

## Naad Shakti, the power of Indian sacred sounds

with Manish Vyas



### Introduction - by Manish

Mantra is a sound, a vibration - and the correct vibration is created only when it is recited correctly because it is a key which can unlock a higher dimension. The meaning is not as significant as reciting the mantra correctly. That's why there is a lot of significance and importance given in India to study and learn Sanskrit properly (sometimes a lifetime) to be able to pronounce correctly and understand the sound/energy relation. Sanskrit is not only a language, but it embraces the power of sound.

Mantra is already so sacred and perfect that it does not need music necessarily. It is the privilege of a musician that he can put or use this sacred text on his music and sing it. To honour this privilege and to give its full respect to the sacred texts, it is fundamental to treat the text in the right musical context.

The truth is that mantra has always been from India, so it must have an Indian musical and cultural element incorporated within it - and it must comply with certain requirements to work and unfold its power, and to create an uplifting silence.

Indian music has evolved from the meditative people who have been able to express their higher state of consciousness through the classical music – that's why India has the highest music to bring people into meditation. One of the most important elements of the Indian arts is *rasa* – a flavour or juice, so Indian raga music is able to add different flavours of *rasa* or emotion to the texts, according to their requirements. There can be a *rasa* of devotion, love, courage, energy, longing, etc. It's like the personality of the song. In this way, Indian music is able to bring that *rasa* into the **mantra music** also, which will create more depth to the sacred text. This would be honouring the mantras.

But the discouraging truth is that most of the western mantra singers have no knowledge of Indian music, Sanskrit and the elements required to compose and sing the mantra. Most of them replicate this

music in a pop, lullaby and sometimes even rock-style just putting the mantra text in a melody. That's why I always say that simply being a musician does not qualify to become a mantra singer or even worse, a 'mantra model'... for me it is like singing tango in Indian style and Indian accent.

What happens is that then there is no connection between the text and the music. The text which has originated from India must have some Indian element, if not all, because there is a whole science behind. Also one must understand at least a little bit the Indian culture to know how to approach the music, the learning and the composition. It needs proper knowledge, training and understanding - like any subject which one wants to learn: the most effective is to go to the source of authenticity.

Having been connected and living in the West, i have maintained my roots in such an old, mysterious and vast tradition - yet having also an understanding of the western ear and musical system.

This is one of the reasons i was asked to start offering workshops, to explain how this techniques work and inspire or enlighten the people to use them with the right understanding. It is a privilege for me to share this subject – acquired from my musical and spiritual training since my early days in India.



### **Recitation of Sacred Sound (Mantra Chanting)**

The world of sound is a fascinating subject. It is so close to our daily life, even if it goes unnoticed. Unfortunately we are seldom aware of the sounds around us and the power of the sounds as healing and uplifting tools.

Mantras are conscious sounds and they have the power to awake experiences and emotions at different levels of our beings. The workshop combines theory and practical activities. The participants leave with tools to apply techniques with mantras in their life, in yoga, in meditation, for promoting good sleep, for relaxation. It gives the right understanding and the necessary tools to relate to this ancient mantras.

In the science of mantra, meanings are not so important, as 'meanings' belong to the sphere of the mind. It is the sound itself and the form which are connecting. So I always ask... 'are you connecting or not?' The quality of the sound is important, not the meaning. A mantra comes from the source of creation and when the transmission is pure, then it can become a transformative force. Without the necessary awareness, just repeating a sound only brings dullness to the mind. Contrary to many

people's beliefs, in mantra singing it's not so important the intention, but the correct reciting, pronunciation and *rasa* - one of the most important elements in Indian music, which gives its character, and is key to make the mantra or the prayer or the 'call' be the right one.

The purpose of mantra chanting in yoga is to generate specific vibrations and connect with the universe. If the call is not right, it will not get a response - just like if we type one letter wrong in an email... the email won't be delivered.



### **Overview of points covered in an approx. 3 hour workshop.**

- Introduction to mantras and how mantras are used in India - technically and devotionally
- Why sound is healing and why is great to use the right sounds for meditation and pranayam
- What is the science behind the mantra and the technique to make the practice effective
- Preparation for chanting / explanation of *rasa* or spirit given to the music
- Sanskrit and the importance of mantra pronunciation
- Mantra and Kirtan - how it originated, how it is actually used in India
- Music for elevation v. music for entertainment
- Mythology behind mantras
- How to approach mantras in meditation and for daily practice
- Relation between mantra and breath: practice of one pranayam with mantra
- Chanting with harmonium / Use of tanpura
- Introduction and singing together of different mantras
- Q&A and comments
- Closing mantra
- Tea and informal final open talk

\* Depending on the type and length of the workshop, Manish also combines the Mantra Workshop with Surya Namaskar or light Hatha or Kundalini Yoga (by Sa), Pranayam with music composed by him for this practice, Yoga Nidra and other effective meditation techniques, with and without music.



### **Briefly about Manish**

Manish grew up in Gujarat, India in a family of musicians and under the ayurvedic lifestyle of which his grandfather was a specialist. He learnt Indian classical and devotional music since he was a child, where music and *kirtan* gatherings were happening in his house since his childhood. Later, living in Pune, he conducted and co-coordinated retreats in India during more than 15 years. During these years, he was also actively involved with the music department of Osho Commune in India, while Osho was still in his body. In this period, he was conducting live music for various meditation sessions, dance sessions and concerts, all directed to a very specific purpose of deepening the quality of meditation. This long period of experiments and experience reflects in his music. He is also a certified Hatha Yoga teacher - and focuses his yoga-teaching in Pranayam, Yoga Nidra, Meditation and Naad Yoga (the yoga of sound). Growing up in a family of musicians, spent his childhood around a unique atmosphere of dance, meditation, spirituality... in which music was always present and has been part of his life ever since. Manish is a composer, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist – he is also a talented tabla player and teacher. He was a disciple of Ustad Allarakha with whom he learnt many years in Mumbai. Later he learnt to play the hundred-stringed ancient instrument: Santoor, traditionally used in the folk music of Kashmir and also in classical music. He also plays and teaches harmonium with singing. Having learnt Indian music since his childhood with respected Indian maestros, his music reflects the deep feeling of an ancient mystical India, touching the heart of the listener. Between 20 and 40 years he was actively touring in Europe and US, where he blended his skills and taught these techniques to other western musicians. His music incorporated the ‘friendliness’ to the Western ear – creating a fine blend

of his genuine heritage with more contemporary sounds - what now is known as fusion music - yet keeping the Indian necessary element intact. The feeling behind his music is that of joy, meditation and silence.

The range that him and his band cover through vocals and Indian instruments (tabla, santoor, harmonium, keyboards, tanpura, swarmandal, bansuri, sitar) gives raise to different flavours : from devotional prayers, mantras, and songs of love; raising up the rhythm to Kirtan music, followed by uplifting dance-celebration music – to finally return to the meditative shanti (peaceful) music. In this way, covering the whole fan of emotions through the musical expression. Manish is one of the few earnest kirtan and mantra singers in the west who has the true deep understanding of Indian music and keeps its authenticity most gracefully, with true respect to the sacred sounds. Besides performing concerts and workshops, he also teaches Indian music, mantra singing, harmonium and tabla and launched until now 14 CDs - a new mantra CD with auspicious mantras called Mangalam is being released summer-2018. He got married and lives now in St. Gallen, Switzerland where he also teaches.

Manish has been conducting retreats in India for many years, following his spiritual Guru across India. In these retreats he learnt meditation techniques and he was in charge of the music so he knows very well how to use music and silence to produce an uplifting effect in a meditative gathering or for deep relaxation. He certified as yoga teacher at the Association for Yoga and Meditation, Rishikesh and he focuses mainly in pranayam, naad yoga, surya namaskar and meditation when he teaches.



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