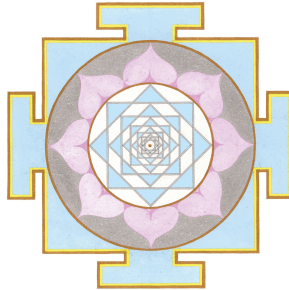


**Drawing the Venus Yantra took four intense, joy-filled hours.
Meditating on it will go on for the rest of my life. (Yantra: Sarah Tomlinson)**



Drawing as Meditation

I start with a shopping bag full of colored pencils, gold and silver markers, a ruler, an eraser, a compass, and a sharpener. I pick up a piece of square paper and under the patient and entertaining guidance of Sarah Tomlinson, I create a Yantra.

It took four hours to draw and the beautiful ancient symbol that I have chosen to replicate will act as a meditation tool over the coming days and months. Its resonance is both universal and deeply personal. I will ponder its significance and utilize it in my yoga practice. Yantras are Tantric Yoga symbols which hold your focus allowing liberation within that restraint. A Yantra may represent properties of specific Chakras, the energies of Goddesses or the powers of the planets. They utilize symbols like lotus flower, triangles, circles and Mantras, or chants, to enhance the subtle and vibratory content of the design. It's really helpful when you are using them as meditation tools.

Sarah has painted and studied the meaning of Yantras for more than 20 years. She first learned about them from Harish Johari. The author of "Tools for Tantra," he invited a young Tomlinson to come to India and paint under his tutelage. His teaching helped her gain "new eyes to see with." And, it is with attentive and intuitive eyes, that she teaches today.

Beginning a workshop, Sarah lays out a deck of a dozen or so cards. These are mini-representations of the Yantras she teaches to novices. Sarah asks each one of us not to "think too much" but to pick a design that calls to us. Going around the room we hear about each of the Yantras that we are fascinated by. Her beguiling and detailed explanations about their characteristics entice us to make a commitment to one. For the extent of this workshop, we will work exclusively with the design we choose and you might actually choose to work with that design over and over again throughout the year.

Last year, at my first Tomlinson workshop, I chose "The Uniqueness Design" which is "associated with Rahu, the north node of the Moon and one of a pair of shadow planets known as the nodes," she explains. It speaks to being comfortable with our own individual personality. The predominant colors in are warm purples and browns with yellow and gold. Without my consciously knowing, I chose it at a time that I was struggling to find my own voice in both my practice and my teaching.

This year, I confidently chose “The Bliss Design,” associated with the planet Venus. This Yantra “stimulates the feminine impulse of creativity and the play of the senses.” This light blue, pink and silver design had been my second choice last year and now it had become my unconditional first choice.

Sarah leads the group in using rulers, pencils and compasses in a very systematic way to outline the designs we’ve chosen. It takes patience and precision. My Yantra contains a lot of geometric shapes and lines making the drawing work painstaking. Throughout the process Sarah is there to guide us. She reminds us to breathe and to create the design moment by moment. She asks us to finish each task before rushing ahead to the next one.

For some reason I am having trouble finding center. I get dizzy as I work closer and closer to the Bindhu at the center. Sarah relates the Mantra associated with my design, *Om Shoom Shukraya Namaha*. I repeat it over and over quietly. It helps me line up the most complicated portion of the Yantra.

After the drawing is done, we color. It is a joyful process. There is a sense of creativity and individuality that is sedated during the outline portion of the work. Now colored pencils fly around the room. The room gets quiet and then we all smile as we look around at the progress other attendees are making. A student next to me is mixing dark purples, pinks and midnight blues to achieve a richness of color. Another has pulled out her watercolors and a third is shadowing her colors to emphasize certain rhythms.

We smile, we share and as the sun begins to set we realize that we have spent four hours in an engrossing meditative practice. My Yantra is not done by the end of the workshop but Sarah has taken me far enough that I can finish it on my own. I can’t wait to get it done and ponder its significance. And, I look forward to the next time I work with this very knowledgeable teacher. I first took Sarah’s workshop at [Yoga Union Center for Backcare](#) as part of Alison West’s 300 Hour Teacher Training program. Sarah’s upcoming workshop schedule can be found at <http://www.sarahtomlinsonyoga.com/Workshops.html>. She’ll be teaching Yantra Workshops at [Sankalpah Yoga](#) on May 8, at [Om Factory](#) on May 15th, at the [New York Open Center](#) from July 12 – August 2, and the [Ananada Ashram](#) from August 20-22. You can also find out more about creating Yantras by reading her book “[Nine Designs for Inner Peace](#)”.

--Brette Popper