of the rising sun. Khepera would roll the sun along the sky, much as the dung beetle rolls a ball of dung in front of him (sometimes the Khepera was also shown pushing the moon through the sky). This ball of dung is what it lays its eggs in. The beetle larvae eat the ball of dung after they hatch. The Egyptians would see the beetle roll a ball of dung into a hole and leave. Later, when many dung beetles emerged from the hole, it would seem as though they created themselves. Khepera also had this attribute of self-generation and self-renewal. The particular dung beetle the Egyptians identified with Khepera was the *Scarabaeus sacer*.



2 images of Ra

Ra's name is thought to mean "creative power. Very early in Egyptian history, Ra was identified with Horus, who as a falcon-god represented the loftiness of the skies. He was represented as a hawk-headed man or as a hawk. A combination of the two, Ra-Hoor-Khuit, "Ra, who is Horus of the Horizons" showed the two as

manifestations of the singular Solar Force. (Hawk headed like Garuda?) The story of Ra says that before there was any land of Egypt, all was darkness, and there was nothing but a great waste of water called Nun. The power of Nun was such that there arose out of the darkness a great shining egg, and this was Ra. Now Ra was all-powerful, and he could take many forms. His power and the secret of it lay in his hidden name; but if he spoke other names that which he named came into being. Does this compare with “Logos” – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1). "I am Khepera at the dawn and Ra at noon, and Atum in the evening," he said. And the sun rose and passed across the sky and set for the first time.

Indian



Indian image from c. 1760

In Indian mythology the breathing cosmos is seen as alternating periods of activity and rest. The days and nights of Brahma. In this painting Vishnu reclines during an interval in creation having withdrawn the universe into himself. He is seen within the Golden Egg (again the image of the egg) in his threefold aspect – that as himself, as the serpent Ananta-Sesha (who forms his bed) and as the Cosmic ocean upon which he and the serpent float. The potentiality of the primordial waters is manifest as the spiralling of the cosmic serpent.

Brethren, this was but a brief examination of some of the symbolism of the spiral. A geometric and mathematical shape that is referred to in our ritual and that is significant in science, the universe, and both Egyptian and Hindu thought. Thinking of the use made in our beautiful rituals of the symbolism of the scarab beetle, and the prevalence of the egg, in closing is it just coincidence that the scarab beetle lays its eggs in the base of their burrow tightly packed in fine soil in the form of a spiral?

Selected bibliography

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