

Yantras of Shankara and their influence on Indian Tantric Artists With reference to G.R. Santosh and K.V. Haridasan

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ABSTRACT

Yantra, defined as a ‘mystic energy diagram’, is a simple composition of lines, triangles, squares, circles, lotus petals, a trident and with a dot of seed syllable in the centre. Amongst the numerous thinker saints of India, Shankara of the 8th century has integrated religious thought, rituals, spirituality, philosophy, poetry and the art of drawing *yantras* in his composition of one hundred hymns of *Saundarya Lahari*. The uniqueness of this composition is that each of the hymn has a *yantra* complimenting it. Two Indian artists GR Santosh and KV Haridasan drew inspiration from *Saundarya Lahari* and depicted the *yantras* vividly in their paintings. GR Santosh a poet artist and who was adept in yoga, born in Kashmir, often visited Shankara’s shrine in Srinagar which kindled an interest in the philosophy of Shankara. These impressions from his early life reflected in his paintings were compositions of human silhouettes juxtaposed with *yantras*. Born and brought up in a traditional Hindu family, Haridasan was introduced to the philosophy of Shankara early in his life. His paintings were an exploration and creative visual representations of Shankara’s *yantras*. The present paper inquires the influence of Shankara’s *yantras* on two Indian Tantric artists GR Santosh and KV Haridasan illustrating relevant examples of their paintings.

Keywords: Yantra, Shankara, Indian Tantric artists, Painting, GR Santosh, KV Haridasan