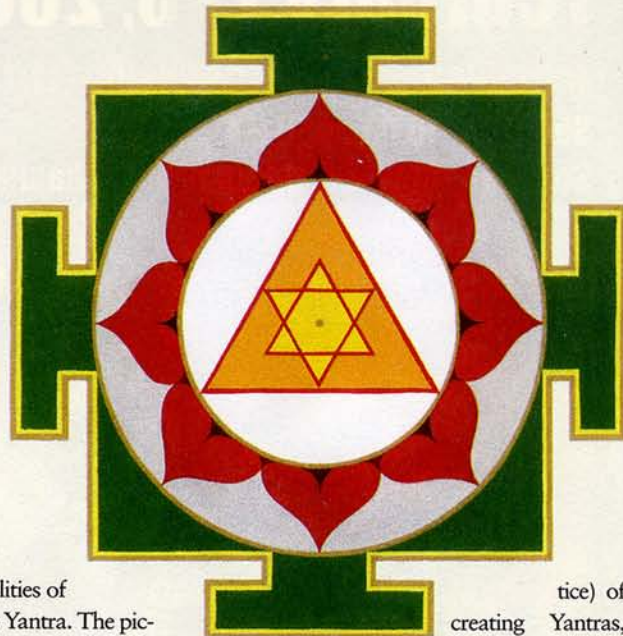


# Ganesh for new beginnings

story and painting by Sarah Tomlinson



MY FIRST YOGA TEACHERS, SHARON Gannon and David Life (co-founders/creators of Jivamukti) enlivened my experience of *asana* (posture) by inspiring me to align with the divine and aim at a feat no less wondrous than re-mystifying yoga. At the time this was revolutionary.

Yantras have done the same for me with sacred geometry. When seen purely as groupings of geometric forms they fall somewhat flat as transforming agents. But in reality, a Yantra is a magical geometric symbol created to produce a profound and lasting spiritual experience to those who come in contact with it. It represents a gathering of the energy of a deity or planet with the sole purpose of aligning one's energy with the divine. I discovered Yantras through my studies with Tantric teacher Harish Johari after I had been immersed in yoga practice for many years. As an artist I was seeking to unite the visual and the spiritual. Icon paintings perform a similar function in the Christian tradition, raising the quality of attention of its creator/devotee making a beautiful piece of art which uplifts all. In the Yogic, and more accurately, Tantric tradition, Yantras are part of the visual spiritual vocabulary.

Each geometric component and color of the Yantra signifies qualities such as compassion that can be awakened within the artist and viewer. The external process of creating and meditating with a Yantra produces an internal effect, clearing the energy within the body and mind based on the frequency emitted by the Yantra's vibration, formed from the unique combination of colors, shapes and original Mantra (sound vibration) that gave rise to the visual form.

The Yantra is ignited by repetition of the corresponding Mantra. Just as we like to hear our name, the Yantra becomes a living being when its Mantra is recited, and you as the one igniting the form become entranced in its mystical effect. The practice centers you in the immovable place

of the silent witness within.

To learn more about the qualities of Ganesha in your life, gaze at its Yantra. The pictorial image one often sees of the elephant-headed boy, acts in a much grosser way on our being than the Yantra.

Yantras are created from the outer lines towards the centre. The square-based outer form is the foundation, the base for the Yantra. Within this form known as the *bhupura* one enters the celestial realms. The deep green color found in this *bhupura* produces a deep red color (its opposite) in the viewer's inner gaze. Red represents the root, the first *chakra*. The circles contain eight lotus petals pointing towards the center; eight represents the five elements: ether, air, fire, water, and earth; and the three *gunas* (qualities): *rajas* (passion), *tamas* (inertia) and *sattva* (purity). The inner triangle, the color of Ganesha's skin, points upwards to raise our spiritual energy, and the central focal point is the *bindu* located within the six-pointed star. This star balances the upward, male energy, with the downward, female energy, life's opposing forces, allowing our gaze to rest on the *bindu*.

Here the *bindu* represents Ganesha in its purest form. When reciting the Mantra it is advised to gaze directly at the *bindu*. After gazing at the *bindu* with open eyes for some time, close the eyes and absorb the image silently to awaken its magic within.

The energy of Ganesha is located in the physical body at the base of the spine and is the gatekeeper to higher states of consciousness. Once Ganesha has been propitiated through its Yantra and Mantra, then new undertakings, new beginnings can be pursued with great success. This is a timely Yantra to invoke in the New Year.

A *sutra* Sharon Gannon recited as we revisited *asana* daily was an alchemical precept "through repetition the magic will be forced to rise." When one begins the *sadhana* (spiritual prac-

...tice) of creating Yantras, it is suggested that creating six Ganesh Yantras is the way to go, giving knowledge to the aspirant and removing potential obstacles...and I would like to add, the magic surely ascends and the irresistible urge to immerse oneself in this practice takes over!

#### LAYOGA

*Sarah Tomlinson, a student of the late, great Harish Johari, teaches Yantra Painting and Ancient Ayurveda Yoga. Her book Nine Designs for Inner Peace (Destiny Books, 2008), is now available. Sarah is presenting the Ancient Ayurveda Yoga Series at the FIT YOGA conference. sarahtomlinsoryoga.com. She is teaching Yantra Painting at Sherwood Yoga, West Hollywood, January 27. yantrarchitecture.com*

Scan of Yantra Painting: Ray Henders

## The Ganesh Yantra

Mantra is Gam Ganapataye  
Namoh Namaha

Pronounced: Gum Gunner Pat Ai Yeah  
Nam o Naam ah haa

The sound produces this shape. The Yantra, second only to the Mantra, possesses the pure quality of Ganesha.

To learn more about the qualities of Ganesh in your life, gaze at this Yantra and chant this Mantra.

Ganesh is filled with mystical symbolism. Known as the Auspicious One, Ganesh is the luminary who brings knowledge, removes obstacles and is even said to occasionally place them in our midst as lessons and challenges for us to overcome.