



SECTION
The Knowledge of
Sacred Empowerment

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CHAPTER 1

Altars of Power and Grace: The Evolution

Since the dawn of civilization people have created altars and shrines in sacred places where they invoked the spirits, prayed to their deities, and expressed their devotion to the mysterious forces that guided their lives. In the Western world, shrines were memorials erected in homes or at wayside crossings to commemorate saints and ancestors and to honor the dead. Altars, where spiritual ceremonies took place, were usually found in churches and temples. The services and rituals performed in these places were considered the province of established religions. In recent years, the idea of having private altars has gained increasing popularity.

In this book are innovative steps, based on the ancient science of Vastu Shastra, to create empowering and transformational altars. These altars are designed as a sacred space where you can ask for Divine inspiration, grace to infuse your life, and help make your dreams come true. This system was developed over several years of extensive study of both Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, and Vastu Shastra, the primary system of sacred architecture used in India for more than seven thousand years.

For many years my husband, Michael Mastro, and I have taught yoga, meditation, and other spiritual awareness techniques as part of the Art of Living Foundation, a nonprofit, humanitarian organization whose purpose is service to humanity. Michael, a meditator for more than 35 years, traveled extensively in India with the renowned spiritual teacher, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.



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During the last 30 years, Michael has become one of the leading Western experts on the art and science of Vastu Shastra. In the mid-nineteen-seventies, as a graduate architecture student, Michael was asked by the Maharishi to design spiritual centers in India, Europe, and the United States using the principles of Vastu Shastra. He then began to apply this ancient Vedic system of placement in his work to build and create living environments in harmony with nature, including using the science to determine the environmental orientation of the first Microsoft building.



Although Vastu Shastra had enormous appeal to me, I felt it was too complex and difficult for Westerners to integrate into their busy lives. However, I also knew that the benefits this system offered to harmoniously align our personal space with the powerful energies of the Universe, were too important to set aside.

I decided to find a way to simplify the complexities and to extract the most potent aspects of Vastu Shastra. I knew there were tangible

benefits in this ancient art that would point the way to an evolving system adaptable to the realities of today's world.

At that time, I was completing a graduate degree at Antioch University in the new field of Whole Systems Design, which simply stated, teaches how to think systemically, operate holistically, and design creatively. We had also purchased a home that conformed to the general outline recommended by Vastu Shastra, and were busy remodeling it in accordance with Vastu principles.

After we moved in, our lives changed dramatically. Our health improved, our family relationships blossomed, and our finances improved – even our pets benefited from the change. I was convinced of the great advantages the system offered.

Shortly after moving into our home, we were invited to travel throughout India with the founder of The Art of Living Foundation, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Wherever we went in India we saw altars: they were placed at roadside rests, in people's homes, and in meditation halls. The Divine seemed ever-present in this culture. Ceremony and common daily rituals went hand-in-hand. By using altars, there was a tangible connection with the Divine apparent and this was the essential piece I had been looking for to define my graduate work. I had gone to India





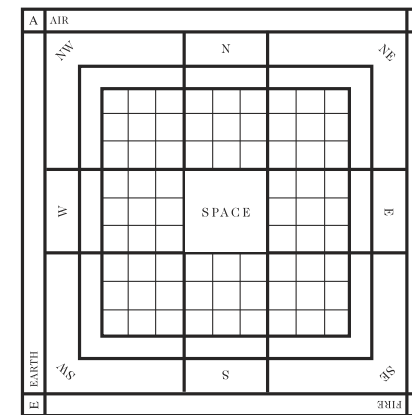
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knowing that Vastu would be the subject of my graduate project, but I hadn't known how a system derived from it would emerge. I thought perhaps the answer was to create small areas in a home or office where these principles could be incorporated, even if they could not be applied throughout the dwelling. From listening to peoples' concerns about how to integrate Vastu, I knew it needed to be not only aesthetically appealing, but simple enough to understand and powerful enough to impact their lives.

Upon returning home I developed a model for creating altars based on Vastu and incorporated it into my graduate work. Along with my husband, I worked on the design, taking into account directional influences and the placement of each of the five elements, to create the results that were inherent in the science itself. Anyone could assemble such altars in their homes or offices, whether or not their

environment fulfilled the requirements of this ancient system.

This book teaches you how to create dynamic altars based on principles of Vastu Shastra as seen through the lens of Whole Systems Design. Michael and I have taught classes and worked with clients for several years to create altars based on this new understanding of an ancient art. Reports from people who have assembled altars have been outstanding, and in some cases truly amazing. In this book we present examples of altars to demonstrate different ways they can be coordinated with various decors and lifestyles.



The Elements and Directions

We believe, and our experience has demonstrated, that by following the simple directions presented here, anyone can create altars that attract spiritual empowerment and manifest positive results. I hope that you will find the inspiration in this book to create your own altars - altars which please you aesthetically, open you to Divine energy, and help you to attain the desires of your heart.

“**Wisdom begins in wonder.**” —Socrates