

Interview with Deva Premal and Miten

July 18, 2007

Connie: I just love your new CD, *Deva Premal Sings the Moola Mantra*, which will be available on August 28th from White Swan Records. I've been playing your new CD so much that my seven-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, is now singing chants from it as she plays. Deva, your parents sang chants to you as a child, in particular the Gayatri Mantra. What impact do you think this had on you?

Deva: At the time, I didn't know, but now I see it's really been a blessing and it's like they've planted a seed early on in my life and it needed quite a few years, even laying dormant for a few years, and now I can harvest and reap the fruits. I feel my whole life is a blessing. I couldn't even have imagined it. It's kind of a seed of spirituality and also of being aware that I'm not the body - that there is something beyond the physical, beyond the material and that there is no death in that sense. It's a kind of feeling of eternity or something. It's very unconscious when you're a child, but I feel now that it's so deep inside of me that it's easily accessible. I still forget, but it's still right there when I need it.

Connie: I read that you didn't even plan on being a singer and, in fact, it was Miten that encouraged you to sing with him. Can you tell me a little about how that happened? I know you met at the famous Osho ashram when you were a 20-year-old body worker and Miten was one of Osho's musicians. Is that correct?

Deva: That's right, yes. He was 43; I was 20. I was just a 20-year-old girl in love and I felt maybe there was something we could do together to spend even more time together. I didn't really have any higher motives than that. I knew I was musical because I grew up kind of in a musical home with my mother being a musician and my father loved to drum. I knew I had some potential but not anything like a professional singer or anything like that.

The ashram is and was such a playground where you could try out these things and you could make mistakes. It was supportive and it was received and, in that way, Miten took me in and I started singing in the evening meditations with him, which was a huge honor, because we would sing for 2,000 - 3,000 people who come together for meditation. That's a very, very delicate space to play music for because people are totally open and receptive. They let you take them deeper into silence, so it was a good apprenticeship for me to find a way to enhance the space of silence. Miten was and still is my master, not only in that respect.

Connie: Miten, you were a British rock guitarist/singer/songwriter who opened for bands like Fleetwood Mac, Lou Reed and the Kinks. What happened to you that changed your musical path from rock and roll to that of kirtan?

Miten: I think overindulgence probably. There just came a point when nothing made much sense and life didn't seem to look that rosy after the indulgence. Something was very obviously missing. I suspected that there was something more. I just didn't know what and I just didn't know where, even though, by the time I actually found my way to Osho, the pilgrimages that had been made to India were well under way by my peers by then. I never really considered a guru or any kind of Indian philosophy, but there you go. You just never know in life, do you?

I just happened to read a book at the right time and the right place. The book (*No Water No Moon*) just hit me. It just changed my life really. Reading the book made me wonder or made me at

least inquisitive as to, if there really is a community like this, then I want to live in it. If there really is a life like the life that Bhagwan Osho, as he was known back then, as Bhagwan, was talking about, then I owed it to myself to at least check it out. That was 25 years ago or so, and it really did exist and it still does, even though he's left his body over 10 years ago now. Yes, that's my little story in the whole thing.

When I came to Osho, the first thing I did was to sell all the guitars I owned and not be a musician, which is the way I kind of lived my life up until that point. It was like dropping your cross really. You just disappeared into this ocean of creativity and meditation and everything else that went with being in an ashram. The years that followed were just a healing for me, just the healing of my heart, healing of the weight of being a musician. So when the music did come back, which it eventually did, it came back as a non-performance experience. It just came back as a prayer. From that moment on, up until this day, that's all I do. I just sing my prayers, and it's what Deva and I have found to be the most nourishing and most beneficial thing in our lives.

Connie: It was Osho that gave you the Sanskrit names of Deva Premal and Prabhu Miten. Can you tell me what your names mean and why is being given a Sanskrit name important?

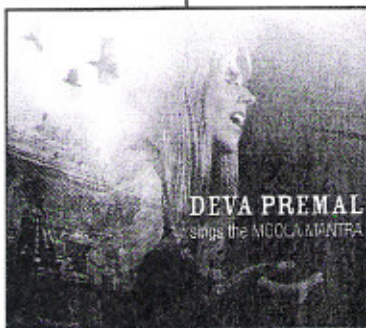
Deva: It's really the symbol of a new start, just that you can leave the past behind, and it's a constant reminder to be in the moment and to know why you're living this life. Deva Premal means divine loving. Deva is divine, and Premal is loving.

Miten: It's a challenge also, Connie. You go to a guru and you can either hang out on the fence or the idea of giving you a new name is a challenge. Enlightenment doesn't come cheap. If you want it, there are a few things that you need to be ready for and the first one is a new beginning. One thing is to say you want a new beginning, another thing is to actually live it. Osho's method was to give you a new name, as Deva said, and another thing was to wear the colors of sunrise at the time, so that was a challenge. If you were living in the west, you would be walking around New York City in red clothes, or wherever you happened to be living. You knew if you wanted to do it or not. You made up your mind and it wasn't really such a task, because, actually personally speaking, I was having such an amazing time that I was happy to do those things and it did keep me on the line. It kept me awake. It kept me challenged.

Prabhu means God actually and Prabhu is a sweet way of addressing the Divine. It's like George Harrison singing *My Sweet Lord*. It's a beautiful way of calling God, Prabhu. Miten means friend. The names weren't just random, although they appeared to be random. It was as if he was actually naming your soul or something, because, when I came to him, I didn't have a friend in the world. I just escaped from every dimension of my old life. Without even knowing that, he gave me the name "a friend of God." It was just incredible.

Connie: Wow, that's a beautiful story! Mantra is a Sanskrit word that means "to free the mind." What do you think that chanting a mantra does for the person singing on a spiritual level?

Deva: It's healing. The Sanskrit words, they're like medicine and their vibrations which are scientifically proven in ancient times and scientifically chosen to have a certain effect on the



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that's what inspired us to devote a whole CD to it and really go deeply into the journey of the silence of the sounds through this mantra. There's a 40-minute version on it just for this one mantra, and we've been looking for a long time to find the right one to create this kind of piece of music.

Connie: Well, it certainly is beautiful. I've been listening to it over and over. Now I heard that the Moola Mantra was a newly created mantra that you were given when you were in India last year. I don't know if this is true. Is that a true story or not?

Deva: Yes, it came to us in a retreat which we did in India two or three years ago. It's inspired by the vision of Sri Amma and Bhavavan, who have an ashram in the south of India. It's especially powerful when you receive it from living avatars and that's how we received it there.

Connie: Here's something else. I thought this was totally fascinating, and that's that you ask your audience not to clap in between the songs, because the silence between the songs is just as important as the songs. Can you explain why that is?

Deva: It's really not so much asking the people not to sing. It's basically just telling them: "You don't have to clap," because nobody really feels like clapping. We all sing together. We all enter the space of silence together, and it's just very natural to just enjoy after the song has stopped and after

the mantra has come to a finish. So we just say: "No, you don't have to clap for us. We love that space as much as you do." Also, we all sing together. It's them singing to us, us singing to them, so there's really no need for anyone to clap for anyone. It's very natural. It's also not serious. I know there are moments in the concerts where there is just an overflow of energy and then it might happen, the clapping. It's not like we're very German about it. It's a natural journey we go on, which has its peaks and valleys, like ecstasy and silence.

Miten: It's more of an invitation really. It's really like inviting the people who come to take the night off from their busy lives and just not have to think about doing anything and just see what happens when you are in that space, give it to yourself, and then something magic can happen.

Connie: I read that some of this was about just absorbing the vibrations after the song was done.

Miten: Exactly. Exactly that. When you don't put the sound of clapping into the room, then, like I say, something very magical happens, and that's that silence descends. If you spend a couple of hours going deeper and deeper into that silence, singing these beautiful chants, and then just slowly dissolve it into a meditative space, you have a good chance of walking out of that theater different to the way you walked in.

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Miten yourself and win the rest of that fabulous
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energy centers in the body, on certain aspects in your life. It's a prayer and it's - we are focused on a certain aspect, so it's also beautiful to choose a certain mantra which speaks to you or where you feel you need more energy in that area in your life or to balance certain energies and then to focus on a certain mantra and take it with you for long periods, like 40 days or your whole life. So I feel it's - it's a path. It's not everyone's path, but it's definitely a beautiful path. For me, it's very easy, because the silence happens so spontaneously and easily...

That's why I love it for myself, because when I sing these mantras, I fall into silence really very, very effortlessly. That's, for me, the reason why I sing, so I can experience that thoughtless silence and that full, big, wide open space of silence. It's my path.

Connie: Your new CD is called *Deva Premal Sings the Moola Mantra*. What does Moola Mantra mean? I've heard the word moola used as a slang for money. I don't know if that's true only in Canada or wider, but I'm sure there's deeper meaning to this than that.

Deva: It's a Sanskrit word. Moola means root. If you've heard the names of the chakras - the first chakra is called "The Moola" which is the root chakra. It's a kind of common Sanskrit word. I don't know if it's fortunate or unfortunate that it has a different connotation than English, but we were thinking about it and we thought about what to do. That's what it's called. That's what it is.

Deva: What I love about the Moola Mantra is that it's an honoring of the Divine and it distinguishes between the different aspects of the way the Divine manifests. The first one is the creator, so it's the Divine in its unmanifested form. Then we sing to the Divine as the gurus, as the teachers, in human form and then the Divine in every living being, the soul. It's almost like the yin and the yang. The end of the mantra is the female and the male aspect together with each other. It covers all the aspects and