

INNER LANDSCAPES AND PERSONAL MANDALAS

Since I took my first Indian Philosophy course in college (1969), I fell in love with eastern mysticism. I had been raised a Christian in a southern Baptist family and always enjoyed the hymns during church, but it was the ideas of thinkers of the east that created a resonance in my heart and soul. I understood immediately when they spoke of the Atman, a spaceless, timeless connection of all humans to the cosmos. During those college days I devoured any writings I found on such subjects; Herman Hess, Alan Watts, the Upanishads, the I Ching, Taoism. I find it comforting to search for the unity in the diversity of our search for meaning to life.

I practice and explored the path of the Sufi Order in the west that was brought by Hazrat Inayat Khan. It teaches that religion is a very personal experience and as we gain in wisdom, the differences fall away and what is left is Love. I have developed a lifestyle close to nature by living in the country in a community based on appreciation for the beauty and peace of rural Indiana. I studied for a few years with an Iroquois woman who openly shared her tradition's stories and path. I have taken refuge also in the Tibetan Buddhist way, loved the Course in Miracles, and feel these diverse experiences each contribute to my inner harmony and my outer expression of the Divine in (her) multifaceted manifestations.

I love reading Jungian Psychology and practice astrology and Tarot, and this work has combined in my artistic life. Participating in a women's spirituality group over the past decade, my creative outlets have widened. In our circles, we create a sacred space for our selves, we tell stories of our inner life, and let expressions show as we make dolls, musical instruments, draw, and sew our intuitions and intentions.

Mandalas are a perfect expression of the centering techniques used in a variety of traditions; Native American, Buddhist, and western. Judith Cornell wrote a contemporary book, **MANDALAS; SYMBOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION & HEALING** that I found inspiring and have found an expression in my art. The author suggests a meditation technique that connects us to the cosmos and actually uses our prayers and our drawing instruments as tools for Holy Spirit to work through us. I hope some of this work sparks a resonance in you.