

THE MASTERS OF
MANTRA

YOGI MALIK MEETS DEVA PREMAL & MITEN

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It is our connection to the
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"As a meditation, Satsang begins in silence. The music we make would appear out of that silence, and eventually disappear back into it. In this way, gradually, the silence deepens, becomes tangible within the heart, and eventually serves as a tool to help us navigate the craziness of this noisy world."

With almost a million albums sold worldwide, Deva Premal and Miten have established themselves as the leading mantra-chanting artists today. Last year alone they performed concerts to thousands of people in over 50 cities in 20 countries. They have been touring and holding concerts for the past 17 years, spending 9 months of the year on tour. They have performed in Russia, Bucharest, Czech Republic, Hungary, Canada and America to name a few places.

I began by asking Deva to explain the meaning and purpose of sacred chant. "The purpose of sacred chant is two fold: one, on a fundamental, physical level, chanting opens the voice, which in turn opens the heart. Chanting charges and revitalises - on a cellular level." On a metaphysical level, Deva continues, "Mantras which are thousands of years old, were conceived by ecstatic souls who understood, and were experimenting with, the power of sound."

Each ancient language has its own unique 'vibration' and 'mantras' or sacred sounds are associated with many different spiritual and religious traditions, each carrying its own vibration. In the yoga traditions, the language of the mantras is Sanskrit,

though not exclusively. "Sanskrit language is a sacred language, not used now, apart from ritual and spiritual ceremonies. Sanskrit carries the essence of the object or emotion it describes. It is not descriptive, as is our language and is the actual sound of the emotion." Deva provides an example: "Ananda chanted repeatedly, will bring one into a state of bliss, because ananda is the actual essential sound of bliss."

Deva Premal and Miten have formed a collaborative, unique and special relationship, which in turn is reflected in their music. That 'relationship' is also their inspiration for their work. "Music enhances and expands our tantric practice. It is our connection to the divine - in our case, our spiritual teacher, and guruji, Osho."

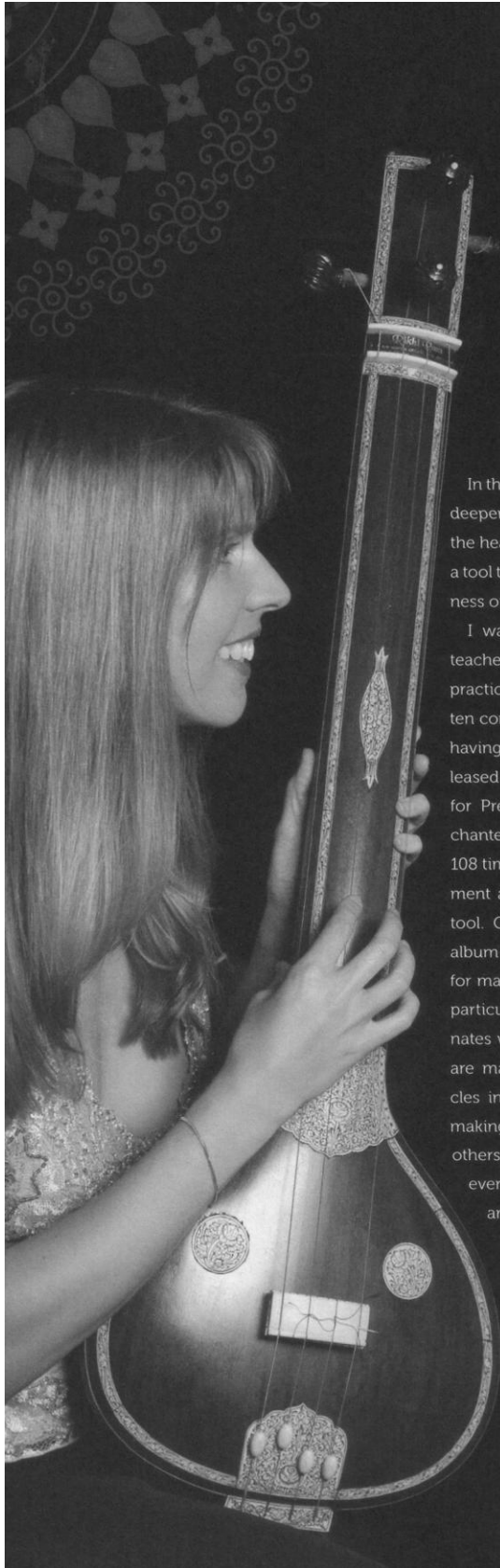
I ask Deva what kinds of mantras they work with, are they from many different spiritual traditions? "Chanting could not be further away from work. Only in modern times has music making become a source of financial reward. Singing rock music or opera may be work, but chanting is play...or to be more specific, a spiritual practice."

Deva and Miten have primarily worked with Sanskrit mantras. "We lean towards Sanskrit, but we tend not to discriminate against any traditions.

Recently we recorded an album chanting with Tibetan monks. We chant from the traditions of the Sufis. We chant mantras from aya-huascha. We even sing the blues on a good day!"

When finding suitable mantras to work with, Miten explains, "We look for the essence in the chant. If it resonates, we give it our full attention, until something is born, through our voices and the music we accompany it with. Once that is in place then we share it. First between ourselves, and eventually, to the chanters, who come to be with us. In our experience, all mantras, no matter what tradition, at their core, speak of the oneness of all things."

A popular way of chanting mantras is to do so in the company of others and what is known as a Satsang Group. Miten states that the 'word Satsang in Sanskrit translates to 'meeting in truth'. So, you can say that a Satsang gathering is one that transcends the social. It is beyond the small talk of every day life, and any kind of superficial communication. Chanting mantras and the singing of sacred songs can enhance this space. Miten explains, "As a meditation, Satsang begins in silence. The music we make would appear out of that silence, and eventually disappear back into it."



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I was interested to know if a teacher is essential to learn the practice of mantra? Deva and Miten confirm that it does help, "but, having said that, we recently released an album with 'Mantras for Precarious Times', 7 mantras chanted in the traditional way of 108 times. It is not a musical statement as such, more a meditation tool. Our reason for making the album was to give people a tool for mantra practice. You choose a particular mantra, one which resonates with you (for instance there are mantras for removing obstacles in one's life, for sacred love making, for peace, for healing and others), and chant it before sleep every night for 21 days, or if you are really serious for 40 days. The practice itself brings tremendous benefits. It keeps one connected to the reality of life and miracles."

Miten explains that his and Deva's life is "a constant flow of creativity. Our new album will be released later this year. It is an album of chants and ancient sacred poetry accompanied by some great musicians from Denmark." The Gayatri mantra is especially special to Deva, explains Miten, "Deva was born to the sound of the gayatri mantra and chanted it all through her childhood. It has been our constant companion and teacher ever since she rediscovered it in 1998. It has guided us into places we could never have dreamed of and I mean that literally. Along with Osho, it is the cornerstone of everything we are."

Regarding projects, their recent album, 'Tibetan Mantras For Turbulent Times' is a benefit CD and supports various charities involved with the Tibetan people in exile. "Inspirational teachers, range from Eckhart Tolle, who we have accompanied on various lecture tours both in Europe and Australia, to the Dalai Lama who we were blessed to meet personally and to be able to sing to. We sang his favourite mantra 'om tare tuttare'. We also understand that he listens to our music in his personal time."