

The Indian choir, ensemble and Vedic traditions

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Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement of
The Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)
April 2024

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Abstract

In this commentary, I provide the details of four Indian choir projects: how I planned, prepared the musical repertoire, compositions, technical plans, and marketing and how I delivered the high-profile concerts. It was my aspiration to create an Indian choir in the UK and through this I provided learning and performance opportunities to all ages. The chapters of this commentary cover discussions on Indian music notations, choir songs, Vedic tradition, Indian and Western choirs, dictions, Indian ensemble and my future vision for the Indian choir and ensemble in the UK. I discuss the challenges that I faced as an Indian musician living in the UK and how I successfully delivered the Indian choir and ensemble concerts in the UK. The major challenge I faced was transcribing Indian notation to Western staff notation and writing Indian songs in Sanskrit and English. With the support of Western conductors and Sanskrit scholars, I managed to write notations for all singers and musicians of both traditions. My goal is to establish, develop and present the finest Indian choir in the country. Another challenge I discuss in my commentary is the limitations in Indian choral singing while harmonizing in parts. I gathered valuable feedback and testimonials from the choral conductors for the development and improvement of the Indian adult and youth choir.

Note for readers:

To open the music links in Microsoft Word, and to read the reviews at the end of the chapters, please press control at the same time as selecting the link. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

My father (late) Dr Anilchandra Suryaram Joshi and my mother Dr Hemlata Anilchandra Joshi helped and guided me since my childhood and introduced me to Vedic traditions. My big thanks and respect to my parents. I would like to thank to my wife Hemali and children Rutik and Diyaa for their continuous support during my research study. Many times, my son helped me with my compositions and proofread the chapters.

All my gurus are source of Indian classical music and theory. My vocal guru Padma Bhushan Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty helped and guided me to understand voice training of Indian vocal music, Shri Brij Joshi taught me piano and music management, Shri Shashank Fadnis guided me with studio recording techniques and stage appearance and (late) Shri Dinesh Majmudar taught me various raga during my diploma in Indian music.

I would like to thank my DMA supervisor Prof. Alan Williams whose understanding and expert support have been invaluable throughout my research period and in the production of my DMA work. I would also like to thank Dr Robin Dewhurst and Tim France for their support. I am thankful to the music department of the University of Salford for providing me with the best support in studio bookings, rehearsal venues and arranging video recordings for my compositions.

Dr Vikram Tanna, Chairman of BVG and SHIVA choirs and all committee members supported me with all choir activities, organised concerts, managed financial work and collaborating with all in the choir. The Choral Leadership Network led by the Hallé choir and orchestra brings together a number of partners from across the country involved in choral activity and training. BVG and SHIVA choirs are members of the network. I attended many meetings with choral conductors and directors. It was a great educational experience collaborating with all the choir. By attending the meetings, I learnt more about the Western choral plans, rehearsals style, disciplines and professionalism.

In reference to conducting and deliverying the Indian choir in the UK, I was inspired by 'Gandharva' choir and Pandit Madhup Mudgal. Pandit Madhup's father (late) Padmashri Vinay Chandra Maudgalya started [Gandharva choir of India](#). I am thankful to Dr. Subhadra Desai for guiding and checking my Veda chapter. Dr. Desai is a classical singer, scholar and chair professor, department of Hindustani music at the University of Silicon Andhra, Milpitas, California. I also attended Dr. Desai's online workshop regarding Vedic hymns. It was a great learning experience for me regarding how to chant R̥gveda and Samaveda mantras. [Classical vocalist, mentor, teacher - Dr. Subhadra Desai](#)

I am thankful to my current employer, the Department for Education for providing me with an opportunity to work for the teacher's unit, schools, future education projects and setting up my financial loan payment with the student finance company. Department for Education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Musicians of the choir Saleel Tambe, Vijay Venkat, Yuswin Chavda, Sandeep Popatkar, Hemant Bhatt, Robin Christian and Cariappa Pandanda provided best musical support over last few years. I am thankful to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Manchester - the Indian arts and education centre for providing me teaching and performance opportunities since Sept 1999. www.bhavan.co.uk.

SamooH Gaan (group singing) through All India Radio inspired me since childhood to take part in stage performances and to create a versatile choir. The ideas and inspirations behind this research portfolio date back to my school days, some thirty years ago and during that time there have been some key figures that have influenced my performing life. My performances and recordings would of course not have been possible without the support of poets and composers of the choir. I am thankful to my previous project sponsors, the Arts Council England, venues of the UK, audience, technical and the media team.

For proofreading of my chapters, I would like to thank Dr. Devaki O'Riordan, Dr. Jyoti Vitlani and Rohini Krishnamurthy.

Chapter 1 - Glossary

In my commentary I use original Sanskrit and Hindi music words. Here I explain the meaning of Sanskrit or Hindi words below in the context of Indian music.

Aakar: It is the vocal improvisation using the long vowel 'a'.

Alap: Chakrabarty (2020) explains Alap in Indian Music is the opening piece of a typical Indian classical performance. There are various forms of Alap, and it begins at a slow tempo. In Indian music, it is an analysis of the ragas. It possesses no metre and forms the opening section of a typical North Indian classical performance.

Bandish: A composition in Indian classical music.

Bhajan: 'Bhajan' is a Sanskrit word. It is used in singing to glorify God, Goddess and 'Guru'. It is also the name of a Hindu, Jain, Sikh genre of devotional songs and hymns. 'Bhaj' means to serve, to love, to share.

Bharat Ratna: The Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India.

Geet: Indian music is comprised of two types of compositions, 'Bandish' and 'Geet'. Bandish is a pure raga-based musical composition, always projecting the details of raga and not the expression of the lyrics only. However, to enhance the lyrical expression, some fitting melodic forms may be composed. When these melodic forms are projected in a tuneful and trained voice, we call it a Geet. Geet is more like a composed song, sung exactly in the same way the composer composed it.

Gamak: Ornamentation of the musical notes while performing in North and South Indian music traditions.

Gharana: This means music or singing style from a particular county or region. The concept developed in the nineteenth century when the royal patronage enjoyed by performers weakened. Performers were then compelled to move to urban centres. To retain their respective identities, they fell back on the names of the regions they hailed from. The names of many 'gharanas' refer to places. (ITCSRA, 2020)

Khayal: A song used as the basis for a much longer improvisation.

Komal Svar: Flat note.

Laya: The speed or tempo at which the rhythm is played is called the Laya. Laya can be 'Vilambit' (slow), 'Madhya' (medium), 'Drut' (fast), 'Ati Vilambit' (very slow) or 'Ati Drut' (very fast).

Meend: Chakrabarty (2020) explains, sliding or gliding movement from one svar to another svar in curve line, with dynamics and modulation, with a vision of the intermediate svaras used is called 'Meend'. 'Meend' is not sung or played in a very fast tempo. All straight lines and angles are created by human beings, whereas curved lines are nature's creation. As Indian Music is created by nature, the existence of 'Meend' is obvious.

Naad: Chakrabarty (2020) explains the sound which is generated from the connection of air and fire is called 'Naad'. There are usually two types of 'Naad': 'Ahat' and 'Anahat', that both appear in the body as it is described. In the Indian choir, when we sing spiritual songs or Vedic hymns, it is more peaceful, 'Pran Vachak'. When we sing patriotic songs, it relates to the more powerful output, 'Agni Vachak'.

Palta: It is a combination of musical notes, arrangements in different patterns. It is a voice training exercises in the natural notes and any raga scales in various rhythm patterns.

Pandit: A scholarly musician.

Raga: A raga is a composition of musical 'svaras' and a few lines with a sequence, form and structure that gives rise to a definitive personality and character just like a human being or spiritual entity. Every 'raga' has distinctive serial notes for ascent ('aroha') and descent ('avroha') which determines the structure. The degree of importance of a particular note through building of the raga gradually creates layers of emotions, colour and brings the raga to life. (Darbar, 2023)

Shruti: Chakrabarty (2020) explains that in music there are twelve notes. But in Indian music, in addition to these svaras, we use other intermediate frequencies or positions in an octave, which are considered as 'Shruti'. Commonly any audible and melodic frequencies are called "Naad".

Stuti. A prayer song to a particular God or Goddess.

Sur: Chakrabarty (2020) explains that meaningfully produced Svar is Sur. To bring out this meaning of the svar, one has to connect his mind and heart with the physically produced svar. The beauty of music lies in sur, not in svar. Svar produced for a longer time (8-16 seconds), can also be considered as sur, if it is produced with full concentration adding thoughtful application of dynamics and modulation.

Svar: Chakrabarty (2020) explains, any sound produced by the vocal cord is called 'svar'. There are altogether twelve Svaras. To produce the correct positions of the svaras in Indian music, one has to practice with full concentrated mind and heart rigorously with the tanpuro instrument only. The overtones of tanpuro complement the exact positions of all the twelve svars of raga music.

Taan: 'Taan' is a garland of musical notes in any raga, sung in different tempo, along with a 'tala' (rhythm).

Thaat: The modal structure of a raga is called 'Thaat'. It specifies which alternate forms of svar will be chosen.

Tarana: Chandra (2023) explains, 'tarana' is based upon the use of meaningless syllables in a very fast rendition. Tarana is a type of composition in 'Hindustani' classical vocal music in which certain words and syllables such as 'odani', 'todani', 'tadeem' and 'yalali' based on Persian and Arabic phonemes are rendered at a medium ('madhya') or fast pace ('drut laya'). Many composers introduced syllables 'aum tanana' 'tana derena' and 'taum-tanana'.

Tivra Svar: Sharp note.

Voice Culture: By 'voice culture' I mean the vocal techniques used in Indian classical singing and voice improvement. It includes exercises such as voice modulation (moving from one note to another), significance of pitch control, breath control in classical singing, techniques for effective singing by using notation, 'alap', 'meend', 'gamak'. It also gives an understanding to the student on how to keep the voice healthy by correct warm-up exercises.

Chapter 2 - Introduction: singer, musician, composer, arranger, artistic director

I was born in India in June 1971 where I went to school, college, and university. There I also learnt harmonium, piano, keyboard and singing. During my education and afterwards, I attended many studio recordings and provided music for television series, audio CDs and dance-dramas. In August 1997, I came to the UK where I met various Western and Indian musicians in the Northwest of England, the Midlands and Greater London.

Back in India, as a young boy I had an aspiration to create an instrumental orchestra. This aspiration was fulfilled in the UK. Traditionally, Indian classical musicians perform either solo or in a duet. Sometimes a group of around four to six instrumentalists perform contemporary raga-based compositions in an improvisation style. However, there is no concept of a traditional raga-based Indian orchestra.

Raga Jyoti: Shastriya Vadhya Vrund (traditional Indian instrumental orchestra)



Figure 1 - logo of Raga Jyoti ensemble

This all changed for a concert in 2001. I was given a platform and the opportunity to work with Western and Indian musicians together. This led to the creation of the Indian ensemble 'Raga Jyoti'. The name of the group itself derives from the Indian music book written by musician and yoga scholar, 'Yogacharya' Krupalvanand (1969) of Kayavarohan, Gujarat. 'Jyoti' means eternal light and 'raga' means musical mood. The name of the book is linked with my own inner musical and spiritual journey, 'Divine Light'. At the musical performance in Leeds, I strived for the audience to experience soothing music for inner peace and relaxation for happiness. This was my aim going forward and it set me on a new musical path.

Our first concert, on 9th January 2001 at Leeds Town Hall, was themed 'The Light Beyond the Millennium'. I wrote four compositions using Indian notation, but the greatest challenge was how to explain them to Western musicians as I did not know how to write compositions using Western staff notation. To overcome this problem, I first consulted the British Manchester-based arranger David Wainwright. I wrote basic scales and notations for him, recorded my reference voice recording and provided an Indian music score to him. He helped me in writing my score into staff notation. With a few rehearsals with the ensemble, we managed to get the sound I had envisioned. In the end, I composed raga-based contemporary compositions, folk music tunes and 'Vedic' hymns in Sanskrit by adding a group of six singers.



Figure 2 - Raga Jyoti Indian music ensemble concert at The Lowry, Salford Quays

The motivation behind this was to present Indian compositions to both Western and Indian audiences and give a new musical taste to a diverse audience in the UK. To achieve this, we performed traditional music of North and South Indian styles and matched them with colourful projections of Indian culture on large screens. An interesting discovery was that while the European word ‘ensemble’ is more popular amongst Western musicians, the musically uneducated audience was confused by the word. However, I liked to use the traditional Indian name of the group ‘Shastriya Vadhya Vrund’ which means ‘traditional Indian instrumental orchestra’. I composed raga-based contemporary compositions, folk music tunes and Vedic hymns in Sanskrit by adding a group of six singers.



Figure 3 - Indian ensemble concert ‘Divinity’ performing at Curve Theatre, Leicester

Raga Jyoti’s Indian music ensemble composition ‘Krishna’ - [listen here](#)

I composed one piece based in 'Carnatic' raga 'Charukeshi' and six beats rhythm cycle 'Dadra'. I involved Western string players and Indian musicians to play this piece at Curve Theatre, Leicester. It was a joyful and challenging experience working with Western strings players and writing this composition. Pianist Tim Mottershead transcribed the score into staff notation, and I wrote Indian notation for Indian musicians. All musicians practiced together twice. I recorded reference music and emailed it to all musicians for their reference. I sang the alap notes of the introduction and also the song within the overall composition. The audience enjoyed the piece.

Raga Jyoti's concerts featured traditional Indian instruments such as tabla, mridangam, sitar, veena, bansuri, violin, harmonium, surmandal and santoor, played alongside classical Western equivalents and choral arrangements devised especially for these events. The compositions capture the beauty and spirituality of the extraordinary Indian culture.

In general, a group of thirty Indian and Western musicians performed together for the 'Raga Jyoti' music concerts. As per the tradition, Indian musicians always take off their shoes, cross their legs and hold their instruments, wearing colourful authentic costumes while they are performing at a concert. To show respect, the Western musicians did the same for these concerts. It was a challenge for the female musicians to play string instruments like viola-violin and cello while wearing 'sarees' but they managed it with some practice and enjoyed performing along with Indian musicians.



Figure 4 - Indian and Western musicians performing raga music at Curve Theatre, Leicester



Figure 5 - Audience at the 'Divinity' concert at Curve Theatre, Leicester

'Raga Jyoti' has a history of presenting soothing and joyful Indian music projects, such as 'Light Beyond the Millennium', 'Akashganga', 'Eternity', 'Divinity', 'Divine Light' 'Beyond Time' and 'Guru Vandana' concerts. 'Raga Jyoti' is a non-profit Indian music ensemble and is artistically led by me. In the past, we have presented successful concerts in collaboration with the Hallé Youth Orchestra and the musicians of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. The ensemble has performed at many high-profile venues in the UK such as: the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester; the Lowry, Salford Quays; Curve, Leicester; Fairfield Halls, Croydon; Leeds Town Hall; Buxton Fringe Festival; and Oldham Coliseum.



Figure 6 - With Pandit Ravi Shankar, at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

In 2002, we performed one of my compositions for sitar maestro, 'Bharat Ratna' Pandit Ravi Shankar at the Bridgewater Hall. Mr. Shankar encouraged us and appreciated our musical efforts in working with two different music styles.

Shankar (1968, p17) states that "Our tradition teaches us that sound is God—'Nada Brahma'. That is, musical sound and the musical experience are steps to the realization of the Self. We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that raises one's inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss. The highest aim of our music is to reveal the essence of the universe it reflects, and the Ragas are among the means by which this essence can be apprehended. Thus, through music, one can reach God."

Musical Challenges

Having not learnt to write or read Western notation, I systematically wrote all ensemble compositions in the Indian music notation system. For these concerts, music software was useful to transcribe my notations to Western staff notations, but it was not always possible to write an exact score for Indian compositions. Indian musicians use reference notations, and they play music by listening. For them, it was a challenge too when they collaborated with Western musicians. On a few occasions, this resulted in a lack of synchronisation. In general, most of the musicians performed well together in all concerts. I received help from the special musicians of the Hallé, Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) and local strings players from Greater Manchester.

Viola

AKASHGANGA: yaman

FREELANCE:

tanpura, chime, harp...

Alap: santoor then sitar

...Rakesh: Skolam chants *Lento, libero*

(c.3 mins)

RAKESH JOSHI
trans. Tim Mottershead

10

16

22

28

35 **B** Allegro Deepchandi tala 4 16 2

59 2

65 2 2

71 7 hold

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Figure 7 - An example of the Staff notation of my composition, Yaman 1

Brindavani Sarang

ALAP Very slowly, ad lib (follow cello)

Rakesh Joshi
transcribed David F Wainwright

The image shows a musical score for Cello, titled "Brindavani Sarang" by Rakesh Joshi, transcribed by David F Wainwright. The score is in the key of D major (one sharp) and is marked "ALAP Very slowly, ad lib (follow cello)". The notation is in bass clef. The score begins with a "Flute alap" section. The music is written on a single staff with a Cello icon at the beginning. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 6, 11, 16, 22, 25, 27, 29, 32, 35, and 37 indicated. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks such as accents and slurs. A box labeled "A" is placed above measure 29. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Figure 8 - An example of the Staff notation of my composition, Yaman 2

There are a limited number of Indian musicians in the UK who play traditional instruments with expertise. I searched for and approached quality musicians for the projects. To make this happen, I wrote the funding bid, sponsorship proposals, grant application and undertook managerial work. I managed thirty musicians, booked the venues and prepared marketing, technical and artistic plans. Managing the projects single-handedly without an administrator, tour manager or marketing staff was challenging. As a leader, I took the responsibility of managing all musicians, artistic delivery of the projects and the overall quality of the ensemble. Since that time, I have delivered many successful concerts with passion and enthusiasm. In the past, Arts Council England, Manchester Airports Group, Conlon Opticians, Tameside council and community centers have provided their support to these projects.



Figure 9 - Western musicians in Indian costumes.

Rakesh Joshi as Raga Pianist



Figure 10 - Rakesh Joshi playing raga music on piano, Hallé St. Peter's Square, Manchester

Traditionally, in Indian classical music concerts, harmonium, piano, keyboards are not used because, the instruments cannot create the 'meend' effect (sliding the notes) and that is the most important part of raga music. The musicians can play only contemporary or folk tunes on harmonium and piano. It is rare that the audience members see the musician playing raga music on the grand piano. It is fascinating for the musicians and audience to hear Indian music being played on a Western instrument. For a few of the Indian choir songs, I play grand piano instead of harmonium. It provided a rich sound and support to the choir singers. Also, for the audience, it was an innovative approach to music playing Western instruments with an Indian choir. In 2018, I started performing North and South Indian ragas on piano myself, accompanied by a tabla player.

Raga Piano concert recording - [Listen here](#)

A screenshot of a website event page for The Bridgewater Hall. The header includes the hall's logo and navigation links: 'My Account', 'Seating Plan', 'Gift Vouchers', 'Conferences and Events', 'What's On', 'Your Visit', 'Booking Info', and 'Search'. The main content area features a photo of Rakesh Joshi at the piano. To the right of the photo, the text reads: 'Rakesh Joshi', 'A Little Bite Music', 'Friday 31 May 2019 12.45pm', and a red warning icon with the text 'This event has passed'. Below the photo, the text says 'Saleel Tambe tabla' and 'Join accomplished musician and composer Rakesh Joshi on piano accompanied by tabla for a concert of Indian classical raga and folk tunes.'

Figure 11 - Marketing information of piano recital.

Shakti Vrund: Folk Music Group



Figure 12 - Shakti Vrund performing folk music and dancers dancing with live music, Liverpool

In 2008, I started an Indian folk music group called 'Shakti Vrund' UK. This group performs traditional folk music from Gujarat (Northwest India) such as 'garba', 'raas', 'duha', 'chhand', 'sugam sangeet' (singing poems, sonnets and devotional songs) and folk songs from various parts of Gujarat. For many years, during the 'Navratri' dance festival, our group performed for nine nights in Liverpool by special invitation. For the folk songs, I invited traditional instruments players such as dhol, dholak, tabla, shehnai, bansuri and a variety of percussion. I sang as the main singer and three female vocalists joined me in the chorus. I played the harmonium while singing assisted by the keyboard, flute and dhol players. Hundreds of audience members wearing traditional costumes danced to our live music performing non-stop for an hour. I also wrote my own lyrics and music. I prefer to sing more traditional folk songs rather than mixing with modern songs. I included selected Bollywood film songs that match the folk rhythm patterns.



Figure 13 - Shakti Vrund musicians and singers, concert in Liverpool.

Gujarati folk song: Garbo, solo and chorus singers singing in Liverpool - [Listen here](#)

Bharatiya Vrund Gaan (BVG): the Indian adult choir and SHIVA: the Indian youth choir



Figure 14 - Logo of the Indian choir group.

‘Bharatiya Vrund Gaan’ is the Sanskrit name of the adult choir, popularly called BVG for short. I was my aspiration to create an Indian choir and was enthusiastic about introducing this concept. After researching online and spoke to a few Indian vocal teachers, community organisations and music schools and noticed that there was no regularly performing Indian choir in the UK. However, there were a few regional choirs who sing occasionally in specific languages for folk festivals and community events. Therefore, I introduced the concept in the UK. I aspire to offer a new musical experience to audiences in the UK and Europe, as I enjoy solo and choral singing. The Indian choir BVG is the UK’s first Indian choir, conceived in November 2014, thus showcasing this new concept of Indian choral singing in the UK.



Figure 15 - Indian youth and adult choir performing at the Southbank Centre, London, May 2019

It was my ambition to give professional recognition to the Indian choir in the UK and European choir world. Bharatiya Vrund Gaan is a not-for-profit music group. In the adult choir, over sixty adult singers were selected through formal auditions and invitations. In the youth choir, forty talented young singers aged between 8-18 years perform together.

In June 2016, I introduced the Youth choir ‘SHIVA’. These young singers are selected through formal auditions. The youth choir members are learning traditional Carnatic and Hindustani styles of Indian music from ‘gurus’. The singers are from Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Yorkshire, Chester, Tameside, Bolton, Croydon, Watford, Finchley, Harrow, Sutton, and London. Both choirs are managed by seven committee members of BVG Trust.



Figure 16 - Indian choir concert 'Shivoham' at The Lowry, Salford Quays

Both traditional choirs are unique as they sing in seven Indian languages: Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil and Bengali. The variety of songs includes raga based tarana, Vedic chants, patriotic songs of India, famous poetry and songs written by Indian poets and “songs of four seasons” such as winter, summer, monsoon and autumn. I led the group artistically and composed most of the compositions. In the past seven years, the choir members have performed at high-profile venues such as the Lowry in Salford Quays, the Hawth Theatre in Crawley, the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, Wembley Arena, Harrow Arts Centre in Harrow and at an international concert tour in India. The choirs have done collaborative work with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, the Hallé Youth Choir and the Opera North. BVG and SHIVA are part of the Choral Leadership Network, managed by Hallé. The foundation of BVG is in many ways a development of my previous activities in Indian music.



Figure 17 - Indian choir members performing with tabla, dholak and harp players, at the Lowry, Salford Quays

The choir ('Vrund Gaan') is not part of Indian classical tradition, but the singers deeply enjoy the experience of singing together. The feelings and vibrations while singing the sound of 'Aum' and many Vedic hymns are peaceful and effective for life so the concept of choral singing in Indian music is getting popular. As an arranger, I systematically wrote Indian choral songs with notations in Roman script and Sanskrit. I also wrote a few songs for the adult choir and composed 'tarana', based on the ragas. I used a common notation system which everyone reads and understands well, this was the North Indian notation system introduced by 'Pandit Bhatkhande'. For each concert, I prepared the stage plan, decorative arrangements for the stage and technical-lighting plans and also designed marketing leaflets and prepared PowerPoint slides to match each choir song.



Figure 18 - 'Swaranjali' concert at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

Our performance style is unusual as the choir members perform without a conductor on the stage. I trained the choir members, explaining how to remember their singing parts, face the audience, maintain appearance on the stage, apply voice training and keep eye contact with other singers and the musicians while performing at the venue.

The Indian choir: traditional approach, rehearsals and techniques

Some confusion was evident initially amongst choir and audience members over the whole concept of the Indian choir. Criticism also emerged from the Indian musical community that the choir members had not received the traditional education of Indian music, as per the 'Guru-Shishya' 'parampara' (the student learning music from the scholar, as per ancient tradition). In this system, barely one or two longstanding students emerge prepared who can lead the gharana (music genre) and take forward the tradition in the way the guru prefers. As well as these exceptional students, the method also produces the following kinds of musician:

1. The singer who performs for a knowledgeable audience and music fans, and who understands the music, has studied musical raga, tala and theory, but has not fully completed the training.
2. Singers and musicians who perform occasionally when needed as a hobby or to earn money but are not full-time professionals.

For the best quality sound of the choir, I recommended each choir member recognise their basic singing scale, (how high or low they can sing), then rehearse individually with an acoustic tanpuro or drone application from their smart phone. I also suggested recording their voice and listening back for self-judgement and improvement. For feedback, I encouraged them to send me their voice recordings for my suggestions for improvements. I also suggested yoga and breathing techniques to improve voice quality and healthy singing. Daily practice of singing 'Aum' chant in each note of an octave helps fine tuning and is peaceful for their inner wellbeing.

For the voice development of singers, I arranged one-to-one sessions with them and prepared personal development plans. Many singers learn classical vocals from various gurus. I advised them to stay in regular contact with their 'guru' for basic guidance, learning 'raga', 'tala', theory of Indian music and practicing daily. For the youth choir, when the male voices break at the age of 15 or 16, I suggested taking a four months' break from the youth choir. I advised them that they may join the adult choir or remain in the youth choir until they are 18. Before the lockdown, I would travel to Salford, Harrow, and Croydon for face-to-face monthly rehearsals for both choirs. For effective and productive rehearsals, I took a projector and laptop to project wordings and notations on a large screen. With tanpuro and harmonium, we would practice approximately six to seven songs for 90 minutes. Occasionally, I invited a tabla player for the singers to better understand rhythm. During the lockdown, however, we would hold rehearsals online which provides very limited scope for singing all together.

In general, I did not conduct at the choir concerts; rather, all members remembered their parts and sang traditionally. While performing with adults, I would stand in the middle of the choir with other male singers to sing and play harmonium. But for the youth choir performances, I would sit on the rostra with flute and tabla players to play harmonium and give them timings. Sometimes, one of the choir members or I would play 'manjira' (Indian bells) to help to keep time in the classical 'tarana' compositions.

BVG and SHIVA choir members have become familiar with my style and with not having a conductor on the stage. Further to feedback received, the audience found it impressive to see and hear how the Indian choirs perform, dress, sing and interact. The youth choir members always try to keep good eye contact with me while they are on-stage. I have appointed three choir leaders within the youth and adult choirs who organise additional rehearsals for members who need more development. They also liaise with each other regarding notations, costumes and logistical arrangements. BVG and SHIVA choir members wear matching, traditional Indian costumes. Regular music rehearsals help the choir members gain confidence by looking at the audience, smiling and performing naturally. As I do not conduct the choir, I ensured the choir members to keep eye contact with me during the concert, to sing in correct time signature with accuracy,

Instruments for the choir concerts

For Indian choral singing, conductors generally allow an acoustic tanpuro (a drone sound), tabla and harmonium to accompany the choir. In India, some choirs are accompanied by Western-influenced instruments while performing, such as the Mozart choir of Delhi, who use piano and European stringed instruments while performing. For the BVG and SHIVA choir concerts, I use harmonium, tanpuro, tabla, dholak, harp, bansuri, or violin. Indian folk songs sound nice when accompanied by traditional instruments. For the raga-based compositions, I allow only tabla but not dholak (a folk instrument). For the Indian choral compositions, I have not yet used popular string instruments such as sitar and veena. As a composer, I prefer to use the minimum number of instruments to highlight the vocal sounds.

We use these instruments for the Indian choir concerts:



Figure 19 - harmonium



Figure 20 - tanpuro



Figure 21 - tabla



Figure 22 - dholak and manjira



Figure 23 - bansuri (bamboo flute)



Figure 24 - violin



Figure 25 - full size harp



Figure 26 - surmandal (psaltery)

Bringing the choir to the stage

For a quality performance, I always like to ensure clear and precise information provided to the technical team of the venue for the smooth running of all compositions. Most Western choirs do not use microphones for choir concerts. However, I felt they are required for Indian choral concerts because of the nature of the raga, music, and delicacy of the compositions.

For the adult choir, I ask for eight Shure SM58 microphones on stands, for the youth choir, five Shure CVO-B/C Centraverve overhead cardioid condenser hanging microphones, and in addition two BETA cordless microphones for each solo singer. For tabla, two Shure SM58 and SM57 microphones on low stands, and to get a better bass sound from bamboo flute and harmonium, and two condenser microphones on low stands. For live concerts, Shure SM58 gives better sound quality and for this reason I also asked for the same mic for my vocals. In general, I ask for one music stand between two singers and two condenser microphones for the harp.

For standing arrangements on the stage, I ask the stage manager to provide six wide rostra/mini platforms for the singers to stand comfortably and to ensure all singers are clearly visible, especially when the youth and adult choir perform together. I instruct the stage managers to set up one rostra on the left side of the stage for the rhythm players and one on the right side of the stage for flute and harmonium players.

Depending on the venue size and technical facilities, the technical team provide approximately eight on-stage monitors - two in the middle, two for rhythm instruments, two for flute and harp players, and two on the sides for the singers standing in the second row. I liaise with the sound engineer to do good balancing of all instruments and voices and to ensure the vocal sound is clear. The youth choir singers generally stand in the front row and adults in the back two rows. I inform the sound engineers to record the live concert audio via a digital sound desk then transfer it onto pen drive. I employ professional videographers to film the concert. To get the best sound in the video, I ensure that correct cables are provided to get the direct sound from the mixer. I prepare a PowerPoint projection of images to correspond with the words of each song. For each composition, I plan the lighting requirements and instruct stage staff to provide clear white or yellow light focuses on the music stands so the singers can read notation clearly.

On the concert day, I ensure that an adequate sound check is done before the program starts. I send the technical requirements one month in advance to the venue so they can plan and set all microphones up before our arrival at the venue, providing the best sound balancing. An example, how I have prepared clear instructions for the Front of House team follows.

No	Instruments and Vocals	Microphone Requirements
1	tabla	one Shure SM57 or SM58 microphone on low stand.
2	bansuri (bamboo flute)	one condenser or Shure SM57 microphone on low stand.
3	dholak	one Shure SM57 and one condenser microphones on low stands.
4	violin	one condenser or Shure SM57 microphone on low stand.
5	drone sound / tanpuro sound from I-phone. (mini-jack pin required to connect I-phone to DI-box)	amplify tanpuro sound in all monitors (90% volume), for outside speakers (10% only volume).
6	45 choir singers	five Shure CVO-B/C Centraverve overhead cardioid condenser hanging microphones, eight Shure SM58 microphones and two BETA cordless microphones for solo singers on high stands.
7	vocal & harmonium - Rakesh (choir leader)	better vocal microphone or Shure SM 58 microphone, on high stands and Shure SM57 microphone for harmonium.
8	harp	two condenser microphones on high stands.

The following is an example of a sound, lights, and stage set up sheet that I have provided to the technical manager of the venues prior to the concerts.

Bharatiya Vrund Gaan (BVG): the Indian choir

- All singers will stand in two rows and musicians will sit on the rostra/platform.
- Please see the image below to set up the rostra.
- Looking from the audience's perspective, tabla, sitar and flute players will sit on left side of the stage on mini platform / rostra.
- The choir leader will stand in the centre of all singers.
- Please provide a small table to put the harmonium on.
- Please cover the mini platform / rostra with black or white sheets or tablecloths.
- Eight on-stage monitors – six for the singers and 2 for the musicians
- Reverb effects in vocals, for flute (delay and reverb effects) & for tabla (bass and high mid effects). Please ensure that the overall feel of the choir sound is perfect. Good sound balancing is required all the time.
- Small / mini boom mic stands for all musicians.
- We would like to light small candles. We will put each candle inside candle holders for safety.
- On the right side of the stage, we would like to display one statue, please provide a small square table. We would like to light one small light candle there (also in a secure holder and dish).
- We will be arranging two fresh flowerpots on both sides of the stage.
- **Audio Recording:** Please record the live concert directly to USB from the sound desk. We will provide you with a blank USB stick.
- **Video Recording:** Two of our volunteers will record the live concert on a camcorder. They will stand in allocated positions. Please provide a cable to connect the camcorder to the sound mixer so we get good quality sound.
- **Lighting:** Please use colourwashes: Blue, Purple, Gold, Red, Green, Gold and White. Special White focus light on the main singer (Rakesh). Please set up some lights under each rostra.
- **Haze Machine:** Please provide Haze machine/equipment to create smoke effects from the left and right sides of the wings.
- **Music Stands:** Please provide 15 music stands.
- **Stage rehearsal & sound balancing:** We would like to do good sound balancing before the program starts. I would appreciate it if the technical manager could set up microphones before we arrive at the venue, for ease and speed.
- **Overall position: The choir members will be standing position:** The tabla and flute players sit on the rostra on each side of the stage. For the benefit of the technical and sound engineers, I have provided a photograph and video recording of a previous concert to explain how I would like the stage to set up and microphone arrangements.

For the further details, please contact: bvg.theindianchoir@gmail.com



Figure 27 - BVG choir concert image of previous performance

The photograph above is an example of stage positioning, to demonstrate to the stage and technical managers.

Below are images showing the process of the sound checking, the stage rehearsal and decoration.



Figure 28 - the choir members and tabla player doing sound check.



Figure 2925 -the choir members decorating the Stage, during 'Diwali' concert.

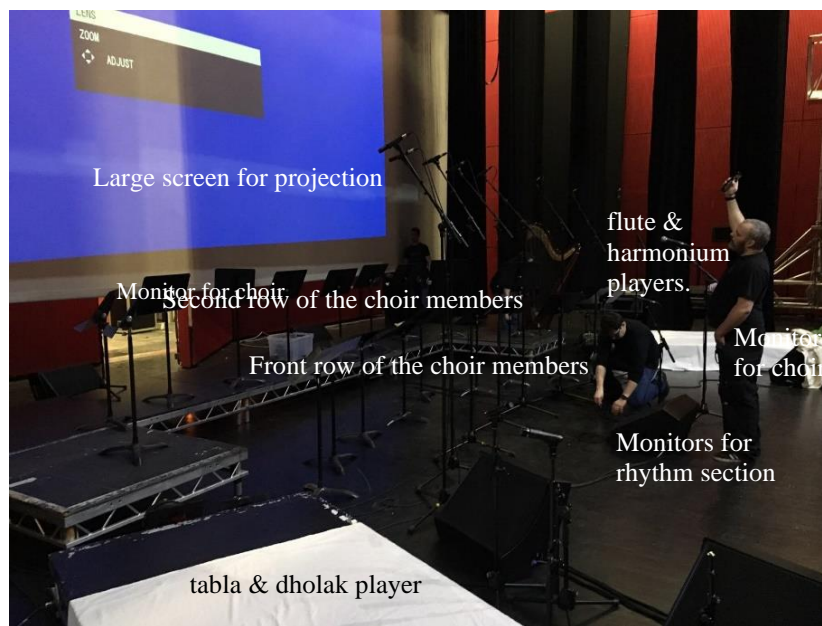


Figure 30 - Setting up the monitors, music stands, rostra, screen for the projection and microphones.

An example of the concert running order for Front of House Manager

Front of House managers are responsible for a live event that is accessible to the public. As part of the choir concert administration, I provide clear information for the venue's Front of House team to help them understand at what time to open the doors to the audience, timing of intermissions to help bar and canteen staff and the closing of the concert. For major venues, it is the responsibility of the front of house team to brief the events team, security guards, health & safety team and the box office team regarding the day plan.

I also arrange distribution of the leaflets at exits advertising our future events.

First Half of the Concert: (Approximately 70 minutes)

Both choirs will sing together for three songs in the beginning. The adult choir members then leave the stage and youth choir members continue.

The youth & adult choir members standing position. Please arrange a second rostrum on the right side of the stage for the choir leader and harmonium.

Interval (Approximatey 15 Minutes)

Second Half of the concert: (Approximately 50 minutes)

This involves five songs by adult singers. I also requests that the event manager announces that there should be no flash photography or any kind of recording by audience members, but to indicate that however we allow photos before the start, during the interval and at the end. I also request that no food or drinks are allowed in the auditorium.

Late entry: Late arrivals will only be permitted to enter before the start of a song, or after the end of a song, not during a performance.

My clear instructions and the day plans have helped the Front of House managers. After the concert, the Box Office managers print the ticket sales report.

BVG and SHIVA choir's past concerts details in the UK and in India

Nov 2016	BVG concert, the Lowry, Salford Quays
Nov 2016	BVG concert, Wembley Stadium for the Prime Ministers of the UK and India
July 2016	Guru Purnima concert, Manchester Grammar School
Aug 2016	BVG concert, Peepul Centre, Leicester
Sept 2016	BVG concert, Harrow Arts Centre, Harrow
Oct 2016	BVG concert, the Subscription Room, Stroud
Nov 2016	BVG concert, Nehru Centre, the Indian High Commission, London
Dec 2016	BVG concert for Samsung Project, Piccadilly Circus, London
Nov 2017	BVG performance for Diwali event, the House of Commons, London
Oct 2017	BVG concert, Croydon Council, Croydon
Nov 2017	BVG concert, Wythenshawe Forum Centre, Manchester
May 2017	BVG and SHIVA concert, The Lowry, Salford Quays
July 2017	BVG and Gandharva Choir concert, Peel Hall, the University of Salford
Oct 2017	SHIVA concert, SSE Arena, Wembley
Nov 2017	BVG concerts in India (In presence of Prime Minister of India and dignitaries)
May 2018	Summer Retreat in Wyboston Lake Resort Spa and Hotel, Bedford
Sept 2018	BVG and SHIVA choir concert, the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester
Sept 2018	BVG concert, BBC sing project, Manchester Airport
Dec 2018	SHIVA, the youth choir concert tour, India
May 2019	BVG and SHIVA choir concert, Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, London
July 2019	BVG concert, the Manchester Cathedral
Aug 2019	BVG and SHIVA choir Music Retreat, Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire
Nov 2019	BVG concert at the Crewe Hospital
Nov 2019	BVG concert at the Manchester Cathedral.
Jan 2020	Project Mahatma Gandhi, Filming BVG choir and Western Strings Players
Feb 2020	Indian choir workshop for the Hallé Youth Choir. Manchester
March 2021	Online workshop with Opera North.
March 2020 to July 2021	Online workshops, rehearsals twice a month (a few national and International choral conductors, scholars delivered sessions).
Feb 2022	First face to face rehearsal in Salford and Harrow, after pandemic.
June 2022	SHIVA, the youth choir concert, Krishna Avanti School, Edgeware.
July 2022	Learning and observing, the Halle's Youth choir and the Orchestra.
Nov 2022	BVG and SHIVA choir concert, Halle's St. Peter's Square, Manchester.
Dec-Jan 2022	Solo concerts tour in India
March 2023	Kaushiki Chakraborty's masterclass, the University of Salford.
April 2023	BVG choir and dancers of Subrang Arts, Epsom Playhouse.

May 2023	BVG choir and dancers of Subrang Arts, Watersmeet Theatre.
June 2023	BVG choir concert and Raga Piano recital, the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.
July 2023	BVG choir and Raga Jyoti ensemble concert, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, London.
July 2023	Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, Wales.
Nov 2023	BVG choir and dancers of Subrang Arts, Palace Theatre, Watford.
Nov 2023	Diwali concert, Manchester Museum.
Nov 2023	'Raga Jyoti' Indian ensemble concert, the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.

Impact of Covid-19

Our last face-to-face rehearsal before Covid restrictions were imposed was in February 2020. After March 2020, when lockdown began, we were unable to meet in person for choir rehearsals. We had been so excited to perform at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Manchester Grammar School Hall and the Southbank Centre, in concerts booked for July 2020 but due to the pandemic all these concerts got cancelled. I had also been planning to present a concert in November 2020 in collaboration with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain (NYCGB) and SHIVA youth choir members, but this plan was cancelled also. We tried to continue rehearsals online, but it was very challenging. Rehearsing online, via Zoom was difficult due to the audio delay which makes it hard to sing together. Usually, when we sing in a choir together, we exchange emotions and energy but this was lost. We continued with vocal and theory classes throughout the lockdown so that we could at least come out of these as better musicians. The biggest challenge was not knowing when we would be able to perform in front of a live audience again, but we persevered in moving forward. I managed virtual rehearsals for small groups of singers for their personal development.

My voice was severely affected over eight months by Covid-19. From June to August 2020, I was unable to sing for more than 30 minutes. I had to cancel many of my music teaching classes and arrange replacement teachers. My doctor advised me to do an X-ray of my chest and throat; all reports were normal. After going through speech therapy and taking medicine, my voice recovered in January 2021. Several choir members and their families in UK and India were affected by Covid-19. The lockdown and online rehearsals were the most challenging, particularly for the youth choir members. This period tested our patience but we held out hope for a better musical life in 2022. During the pandemic, I announced annual auditions for both choirs. I planned online auditions by involving two additional panel members. We managed to recruit six new members for the youth choir and three for the adult choir.

I composed and introduced five new songs, including taranas for both choirs. I wrote the notations for the songs in Sanskrit language and Roman script. In April 2021, I organised a music and arts-related painting competition and announced prizes for the winners. Most of the choir members took part and submitted paintings for the competition. Apart from online rehearsals twice a month, I organised a special online program of solo songs by talented choir singers. I provided them with an opportunity to sing a song of their choice to over one hundred singers and their families. The members found it remarkably interesting to sing for the wider audience online. I invited the Western conductor Jeremy Haneman and Kaushiki Chakraborty, one of the finest Indian classical singers of India, for special online music sessions on voice culture, voice training and new compositions.

In terms of choral leadership, I regularly kept myself motivated by listening to good choir songs, raga music and solo practice. I motivated the choir members by teaching them new and uplifting compositions, holding musical quizzes, talent shows and other arts activities. I am a member of the Choral Leadership Network (CLN) led by Hallé, and through this network, I met other choir leaders and directors via online meetings and heard their experiences and views on how they were leading their choirs during the pandemic. During the pandemic, I arranged two monthly Zoom sessions for the Indian choirs. I recorded many new compositions via good recording equipment and shared the reference recordings with the choir members.

For online rehearsals of choral songs, I used the Zoom application. Rehearsing remotely might not be considered a great platform for vocal practice but at least the members kept connected online whilst based in various cities around the UK. I encouraged individuals to download the tanpuro application and keep the drone sound on at the right pitch for their own tuning of the voice while learning and singing. Everyone cannot sing at the same time due to undesirable echo effects and voice clashes. Occasionally I would ask a named member to unmute their microphone and demonstrate what I had sung. We also faced associated technical difficulties such as suboptimal sound quality due to poor Wi-Fi network, slow internet speeds, or suboptimal hardware equipment in people's homes. I recorded a few online sessions as a reference for the members. One of the biggest limitations that we faced was not being in the same room, hall or venue for the sound and feel. We all missed the togetherness and the overall sound of a choir.

Chapter 3 - Four projects of DMA, music links and testimonials

In this chapter, I will be discussing four case studies of music projects that I have selected for my DMA. These projects explore Indian choir music in the United Kingdom, and they encompass various musical information, challenges, compositions, and choral techniques that have been adopted. Furthermore, the chapter will explain how the concerts were planned, the methods employed to collect testimonials and feedback from music scholars, and the solutions that were adopted from their suggestions.

Project 1: BVG and SHIVA choir concert, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 1st September 2018



Figure 31 - Indian choir concert poster

Venue link: [Swaranjali concert - 1 September 2018 - The Bridgewater Hall Marketing information](#)

In April 2017, I sent a written proposal to the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester to organise a concert for the Indian choir. As the venue was busy with other agendas, we were offered the chance to perform in 18 months' time. The programming team invited BVG and SHIVA Indian choirs to perform at the main auditorium – an offer that I was thrilled to accept. The concert title 'Swaranjali' was chosen, which means 'musical tribute'.

Repertoire

As an artistic director, I decided to present a traditional concert of Indian choral music. The event started with one special song combining the youth and adult choir members in a two-part harmonisation. I invited tabla, dholak, guitar and bamboo flute players to accompany the choir. For the first song, I played a Steinway grand piano and for the rest, I played the harmonium. Another choir member played manjira bells to give tala (timing for raga-based tarana).

To provide a variety of songs and new musical tastes to the audience, I chose new 'tarana' compositions based on a new rag, songs of four seasons, famous poems, and Vedic chants. Approximately 850 audience members attended the concert in the 2000-seat capacity auditorium. The concert was immediately after the summer holidays, and we believe this was why we did not get a full house, despite a great marketing campaign by the venue and ourselves. However, I was very satisfied with the audience feedback and support.

We have a standard repertoire for the choir, using tabla, harmonium, and drone sounds. South Indian flute and a guitar was added to accompany the choir, providing new musical varieties in each song. Given the large auditorium, we adopted a new style of performing with support from additional musicians. During our five rehearsals, the sound seemed good, however, the on-stage impact was different from what we expected. I used the technical facilities of the venue and amplified most of the singers' voices and provided an individual microphone for each of the instruments. Additionally, playing the grand piano for the first song did not work well as the singers were unable to see me adequately, and without a conductor, the timing went out of sync and out of tune. I created WhatsApp groups for the singers and musicians to share music recordings and discuss. Due to the geographical distance between the musicians and the singers, we had only two face-to-face rehearsals together. Many of the new choir members from Greater London and Northwest England had never met before so they were worried about how their voices would coordinate but after the practice on stage, they all developed in confidence. There was great excitement amongst the choir members to be able to take the stage at one of the country's largest concert halls. They had been practicing for the previous few months to sing at the world-class venue. The choir members travelled from Greater London, Merseyside, Tameside, Cheshire and Manchester. All singers maintained the standard and repertoire of the choir and thoroughly enjoyed their time performing at Bridgewater Hall.

For the first time in an Indian choir concert, I invited acoustic guitar player Carriappa Pandanada to play chords for all songs apart from the classical 'tarana'. This musician has a good understanding of raga and Indian music. The bamboo flute player, Vijay Venkat, also accompanied all songs with musical understanding. Tabla and dholak percussionists played a major role in giving the choir a good rhythmic flow. I found obtaining and maintaining the balance in the sound the most challenging part of the concert. The Bridgewater Hall is one of

the largest orchestra halls with very good acoustics, but while amplifying musical instruments, I also requested the sound technician to provide 20 choir microphones and a few hanging microphones. The venue provided us with a box office split deal offer. It helped us a lot as we did not have to pay the venue hire fees.

For this concert, I specially composed a new 'tarana' based on raga 'Tilang' and based in 'teentala' a sixteen-beat rhythm cycle. This composition started with my solo 'alap' followed by short bandish in Hindi language and 'tarana' in double speed. I requested 'Pandit' Madhup Mudgal, composer, and conductor of 'Gandharva' choir to provide feedback, a critical review, and a testimonial for the two music links, which I had sent him. His feedback and suggestions for improvements are in his review provided below.

As a part of my research trip, I personally visited the 'Gandharva' Institution in Delhi to meet 'Pandit' Madhup Mudgal. I was inspired by the musical repertoire and traditional approach of the 'Gandharva' choir. Our choir also learnt one of the compositions from 'Pandit' Mudgal when the 'Gandharva' choir visited UK in 2018 and performed one song together.

Raga 'Tilang Tarana' by BVG choir, 'Swaranjali' concert at the Bridgewater Hall, 1st Sept 2018
- [listen here](#)

Testimonial from Pandit Madhup Mudgal, Gandharva Choir, Delhi, India

212 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110002. Phone: 23233791, 23238784. Fax: 23222840

GANDHARVA
MAHAVIDYALAYA

गान्धर्व महाविद्यालय

Registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860. Registration No. S-933 of 1955-56. Donations exempt under section 80G of ITA.

Principal : Madhup Mudgal

Testimonial for Rakesh Joshi

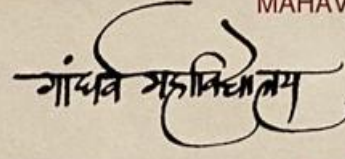
I have heard both the compositions in *Ragas* Tilang and Kalyan, sent by Rakesh Joshi. It is commendable that he has assembled a group of Indian singers and built a Choir with a repertoire of Indian Music, away from India, in England. It is not an easy task to train so many singers, compose and produce presentations, singlehandedly.

Joshi has composed the *Tarana* and has included *sargams* and lyrics too. The selection of the *Ragas* is good, as they are simple and appealing melodies. The *sargams* are precise and sound good too. They are well rehearsed and sung with gusto. The singers appear smart and involved in the presentation.

Critical observations:

A comprehensive texture of compositions may be worked upon. It is advised that traditional compositions of *Tarana*, *Dhrupad*, and *Chatarang* (Compositional forms of Indian Classical Music) and folk music in various Indian languages are incorporated in the repertoire, so that the compositions themselves are a precise representation of Indian Music. Technical and creative improvisations can be added by Joshi.

Figure 32 - Testimonial by Pandit Mudgal, page 1



The following Choral techniques may be incorporated in the compositions:

- Simple harmonization, without changing the pitch, may be employed.
- Perpetual canon or Infinite canon singing (originating in Italy and France) may be beautifully incorporated in the Indian style of Choral singing.
- Echo singing may also be used.

Before the performances, the Choir members are required to do simple voice exercises to warm up. It is advised that they have regular meetings with Joshi for voice training (may be once in a week or two). Voice exercises in the ascending and descending orders, in different tempi are recommended to achieve a better level of voice production. Visiting experts of Indian choral music may be invited to train the singers.

The Harmonium and other Instruments may be placed on both the sides and played by professional players. The Choir needs to be conducted by someone from the front, preferably by Joshi, as the singers need to focus on the Conductor to be able to bring precision to the performances.

Madhup Mudgal

Conductor – Gandharva Choir

Principal

Gandharva Mahavidyalaya

New Delhi, India

Adoption from the feedback

After receiving feedback from Mr. Mudgal, we incorporated technical and improvisational elements of Indian singing into our tarana compositions to better reflect the mood and flavour of the raga. We utilized simple part singing techniques from the same pitch of the first note (Sa) and the third note (Ga) of choral compositions, which sounds better when performed in the correct tuning. We planned to teach Indian choir singers the perpetual canon singing technique and introduce echo singing with overlapping lines at the beginning and end of the song. To implement these changes, we scheduled two face-to-face vocal rehearsals per month, in addition to one online rehearsal, to discuss notation, pronunciation, and lyrics of the new songs.

I realised the value of having a conductor for our concert in November 2022. I conducted a couple of compositions as well as playing piano alongside harmonium, bansuri and harp in other pieces. This change was effective and choir singers developed their confidence to sing in the correct time signature. For example, please find two music links below to listen to the choir singing in two parts.

- A prayer: Teri Aaradhna Karu - [listen here](#)
- Tabla Tarana - [listen here](#)

To ensure all choral singers sing in tune at the concert, I introduced warm-up practice. To follow up on this suggestion and to learn further, in March 2023, I invited Kaushiki Chakraborty, one of the finest classical singers of India to train us with voice culture and to teach us new 'tarana' composition. In the future, I would also invite Western and Indian choral scholars to provide us with advanced training to develop quality.



Figure 34 - Kaushiki Chakraborty's masterclass at the University of Salford

Project 2 - SHIVA and BVG concert tour to India, 20th to 30th December 2018



Figure 265 - Rehearsal in progress with the musicians in India and the choir singers

The second project of my DMA commentary involves an elucidation and illustration of Indian choir concerts in India. This project offers an opportunity for readers to gain insights into the planning, execution, and management of international choir concerts. In December 2017, the BVG adult choir was invited to perform in India and owing to the success of the concert and positive feedback from the audience, the sponsor extended another invitation for the following year. For this special international concert, I decided to take twelve youth choir and six adult choir singers to India. The sponsor made a specific request to include youth choir members to perform selected choir songs. In order to support the children, one parent per child was invited to accompany them on the trip, as it was a major decision to take them to India and we felt that the parents could better look after and support their child in this regard. Furthermore, the sponsor partly sponsored the parents' flight tickets too.

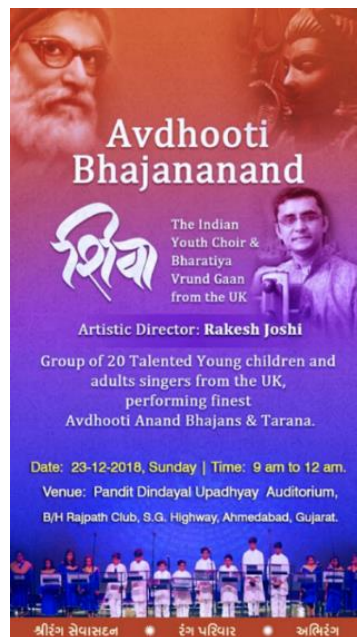


Figure 36 - Poster of the concert in India.

To make this happen I prepared thirty choral songs. Most of the songs were spiritual 'bhajans', as well as a few Vedic chants, raga-based 'tarana' and songs of nature. It was my responsibility to prepare their musical accuracy. I taught the pronunciations of the songs to the British-born youth choir members. The six adult choir members supported them well as they had been to India the year before with the adult choir. The members from Greater London and Northwest England attended several rehearsals with additional regional rehearsals for further assistance. I wrote all choir songs in Roman script and ensured that the young members were ready to perform for the international concert, where the Indian audience were not only more receptive to but also critical of the Indian songs. For these concerts, I selected a few 'mantras' and 'Rchas' from Rgveda and Samaveda. Most of the compositions featured 'slokas' and 'mantras'.



Figure 37 - Concert in Ahmedabad, India



Figure 38 - the Indian youth choir concert and an audience at Sanjeevkumar Auditorium in Surat, India

Since we were to perform in a different country, all members were advised to consult their doctor and take any necessary medicines, to ensure they were taking care of their voices and health. We also selected a new set of costumes for our concert in India. I compromised with the standard musical repertoire to adapt to the requirements of the concert, as the sponsor had requested that we perform songs written by poet 'Rang Avdhoot' I composed new songs that fit the Indian choral repertoire by adding new musical arrangements to the songs such as humming, 'alap', harmonizations, 'taan' (raga-based notation singing), 'slokas' and chants. It was new for the Indian audience to see the choir performing Vedic and religious songs in this modern style.



Figure 39 - the youth choir performing at D.N. High school auditorium, Anand, India

The most challenging part of the rehearsals and concerts was performing with local Indian musicians whom we had never met before. Before our first concert, we had two face-to-face rehearsals of twenty compositions. The choral compositions sounded exactly as I had hoped, and the expert musicians accompanied us well with their specialist knowledge. Along with the new songs, we also performed traditional ‘tarana’ compositions and choral songs. ‘Tarana’ compositions does not include lyrics or words, instead it includes syllable such as ‘derena’, ‘aum tanana’, ‘dwin tanana’, ‘udani tanadere’, etc...It is more joyful as it includes notation singing in fast speed. Indian audiences said that they found it remarkably interesting listening to youth choir members from the UK singing Indian songs with confidence. Most of the songs were in Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit languages, however, not all choir members speak Indian languages in their day-to-day life in England. I fixed the sequence of the songs based on the pitch and varieties of the songs. We performed concerts at three venues:

1. Pandit Dindayal Auditorium, Ahmedabad with 1500 attendees
2. Sanjeev Kumar Auditorium Surat with 1200 audience attendees
3. Prarthna Mandir, D.N. High School, Anand with 400 attendees

The venues provided technical facilities such as microphones, monitors, projector and screen. We sent all our technical requirements one month in advance so the venue could provide live sound reinforcement and lighting. All the concerts were sold out: it was an amazing experience for the youth choir members to go to India and perform for a new, and large, audience. Some of the young members had stage fright before the first concert but then with appreciation and applause from the audience, they built up their confidence. The concert was live streamed worldwide, with over 20,000 people watching and enjoying it. One of the concerts took place at my high school auditorium, which was a personal honour for me. We received particularly good feedback from all three concerts. The only criticism from a local music group was that the youth choir members were not in tune and their Sanskrit pronunciation was not accurate. However, very few of them realised they were British-born Indian children. Overall, this music project was highly successful. Many local Indian musicians, singers, and my teachers came to see the Indian choir concert.

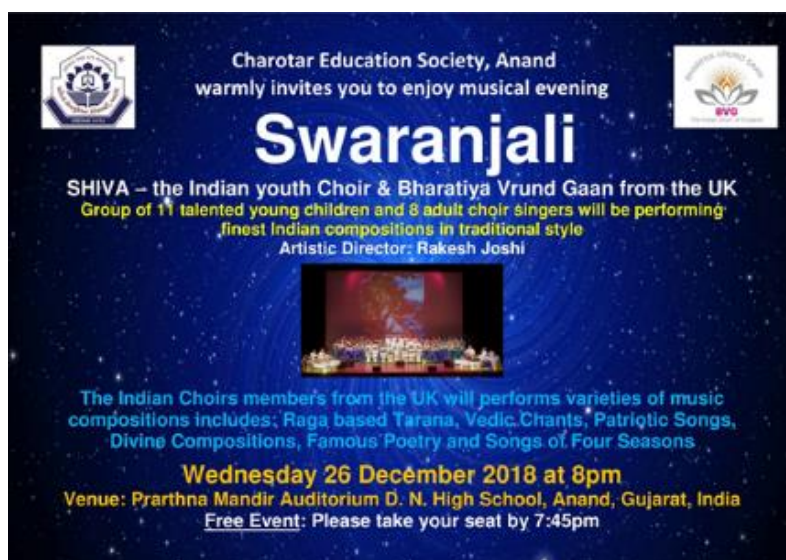


Figure 40 - Poster of the concert in India



Figure 41 - Rakesh Joshi with Indian musicians.

Composition 1: 'Bhairavi Tarana' performed with soloist and the youth choir - [Listen here](#)

This composition starts with my solo song, followed by the 'tarana' (notation singing in raga Bhairavi) by the youth choir members. The song is written in Sanskrit by 'Rang Avdhoot' set to Ektala, twelve beats rhythm cycle. The Tarana was composed in teentala set to sixteen beats rhythm cycles. At the beginning of the song, I am singing 'mantra' and 'shloka' about 'guru', the divine scholar.

Composition 2: 'Shiv Panchakshar Stotra' by the youth choir - [Listen here](#)

In this composition, the youth choir members sing raga 'Bhupali' based composition set to 'Dadra tala'. It has a six beats rhythm cycle that I composed. In the beginning we use mantras followed by 'tarana' and 'alap' between each verse.



Figure 42 - tabla, dholak and percussions players



Figure 43 - traditional Indian wind instrument, 'shehnai'



Figure 27 - Indian choir trip to the 'Laxmivilas' Palace, India

Testimonial and critical review from Matthew Hamilton, Hallé Choir Choral Director

In April 2019, I submitted one of my compositions to Matthew Hamilton, Hallé Choir Choral Director, seeking a testimonial, critical review, feedback, and suggestions on how to enhance the quality of Indian choral music in the future. My objective was to understand the impact of Indian arrangements and compositions on Western audiences, listeners, and non-Indian choral singers. I had previously collaborated with the Hallé choir, ensemble, and Matthew on several occasions. The purpose of submitting the composition for review to Matthew was to get feedback and suggestions for raising the standard of music of the Indian choir to that of Western choral styles. Some of the questions posed to Matthew, along with his responses, are as follows:

As a Western musician, composer and conductor, what is your artistic view of the Indian choir compared to the Western choir – Hallé Youth-Adult choir? What do you hear and see differently compared to Western choirs?

The biggest difference is the tuning system and melodic scale, and the music seems mostly linear with drones rather than vertical harmonisation. In terms of singing, the tone production is different, and based on a more natural vocal production than Western bel-canto sound. This gives a vibrant, open sound when the whole choir is singing. The virtuosity of the embellished lines is impressive and reminds me of vocal lines in Bach's music being as virtuosic as his instrumental writing.

Re: Indian music and compositions, what is your opinion? Do you think British audiences will find a new taste in music? Is it difficult or joyful?

I think there is no reason that British audiences couldn't find a taste for Indian music. Concert presentation would be an important aspect of introducing this music to people who are unaware of the tradition – explanations in the concert of the structure or nature of the music, and how it is put together, as well as information about the text and meaning, and the cultural background of each piece would give an unfamiliar audience a good way into this music. Educating an audience, I think is key to helping them appreciate music from a different tradition.

Re: Harmonisation in Gospel and Western choir – how do you see in the Indian choir performance? Any suggestions?

The 2-part harmony between men and women is effective in the larger choir piece. It's really a melody and countermelody, I think. Perhaps it's hard to harmonise in a Western sense because of the drone accompaniment. It might be interesting to explore whether 3-part counter melodies are possible as a next step.

What do you think we should do to improve the quality of Indian choir?

The quality of sound, particularly from the larger group, is very good. In the smaller group the sound is not quite so impressive, but that may be partly due to the amplification used, with each singer mic'd individually – some individual voices stick out. Again, in the smaller group, there isn't always complete unification and intonation is sometimes off in the more vocally athletic sections – rehearsing these bits slowly and carefully would help. Because there is no conductor, not all the singers know where to focus their performance. Some look out at the audience and are very engaging to look at. Others look down at their music, or at each other, and don't seem so happy to be on the stage! If all of them were helped to sing out joyfully to the audience, this would really improve the effect of the performance.

Suggestions of the Indian & Western choir performing together in the future.

It would be fascinating to explore this. Particularly looking at Western-style harmonisation for Indian Choirs and at unison scale-based melodies and tuning systems for western choirs.

Matthew Hamilton

Hallé Choir Choral Director

Hallé Concerts Society

The Bridgewater Hall | Manchester | M1 5HA

www.halle.co.uk

Adoption from the feedback

Taking into consideration the valuable feedback from Hallé's choral director I needed to make changes for improvement in the choir performances and development of future concerts. Some of the changes for improving the Indian choral singing include:

- **Improving overall tuning system** and melodic scale without relying too much on the drone's sound and use vertical harmonisation. I would introduce western scale singing system and voice culture by inviting Western conductors for regular masterclasses.
- For future concerts, **I would introduce the music composition to people who are unaware of the tradition** with explanations about the choral structure, information about the raga music and tala by adding details in the program note I put together. I would also add the cultural background of each piece to give an unfamiliar audience a good way into this music. I agree that educating an audience is key to helping them to understand, appreciate and enjoy music from a different tradition.
- To improve the overall sound quality of the youth choir, **I would plan weekly rehearsals to have more voice training and advice on pronunciation, tuning and understanding Indian rhythm.** In the future, I would like to provide an opportunity for Indian youth choir members to see the Western youth choir concert to learn how they sing in parts. I would also help them improve their unification and intonation. I noted and recognized that without a conductor a few young members were missing the beats and losing their focus. **I would now conduct all compositions myself and appoint another harmonium player to take my place.**
- I agree that stage discipline is incredibly important. I would teach the values of stage discipline. I noticed that when young members come on the stage for the first time, they look worried and have stage fright. **I would help them to sing out joyfully to the audience for an effective and happy performance.**
- **My next plan for the choir is to introduce three-part singing.** By teaching them simple compositions and in focused rehearsals, I would introduce this technique, without using a drone or using a softer sounding drone.
- I also sent my proposals to Hallé and NYCGB to see if there was any scope to **work together for future concerts.**

Project 3 - 'Swaranjali' concert by BVG and SHIVA, Southbank Centre, London, 12th May 2019



Figure 285 - 'Swaranjali' concert leaflet for the concert in London

It was my aspiration to showcase the choir concert at the international platform of the Purcell Room, situated in Southbank Centre, London, with a seating capacity of 300. Being a composer based in Manchester, it was a significant challenge to attract an audience in London. To address this, the management committee and I collaborated to devise an artistic and marketing plan. To ensure financial viability, I formulated a financial plan after analysing relevant data from previous projects. Additionally, I sought the feedback of the choir members regarding their experiences with previous concerts, both positive and negative, through an open discussion.

In preparation for a concert at the Purcell Room in London, I took great care in selecting and composing a suitable musical repertoire for the Indian choir. As the audience had never experienced an authentic Indian concert before, I composed some brand-new choral music composition resulting in twelve songs to fill the two-hour concert. To ensure that the choir members were well prepared, I travelled twice a month to Croydon and Harrow for rehearsals and led the Northwest rehearsals in Salford. In the interim, I conducted online rehearsals and recorded each composition, which I then shared with the choir members via regional WhatsApp groups. To facilitate a smooth learning process, I wrote all choir songs and notations in Roman script and Sanskrit. Teaching Indian language songs to British-born youth choir members proved to be a significant challenge, as I had to work hard to ensure their pronunciation was authentic. To address this, I appointed two youth choir leaders to assist with rehearsals and provide additional support to new members.

One of the challenges encountered during rehearsals was the skill base singers who lacked training in Indian classical music, especially in singing raga-based notations. Consequently, it was necessary to make adjustments by asking these individuals to remain silent during specific parts of the compositions. Similarly, community singers found it difficult to perform raga-based compositions with classical rhythms, as most of them lacked formal training in classical singing. Additionally, some North Indian singers struggled with pronouncing South Indian language songs. Consequently, it was necessary to request these individuals to refrain from singing in a couple of songs. However, the easiest part of the rehearsal process was meeting in person during sectional rehearsals, as eye-to-eye contact between singers and musicians is essential for achieving a quality performance.

There were several other challenges, such as needing to raise ticket prices to cover costs, and event marketing. We also had to prepare our chaperone's policy to match government guidelines for which guidelines from Hallé and NYCGB was an invaluable help. We had to pay additional fees to four professional chaperones which was an unexpected cost, but it was the legal requirement for all national venues. Fortunately, we overcame these challenges with great support from other choral networks. I worked proactively and liaised with the technical, marketing, and public relations teams. Whilst leading the choral artistic and musical agenda, I also prepared the sound and lighting plan, and designed the marketing leaflets. I composed three new songs for the London concert and prepared a PowerPoint display corresponding to each song, which the audience enjoyed. The person who compered was briefed to explain each song before it started, so the Western audience could understand the meaning of Indian songs and appreciate the musical elements.

An audience feedback form was distributed, to identify areas for continue and improve on future performances. The deputy High Commissioner of India and the editor of *Asian Voice* newspaper attended the concert as chief guests. Two review articles were published in the *Asian Voice* and *Gujarat Samachar* (Gujarati newspaper), and these can be found in chapter ten (figures 79 and 80).

Members of audience enjoyed the concept and compositions of an Indian choir. I had invited the conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra who kindly sent a representative to attend. I received feedback from the Western choral singers to include more harmonisation and part singing in Indian compositions to add more flavour which I took on board for future concerts. I incorporated the feedback received and evaluation report into a "lessons learned" review. The concert was a big success and we sold out at the venue with 300 people attending the event. After deducting all expenses, we made a profit of £300. This motivated me to book a major concert at Queen Elizabeth Hall for March 2021 but due to Covid-19, it was cancelled.



Figure 296 - BVG female singers performing at Southbank Centre, London

As a composer and artistic director, it was a fantastic opportunity for me to present my compositions at a world-famous venue. Two composers of the Western classical traditions came to meet me after the concert to convey how much they enjoyed the concert and learned about Indian choral singing repertoire.



Figure 47 - BVG and SHIVA choir singing together at Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, London

Composition 1: Composition from Southbank Centre concert 'Akashganga' - [listen here](#)

This song was originally composed by 'Kanu Ghosh' of Delhi and set to a six-beat rhythm cycle known as 'Dadra tala'. This song is not based on a particular raga and was simply composed in unison. I made musical arrangements, added the harmonisation in two parts and a humming sound. For variety, introduction and interlude music on bansuri was introduced. This was the first time our choir members sang in harmony. In the beginning, a few singers were struggling to hold their notes while singing across parts, but with rehearsal, they managed to perform with confidence.

One of the audience members made a valuable comment that the overall sound of this song had poor intonation and was out of range because the adults and youth singers were singing together. I realised my mistake and ensured that both choir singers were not mixed in the future for this song.

Composition 2: Composition from Southbank Centre concert 'Tilang Tarana' - [listen here](#)

This 'tarana' piece is based on the North Indian raga 'Tilang'. Raga 'Tilang' is a pentatonic raga using the ascending notes Sa Re Ga Pa Ni Sa 'and descending notes Sâ Ni Pa Ga Re Sa. The composition starts with the Hindi 'bandish' 'Mujhe Koi Krishna Dikhao' followed by tarana. This original song was written in Gujarati and composed by the music scholar 'Krupalvanand'. I translated the wording into Hindi language and composed 'tarana' with new musical arrangements set to Teentala, a sixteen-beat rhythm cycle. The adult choir singers liked this new composition popularly known as 'Madhuban'. For non-classically trained singers it was challenging as there are many raga-based notes and tarana at a very fast speed. They therefore struggled to recite this. Extra rehearsals were provided for these singers so they could sing in the appropriate time signature and tune but there were still some issues with fifty singers singing in unison.

An audience member, a Carnatic musician, sent in a constructive comment, that the digital drone volume was too high in the speakers compared to the choir and that there was a lack of synchronisation between the singers, especially while singing notations in that a few singers were slowing down sometimes. I discussed this feedback with adult choir members to improve the performance for future concerts.

Testimonial and critical review from Nick Shaw, Opera North

Following the concert, In October 2019, the recordings were sent to Nicholas Shaw of Opera North for his feedback on Indian choral sound and to consider how he found it different from Opera singing and Western choirs. As an Indian composer, it was important for me to learn from the feedback of Western composer to enable me to improve my work and modify it to create harmony like Western choir. Nicholas made some interesting points and suggestions as described below:

These extracts show an interesting branch of choral music that we don't often experience in the Western Choir. The vocal production and the sound are different. This is a little startling to begin with but the ear quickly picks up the different patterns. The sense of rhythm is an easy thing for the audience to understand – it's possible to tap your toes to the music. I think British audiences will respond to this – it's vital that the meaning of the songs is conveyed in some way, especially for the longer pieces.

Coming from a background of opera where we are interested in storytelling and drama with plenty of movement, this singing is rather more like traditional choral music in the UK with singers holding music and standing still. One thought – do the singers need to have music stands? Somehow, they look like a barrier between the audience and the singers.

One feature that has obvious musical benefits is the Q&A nature – this means singers (or instrumentalists) must listen to repeat. There's then an element of improvisation on top of this – this has obvious cross overuses into the western tradition.

Do Indian choirs ever sing in harmony? It is very interesting and powerful to have the unison songs – western choirs teaching harmony vs Indian choirs teaching their unison would be interesting to see.

Nicholas Shaw
Youth Chorus Master
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Adoption from the feedback

I am thankful to Nicholas Shaw for providing valuable feedback and support. I considered his two suggestions as a challenge and have tried to sing Indian choral songs in harmony in the way Western choir sings and avoid using the music stands. For the concert at the Southbank Centre in July 2023, we did not use music stands, sat differently and harmonized the song in two parts, and were accompanied by a variety of Indian instruments.

Please find a prayer song 'At the divine lotus feet' adopting the suggested changes - **[listen here](#)**.

Project 4 - 'Favourite Tunes of Mahatma Gandhi': Studio recording at the University of Salford, 18th January 2020



Figure 48 - Publicity material.

I organised a special musical collaboration between the adult choir members and western string players, centered around the theme of 'Favourite Tunes of Mahatma Gandhi'. This project was inspired by the unveiling of Mahatma Gandhi's statue at Manchester Cathedral in November 2019, during which the BVG choir performed a song. To bring this idea to life, I secured project funding from the Arts Council of England and enlisted the help of Professor Alan Williams from the University of Salford to transcribe my music score into Western staff notation and make musical arrangements for three songs. We met several times to plan the recording session, which took place at the University of Salford's music department studio. I carefully selected three of my traditional compositions and invited around fifteen choir members and fifteen string players to participate. Prior to the session, I sent a reference recording of myself singing the songs to the singers and musicians so they could familiarize themselves with the tunes. Professor Williams transcribed the score, while I provided Indian notations for the singers and explained the rhythm vision to Yuswin Chavda, a tabla player, and the melodic part to Adina Nelu, a Romanian musician who played a folk instrument from her native country. To capture the session, a professional videographer was hired to film and edit the recording.

An example of the Western notation copy, transcribed by Prof. Alan Williams.

Composition: Rakesh Joshi
Williams BVG: the Indian choir of England

Transcribed by : Prof. Alan

30

3: Amane, Amane

Gently
♩ = 56

A

Rectangular Snip

Choir

Intro.
Gently
♩ = 56

A

Vln. I
p

Vln. II
p

Vla.
p div. tutti div. tutti

Vc.
p

Choir

Vln. I
sfz *mp*

Vln. II
mp

Vla.
sfz *mp*

Vc.
mp

Figure 309 - Music arrangements of Prof. Williams, page 1

31

B

9

Choir

A - ma - ne _____ a - ma - ne

Vln. I

sfz *p* pizz.

Vln. II

sfz *p* pizz.

Vla.

sfz *p* pizz.

Vc.

p

with choir **B**

12

Choir

raakh - (e) sa - da - ta - va she - ra - ne A - ma - ne _____ a - ma -

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 50 - Music arrangements of Prof. Williams, page 2

21

Choir
ma du ma ya ka mal sa-ma sa ma-ta-va cha ra - ne A-ma

Vln. I
mp
div. (1. upper 2.3. lower)
sfz 5

Vln. II
mp
div. (1. upper 2.3. lower)

Vla.
mp *sfz* 5 *mp*

Vc.
mp *mp*

D

24

Choir
D ne a ma - ne raakh - (e) sa da - ta va she ra - ne

Vln. I
pp
div.

Vln. II
pp
div.

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 51 - Music arrangements of Prof. Williams, page 3

For this project, I had to change the repertoire of the choral singing matching to the Western instruments. For example, I raised the pitch of each song from the normal scale, as the violin, viola and cello sound better in keys using their open strings. The original pitch of the songs was C#2, and we changed that to D. The most challenging part was transcribing the score to Western staff notation. I sang, recorded and explained each part of the song to Professor Williams so he could capture the right emotions writing the score for the string players. To get the authentic flavour of Indian songs, Prof. Williams supported and wrote the Western score matching the Indian choral requirements. There was some Western influence in the flow of the Indian songs, but with the singing, it amalgamated well.

Within five hours, we managed to record and film three notated songs and one raga-based composition without notation. This was a remarkably interesting part for Western musicians and singers. The Indian singers had never worked with any Western string players, and vice versa. It was a wonderful experience facilitating the amalgamation of two diverse cultures.



Figure 312 - Professor Alan Williams conducting strings section during the recording

Composition 1 - A prayer: 'Amane Raakh Sadaa Tav Sharane' - [Listen here](#)

This Gujarati song written by Indian poet Shri Sundaram, originally composed in unison by late Shri Dinesh Majmudar. I modified the song and added two parts singing, humming, tarana and harmonisation techniques.

Composition 2 - Shri Ram Dhoon: 'Raghupati Raaghav Rajaram' - [Listen here](#)

This traditional composition is very famous. Many renowned Indian singers have sung it in performances. I added choral techniques along with strings players. It was a unique experience for Indian choir singers to perform with Western musicians.

Composition 3 - Bhajan: 'Vaishnav Jana to tene kahiye' - [Listen here](#)

One of the favourite bhajans (devotional song) of 'Mahatma Gandhi'. This 'bhajan' is written and composed by 'Narsinh Mehta' of Gujarat. I composed musical parts and added choral elements to this solo song. The Indian choir singers sang notations of raga 'Khamaj' and performed with strings players.

Composition 4 - An ensemble composition: 'Raga Brindavan Saarang' - [Listen here](#)

I composed this piece. For raga-based improvisations, no notation was given to the singer and the musicians. They had to listen to my voice and play the same tune in time in a "lead-then-follow" pattern. I chose raga 'Brindavani Saarang' for the improvisation session. I have uploaded these two tracks to my YouTube channel. Many audience members watched it and liked it.



Figure 323 - the studio recording, BVG singers and the string players

During one of my sessions in which I provided an Indian music masterclass for the National Youth choir of Great Britain, I met Ben Perry, the Artistic Director of NYCGB. In June 2020, I asked Ben to write a testimonial on these pieces for the choir's development. Also, my supervisor Professor Alan Williams and I worked together for this project, so Alan understands the nature of my music, my vision and the style of the Indian choir that I lead. Hence, I also asked Alan to provide his feedback in reference to this joint music project.

These testimonials are follows.

Testimonial from Ben Parry, Artistic Director of NYCGB

Dear Rakesh,

“It gives me great pleasure to write some words of support for Rakesh Joshi, with reference to his practical work as a music director and exponent of traditional Indian choral music.

I have further enjoyed listening to Rakesh’s work in relation to his Ph.D. studies. The two songs I have reviewed are live performances on YouTube of ‘Amane Raakh Sadaa Tav Sharane’ by Shri Sundaram and ‘*Raghupati Raaghav Rajaram*’ by Shri Ram Dhoon, both directed by Rakesh Joshi, with string and vocal arrangements in Western notation transcribed by Dr. Alan Williams at the University of Salford.

What is immediately striking is the natural fusion of Western string orchestra (players from Greater Manchester) and the voices of Bharatiya Vrund Gaan (the Indian Choir of England), with additional parts for flute and tabla. The precision of ensemble, balance and intonation is very fine, and there is an inherent enthusiasm imbued in the playing and singing, not least from Rakesh himself, who leads the singers from within the ensemble, playing on the Hindustani harmonium, with Dr Williams conducting the string accompaniment.

As Artistic Director of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, I was delighted to welcome Rakesh to the introductory Discovery Weekend for the flagship National Youth Choir in September 2019, in which he led an engaging and enlightening session with the 95 choir members, exploring and performing some traditional and Vedic repertoire. We at NYCGB think it is crucial for our young singers, as well as our choral leaders, to research and embrace other choral traditions in addition to our own Western culture. The choir members were hugely enthusiastic about the workshop and were very positive in the feedback they provided after the event. There is strong support for discovering music from other cultures – which is what the Discovery Weekend is all about – and Rakesh’s workshop revealed a broad knowledge of his subject as well as an easy facility leading a workshop of this size.

I fully endorse Rakesh’s further studies through his Ph.D., which are so important with cultural collaboration and understanding.”

Ben Parry, MA, Hon. ARAM
Artistic Director
National Youth Choirs of Great Britain
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Aykley Heads
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Testimonial for Rakesh Joshi from Dr Alan E. Williams

I am writing on behalf of my Ph.D. student and fellow musician, Rakesh Joshi.

On January 18th, 2020, I had the pleasure of working with Rakesh, his choir, 'Bharatiya Vrund Gaan', tabla player Yash Chavda, flute player Adina Nelu, and a mixed ensemble of professional string players on the choir's Project Mahatma Gandhi, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Gandhi's birth. I agreed to provide string arrangements for the four songs composed by Rakesh Joshi for the project as a collaborative composition project.

I worked with Rakesh over the preceding weeks to transcribe the songs into western notation as the string players would be expecting this, and then to arrange them from demo recordings made by Rakesh. We then collaboratively recorded the songs with their accompaniments at New Adelphi Studios, University of Salford. I conducted the string players and worked with Rakesh who led the choir from the harmonium and cued tabla player Yash and flautist Adina.

The project was extremely well run by Rakesh. The players also were very happy to undertake the project, felt that the project was of great value artistically and culturally, and that the catering provided was exceptional! I found Rakesh to be extremely professional and easy to work with. His professional standards were demanding, but he achieved these through empathic leadership and general all-round musicianship.

I would very happily work with Rakesh, his choir and ensemble again, and in fact plan a project with Yash Chavda.

Dr. Alan E. Williams, Professor of Collaborative Composition

The School of Arts and Media,

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Adoption from the feedback

Working with Alan Williams while singing choir songs alongside string players was a greatly enriching learning experience. One aspect that particularly stood out to me was the precision with which Alan notated Western music for violin, viola, and cello players. As we look to future concerts, I would relish the opportunity to collaborate with Alan to incorporate raga-based compositions. Given sufficient notice, I trust that Alan would be able to produce scores that reflect the grandeur of a larger orchestra. Additionally, I was struck by the precision exhibited by the string players as they seamlessly executed each note with exactitude, even improvising one song without any notation.

Chapter 4 - Criteria: Vedic traditions and choral singing

This chapter explains what Veda and Vedic traditions are, and how Indian choral singing links with Vedic chants. The four Vedas appeared before the origins of Indian classical music or raga were created. The Indian choir sings a few hymns from Ṛgveda and Samaveda. I often perform a few Ṛgveda and Samaveda mantras before the actual compositions begin to create a peaceful and soothing atmosphere. For folk songs, there is no need to add mantras before the compositions. The Vedic hymns and mantras are closely intertwined with my Indian choral compositions as well as, my musical and personal life. Here I explain how the Veda originated and how the Sanskrit hymns are used for Indian choral singing.

What is Veda?

At the age of seven, I heard the word 'Veda' for the first time during an auspicious ceremony at a temple where a group of 'Brahmins' (Hindu priests) were reciting various Vedic 'mantras'. One of the priests explained to me that the Vedas are the most auspicious of things to learn at a young age. In the Hindu tradition, the Vedas have the status of 'Shruti' (meaning 'which has been heard'). They are thought to embody an eternal, self-existent truth realised by the 'rishis' (seers) in the state of meditation or revealed to them by Gods. During my secondary school, Sanskrit was one of the subjects I studied and found fascinating. I was eager to learn more on how the Vedas are reflected in day-to-day life, music and vocal compositions. During college and diploma study in music, I learnt and sang a few Sanskrit songs in unison, learnt Vedic prayers and attended lectures of the scholars. The word Veda means knowledge. It is derived from the root 'Vid', which means: 'to be, to know, to think, to benefit from' and 'to communicate'. So, whatever is is Veda: the very world of existence is Veda. The knowledge of the world of existence is Veda. (Ram, 2013)

The Vedas are the most ancient Hindu texts in the world. These scriptures are brimming with yogic wisdom. They contain hymns dedicated to Hindu deities, famous mantras such as the 'Gayatri' mantra, various chants and songs of devotion, and even incantations. The Vedas contain all ideas pertaining to 'Vedanta' (spiritual philosophy), 'Jnana' (knowledge), and 'Bhakti' (devotion). It constitutes a vast body of knowledge concerning spiritual values.

Ram (2013) describes, the four Vedas shown below are the earliest Indian texts composed orally in archaic Sanskrit. The Vedas consist of religious poetry and ritual formulas, followed by text layers of explanatory prose, early philosophy and finally, voluminous ritual manuals.

- Ṛgveda is the Veda of Knowledge
- Samaveda is the Veda of Bhakti (devotion)
- Yajurveda is the Veda of Karma
- Atharvaveda is Brahma Veda, an umbrella, celebrating the Divine Presence.

Ram (2013) states, the knowledge (Ṛgveda) is employed in melodies (Samaveda), whilst rituals are formulated (Yajurveda) to provide the speculative stanzas of the 'Atharvans' and 'Angirasas' (Atharvaveda).

Vedic knowledge is classified thematically into three: 'Stuti', 'Prarthana' and 'Upasana'. 'Stuti', praise, is solemn reverential remembrance and description of the attributes, nature, character and function of divine powers. 'Prarthana' (prayer), is an auto suggestive resolution to realise our limitations and rise above those limitations by calling on Divinity for aid and blessings when we have exhausted our effort and potential. 'Upasana' is meditation, the surrender of our limited identity to open out and participate in the Divine Presence. 'Stuti' (reverence for Divine powers) is associated with knowledge (called in Sanskrit 'Jnana'), 'Prarthana' implies humility and action ('Karma'), and 'Upasana' implies total love and surrender (Bhakti). For the Indian choral compositions, we sing many prayers and 'stutis' in Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit languages. (Ram, 2013)

The text layers traditionally include the 'Brahmaṇas', 'Āraṇyakas', and 'Upaniṣhads', but they exclude the late Vedic ritual manuals, the 'sutras'. The latter exclusion was made only in post-Vedic Hindu tradition, according to which the four Vedas down to the 'Upanshads' by the primordial sages (Ṛṣi), while 'Smṛti', "something learnt by heart," is restricted to the Vedic 'sutras' that are believed to have been composed by human beings. (Witzel, 2015)

Hymns of Veda

For Indian choral compositions, we sing a variety of hymns from Vedic traditions. This subchapter will help the readers understand the roots of the Veda and how it is linked to the Vrund Gaan (group singing) as per Indian traditions. Singh (1995) have described, the Vedic system analyses the entirety of music into seven categories:

Arcika consisted of one note only. This was nothing but a musical chant of the mantra of one syllable.

Gathika consisted of two notes. This was sung usually in praise of some king or feudal lord or one who paid for a particular sacrifice (yagna).

Samika consisted of three notes. Many hymns of the Samaveda were originally sung in three notes. This accounts for a song of three notes being called Samika.

Svarantara consisted of four notes.

Odava consisted of five notes.

Sadava consisted of six notes.

Sampurna consisted of seven notes.

The correct way to read, recite and chant Veda

In ancient times, a group of twenty to twenty-five Brahmins (priests) used to chant Vedic hymns in the early morning, afternoon and evening times. At the present time, especially in India, many Vedic schools teach the mantras to men and women. The 'Mandukya Upanishad' claims that even uttering of alphabets from a mantra is powerful and hence describes the greatness of the sound 'Aum' or 'Om'. Since the Vedas were divine in origin the order of every word from their mantras had to be maintained while chanting, as per the established rules. (Shiksha , 2014)

In my Project number four compositions, I introduced Vedic mantras and taught the adult singers four tones and their notations. I showed them how to read, chant and sing Vedic hymns. The singer needs to understand the four tones of Veda which I will explain below. If the singer knows how to pronounce the Veda, then they can recite well. There is a specific way to chant Vedic hymns in the correct metre, pitch, tone, and grammar.

Vedic chants use four tones as explained by Singh (1995):

1. **Udatta** svar (middle tone) is sung or rendered with medium/normal pitch i.e. without any raise or lowering of pitch. Udatta letters are left unmarked. It is rendered/printed usually without any mark/sign.
2. **Anudatta** svar (lower tone) is sung/rendered with lower note than Udatta. Anudatta letters are marked with horizontal bar (_) below the latter. i.e. भद्रः (bhadraḥ), as per Indian music, Anudatta is Komal Nishad Svar (flat 'Ni' note).
3. **Svarita** (higher tone) is sung/rendered with upper note compared to Udatta. Svarita letters are marked with vertical bar (|) above the latter. i.e. क्रतवो (kratavaḥ), as per Indian music, Svarita is Komal Rishabh Svar (flat 'Re' note).
4. **Deergha Svarita** is the extension (elongation of time) of Svarita and is sung/rendered with upper note twice (in time scale) compared to Udatta. Deergha Svarita letters are marked with double vertical bar (||) above the latter.

For example, I include in our repertoire the 'Rv mantra' 1.081.01 with Vedic accent in Sanskrit script. The hymn in long composition is called 'Suktam'.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽदब्धासो अपरीतास उद्भिदः ।
देवा नो यथा सदमिद् वृधे असन्नप्रा युवो रक्षितारो दिवेदिवे ॥

ā | nah | bhadraḥ | kratavaḥ | yantu | viśvataḥ | adabdhāsaḥ | apari-itāsaḥ | ut-bhidaḥ |
devāḥ | naḥ | yathā | sadam | it | vṛdhe | asan | apra-āyuvāḥ | rakṣitāraḥ | dive-dive ॥

Translation:

Let auspicious wills come to us from all sides, invincible, not deviating, breaking through. Verily, let gods, be always not careless protectors for us that {we can} grow day by day. (Aurobindo, 2020)

An example of 'Rv mantra' 1.89.8 With Vedic accent in Sanskrit Script.

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवा संस्तुनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।
स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः । स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

bhadram | karṇebhiḥ | śṛṇuyāma | devāḥ | bhadram | paśyema | akṣa-bhiḥ | yajatrāḥ |
sthiraiḥ | aṅgaiḥ | tustu-vāmsaḥ | tanūbhiḥ | vi | aśema | deva-hitam | yat | āyuh ॥
svasti | naḥ | indraḥ | vṛddha-śravāḥ | svasti | naḥ | pūṣā | viśva-vedāḥ |
svasti | naḥ | tārkṣyaḥ | ariṣṭa-nemiḥ | svasti | naḥ | bṛhaspatiḥ | dadhātu ॥
Aum Shantihi Shantihi Shantihi.

Translation:

(We) want to hear the goodness by ears, o gods, {we} want to see the goodness by eyes, O masters of sacrifice. (We), having lauded by firm limbs {and} by bodies, would like to obtain that life settled by gods.

Let Indra increasing hearing (of the Truth) hold for us happiness, let omniscient Pushan hold for us happiness, let Tarkshya with unhurt wheel hold for us happiness, let Brihaspati hold for us happiness.

Aum! Peace! Peace! Peace! (Aurobindo, 2020)

What is Vedic Ṛcha (ऋचा)?

Ṛcha refers to 'mantra' (chant), usually two to four sentences long. The Ṛcha, is the Sanskrit word, which means to praise. Ṛcha can also refer to a verbal composition of celestial sounds called 'shrutis'. The 'Gayatri mantra' is a Ṛcha, meaning "aphorism of Ṛgveda". As a composer, singer and conductor of Indian choir, I feel that it is very important for the singer to understand what Vedic Ṛcha is. Once the singer learns the tone of Ṛcha, they can sing it correctly. The singer should learn it accurately from the beginning, pronounce it well and sing in the correct Vedic rhythmic meter and tune. In Project number four and overall, in many songs, I use Vedic Ṛchas at the beginning of the composition.

This Vedic Ṛcha is very important in my personal life. Chanting the 'Gayatri mantra' in the morning is part of my daily routine and in many auspicious rituals, local communities invite me to chant 'Swasti mantra', 'Shanti mantra' and other mantras for the religious functions. The adult choir also sings 'Gayatri mantra' as a part of invocation prayer before starting the concert.

Haas (2023) states, 'the verse Ṛgveda III 62.10, widely known as Savitri, Gayatri, or Gayatri-mantra, is among the best-known mantras in the world'.

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं । भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि, धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Om Bhoor Bhuwah Swaha, Tat Savitur Varenyam,
Bhargo Devasaya Dheemahi, Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat.

Translation:

"May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall spur on our thoughts!" (Ṛv). (Haas, 2023). The mantra is also a prayer to the 'giver of light and life' the Sun ('savitur').

This 'mantra' is attributed to 'Savita' or the Sun. By chanting this 'mantra', the worshiper requests 'Savita', the divine light to give him intelligence because he is meditating on its luminous and glowing form. The Sun's brilliance symbolizes knowledge and wisdom. If we keep away from the darkness of ignorance, the light of knowledge will come to us automatically. This is the hidden meaning of this Vedic prayer.

The tradition of Vedic chanting

When 'mantras' are recited with the correct pronunciation and accents, it is spiritual healing for the mind, body and soul. The Ṛgveda is an anthology of sacred hymns; the Samaveda features musical arrangements of hymns from the Ṛgveda; the Yajurveda abounds in prayers and sacrificial formulae used by priests and the Atharvaveda includes incantations and spells. Desai (2017) states, "mantra is the form of communication, the nearest Roman equivalent of which is 'hymn', the Indian musical journey also begins with it. We are able to follow the sequence of evolution of Indian Music from this point of commencement, tracing the development of Svaras as well as the seeds of some of its fundamental techniques which were sown during the Vedic period".

"The tradition of Vedic chanting is classified in two streams as explained by Desai (2017):

1. Chanting of hymns of Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda in the three Vedic Svaras or accents.
2. Chanting of hymns of Samaveda (Archika / Ṛcha) in the accents and singing of hymns of Samaveda in four to seven Vedic Svaras, namely 'Krushta', 'Dvitiya', 'Tritiya', 'Chaturtha', 'Mandra' and 'Atisvarya'.

Vedic svar was critically important, as the meaning of a Ṛcha or mantras changed with any incorrect use of Svar. 'Naradiya' Shiksha (teaching), the famous treatise on 'Shiksha' (which deals with the Vedic methods of pronunciation), contends that if a mantra is pronounced in an incorrect note, it fails to express the intended meaning. Thus, it is imperative that the mantras are chanted in the designated svaras. Scholars and students of Vedas meticulously adhere to this tradition till the present times". (Desai, 2017).

The 'Rishis' (the Sages) provided the Vedas with study tools or 'Vedangas', the limbs of the Veda. An understanding of the 'Vedangas' is a necessity for the comprehension of Vedic texts. There are six 'Vedangas': 'Shiksha', the science of pronunciation; 'Vyakarana', the grammar; 'Chhandas', the prosody and poetic construction; 'Nirukta', semantics; 'Jyotisha', astronomical science; and 'Kalpa', the technicalities of rituals. The value of this tradition lies not only in the rich content of its oral literature but also in the ingenious techniques employed by the Brahmin priests in preserving the texts intact over thousands of years. To ensure that the sound of each word remains unaltered, practitioners are taught from childhood the complex recitation techniques that are based on tonal accents, in a unique manner of pronouncing each letter and specific speech combinations.

Mantra - The R̥k

According to Vedic views, 'mantras' are powerful and effective if chanted with full consciousness and attention, and with an understanding of their meanings. A 'mantra' is repeated in prayer or meditation. The chanting of mantras helps to open the heart and mind to clear consciousness, which is the reality of our true identity as a spiritual being. Vedic prayers, raga based tarana and spiritual poems always impart a soulful and soothing mood when added as mantras in the beginning of compositions. They generate a peaceful and serene atmosphere on stage and in the auditorium overall. Sri Aurobindo is one of my spiritual gurus who wrote one of the longest poems in Indian literature known as 'Savitri'. Sri Aurobindo (1971) described, the Mother, a spiritual collaborator of him also explained in depth in her writings about how Indian music and spiritual life played major role in her personal life and as musician.

As Aurobindo (1971) states, 'The word is a sound expressive of the idea. In the supra-physical plane when an idea has to be realised, one can by repeating the word-expression of it, produce vibrations which prepare the mind for the realisation of the idea.' That is the principle of the 'Mantra' and of 'Japa', one repeats the name of the Divine and the vibrations created in the consciousness prepare the realisation of the Divine. It is the same idea that is expressed in the Bible, "God said, let there be Light, and there was Light." It is creation by the Word.

Aurobindo (1971) defines four types of mantras in the Vedas:

- Stoma: that which establishes or confirms.
- Uktha: that which desires or wills.
- Gayatra: that which brings up and sets in motion.
- Samsa: that which brings out into the field of expression.

The Vedic use of the 'mantra' is only a conscious utilisation of this secret power of the word. And if we take the theory that underlies it together with our previous hypothesis of a creative vibration of sound behind every formation, we shall begin to understand the idea of the original creative Word. The true 'mantra' must come from within or it must be given by a Guru. Mirra Alfassa explains in her writing that 'Nobody can give you the true 'mantra' (secret and easy way of salvation). It's not something that is given; it's something that wells up from within'. A 'mantra' given by a 'guru' is only the power to realise the experience of the discoverer of the mantra. The power is automatically there because the sound contains the experience.

Mantra in Sri Aurobindo's poem 'Savitri':

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unalterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;
He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech. (Aurobindo, 2011)

BVG adult choir sings hymns and prayers written by Sri Aurobindo. For example, here are a few other mantras we sing.

Aurobindo (2001)'s 'Gayatri Mantra':

'Om Tat Savitur Varam Rupam, Jyoti Parasya Dhimahi Yannah Satyena Dipayet.'

Translation: Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.

Aurobindo (2001)'s 'Jyoti Mantra':

'Om Satyam Jnanam Jyotir Aravinda'.

The R̥gveda

The R̥gveda is the oldest collection of over a thousand hymns. Vedic hymns are ‘Apauresheya’, which means that they are not composed by any particular person or people but seen or experienced by Seers in deep contemplation (‘drshta’). The poems are primarily hymns praising various gods and ritual elements and procedures, designed to be recited during ritual performance; that is, they are liturgical compositions. The R̥gveda originated around 1600 BCE. The written manuscripts belong to one millennium BCE, although the ones in existence point between the 11th and 14th centuries. (Astroved, 2020)

Among them, R̥gveda consists of R̥ks (hymns) which are employed to praise different deities. The use of mantras is stated in ‘Brahmanas’. It is ‘Hota’, who recites R̥gveda during a ‘Yaga’ (the sacred fire).

ऋच्यते स्तूयते अनया देवता इतत ऋक् ।

Rcyate stuyate anaya devata iti r̥k.

Devata = the deity, r̥cyate = stuyate = is being praised, anaya = by this, iti = therefore, r̥k = it is called r̥k.

The deity is being praised by this and therefore it is called r̥k. R̥gveda is the Veda which consists of a collection of R̥ks. Veda can chiefly be put under two headings.

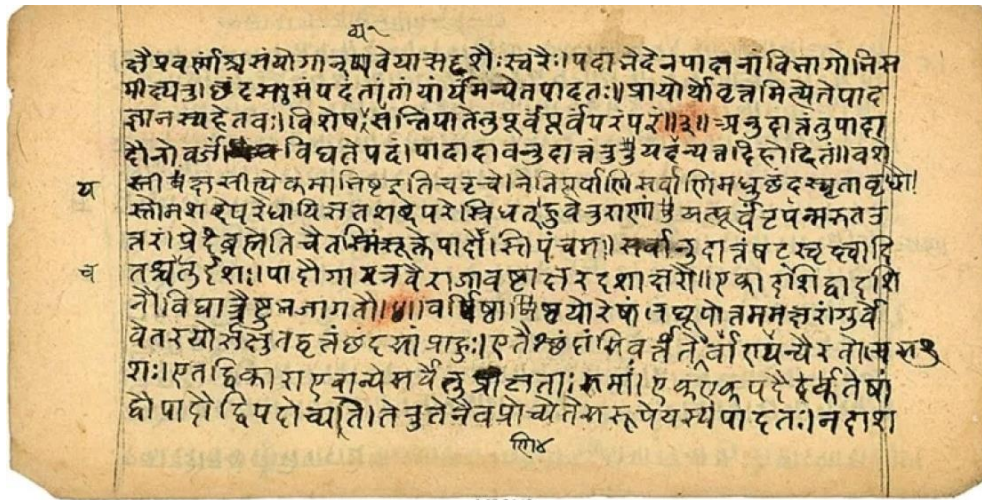


Figure 54 - Original script of R̥gveda, retrieved from [R̥gveda - New World Encyclopedia](#)

Below is an example of ‘Swasti Vaachan’, a recitation, one of the R̥gveda ‘mantra’ written in my handwriting. We chant this mantra during choral concerts on specific religious occasions or spiritual events. Many adult choir singers read the Sanskrit script but for those who do not read Sanskrit. I translated this mantra into Roman script. We also harmonise some of the parts of this mantra. As per ancient Vedic and Hindu religious traditions, male singers generally chant this mantra although nowadays in many states of India and in our choir, male and

female singers both sing 'Swasti Vaachan' mantras. Some of the mantras are composed in a musical manner, for the Indian choir. I have harmonized some parts to give musical effects for the concerts. This is purely a Western concept and has no traditional practice or history in Indian music.

ॐ
॥ स्वस्ति- वाचन ॥

आ नो भद्राः कृतावो यन्तु विश्वतो ऽदृष्ट्यासो अपथितास उद्भिदः ।
 देवानो यथा सदमिद् पृथं असन्नप्रायुवो इक्षिताशो द्वियैदिवे ॥
 देवानां भद्रा सुमतिर्भृजूयतां देवानां शक्तिशभि नो नि वर्तताम् ।
 देवानां सख्यमुप सैदिमा वयं देवा न आयुः प्र निरन्तु जीवसे ॥
 तान् पूर्णया निविद्या इमहे वयं भद्रं मित्रमदिति इक्षिमस्मिधम् ।
 अर्यमणं एङुणं सोममस्विना सरस्वती नः सुमैशा मयस्करत् ॥
 तन्नो यातो मयोभु यातु भेषजं तन्माता पूर्ध्वी तत् पिता धौः ।
 तद् ग्रावाणः सोमसुगो मयोभुवस्तदस्विना शृणुतं धिष्यया युवम् ॥
 तमीशानं जगतस्तस्युषस्पति धियंजिन्यमघसे इमहे एधम् ।
 पूषा नो यथा एदसामसद् पृथं इक्षिता पायुरदृष्टः स्वस्तये ॥
 स्वस्ति न रन्ध्री पृथ्वाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्वर्यदाः ।
 स्वस्ति नस्तान्वर्यो अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥
 पृथ्वा महुतः पृथिमातशः शुमंधायानो धिष्येषु जग्मयः ।
 अग्निर्जिष्वा मनयः सूद्यक्षसो विश्वे नो देवा अघसा शमन्निह ॥
 भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा भद्रं पश्येमाक्षिभिर्यजत्राः ।
 स्थिरैरङ्गैः स्तुषुवांसस्तानुभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥
 शतमिन्नु शरदो अन्ति देवा यत्रा नक्षत्रा जरसं तनूनाम् ।
 पुत्रासौ यत्र पितरो भवन्ति मा नो मर्ध्या शिषितायुर्वान्दोः ॥
 अदितिर्धौर्दितिर्नन्तारिर्दमदितिर्माता सपिता स पुत्रः ।
 विश्वे देवा अदितिः पञ्च जना अदितिर्जातमदितिर्जनित्वम् ॥

(ऋक्. १।८९।२-२०)

Figure 55 - Swasti Vaachan (Sanskrit text), Rgveda mantra in my handwriting, October 2021

As another example, our Indian choirs often perform one particular Rgveda mantra, which follows below. This 'mantra' gives a message of unity and peace on the earth. The choir harmonise the 'mantra' in three parts. I included the Vedic mantras below to the choral repertoire. This 'Samjnana-Suktam' has great significance and meaning in our day-to-day life for social purposes and moral values.

The Samjnana-Suktam of R̥gveda deals with equality among human beings.

(ऋग्वेदः १० / १९१ – R̥gveda:10/191)

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं, सं वो मनांसि जानताम्
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे, सञ्जानाना उपासते ॥

Sam̥gacchadhwaṃ sam̥vadadhwaṃ, saṃ vo manāṃsi janatam
deva bhagaṃ yatha purve, sanjanana upasate ॥

Translation: May you move in harmony, speak in one voice; let your minds be in agreement; just as the ancient gods shared their portion of sacrifice.

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी
समानं मनः सहचित्तमेषाम् समानं मन्त्रमभिमन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥

Samano mantraḥ samitih samani, samanaṃ manaḥ sahacittameṣam
sanaṃ mantramabhimantraye vaḥ, samanena vo haviṣa juhomi ॥

Translation: May our purpose be the same; may we all be of one mind. In order for such unity to form I offer a common prayer.

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥

Samani va akutiḥ samana hrdayani vaḥ |
samanamastu vo mano yatha vaḥ susahasati ॥

Translation: May our intentions and aspirations be alike, so that a common objective unifies us all.



Figure 56 - Indian choir singing Vedic prayer, concert in India

To listen to the British born, Indian youth choir members singing hymns of the R̥gveda 'Sangacchadhwaṃ' - [listen here](#)

The Samaveda

The Samaveda is the Veda of chants and is a most important part of my life. For the Indian choir, it directly relates to the songs and hymns. It is considered as the primary source of Indian classical music and a rich storehouse of mystic outpourings of the Vedic 'Rishis' (Sages).

As Ram (2013) discusses, Samavedic 'mantras' were sung with four to seven musical notes, a practice meticulously implemented by traditional Sama pandits (scholars). The Samaveda is called the Book of Songs, derived from 'Saman', melody and Veda. The Samaveda is the principal root of traditional Indian music. "The Yoga of Songs" is related to my musical journey and inner connections. Samaveda is a symphony of mantric songs sung by the seers of all time in a state of 'Ananda' (joy). It consists of 1875 mantras which, except for about 100, are common with the 'mantras' of R̥gveda. In some 'mantras' there are minor variations from the R̥ks, turning into prayerful songs.

The celebration of 'Agni' (the fire) is the celebration of the divine warmth of life, of the light of the world and of the love and passion for living. 'Indra' is the power of life, the power of the world and the love and passion for the rectitude of living. 'Soma' is the poetry, beauty and pleasure of life, the sweetness and joy of the world and the bliss and beatitude of the soul's experience in its reunion with Divinity in 'Samadhi' (a state of intense concentration achieved through meditation). (Ram, 2013)

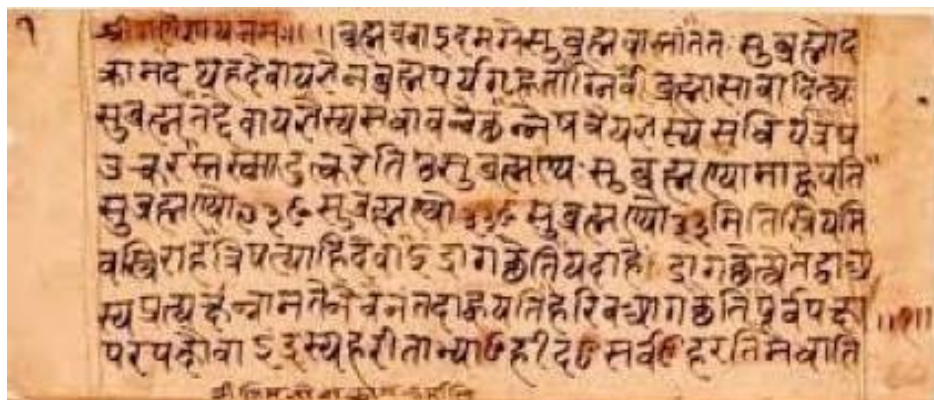


Figure 57- Original script of Samaveda written in Sanskrit, retrieved from <https://Vedicoriginofmusic.in/samaveda/>

Desai (2017) explains in her online journal article that, the Samaveda has two principal parts: 'Archika' and 'Gana'. The 'Archika' is related to the R̥chas of the R̥gveda which are sung, and has two parts, namely 'Purvarchika' and 'Uttararchika'. The first part consists of 650 verses and the second part consists of 1225 verses, so the total numbers of Samaveda 'Samhita' is 1875. Amongst 1771 verses are from R̥gveda and other verses are still regarded as Samaveda itself. The 'Gana' portion includes the same R̥chas in the form of songs. A R̥chas ascribed to a particular Rishi in the R̥gveda 'Samhita' or Samaveda 'Samhita', may be ascribed to a different 'Rishi' in 'Gana' portion of the Samaveda, who is considered as the seer of that Sama or Song. 'Archika' contains only the text of the song whereas 'Gana' contains text with notations.

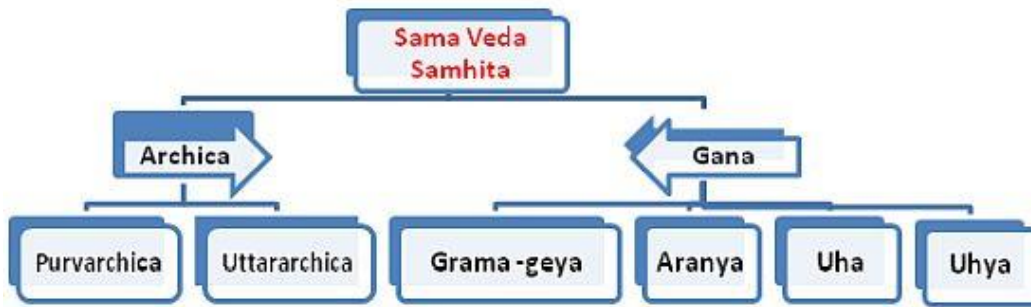


Figure 58 - Sama Veda Samhita table - (SreenivasaRao, Music in Sama Veda, 2012)

Sama songs have five parts:

Prastava - begins with 'hum' sound which is sung by all priest together.

Udgitha - this portion of the song commences with the sound 'aum' and is sung by the 'udagata' priest. This is the main part of the song.

Pratihara - The singer of this portion is known as 'Pratihartas', is divided in two sections – 'upadrava' and 'nidhana'. The main-portion is sung loudly by 'Pratihartas'. The section adulates the 'Devatas' (Gods) to whom Rk is addressed.

Upadrava - This is only a section of 'pratihara', which is repeated by the 'udagata'.

Nidhana - This is the remaining section of the 'pratihara' which is sung together by all.

Sama-Gana (the singing of Sama)

In my third chapter, for Project number four, the Indian choir sings 'Samooch Gaan' (the group songs in unison). It gives an example of Sama-singing. 'Sama', thus, represents the earliest known instance of a deep relationship between religious life and music. Desai (2017) discussed, there were numerous styles of singing Sama. It is parallel to the alap in Indian music. 'Stobhas' are set pace of Sama-Gana, contributes significantly to the Vedic way of communication. 'Stobhas' are used by all 'Shakhas', each following distinguished patterns. There are varieties of 'Stobhas' such as 'Ha', 'Hu', 'Auhowa', 'Aeihehi' but improvisation cannot be done in 'Stobhas'. Improvisation in Hindustani Sangeet (the North Indian singing) is permitted whereas in Sama singing it is permitted only on the 'matras', never of Svras. The Samaveda hymns sung in praise of God are basically religious and philosophical in nature. The musical annotation of the Samaveda is what lends it a unique character. Over the past few years, I have learnt a few styles of singing Sama-Gana and I would like to introduce more Sama singing style for the adult choir.

The Yajurveda

Singers of Bharatiya Vrund Gaan do not sing mantras from Yajurveda and Atharvaveda because it is not possible to recite or sing long mantras. Only the hymns of Samaveda Samhita were sung. They were later written down and only expert 'Samavedin' are able to decipher the musicality from the texts. All Vedic Ṛchas and hymns are like musical nectar, wherein the listener hears pure sounds sung or recited by the scholars, giving them peace of mind. The Yajurveda is an ancient collection of mantras. It comprises 'Yajus' and 'Veda', meaning prose dedicated to reverence or religious worship. The Yajurveda is primarily a book of rituals. The Yajurveda has been divided into two parts: 1) The White Yajurveda known as 'Shukla' or Pure and 2) the Black Yajurveda known as 'Krsna' or Dark. (Singh, 1995). The ancient Vedic text has a compilation of procedures for ritual offerings or prose mantras to be chanted by a priest. At the same time, an individual performs the ritual in front of the 'Yagna' (sacrificial fire). It is practically a guidebook for the 'Purohitas' (priests) to carry out religious ceremonies. The most ancient layer of Yajurveda, the 'Samhita', comprises of 1875 verses, built upon the foundation of the Ṛgveda. The middle layer includes the 'Satapatha Brahmana', perhaps the most substantial 'Brahmana' texts in the Vedic collection. It consists of the most extensive collection of primary 'Upanishads'. Yajurveda contains 40 Adhyaya (chapters) and 1875 mantras/verses.

The Atharvaveda

The fourth of the Vedic scriptures, the Atharvaveda is referred to as the Knowledge Storehouse of the Atharvanas (formulas) to navigate everyday life. This Veda is more attuned to the culture and tradition of the day rather than focusing on religious and spiritual teachings. In this regard, it differs from the other three Vedas. The Atharvaveda is an amalgamation of hymns, chants, spells and prayers that involves healing processes and promotes longevity of life. The Atharvaveda focuses on the knowledge of attaining God through spiritual practice. The Atharvaveda is a collection of 730 hymns, containing 6,000 mantras. This Veda contains three 'Upanishads'. (Singh, 1995)

Conclusion

The Vedas would eventually form the foundational understanding of true religion and provide direction and purpose in the lives of adherents. It came to be understood that there was a single entity, 'Brahman', who not only created existence but was existence itself.

The root of Indian music tradition is still alive not only in music but in day-to-day life. Many people in India and in the world practice the Veda on a daily basis. Through the BVG-SHIVA choirs, I would like to contribute to this ensure the tradition remains alive and developed in the UK and for future generations. I endeavor to do this through our Vedic hymns in live performances and in audio and video recordings.

I went to the Vedic schools in 'Haridwar', 'Rishikesh' and 'Gujarat' states of India to learn and understand more about Ṛgveda and Samaveda chanting. In the future, I would like to undertake further training. Also, I would like to introduce a few Vedic mantras from the Ṛgveda and the Samaveda for the Indian choirs, composing these in different ragas, adding harmonisations and performing them in collaboration with Western choirs, whilst keeping the original flavour of the Vedic style and the mood of Indian music.

Chapter 5 - Contrasting: Western and Indian choral traditions

In this chapter, I will explain what differentiates Western and Indian choral traditions and discuss the different singing methods, techniques, limitations, and styles. Studying this has enabled me to expand the musicality of the Indian choir.

Western choral traditions

Western choral music is sung and performed from the classical music repertoire, which spans from the medieval era to the present, or from popular music repertoire. Most Western choirs are led by a conductor, who leads the performances with arm and face gestures. Stevens (2020) claims the terms choral, chorale, choir and chorus are used interchangeably.

Weigle (1954) explains that tempo is determined by given metronome markings, Italian words, or words in the native language of the composer, sentiment of text, melodic character of the music, harmonic structure of the music, and metrical and rhythmical character of the music. The advantages of having an organised choir are several. An organised choir gives the members a sense of unity and an official channel through which they may voice their emotions.



Figure 59 - the Western choir and conductor: Retrieved from [Cathedral Choir - Manchester Cathedral](#)

Smith (2023) emphasizes the importance of breathing in choral singing: 'without good breath control underpinning a singer, they struggle to hold pitch, control phrasing or maintain vocal energy'. He states that breathing can 'improve the choir's tone colour, agility, range and projection' by improving what he calls the 'placement of the voice'.



Figure 60 - the Westminster cathedral choir and conductor, Retrieved from <https://westminstercathedral.org.uk/music/the-choral-foundation/>

During my DMA study, I went to see a rehearsal of the Hallé choir. I observed that the Hallé used many different singing techniques for the youth and adult choir. During the sessions, I noticed the choir conductor provided instructions regarding posture, tonal quality and tone balancing. I personally met Sir Mark Elder, Music Director, Hallé to discuss how he conducts the Hallé choir and orchestra. He suggested I select a simple song, starting with singing in two parts, then adding additional parts step-by-step to the Indian choral singing.



Figure 61 - Rakesh Joshi with Sir Mark Elder, Music Director, Hallé October 2022



Figure 62 - Hallé Orchestra in rehearsal, October 2022

In June 2019, the National Youth choir of Great Britain invited me to deliver the Indian choral music workshop. During my visit to the NYCGB, I attended one of their regular rehearsals for two hours while Ben Parry was conducting. I observed the rehearsal and noted the details of how they sing, stand and smile. Before the concerts and during the rehearsals the conductor ensured that the tempo of the compositions and singers coalesced with each other, especially while singing in eight parts. I taught them a raga 'Malkauns'-based composition in a sixteen beats rhythm cycle 'teentala'. It was challenging for me to teach Sanskrit language songs to

Western singers. I introduced my session with the basic scale of raga 'Malkauns' and the pronunciation of the lyrics. I showed them how to count the Indian rhythm with claps and wave signs. Two Indian choral singers assisted me. We performed the song for them to demonstrate to them how we sing. It was an inspiring and new experience for the youth choir members. It was also challenging for the young singers to sing in Sanskrit and to pick up Indian music notations. After two rehearsals, the NYCGB singers sang the Sanskrit songs very well. It was good teaching experience for me in delivering an Indian music workshop. In the future, I would like the Indian youth choir and NYCGB to sing together.



Figure 63 - Indian music masterclass with National Youth Choir of Great Britain (NYCGB), Durham, June 2019

During my regular visits to the choir at Manchester Cathedral, I observed how they follow the traditional singing style and techniques to sing hymns. For the past few events, I enjoyed watching the three choirs perform together and in their individual age groups too. I noted the contrasts between the two disciplines. When performing, Indian singers wear traditional, matching Indian costumes and are accompanied by similarly clothed musicians who play the digital tanpuro, harmonium, tabla, harp and bansuri. The choir usually stands in two semi-circles across the stage and may make use of music stands. The musicians usually sit on mini rostra in front, or to the sides, of the singers. For religious and cultural reasons, Indian singers and musicians do not wear shoes. It is usual for the choir to be led by a conductor but, on occasion, it may be led by one of the musicians. Most of the Indian choirs sing in unison, while only a few choirs sing in two or three part harmonisations.

In comparison, the western choir is usually larger and when performing, generally wears black, white or red uniform. It is led by a conductor who stands facing the choir in the middle of the stage. Many Western choirs are accompanied by piano and guitar players. Also, for modern choral songs they use clapping and foot rhythms sounds. Through my observations of a few Western choir performances, I have found that singers enter the auditorium from the audience side with male and female choristers singing from different corners, sometimes involving the audience in popular songs. However, in Indian choral singing, this style is not yet developed, either in the UK or India. Indian choir sings more set compositions either in two parts or in unison whereas professional Western choirs are specialized in singing in eight parts by using different vocal lines.

Also, I attended concerts at the Royal Festival Halls, London and at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Here the BBC Philharmonic choir sang the choral compositions matching video projection on the screen behind about nature and the Earth as a planet whereas for Indian choirs it will take some time to introduce this concept. However, I have used still images in this way, matching the raga-based compositions and matching with the lyrics of songs.

Christian and other choral traditions in India

Ermev (1977) explains in his journal article, 'In South India, many churches and Christian societies have started local choirs to worship. About seven church choirs started in Madras and some churches have hymn texts in local languages in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. Madras Musical Association Choir consists of various people from various choirs in the city including several different church choirs.'

Choral practice in India is divided into two categories. At one end of the spectrum are choirs which are gathered primarily to sing Christian Church music. Appreciation of Church music was built up in modern India through centuries of British colonialism and did not end with Indian independence in 1947. These choirs perform music drawn from the standard repertoire in Western Notation, particularly works in English. At the other end of the spectrum, several choirs sing purely Indian music. These groups have a quite recent development in Indian musical life since 1960. While group singing in unison is found in Indian folk music, Indian classical music is essentially an individual or chamber art limited to a soloist with little or no opportunities for ensemble singing. For the most part, the singers in these modern choirs are not trained in Western notation, nor do they need to be as their program consists of Indian folksongs performed in unison with occasional passage in thirds usually accompanied by a small ensemble of Indian instruments.

In the early 19th century, girls from some families in India were not allowed to take part in singing, dancing or public events for religious reasons. In some regions, however, girls were allowed to learn singing and dancing but were not allowed to perform on the stage in music or dance events. In both the UK and India, singers from the South and North Indian music traditions have created a few regional groups to sing folk, patriotic, religious and semi-classical compositions. It is such group singing in unison known as 'Samooch Gaan'. Historically, the traditional concept of singing chants or hymns in unison has existed since Vedic times, mainly sung by male singers. The concept of parts singing in live choir concerts was not introduced in India until the late 20th century.

A good example of the development of the Indian choir in India is 'Gandharva Choir'. As part of my research, I visited the 'Gandharva Mahavidyalaya' (music education institution) in Delhi. During my visit, I met Pandit Madhup Mudgal, present director and conductor of the choir. Pandit Mudgal described how the 'Gandharva' choir has presented hundreds of striking performances of Indian choral music in India and abroad over the last four decades. Mudgal (2017) emphasized that early in the 20th Century, 'Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar' brought a tremendous change in Indian music and introduced music in a different way'.



Figure 64 - Pandit Madhup Mudgal conducting 'Gandharva' Choir

According to Mudgal (2017), the Gandharva choir was founded in 1972 under the leadership of his father 'Pandit Vinaya Chandra Maudgalya', a renowned musicologist, performer, educator and Hindustani-composer. He was the founder principal of the 'Gandharva Mahavidyalaya' and director of the 'Gandharva Choir'. The Gandharva Choir has successfully experimented with classical and folk styles of music. It not only specialises in difficult classical forms such as 'dhrupad', 'dhamar', 'varnam', 'kriti' and 'tarana' but is equally adept at patriotic, devotional and folk forms. Its extensive repertoire includes hymns from the ancient Vedas, compositions in the 'Hindustani' and Carnatic' styles, 'Rabindra Sangeet' and modern experimental works involving the use of harmony. I also attended one of his music teaching session where he played the tabla and students sang using acoustic tanpuros. In 2018, the Gandharva choir performed at the University of Salford in collaboration with Bharatiya Vrund Gaan.

During my school and college time in India, film songs, devotional songs, folk songs and light music were more popular and adopted by musicians and singers, whereas only a few high calibre musicians adopted classical singing traditions. To learn and copy from recorded music was one of the easiest ways to perform and enjoy music. It was challenging for the individuals to perform their own compositions as it was neither popular nor readily adopted by the wider audience who were used to famous compositions. Over the centuries, temple singing traditions and Veda singing at auspicious ceremonies was more popular, however there were no regular or frequent opportunities for the local singers to take part in these.

In another good example of Indian choirs in India, the Madras Youth Choir was formed in 1971 and founded by Sri. M.B. Srinivasan who was born in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. Srinivasan gladly took upon the mantle of being the composer, conductor, and director of this group with the main goal of popularising choral singing and initiating a mass singing movement in India. Subsequently he was invited to take responsibility for formation the All-India Radio choral group in Madras. The Youth Choir consists of choristers from soprano to bass, practising a variety of songs based on Indian classical and folk music idioms adapting western harmonic arrangements. Many of the members were trained personally by Shri. M.B. Srinivasan to impart the art of choral singing and, as such, this led to forming and training new choral groups in schools, colleges, and various other institutions. The Madras Youth Choir continues its task of training choral groups in various parts of India. (Srinivasan, 2017).

As a more recent example, the Shillong Chamber choir was founded in 2001 by Neil Nongkynrih. This modern Indian choir performs all kind of songs in four parts. They do not sing raga-based classical songs or 'tarana', but their compositions include Western songs, poems, and hymns. This choir adopted more Westernised ways of performing, wearing Western dresses and singing modern songs. They have attracted the younger generations to sing choral songs. (Nongkynrih, 2020).

As a contrast to each other, listen to other choirs of India:

- **Gandharva choir singing 'Charishnu'**
- **'Madras Choir' singing at the Government Museum Theatre**

Indian choir songs: limitations and specialism

In any choral tradition, the songs must be in a set structure to ensure the quality of the choir's sound. Indian raga music is specialised for its unique improvisation style. However, there is limited scope for improvisation in Indian choral songs, apart from singing solo 'alap' before the 'tarana' or raga-based composition, to create the mood. During the composition, the singers do not get much freedom to sing solo improvisation, apart from singing in parts at relevant places. For raga-based 'tarana', I arranged the compositions in two parts with one group holding specific notes, 'alap' and another group sing notations or wordings of a classical 'bandish'. For some raga-based choir compositions, I have sometimes allocated specific solo parts to a few talented classical singers to allow them to improvise in between the compositions, and when they finish improvising, they sing the theme line once so other choir members join in on cue in the next line. Compared to Western choral tradition, Indian music specializes in the beauty of singing the actual notations. By using musical ornamentation of singing notations such as 'alap', humming and voice effects, the overall sound of the song creates a soothing and joyful ambience.



Figure 65 - Indian youth and adult choir concert image at The Lowry

Spiritual aspects

The spiritual way of singing Indian choir music includes the recitation of Vedic hymns, Sanskrit 'Subhashitam' (poems) and light songs such as folk songs of different Indian counties, based on their traditional accents and dialogues in various languages. For these authentic songs, it is very important to pronounce correct words with exact accents by using correct vowels and consonants. For Vedic 'mantras', correct pronunciation and meter are necessary, in the right volume and pitch.

For example, the sloka below is sung by the adult choir and originates from the 'Bhagavad Gita', chapter 4, verse 7:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bharata,
Abhyutthanam, adharmasya, tadatmanam srjamyaham.

Translation: Whenever and wherever, there is a decline in the religious practice, O Arjuna, and a predominant rise of irreligion; at that time, I descend myself (manifest myself in an embodied being) (Bhaktivedanta , 2023)

In the text above, the singer needs to ensure that they pronounce syllables correctly and with the correct accent such as on the word 'yada'. The pronunciation needs to be broad by opening the mouth. The word 'glanir' needs to be pronounced by bending the tongue in the right way to pronounce 'r' at the end of the word.

As a composer and conductor of an Indian choir, I faced challenges when the singers made common mistakes. For some compositions, I compromised and suggested ways to improve the overall quality of the choir. Here I discuss a few situations and my suggestions.

- Voice through head and chest: Generally, singers typically use their chest voice for lower-pitched notes and for when they want to convey power, richness, and depth in their singing. In the adult choir, some of the female singers struggle to sing at a high pitch, whilst in low-pitch notes, they lose their tuning. For a few compositions, I compromised and created special arrangements by swapping the singers' parts.
- Falsetto is a vocal technique that allows singers to hit notes higher than their normal voice can reach, enabling them to sing falsetto and create a distinctive high-pitched, airy sound. The Carnatic and Hindustani style classical female singers sing raga-based compositions from scale G#2 or A#2, whereas male singers sing from scale C2 or C#2 or D2. When BVG choir singers sing raga-based 'tarana', some of the female singers struggle to sing compositions from scale C2. In this situation, I allocated the high and low parts to specific singers in unique arrangements.
- Exhaling more breath than required: This method of singing tires the voice sooner, leaving a painful throat. Carrying a lot of breath while singing may lead to permanent damage to the vocal cords. Some young members in the choir get over-excited when they sing uplifting and rhythmic songs, and they overuse their throat. One helpful piece of advice for younger singers is to inhale deeply from their lower abdomen to enable a larger exhalation.
- Singing like speaking: Sometimes, the vocal tone can appear harsh or heavy and becomes hard on the ears. While traversing the higher octaves, the singer must take care to modulate the voice, keeping the weight of the tone intact. One must try to thin the tone out in the higher octaves, instead of singing full-throated, however, this should not compromise on the pitch or effectiveness. The voice must be trained flexibly to modulate when required.
- Neglecting to train the ear while singing: A good singer must develop a good ear first. One must develop a sensitive ear to one's singing in order to quickly recognise erroneous tones. One helpful piece of advice for singers is to listen to yourself before others listen to you.
- Wrong vocal exercises: The singer must identify the quality of one's voice and the range it can traverse and then carry out the appropriate vocal exercises. This will aid in the improvement of tonal quality; else one might end up losing the natural voice.
- Fine Tuning issues: While singing in a group, there is always an issue of correcting individual accents and fine-tuning. Raga-based songs need fine accuracy and perfection in tuning, but several singers are not classically trained although they sing well. For the raga based tarana compositions, I invited classically trained singers to lead in small groups.

Chapter 6 - Diction: Western and Indian choral traditions

Taking account of audience feedback from our previous concerts and my personal observations, I was intrigued to see how Western choral techniques in improving diction could be applied to some aspects of the Indian songs. To get a better insight into diction, I attended popular Western choir concerts and rehearsals where I observed how lyrics are articulated. There were limitations to what can be used from Western choir that could be applied to Indian language singing. However, there some was scope to adapt some diction techniques like physical and full body warm-ups, postures, vocal production and range extension from Western choral traditions.

LaBouff (2008) emphasizes the Western choral diction is simply the way in which the singers pronounce words as they sing. The basis of diction is found in spoken language, which will be assumed to be English for the current purpose. The essential concept in precise diction is that vowels define pitch and consonants define rhythm. The five primary western vowels are: 'Ah - as in father', 'Eh - as in met, 'Ee - as in meeting', 'Oh - as in home', and 'Oo - as in blue'. In the absence of Indian choral tradition in the UK, I introduced a few singing techniques for the solo and choral singing, by referring to guidance from my vocal gurus and vocal experiences. The techniques include 'palta'(raga-based notes and voice exercises), 'alankar' (raga scales and patterns in various rhythms), 'alap' (introductory note of raga), humming on raga notes, overlapping of voices in the choir songs and singing in parts. Other methods used included yoga, breathing techniques and voice training as there is evidence suggesting that these techniques can improve co-ordination in groups. Taking a creative approach, I created a new 'palta' in raga 'Khamaj' and tala 'Dadra' (6 Beats) as shown here.

1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
SS	GM	PS	GG	MP	DG	MM	PD	NM	PP	DN	S'P
S' <u>N</u>	DP	MS'	<u>N</u> D	PM	<u>N</u>	DP	MG	RD	PM	GR	SP
X			0			x			0		

For the Indian choir, introducing a few techniques of fronting vowels such as pronouncing 'svar' at the right frequency, was an option. The 'svar' should come out effectively while singing, with an open mouth and avoiding bending of the tongue too much, especially for notation singing. For the Indian choir songs, I faced some challenges where fronting and backing vowels are difficult to pronounce for British born singers; they are unable to bring the authentic variation and quality required for the Indian choral traditions. The technique of voice training deals with the correct way of voice production. The voice training refers to controlling the voice to sing effectively.

Smith and Sataloff (2022) states, apart from some obvious cultural differences between the UK and North America, choral pedagogy is exceptionally useful for choral directors, musical directors, singers and teachers alike. There is a useful brief guide to the diagnosis, care and treatment of voice disorders, within the Western choir. Richard Norris's short chapter on "Seating Problems of Vocalists" supplies useful practical information on posture: There are practical exercises on preparing a choir to sing, starting with the techniques of communal breathing, progressing to the development of choral tone, including an overview of voice types and ranges, with some insightful comments and advice on managing the sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses. "Lower voices tend to be less flexible than the higher ones, the bass being the least flexible".

Consonants

Reflecting on my choral practices and experiences of Indian music allowed me to identify that the vowels define the pitch part of the style of singing. Consonants complement the vowels in that they define rhythm.

Hindi and Sanskrit languages also have vowels and consonants, as listed in the table below. It is important for the singers to understand the grammatical use and learn how to read, pronounce, and sing them. The table was a useful tool for explaining to the singers, how the vowels and consonants concept could be applied to the syllable of the raga-based compositions, 'tarana', prayers and Vedic chants in Indian music.

Twelve Hindi vowels ('Svar')

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	aa	i	ee	u	oo	e	ai	o	au	am	aha

Thirtysix Hindi consonants ('Vyanjan')

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	ट	ठ
ka	kha	Ga	gha	nga	cha	chha	ja	jha	nja	ta	tha

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
ड	ढ	ण	त	थ	द	ध	न	प	फ	ब	भ
da	dha	Na	ta	tha	da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba	bha

25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
म	य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह	क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ
ma	ya	Ra	la	wa	sha	shha	sa	ha	ksh	tra	gya

There are five vowels 'a' 'e' 'i' 'o' 'u' and many more vowel phonemes in the English language. Chandra (1998) says that, Sanskrit and all other Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali Marathi, Gujarati and Sanskrit have basic vowel sounds like 'a', 'e' and 'u' and the basic vowels or svar 'varnas' are just these three vowels. The rest of the vowel sounds are made of these three basic vowels and when the vowels are combined, they ideally become long sounds, although it is the sole discretion of the speaker to utter it as a long or a short sound. The time taken to pronounce a single vowel sound is defined as one 'matra' / one unit, in other words, it is called 'laghu' (short). When the basic Sanskrit vowels 'a', 'e', and 'u' are pronounced, parts of the tongue help eject air from the inside to the outside. For 'a', the root of the tongue touches the tip of the uvula; for 'e', both sides of the tongue touch gums and teeth, and for 'u', the root of the tongue makes a passage for air while the cheeks help the lips to become narrow and conical.

Vowels in Dhrupad Gayan, Khayal Gayan, Alap and Sanskrit language

'Gayan' means to sing. 'Dhrupad' is a form of music that is meant to bring the mind to a peaceful, meditative state. It is an ancient science of sound and music that aims to develop human consciousness and the corresponding nervous system. It is the original form of Indian classical music and has been retained in its pure form to date by succession of masters. The form and concept of Dhrupad, with its way of developing a composition, came about around 1100 - 1200 AD, though its origin can be traced back to the Vedas. 'Dhrupad' is a form of 'Gandharva' Veda, the Vedic science of music, which again is a branch of Sama Veda. Although the original text of 'Gandharva Veda', which contained 3000 verses, has been lost, Vedic knowledge is primarily an oral tradition, of which 'dhrupad' is an integral part. (Morfoisse, 2022)

'Khayal' word is a Persian word that, means imagination, thought and logic. In modern times 'khayal gayan' is very popular. As everyone knows, change is a universal law and customs, costumes, language, and lifestyle change with time too. In line with this change, 'khayal' originated after 'dhrupad'. 'khayal gayan' has shorter compositions with two parts only, 'sthayi' and 'antara' versus the 'dhrupad' style which has four parts, 'sthayi', 'antara', 'sanchari' and 'abhoga'.

'Alap' in Dhrupad stands as a testament to the timeless beauty and spiritual depth of Indian classical music. 'Alap' is a combination of an introductory musical phrase, made of musical tones in Indian classical music. 'Alap' is rendered to introduce the melody of a raag briefly or elaborately. The alap in dhrupad music consists of the utterances of 'ri' 're' 'ne' 'na' 'nom' 'tom'. It is universally accepted that khayal alap must be done with the help of 'aakar', utterance of 'ri' 're' 'ne' 'na' nom tom being simple.

There are many Sanskrit songs written in the nineteenth century by 'Muthuswamy Dikshitar', 'Rabindra Nath Tagore', and others. Those compositions cannot claim the original rendition style of Sanskrit songs. Some of the Sanskrit prayer songs written by the sage 'Adi Shankaracharya' such as 'Devi Sureshvari Bhagavati Gange', 'Prabhum Isha Manisha', 'Bhaje vishesha sundaram', 'Bhaja govindam' religiously follow the rules of laghu and guru as their base form of poetry. A syllable is 'laghu' only if its vowel is 'hrasva' (short) and followed by at most one consonant before another vowel is encountered. A syllable with an 'anusvara' ('ṃ') or a 'visarga' ('ḥ') is always 'guru'. All other syllables are 'guru', either because the vowel is 'dīrgha' (long), or because the 'hrasva' vowel is followed by a consonant cluster. In singing these songs or reciting, singers need to ensure the correct pronunciation is used.

Singh (1995) described, the 'Natyashastra' is a Sanskrit text on the performing arts. The text is attributed to sage Bharata Muni, and its first complete compilation is dated between 200 BCE and 200 CE although estimates vary between 500 BCE and 500 CE. The text consists of 36 chapters with a cumulative total of 6000 poetic verses describing the performing arts. The subjects covered by the treatise include dramatic composition, the structure of a play, the construction of a stage to host it, genres of acting, body movements, makeup, costumes, roles, goals of an artistic director, the musical scales, musical instruments and the integration of music with art performance. The 'Natyashastra' is notable as an ancient encyclopedic treatise on arts, which has influenced dance, music and literary traditions in India.

While researching Western choirs, I noted that the two major types of diction elements are vowels and consonants. The basic vowel sounds are 'OO', 'OH', 'AW', 'AH', 'AY', 'EH', and 'EE'. There are other vowels, such as 'UH', 'A', 'E', 'O', and 'U'. Vowels are how the traditional English choir sing pitches and achieves tone colour.

Diphthongs

LaBouff (2008) emphasizes that In Western choral traditions, the diction topic Diphthongs - "di" meaning two and "phthongs" meaning voice are vowels or vowel combinations that are composites of one or more simple vowels, such as I (long) = AH + EE; EW = EE + OO; OW/AU = AH + OO; OY = OH + EE. The "closed" and "open" vowels refer to whether your mouth tends to be closed or open, "labial" indicates vowels formed primarily by the lips, and "glossal" indicates vowels formed primarily by the tongue. In some techniques, if we allow W and Y to be vowels, words such as WE, YOU, YAW, and WAY become diphthongs. If we are willing to consider R as a vowel, OR, ARE, and EAR are diphthongs and WERE, YOUR, and WAR are not merely diphthongs but "triphthongs." In Western Choral traditions, diphthongs are important to choral diction not only because they are integral parts of the words that contain them but because they require special treatment when enunciated.

The pronunciation of the diphthongs varies a great deal in the various dialects. There should be no break between the two vowels. After the first vowel is sustained, it blends into the second vowel. The change from one vowel to the next should be almost imperceptible. As per the song and the composition, there should be very little movement of the articulators during the production of the compound vowel. The first vowel is sustained with the second sung at the very last moment. When the diphthongs are sung on more than one note, the first vowel is sustained on all the notes, with the second vowel added at the very end. A nasal consonant is a speech sound that is produced by the vibration of breath that escapes through the nose when the velum (soft palate) is related. The nasal sounds are (m), (n) and (n) (LaBouff, 2008).

Solfege (Sargam)

The solfege (*Sargam*) is learnt as an abbreviated form of *svar*: 'sa', 'ri' (Carnatic) or *re* (Hindustani), 'ga', 'ma', 'pa', 'dha', 'ni'. Of these, the first Svara that is 'sa', and the fifth svars that is 'pa', are considered anchors (Achal Svars) that are unalterable, while the remaining have flavours ('komal' and 'tivra' svars) that differs between the two major systems.

Digraphs, trigraphs, and interaction of vowels and consonants.

Smith (2021) states, "Digraphs" are to consonants as diphthongs are to vowels, that is, they are composed of two consecutive basic consonants. Examples of digraphs are *ST*, *BR*, *GL*, and *QU* (=KW). Trigraphs are composed of three consecutive basic consonants. Examples of trigraphs are *STR* and *SKL*. However, the sample digraphs and trigraphs above are the sorts that are found in real words. Smith (2021) also suggested in her practice that "if the Western Choral singing allow for the dictional principle that consonants at the end of a word are attached to the beginning of the next syllable" (even if it begins with a consonant), we get digraphs and trigraphs galore, such as in "*from The farthest Hills*" (consonant combinations capitalized). There are even instances where we have to sing combinations of four and five consonants, as in the phrase "*AND TRuST STRongly*."

Singh (2019) describes how Bharat Muni's 'Natyashastra' deals with the systematic process of dance and music. Traditionally, the tonal quality of each Indian music note is associated with the sound of a different animals and birds. Some sounds have additional meanings of their own.

Name of Svar	Svar sings as	Svar written as	Origin of the Indian scale
Shadja	Sa	S	Cry of the peacock
Rishabh	Re	R	Lowing of the bull
Ghandhar	Ga	G	Bleating of a goat
Madhyam	Ma	M	Call of the heron
Pancham	Pa	P	Call of the cuckoo
Dhaivat	Dha	D	Neighing of the horse
Nishad	Ni	N	Trumpeting of the elephant

Svar in the North Indian system (Hindustani Sangeet)

Svar (Long)	<u>Ṣaḍja</u> (षड्ज)	<u>Riṣhabh</u> (ऋषभ)	<u>Gandhar</u> (गान्धार)	<u>Madhyam</u> (मध्यम)	<u>Pancham</u> (पंचम)	<u>Dhaivat</u> (धैवत)	<u>Niṣhad</u> (निषाद)
Svar (Short)	Sa (सा)	Re (रे)	Ga (गा)	Ma (म)	Pa (प)	Dha (ध)	Ni (नि)
12 Varieties (names)	C (shadja)	D _b (komal re) D (shuddha re)	E _b (komal gā) E (shuddha gā)	F (shuddha ma) F _# (teevra ma)	G (panchama)	A _b (komal dha) A (shuddha dha)	B _b (komal ni) B (shuddha ni)

Svar in the South Indian system (Carnatic Sangeet)

Svar (Long)	<u>Ṣaḍja</u> (षड्ज)	<u>Riṣabh</u> (ऋषभ)	<u>Gandhara</u> (गान्धार)	<u>Madhyama</u> (मध्यम)	<u>Pancham</u> a (पंचम)	<u>Daivat</u> (धैवत)	<u>Niṣada</u> (निषाद)
Svar (Short)	Sa (सा)	Ri (री)	Ga (गा)	Ma (म)	Pa (प)	Da (ध)	Ni (नि)
16 Varieties (names)	C (shadja)	D _b (shuddha ri) D _ḍ (chatushruti ri) D _# (shatshruti ri)	E _b (shuddha gā) E _b (sadharana gā) E _ḍ (antara gā)	F _ḍ (shuddha ma) F _# (prati ma)	G (panchama)	A _b (shuddha da) A _ḍ (chatushruti da) A _# (shatshruti da)	B _b (shuddha ni) B _ḍ (kaishiki ni) B _ḍ (kakali ni)

According to South and North Indian music traditions, some vowels and consonants are different in singing. For example, the North Indian singer would sing the second note 'Re' whereas the South Indian singer will sing 'Ri' and the sixth note 'Da' in a South Indian accent and 'Dha' in a North Indian accent.

This emphasizes the North and South Indian singers need to adopt each other's style, especially while singing songs in various Indian languages. In some situations, these matters are not easy, as the male and female singers of Carnatic and Hindustani singers sing raga from different pitch / scale. The concept of singing in parts for the Indian choir has not fully developed and most of the singers are not familiar singing in harmonisation like the Western choirs sing in four or eight parts. In the UK, while the Indian choral concept is developing, for quality singing with better health and wellbeing, I suggested the choir members do meditation, yoga, head, steam inhalation and neck massage do steam to take care of the chest and throat. The critical part I observed is that some singers have harmful voice habits, such as that a lot of singers have been singing too far above or below their optimum range. For example: prerecording a devotional song 'bhajan', classical 'bandish' or Bollywood song, when the choir singer tries to sing in the original pitch, they cannot naturally match this or hit the high or low notes, instead damaging their voice in attempting to sing. For this situation, I suggest the singer select correct pitch or scale/ key until they are comfortable.

As per Indian classical tradition, the singers are trained ideally to have a three-octave range of optimum pitches in various languages when they sing. But when they speak, there is a fairly narrow optimum pitch range that is best for their speaking voice. An optimum pitch is a pitch at which the speaker is most physically comfortable, and the voice resonates and projects most easily. Part of this is also the cultural influences of various country music such as folk songs of India. Female singers are often encouraged to sound 'ladylike' and sing from G#2 or A#2 pitch for classical raga-based compositions. While male singers are encouraged to sing at a low pitch to make their voice sound "masculine' from C#2 or D2 pitch. In general, Indian female singers sing raga-based songs from G#2 or A#2. For light songs, the pitch may be different.

Katherine LaBouff (2008) suggested in her book '*Singing and Communicating in English*', a few actions for the fronting vowels such as *tongue*: tip behind lower front teeth, front arched slightly less towards hard palate and sides touching upper molars; *lips*: horizontal, relaxed, cheek muscles energized; *jaw*: Dropped slightly and more open, most related. In certain vowel pronunciation and singing some suggestions are adopted, such as 'do not let sound fall back in the throat', 'do not keep jaw too wide' and 'do not keep tongue too slack' or 'arched too low', no pressure under the chin, do not press the tongue down, do not protrude lips'. The whole technique of singing is mainly based on breath control. Open-throated singing is always recommended. It is advisable to avoid singing with a half-open mouth and to avoid nasal singing as these become 'vocal impurities'. The lower jaw, neck and tongue are the main contributors to the singing process through the lungs and throat. They have to be free from tension. Hence, it is advisable to relax the lower jaw muscles while opening and closing the mouth . Turning the head left and right helps to relax the neck muscles. The tongue can be relaxed by rolling it clockwise and anti-clockwise and keeping the mouth closed.

Conclusion

Researching diction has been incredibly helpful to me in highlighting the importance of this to the choristers I work with, and also to help me explain to them how to enunciate clearly in different Indian languages.

I have produced advice notes for choir members on how to warm up before singing, in order to use their mouth and neck muscles effectively for diction as well as for improving their range of singing, and we adopt these methods at the start of our rehearsals also.

Chapter 7 - Singing and notation styles

In this Chapter, I will outline styles of Indian singing and how it is related to solo and choral singing. This chapter is important as it explains the theory of Indian music, Indian notation system, singing phrases, techniques and how these are related to my compositions. Knowing the meaning of Hindi words of Indian music and the terminology will help readers to understand the theory, notations system and how we use the notations for the choral singing. I learnt many of these musical terms during my study of music from my gurus and from courses. Here I discuss the traditional Indian music notation system and techniques.

Raga and Rasa

Singh (2019) emphasises that, the raga is the emotion, the expression of thoughts and feelings musically. By clever use of the appropriate 'shrutis', 'svaras' and 'pakads' (the most important phrases of a raga), the singer or musician can present the mood of the raga. This emotional quality of the raga is known as the rasa. In Indian classical music, raga and rasa go hand-in-hand. If rendered properly, every raga can give rise to some emotion; both in the person singing it and amongst the audience. There is more freedom for improvising and exploring a raga's mood for solo singers compared to choral compositions, in which a group of singers maybe harmonising some parts. The 'Natyashastra', talks about the 'Navarasas' – nine types of rasas or emotions. They are:

1. Shringara (Love/Eroticism)
2. Hasya (Mirth)
3. Karuna (Compassion/Pathos)
4. Raudra (Anger)
5. Veera (Valour)
6. Bhayanaka (Fear)
7. Bibhatsa (Disgust)
8. Adbhuta (Wonder/Amazement)
9. Shanta (Peace/Serenity)

Ragas are classified in three types: 'Audav' (scale of five notes), 'Shaadav' (scale of six notes) and 'Sampurna' (scale of seven notes). There are morning, midday, evening and late-night ragas reflecting various mood. Each raga admits one predominant rasa. One raga might even portray more than one emotion, if treated in different ways. The exposition of the raga and the resulting rasas (emotions) all depend on the calibre of the musician and the extent to which his imagination stretches to define the boundaries of the raga.

For example, the Indian adult choir sings the folk song composed in Raga 'Brindavani Saarang', which includes 'Shringara', 'Hasya' and 'Adbhuta' rasas. [listen here](#)

The Gana Rasa

Though the 'Natyashastra' speaks only of nine rasas, one more rasa may be added to the list and that is 'Gana' rasa. 'Gana' rasa is the pure aesthetic enjoyment of music, without any other emotion involved. This may also be termed as "Sangeet-ananda" or joy derived from singing or listening to music. (Viswanathan, 2010). During my Diploma in music studies, I learnt that 'Yogacharya Swami Krupalvanand' says in his book 'Raga Jyoti' "Geetam Vadyam Nrithyam Trayam Sangeetam Uchyatey". This phrase in Sanskrit implies that the word 'Sangeetam' (music) includes the practice of 'Geetam' (vocal music), 'Vadyam' (an instrumental music) and 'Nrithyam' (dance). 'Shruti' manifests from the eternal sound 'Om' naad, the vibration. 'Svar' from the 'Shruti' and octaves manifest from 'Svars'. (Krupalanand, 1969)

Shadja (svar 'Sa') and Frequency

I learnt Indian music terminology and theory from '*Raga Jyoti*' music book and from my Gurus. 'Sa' or 'Shadja' is a musical note from which the other basic notes like 'Re', 'Ga', 'Ma', 'Pa', 'Dha', 'Ni' are born or can be conceived. 'So', 'Sa' is the first note of any octave which can be compared to the Western 'Do'. For the musicians and singers in the West, it is easy to conceive 'Sa' as the tonic or the keynote. Indian music of any genre is fully dependent on 'Sa'. 'Sa' varies according to the health or voice of the vocalist or the quality of the instruments. For the convenience of musical interaction between East and West, A-440 Pitch has been standardized all over the world. Three octaves are classified as 'mandra', 'madhya' and 'taar' 'saptaks' (the upper, middle and lower octaves).

Chakrabarty (2020) explains that in Indian spirituality, we believe that the Almighty is the creator, and his divinity is expressed to us by our Guru. Similarly, 'Sa' as our Guru, shows the light to conceive Indian music in general and raga music. The first day of learning music starts with 'Sa'. In Indian art music or raga music, the basic or main instrument tanpura produces the ambience of the 'Sa' in a pure form. It is scientifically proved that among all the instruments of the world, tanpuro produces the maximum number of overtones.

Raga, the soul of Indian Music

The Sanskrit definition given to the word raga is "Ranjayati Iti Raaga" meaning, "raga is that which pleases the ear". The raga can be defined as a melodic type or melodic mould. It is a collection of notes in a particular order, giving rise to a melody type. Raga is the very soul of Indian music. It is very difficult, almost impossible, to define a raga in just a word or two. Raga is far more complex than the simple modal scale and encompasses in itself a variety of ways in which you can treat its notes or svaras. Raga can be regarded as a tonal framework for composition and improvisation; a dynamic musical entity with a unique form, embodying a unique musical idea. As Harold. S. Powers states, "A raga is not a tune, nor is it a 'modal' scale, but rather a continuum with scale and tune as its extremes." (Powers, 1999)

Personally, when I sing raga or play an instrument, it is a meditation, a connection with the strings, or more aptly described as an 'inner journey in connection with the soulful music of raga'. Nowhere else in the world music do we see the existence of a phenomenon like raga music. Hence the Indian raga system generates much interest among musicians and musicologists of world music. The raga is ornamented with various shakes and graces too, thereby enabling it to emote and breathe life and expression into a song. In 'dhrupad' singing, prayers are based on particular raga and endows the singer with peace, relaxation and joy, Sometimes the 'alap' and introductions notes can last more than 30 minutes when I practice raga.

The notations, lyrics and singing style: the adult and youth choir

'Hindustani Sangeet' notation system was introduced by two musicologists, legends 'Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande' (1860-1936) and 'Pandit Dattatreya Vishnu Paluskar' (1921-1955). As a North Indian musician, I follow Pandit Bhatkhande notations system, but while writing in Roman script, I added some changes for the better understanding for the student. I introduced contemporary, devotional and sugam songs in a straightforward way. To read, learn and perform folk songs about nature, I introduced a simple method of writing the notation where the males sing lines, and the females follow or other way round. To create a special mood, we harmonise the song in two or three parts. For example, the poem below is written by 'Sohanlal Dwivedi' in Hindi for which I composed music completely differently to the online version, to give a new and authentic flavour of music for the listener, to create a more joyful and uplifting mood. The following is an example of how I notated the poem for the choir.

Singing pitch: C

Intro Music for 16 bars

All - Humming 2 x 2 x 2 x 2.... Music

{ Boys: Lehron se Darkar, Nauka paar nahin hoti,
Girls: koshish karne walon ki, kabhi haar nahin hoti } x (2)
Humming 2 x 2 x 2 x 2.... Music

All Nanhi cheenti jab, Daana lekar chalti hai,
Chadhti deewaron par, sau bar phisalti hai.

Mann ka vishwas ragon mein, Saahas bharta hai,
Chadhkar girna, girkar chadhna Na - akharta hai.

Boys Akhir uski Mehnat, Bekaar nahin hoti,
Girls Koshish karne walon ki, kabhi haar nahin hoti...(2)
Humming 2 x 2 x 2 x 2.... Music

All Dubkiyan sindhumein, Gotakhor lagata hai,
Ja legate kar khali haath, Lautkar aata hai.
Milte nahi sahaj hi moti, Gehre paani mein,
Badhta dugna utsah, isi hairani mein.

Boys Mutthi uski khali, har bar nahin hoti,
Girls Koshish karne walon ki, Kabhi haar nahi hoti...(2)
Humming 2 x 2 x 2 x 2.... Music

All Asafalta, ek chunauti, hai, Ise sweekar karo,
kya kamee reh gayi, dekho, Aur sudhar karo.
Jab tak na safal ho, neend chain ko tyago tum,
Sangharsh ka maidan, chhod kar mat bhago tum.

Boys Kuch kiye bina hi, Jai jaikaar nahin hoti,
Girls koshish karne walon ki, Kabhi haar nahin hoti...(2)
Boys Lehron se Darkar, nauka paar nahin hoti,
Girls Koshish karne walon ki, kabhi haar nahin hoti – (3)

At the end All - Humming (four times on Ga Sa)

The notation below in figures 66-71 showing a score and wordings in Sanskrit language followed by Roman script. I composed this 'tarana', based in raga 'Brindavani Saarang' and 'teentala', a sixteen beats rhythm cycle. I also wrote the poem, known as 'Radhakrishna's Raas-leela' (musical dance of Radhakrishna). The beauty of this composition is that the choir sings the notations for eight minutes then a 'bandish' starts followed by 'tarana'. It was very challenging for the choristers to sing all parts while maintaining their tuning and the correct time signature of teentala (16 beat rhythm cycle). It was easier for classically trained singers compared to community singers who took a long time to learn and perform this piece. In the music link below, the Western string players play the same composition without looking at the notations. The choir singers and string players responded to the improvised style of my vocal singing. The musicians enjoyed the raga-based compositions and by listening to pre-recorded tracks they learnt the music and rhythm patterns.

The North and South Indian classical singers follow a similar method of reading and writing Indian choir songs and classical raga-based 'tarana' and 'tillana'. There are various techniques of writing notations in both traditions, according to the regional gharana and counties, but I introduced this simple and easy method of reading choir songs. It worked well for both choirs. Obviously, the youth choir members born and brought up in the UK mostly read only Roman script, whereas most of the adult choristers read and write many Indian languages as well Roman script.

To hear the recording of part one of this composition, a collaboration between the choir and the strings orchestra - [listen here](#)



|| BHARATIYA VRUND GAAN ||

Theme: Vrundavan

Composition based on Raga: Brindavani Saarang

Teentala: Bol of Tabla (16 beats / Matra)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta	Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
+Clap				Clap				Wave				Clap			

STHAYI

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
														RM	PN
S'	-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	RM	PN
S'R'	S'-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	-	-
MR	PM	<u>NP</u>	MP	N	N	S'	-	PN	S'R'	<u>S'N</u>	P-	<u>PN</u>	PM	RS	.NS
MR	PM	<u>NP</u>	MP	N	N	S'	-	PN	S'R'	<u>S'N</u>	P-	<u>PN</u>	PM	RM	PN
S'	-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	RM	PN
S'R'	S'-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	-	-

ANTARA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
P-	MP	-	RM	P-	MP	-S	RM	P-	MP	PM	R.N	S-	R-	M-	P-
<u>N-</u>	<u>PN</u>	-	MP	<u>N-</u>	<u>PN</u>	-R	MP	<u>S'N</u>	<u>PN</u>	-P	MR	M-	P-	N-	S'-
S'N	S'-	<u>NP</u>	<u>N-</u>	PM	PR	-M	-P	S'N	S'-	<u>NP</u>	<u>N-</u>	PM	PR	-M	-P
S'N	S'-	<u>NP</u>	<u>N-</u>	PM	PR	-M	-P	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN
RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S-	RM	PN	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN
S'	-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	RM	PN
S'R'	S'-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	-	-

SANCHARI

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
.P.N	S.N	SR	SR	MR	MP	RM	<u>PN</u>	RM	PN	S'R'	NS'	<u>PN</u>	PM	RS	.NS
SR	MR	MP	MP	<u>NP</u>	NS'	PN	S'R'	<u>PN</u>	S'R'	M'R'	<u>S'N</u>	<u>PN</u>	PM	RS	.NS
S.N	.PS	.N.P	S.N	.PS	.NS	.PS	.NS	RS	.NR	S.N	RS	.NR	SR	.NR	SR
MR	SM	RS	MR	SM	RM	SM	RM	PM	RP	MR	PM	RP	MP	RP	MP
<u>NP</u>	<u>MN</u>	PM	<u>NP</u>	<u>MN</u>	<u>PN</u>	<u>MN</u>	<u>PN</u>	S'N	PS'	NP	S'N	PS'	NS'	PS'	NS'
R'	-	-	-	-	-	M'R'	S'N	S'-	-	-	-	<u>PN</u>	PM	RS	.NS
S'-	N-	P-	M-	R-	S.N	SR	MP	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN
RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN
S'	-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	RM	PN
S'R'	S'-	<u>N</u>	P	M	P	R	-	-	-P	MR	-.N	S	-	-	-

ABHOG

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
M-	P-	<u>NP</u>	-M	-P	-S'	NP	-	R-	M-	P-	-M	P-	-S'	<u>NP</u>	MP
P-	N-	S'R'	-P	-N	-S'	R'-	-	R'M'	S'R'	NS'	<u>PN</u>	<u>PN</u>	PM	RS	.NS
S'-	<u>N-</u>	P-	M-	R-	S.N	SR	MP	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN
RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN	S'-	RM	PN

TALA CHANGE – RAAS THEKA

RADHAKRISHNA RAAS-LEELA (Lead – Follow)

RJ First & Choir Repeats Vrundavan mei Raas Rachaayo,
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Radha ke Sang Shyam.
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Murali ki Dhoon, Mann mei Bhaayo,
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Giridhari Ho Shyaam
 RJ First & Choir Repeats He Yadunandan, Krishna Murari
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Naath Niranjana Kaahn
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Raas Rachaake Vanara Vann mein
 RJ only (once) Karuna Kare Apaar
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Vrundavan mei Raas Rachaayo,
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Radha ke Sang Shyam.
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Murali ki Dhoon, Mann mei Bhaayo,
 RJ First & Choir Repeats Giridhari Ho Shyaam
 RJ only (once) Vrundavan mei Raas Rachaayo,

Males 1st & Females Repeat Krishna-Krishna Hari (3) Bol....(Seven times on notes S R M P N N S)....Once

Figure 67 - the notation of raga 'Brindavani Saarang' composition in Roman script, page 2

TIHAEI - AT THE END

(1) { S'-S', N-N, P-P, M-M, RM PN } (x 3) S' - - -

(2) { S'-S', N-N, P-P, M-M-, RM PN } (x 3) S' - - -

(3) { S'-S', N-N, P-P, M-M-, RM PN } (x 2)

S'-S', N-N, P-P, M-M-, RM PN S', RM PN S', RM PN S' - -

RM PN S', RM PN S', RM PN S' - -

RM PN S', RM PN S', RM PN S' - -

|| Shrikrishna Sharanam mama ||



॥ भारतीय वृंद गान ॥
वृंदावन
 राग : ब्रिंदावनी सारंग

तीनताल : तबला बोल (१६ मात्रा)

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०	११	१२	१३	१४	१५	१६
धा	धिन्	धिन्	धा	धा	धिन्	धिन्	धा	धा	तिन्	तिन्	ता	ता	धिन्	धिन्	धा
x ताली				ताली				०				ताली			

स्थायी

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०	११	१२	१३	१४	१५	१६
														रेम	पनि
सां	-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	रेम	पनि
सारिं	सां-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	-	-
मरे	पम	निप	मप	नि	नि	सां	-	पनि	सारिं	सांनि	प-	पनि	पम	रेसा	निसा
मरे	पम	निप	मप	नि	नि	सां	-	पनि	सारिं	सांनि	प-	पनि	पम	रेम	पनि
सां	-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	रेम	पनि
सारिं	सां-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	-	-

अंतरा

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०	११	१२	१३	१४	१५	१६
प-	मप	-	रेम	प-	मप	-सा	रेम	प-	मप	पम	रेनि	सा-	रे-	म-	प-
नि-	पनि	-	मप	नि-	पनि	-रे	मप	सांनि	पनि	-प	मरे	म-	प-	नि-	सां-
सांनि	सां-	निप	नि-	पम	परे	-म	-प	सांनि	सां-	निप	नि-	पम	परे	-म	-प
सांनि	सां-	निप	नि-	पम	परे	-म	-प	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि
रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि
सां	-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	रेम	पनि
सारिं	सां-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	-	-

संचारी

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०	११	१२	१३	१४	१५	१६
प्रनि	सानि	सारे	सारे	मरे	मप	रेम	पनि	रेम	पनि	सारें	निसां	पनि	पम	रेसा	निसां
सारें	मरे	मप	मप	निप	निसां	पनि	सारें	पनि	सारें	मरें	सांनि	पनि	पम	रेसा	निसां
सानि	प्रसा	निप	सानि	प्रसा	निसा	प्रसा	निसा	रेसा	निरे	सानि	रेसा	निरे	सारे	निरे	सारे
मरे	साम	रेसा	मरे	साम	रेम	साम	रेम	पम	रेप	मरे	पम	रेप	मप	रेप	मप
निप	मनि	पम	निप	मनि	पनि	मनि	पनि	सांनि	पसां	निप	सांनि	पसां	निसां	पसां	निसां
रें	-	-	-	-	-	मरें	सांनि	सां-	-	-	-	पनि	पम	रेसा	निसां
सां-	नि-	प-	म-	रे-	सानि	सारे	मप	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि
रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि
सां	-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	रेम	पनि
सारें	सां-	नि	प	म	प	रे	-	-	-प	मरे	-नि	सा	-	-	-

अभोग

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०	११	१२	१३	१४	१५	१६
म -	प -	निप	- म	- प	- सां	निप	-	रे -	म -	प -	- म	प -	-सां	निप	मप
प -	नि-	सारें	- प	- नि	-सां	रें-	-	रेंमं	सारें	निसां	पनि	पनि	पम	रेसा	निसां
सां-	नि-	प-	म-	रे-	सानि	सारे	मप	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि
रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि	सां-	रेम	पनि

ताल CHANGE -> रास ठेका

राधा कृष्ण रास-लीला (Lead - Follow)

RJ First & Choir Repeats	वृन्दावन में रास रचायो	RJ First & Choir Repeats	राधा के संग श्याम
RJ First & Choir Repeats	मुरली की धुन, मन में भायो,	RJ First & Choir Repeats	गिरिधारी हो श्याम
RJ First & Choir Repeats	हे यदुनन्दन, कृष्ण मुरारी	RJ First & Choir Repeats	नाथ निरंजन काह्न
RJ First & Choir Repeats	रास रचाके वनारा वन में	RJ only (once)	करुणा करे अपार
RJ First & Choir Repeats	वृन्दावन में रास रचायो	RJ First & Choir Repeats	राधा के संग श्याम
RJ First & Choir Repeats	मुरली की धुन, मन में भायो,	RJ First & Choir Repeats	गिरिधारी हो श्याम
RJ only (once)	वृन्दावन में रास रचायो		

Males 1st & Females Repeat कृष्ण-कृष्ण हरि (3) बोल (७ बार हर स्वर पर-> सा रे म प नि नि सां)....**Once**

अंतिम तिहायी

(1) { सां-सां , नि-नि , प-प , म-म , रेम पनि } (x 3) सां - - -

(2) { सां-सां , नि-नि , प-प , म-म , रेम पनि } (x 3) सां - - -

(3) { सां-सां , नि-नि , प-प , म-म , रेम पनि } (x 2)

सां-सां , नि-नि , प-प , म-म , रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां - -

रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां - -

रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां, रेम पनि सां - - - -

॥ श्री कृष्ण शरणम् मम ॥

Raga ‘Tilang Tarana’ in sixteen beats rhythm cycle, the song and notations in Hindi and Roman script

This song was originally written in Gujarati by music guru late Krupalvanand. I translated the song into Hindi known as ‘bandish’ and composed a tarana (notation singing) to follow it. This exemplifies the use of both Roman and Sanskrit scripts, along with tabulating the rhythmical notation.

Recording of this composition ‘Tilang Tarana’ - [listen here](#).

“Madhuban”

Raag: Tilang - **Taal:** Addha-Teentaala (16 Beats) - Scale A#

Original Composition: Shri Krupalvanand Ji – ‘Tarana’ composed by Rakesh Joshi

Teentala: Bol of Tabla (16 beats / Matra)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta	Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
X Clap				Clap				Wave					clap		

Aaroh: N S G M P N S

Avroh: S N P M G S

Pakad: N P G M G

STHAYI

(-Mujhe Koyi Krishna Dikhaao Sakhi) x 2
 (-Krishna Ki Chhavi Mere, - Mann Mein Basi) x 2
 -Mujhe Koyi Krishna Dikhaao Sakhi
 -Mujhe Koyi Krishna Dikhaao...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
								-	Mujhe	-ko	yi	Kri	-sh	na	Di
Kha	-	o-	--	Sa-	--	khi-	--	-	Kri	sh	naki	Chha	vi	Me	re
-	Mann	mein	Ba	si	-	i	-	-	Mujhe	-ko	yi	Kri	-sh	na	Di
Kha	-	o-	--	Sa-	--	Khi-	--	-	Mujhe	-ko	yi	Kri	-sh	na	Di
Kha	-	o	-	-	-	-	-								
X Clap				Clap				Wave				Clap			

ANTARA

- (Vrindaavan Ghoomi, - Mathura Ghoomi) x 2
 (- Ghoomi Gokul Ki, Galion Mein) x 2
 (- Mujhe Koyi Krishna Dikhaao Sakhi) x 2
 (- Mujhe Koyi Krishna Dikhaao) x 3

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
								Vrin	d a a	v a	n	Ghoo	-	m i	-
-	M a	t h u	r a	G h o o	- -	m i	- -	-	G h o o	m i	G o	- k u	l	k i	-
-	G a	l i	y o n	m e i n	- -	-	- -	-	M u j h e	- k o	y i	K r i	- s h	n a	D i
K h a	-	o -	- -	S a -	- -	k h i -	- -	-	M u j h e	- k o	y i	K r i	- s h	n a	D i k h a o
-	M u j h e	- k o	y i	K r i	- s h	n a	D i k h a o	-	M u j h e	- k o	y i	K r i	- s h	n a	D i k h a o
X Clap				Clap				Wave				Clap			

SANCHARI

Tabla Speed: Double -Four times of Teentala (16 beats cycle)

All

- | Aum Tum Tanana, Dwim Tum Tanana, Aum Tum Tanana **P M G S** | x 2
 | Aum Tum Tanana, Dwim Tum Tanana, Aum Tum Tanana **S N P M** | x 2

| G M P N-N-N- | G M P S- S- S- | X 2

| S N- N- | N P- P- | P M- M- | M G- G- | X 2

| GMPNS- GMPNS- GMPN | x 3

| SN-P-M-G-MG, SNS | PNSG, NSGM, SGMP |

X

| GMPN | SN-P-M-G-MG, SNS | PNSG, NSGM, SGMP |

| GMPN, SN PNPM PMG- | M- P- N- S- | G- M- P- N- | S- G- M- P- |

| -PMPGMP, -NPNMPN, -SNSPNS, -SNSPN |

| P N N S G G S SN NP P M M G | X 3

| GMPNS- GMPNS- GMPN | x 3

| Aum Tum Tanana Dwim Tum Tanana, Aum Tum Tanana **P M G S** | x 2

| Aum Tum Tanana Dwim Tum Tanana, Aum Tum Tanana **S N P M** | x 2

| G M P N-N-N- | G M P S- S- S- | X 2

| S N- N- | N P- P- | P M- M- | M G- G- | X 2

| GMPNS- GMPNS- GMPN | x 3

| SN-P-M-G-MG, SNS | PNSG, NSGM, SGMP |

X

ABHOG

Rakesh's Solo – Notations improvisation

RJ sings this line once - GMPN | SN-P-M-G-MG, SNS | PNSG, NSGM, SGMP |

All

| GMPN | SN-P-M-G-MG, SNS | PNSG, NSGM, SGMP |

| GMPN, SN PNPM PMG- | M- P- N- S - | G-M-P N- | S- G- M- P |

| -PMPGMP, -NPNMPN, -SNSPNS, -SNSPN |

| PN NS SG GS SN NP PM MG | x 3

| GMPNS- GMPNS- GMPN | x 2 |

| GMPNS- GMPNS- GMPNS - - - |

'Tarana' composed by Rakesh Joshi

“मधुबन”

राग: तिलंग

ताल: अब्दा-तीनताल (१६ मात्रा)

आरोह: नि सा ग म प नि सां

अवरोह: सां नि प म ग सा

पकड़: नि प ग म ग

स्थायी

- (- मुझे कोई कृष्ण दिखाओ सखी) x २
 (- कृष्ण की छवि मेरे, - मन में बसी) x २
 - मुझे कोई कृष्ण दिखाओ सखी
 - मुझे कोई कृष्ण दिखाओ...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
								-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दि
खा	-	ओ	-	स	-	खी	-	-	कृ	ष्	णकी	छ	वि	मे	रे
-	मन	में	ब	सी	-	-	-	-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दि
खा	-	ओ	-	स	-	खी	-	-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दि
खा	-	ओ	-	-	-	-	-								

X Clap

Clap

Wave

Clap

अंतरा

- (वृंदावन घूमी, मथुरा घूमी) x २
 (- घूमी गोकुल की, गलियों में) x २
 (- मुझे कोई कृष्ण दिखाओ सखी) x २
 (- मुझे कोई कृष्ण दिखाओ) x ३

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
								वृं	दा	व	न	घू	-	मी	-
-	म	थु	रा	घू	-	मी	-	-	घू	मी	गो	-कु	ल	की	-
-	ग	लि	यों	में	-	-	-	-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दि
खा	-	ओ	-	स	-	खी	-	-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दिखाओ
-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दिखाओ	-	मुझे	को	ई	कृ	ष्	ण	दिखाओ

X Clap

Clap

Wave

Clap

संचारी

Tabla Speed: Double - Four times of Teentala (16 beats cycle)

सब

| ॐ तूम तनन, द्वीम तूम तनन, ॐ तूम तनन प म ग सा | x २
| ॐ तूम तनन, द्वीम तूम तनन, ॐ तूम तनन सां नि प म | x २

| ग म प नि-नि-नि- | गम प सां-सां-सां- | x २
| सां नि- नि- | नि प- प- | प म- म- | म ग- ग- | x २
| गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां- गमपनि | x ३
| सांनि- प- म- ग- मग, सानिसा | प्निसाग, निसागम, सागमप |

x

| गमपनि | सांनि- प- म- ग- मग, सानिसा | प्निसाग, निसागम, सागमप |
| गमपनि, सांनि पनिपम पमग- | म- प- नि- सां- | ग- म- प- नि- | सा- ग- म- प- |
| -पमपगमप, -निपनिमपनि, -सांनिसांपनिसां, -सांनिसांपनि |
| पनि निसां सांगं गंसां सांनि निप पम मग | x ३
| गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां- गमपनि | x ३

| ॐ तूम तनन, द्वीम तूम तनन, ॐ तूम तनन प म ग सा | x २
| ॐ तूम तनन, द्वीम तूम तनन, ॐ तूम तनन सां नि प म | x २

| ग म प नि-नि-नि- | गम प सां-सां-सां- | x २
| सां नि- नि- | नि प- प- | प म- म- | म ग- ग- | x २
| गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां- गमपनि | x ३
| सांनि- प- म- ग- मग, सानिसा | प्निसाग, निसागम, सागमप |

x

आभोग

RJ Solo – Notations improvisation

RJ (एक बार) - गमपनि | सांनि- प- म- ग- मग, सानिसा | प्निसाग, निसागम, सागमप |

सब

| गमपनि | सांनि- प- म- ग- मग, सानिसा | प्निसाग, निसागम, सागमप |
| गमपनि, सांनि पनिपम पमग- | म- प- नि- सां- | ग- म- प- नि- | सा- ग- म- प- |
| -पमपगमप, -निपनिमपनि, -सांनिसांपनिसां, -सांनिसांपनि |
| पनि निसां सांगं गंसां सांनि निप पम मग | x ३
| गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां- गमपनि | x २
| गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां- गमपनिसां - - - |

‘Tarana’ composed by Rakesh Joshi

Chapter 8 - Feedback

The purpose behind gathering this feedback was to improve the quality of the Indian choir, and its musical development and to find out how members feel as part of the Vrund Gaan activities. I approached the singers and musicians connected with the choral activities to gain feedback about rehearsals, concerts, songs, notations, their experiences and what they feel about my compositions and working with others. I have used their comments to make improvements in the choir activities, adding social elements and further learning opportunities and improving the standard of the choir. I spoke personally to most of the adult singers and to the parents of youth choir to find out what type of songs they would like to sing and what kind of new learning activities they would like to take part in. I read their comments and constructive criticism and considered these to bring about changes in the ongoing choral activities.

Dr. Preeti Kuduvalli

Since 2012-13, when Mr. Rakesh Joshi first envisaged the concept of forming UK's first Indian Choir, I feel fortunate to have been one of the initial 21 members. I have greatly enjoyed working together in unison towards common goals; learning "baby-steps" together in the context of choir, supporting and interacting musically. I feel very privileged to have been part of the ensemble's journey in creating a name for itself in 2014: Bharatiya Vrund Gaan (BVG).

To this date, I feel proud to witness Mr. Joshi's vision of "the Indian choir" grow, not only in numbers, but in finesse and quality too, with a welcoming audience so eager to listen. It is a joy to sing under Mr. Joshi's sublime direction, so originally conceived, composed in relevant ragas with added svaras, alaps, taranas, and cross-part 'harmony'.

My participation in BVG has personally helped me embed correct enunciation of words in various languages and their appropriate expressive intonation in the context of the musical composition. Mr. Joshi's approach to pitch, tone quality and voice-culture during rehearsals. His decision-making in standing positions of the singers during choir performances and concerts has helped me understand practical applications of the concepts of musical 'blend' and fine 'balance', in the context of making the choir sound as one.

The musical tapestry woven, and the energy experienced in the hall at a collaboration with western string instruments (January 2020) and the NYCGB workshop (September 2019) was nothing short of magical. 'the Indian choir'

Dr. Shopon Saha

I enjoy singing and being a member of 'Bhartiya Vrund Gaan'. BVG is the first Indian Music adult choir of the UK. BVG performs popular compositions of Indian music and songs written by well-known poets of India. These songs are based on Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Malayalam and Marathi, classical raga-based compositions, Divine chants of Vedic tradition, songs of four seasons. Enjoy touring with the BVG family and have performed at major venues in the UK including Wembley Arena.

Tvisha Shankar and Dr. Nethra Shankar

I love music for the relaxing state of mind it puts you in. The Shiva Youth choir is an excellent organisation which promotes Indian classical/semi classical singing in the far west. The choir has given me many incredible opportunities like performing in the Bridgewater Hall and Southbank centre. I have also had a magnificent chance to collaborate with both the Halle youth choir and Opera North over zoom. Me and a couple of other members sang a few compositions the choirs and it was interesting to see both styles of music combine. The thing I like the best about the choir is when we all sing together as one and with harmonisation and it sounds immaculate.

Rakesh Ji who is an immensely talented musician has inspired me and many other youngsters. His ability to teach and to perform is highly commendable, this inculcates professionalism and discipline through music. He is a real authentic culture shaper. His passion towards music is reflected on his dedication and teaching hours on end in his free time. In unprecedented times, choir has become virtual. I feel like this has limited my learning and understanding of Indian classical music; therefore, I am looking forward to sing with Rakesh Ji and the other members to feel the rhythm and melody of music.

Mr. Saleel Tambe

It is an honour and privilege for me to be associated with Bharatiya Vrund Gaan, a wonderful entity dedicated to Indian choir singing. This unique concept of rendering Indian choir in the UK has been conceptualized, implemented and so successfully pursued by the innovative leader Shri Rakesh Joshi – with whom my association is a pleasure for me. His warm interpersonal relations, musical skills, creativity and composition insight were worth a big appreciation.

I have been part of this choir family as a tabla player and thoroughly enjoy the events and renditions of the choir group. The best part of this choir is that in addition to being an example of great teamwork, it is also a confluence of members speaking various languages, occupied in various professions, having different ages and come from different geographies.

The musical as well interpersonal harmony of this Choir group is an inspiration, and it always feels very uplifted when all of them do the group singing. I always feel a different spirit of unity whenever I am accompanying them. One of the memorable moments was when we were performing in Southbank centre – one of the best stage venues of London, I met a lady who said - this is like a rainbow of language, cultures, personalities, and musical compositions stretched on the stage and what shines out of it is the sunrays of commitment and creativity!

I wish all the good luck to this choir initiative and always look forward to being a part of it - in whatever form I can contribute.

Dr. Sangeeta Das

I have been a member of the Bharatiya Vrund Gaan (the Indian choir of UK) since its inception. Coming into the choir, we did not know exactly what to expect, as it was a novel concept. Under Rakesh's leadership, the choir has developed into a mode of cultural expression, allowing us to showcase aspects of Indian culture to members of the public through music. Our repertoire is quite varied – from Hindustani classical to folk songs to Bollywood, with pieces in multiple Indian languages including Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali, and Malayalam. This allows all of us, as members, to enjoy the compositions and share our personal experiences with the songs with each other. The choir has certainly expanded my social interaction and wellbeing, I have made many new friends and reconnected with others whom I had fallen out of touch with. Our rehearsals are often a good balance of singing together and enjoying one another's company over Indian snacks and sweets. I have learnt a lot about Indian classical music as a whole, especially from a stylistic and technical perspective. The choir has a unique approach to the conventional Western choir, mainly due to the fact that we are focused on Indian styles and our members come from across the country. This allows us a greater sense of belonging, and pride at the ability of our choir to overcome these challenges. The choir provided great opportunities for performing on stage in prestigious venues in the UK and also a tour of India, experience of recording studios and with live band too. Our India tour was a particularly memorable experience and was a once in a lifetime opportunity to perform in a unique environment, which would never have been possible for me outside of being part of Bharatiya Vrund Gaan.

Mrs. Hema Manjunath

Since 2016, I enjoy being a member of 'Bharatiya Vrund Gaan'- The Indian Choir of England. The musical compositions and songs taught by Mr Rakesh Joshi are very innovative, melodious and for inner Peace. It is a pleasure to sing varieties of songs in different Indian languages, which help to appreciate our heritage. They bring nostalgic memories of my days in India and also keep us connected to our cultural roots. It always makes me feel proud to sing devotional, folk and patriotic songs from our Motherland, when we perform in different places in the UK on various occasions. It was indeed very exciting to perform in a few cities in Gujarat, India on two consequent years. It was a joy to attend the Navratri Garba Music Workshop, arranged by Mr. Rakesh Joshi. To be a part of music collaboration with Gandharva Choir from Delhi, India and also during the collaboration with Western Orchestra were amongst some of the fabulous learning experiences for me. Being a part of our Choir for a Charity Fund raising event, representing The World Choir event by Samsung, participating on the BBC Music Day, performing in front of dignified personalities like Sri Sri Ravishankar and Pt. Jasraj were some of my most memorable cherished moments. I really look forward to learning many more wonderful compositions from Mr Rakesh Joshi and sing along with my Choir members.

Dr. Shoba Nirmal

I have been a member of the Bharatiya Vrund Gaan since April 2017. My music director is Mr. Rakesh Joshi. It has been a great experience being part of Bharatiya Vrund Gaan for the last 5 years. We sing in multiple Indian languages - national integration songs, traditional and folk songs and devotional songs. Mr. Rakesh Joshi composes the music for the songs and each composition is so unique and based on Hindustani classical music. I have always felt the compositions to be very soulful and meditative and the songs have given me immense happiness. We have done many performances and concerts. My first one was in 2017 in India - We sang at multiple venues in Gujarat, India and it was very well received. I also participated in the concert performed in Southbank in 2019 and it was appreciated by one and all. Mr. Joshi also conducts annual music retreats - I took part in the retreat in 2019 where all the members come together as a family, and we learn the finer nuances in singing from Mr. Rakesh Joshi. I enjoy singing in the BVG choir and because of the Covid pandemic we are not having face to face practice sessions which I miss very much. In spite of the pandemic Mr. Rakesh Joshi has continued the music classes online with the same enthusiasm and dedication. The only change I am looking forward in the choir is resuming our face-to-face sessions again. I learnt classical Indian music and I enjoy singing in BVG choir under Mr. Rakesh Joshi who is also trained in Indian classical music.

My expectations as a singer and choir member are met beyond my expectations in BVG choir. I wanted to perform in concerts and I wanted to keep learning music and meet people of similar interests and BVG choir has made all these expectations come true choir is like an extended family and I have innumerable memorable moments - from our interactive face to face practice sessions , to the multiple performances in India in 2017 - we performed in 4 venues in a week and received so much appreciation and the concert performance in Southbank in 2019 where all my international friends applauded our performance. I would like to continue learning new songs and in 5 years I would like BVG choir to perform more concerts not only in UK and India but in other countries as well with me being a part of it. I am very happy to be a part of BVG choir and looking forward to many more wonderful experiences and performances in the years to come under the guidance of Mr. Rakesh Joshi.

Dr. Rajshree Kanitkar and Dr. Uday Kanitkar

We, my husband Uday and myself, are proud to be part of BVG choir for the past 5 years. Rakesh ji is a brilliant music composer, his compositions are melodious based on Indian classical ragas I found that his taranas are very well composed. He was pioneer in starting first Indian choir group in UK. All singers feel like being a part of musical family singing practicing together and presenting to audiences. We had an amazing experience of singing with professional choir singers in workshops. My most memorable concert was in the presence of respected Sri Sri Ravi Shankar ji (yoga guru) in the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. It was a Divine feeling. We all sing for inner peace as our hobby I feel that we can improve the singing quality by practicing regularly. Also, we have too many female singers. We need more male singers to achieve the right balance in our choir I would like to continue to learn more classical compositions. Best wishes.

Summary

The Indian choir a valuable platform where members meet for music rehearsals but also gives them a chance to socialise, relax outside of their busy weekday schedules and to develop their learning by working in team.

Feedback has shown how the choir has provided a unique sense of family and social interaction, with members of different ages, languages and backgrounds mixing and learning from each other. The choir has received many great opportunities to perform at high-profile venues of the UK and abroad. This has been appreciated by individuals, as evidenced in the feedback. They have enjoyed not only individual concerts, but also tours and retreats. As a result, I am working hard to organise further such events in the future. Several members have pointed out the huge advantages of face-to-face practices compared to online virtual meetings. The latter was a necessity to keep the choir going during lockdown, however I have endeavored to re-establish regular face to face rehearsals since then, in response to this feedback. Some feedback has indicated the need for more male voices in the choir, which I also agree with. With this in mind, I have held further auditions at several venues and on different dates, with a view to recruiting more male singers.

The choir had an opportunity to learn and perform with my Indian ensemble and string players, and the reflection shows they have enjoyed this. For the musicians, it was also a unique experience to perform with large numbers of talented Indian choir singers. In addition, the events in which there has been collaboration with Western musicians has also been appreciated as a learning opportunity. Indian arts, music, dance and culture is so versatile and diverse, that it provides members with an opportunity for cultural exchange. Other feedback received that makes me feel proud and thrilled is that musicians enjoy meeting other singers who speak and sing in various Indian languages. At present, we sing in eight different Indian languages, and it has encouraged me to add and introduce songs from a few more Indian languages.

Informally, a few community singers have requested that I include Bollywood songs, so I have added two meaningful and relevant film songs to our work which fit our repertoire and keep the interest alive. It was challenging for me to maintain the traditional choral concept as well as giving justice to member's interests. Bollywood songs are great, but this Indian choir specialised in singing Vedic hymns, classical tarana, prayers, folk songs, so adding film songs may disappoint classical audiences. To overcome this challenge, I included the performance only at relevant community events.

Building on the feedback I have received has enabled improvements in the quality of the choir overall. Further to my own reflection, I also introduced many joyful and musical elements for members such as musical quizzes and working with Western choirs to learn English songs. Over the last year, I have begun to conduct the choir instead of playing harmonium and also included 'tillana', a type of Carnatic music compositions to our repertoire. I also hope to gain formal feedback from the audience and so I have created a feedback form to gather comments on what they enjoyed and what they would like to hear in the future.

Many members feel proud to be performing in the first Indian choir of the UK and their experience of this has been beyond their expectations. I am really delighted to read the positive comments in feedback about how happy they feel being part of the choir and it makes me feel that my hard work has been worth it.

Chapter 9: Poets and composers

In this chapter, I discuss the poets and composers whose work I have used in my projects and choir compositions, to allow a deeper understanding of how they have influenced my approach to setting pieces for the choir. I selected specific songs written by the poets which are relevant, popular and fit in the choir repertoire and in most cases I have set these to various ragas to create a musical piece.

Shri Rang Avdhoot Maharaj

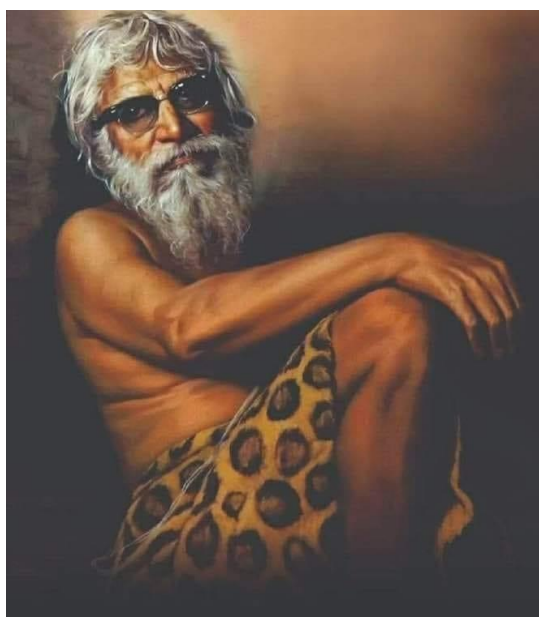


Figure 72 - Shri Rang Avdhoot, an image retrieved from <https://www.rangavadhoot.us/p-p-shri-rang-avadhoot/>

One of the most popular compositions of both choirs, 'Gaayati Reva Rava-Madhuram', was written in Sanskrit and composed by Rang Avdhoot of Nareshwar. The poem is written about the second longest river of India (also known as 'Narmada'). This song is composed in Raga 'Malkauns', set to 'teentala' (16 beats rhythm cycle). I composed the tarana part of this song. This is one of the favourite songs of the singers. Rang Avdhoot, born Pandurang Vitthalapant Valame, (21 November 1898 - 19 November 1968) was a mystic saint-poet belonging to Datta-Panth (Gurucharita tradition of Dattatreya) of Hinduism. He was a social worker and independence activist before accepting asceticism. He is credited for the expansion of 'Datta-Panth' in Gujarat state of India and has written more than 45 works which mostly concern spirituality and devotion. He belonged to a Marathi 'Brahmin' family. Rang Avdhoot was fluent in Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, English and Sanskrit. Rang Avdhoot's other major works are Ranghridayam (1932), Nareshwar Mahatmya, Shri Vasudevnam-Sudha, Vasudev Saptashati (1970), Shri Saptashati Gurucharitra, Dattayag-paddhati (1973), Shri Gurumurti Charitra, Prashnottargeeta (1976) and Datta Namsmaran. (Avdhoot, 2023)

To hear Bharatiya Vrund Gaan singing Rang Avdhoot's song 'Gaayati Reva Ravamadhuram', [click here](#)

Yogacharya Swami Shri Krupalvanand



Figure 73 - Shri Krupalvanand, Retrieved from <https://swamikripalvananda.org/north-america/kayavarohan-east-and-west/>

The adult choir sings a raga Tilang-based composition ‘Mujhe koi Krishna Dikhao’ in Hindi language followed by the ‘tarana’. This piece was originally written in Gujarati language and composed by Shri Krupalvanand (13 January, 1913 – 29 December, 1981), who was born in Dabhoi, Gujarat, India. I composed a tarana for this classical composition as very few tarana have been composed in this raga, and I wanted to fill this gap.

Shri Krupalvanand, also known as ‘Bapuji’, was a renowned master of kundalini yoga and the namesake of the Kripalu Centre and Krupalvanand Yoga Institute in the United States. His famous quote helps music, yoga and philosophy students: “Love is the only path, love is the only god, and love is the only scripture. Impress this verse upon your memory and chant it constantly if you want to realize your dreams of growth.” He worked as a music teacher in Ahmedabad between 1935 and 1940, playing the tamboura and harmonium, and becoming a Master of Music at the same time. In 1981 his health worsened, and he decided to go back to India. His shrine is in Malav, Gujarat. Krupalvanand had four disciples who took vows of renunciation: Swami Rajarshi Muni, who maintains his institution (ashram) in Gujarat, India, Life Mission; Swami Vinit Muni who died in 1995; Swami Asutosh Muni who maintains the shrine of Krupalvanand in Malav, India and Yogeshwar Muni, who was given the highest yogic teachings and commissioned by Krupalvanand to teach kundalini yoga in the West, he died in 2007. (Krupalanand, 1969) (Faulds, 2022)

To hear Bharatiya Vrund Gaan singing Krupalvanand song ‘Mujhe Koi Krishna’ in Raga Tilang, [click here](#)

Sri Adiguru Shankaracharya



Figure 74 - Adiguru Shankaracharya, Retrieved from <https://sringeri.net/history/sri-adi-shankaracharya>

BVG and SHIVA choirs sing many Sanskrit hymns written by Adiguru Shankaracharya such as 'Nirwan Shatakam', 'Shivashtakam' and 'Shiv Panchakshar' stotra (group of mantras). I composed these mantras / hymns in ragas Bhupali, Jog and Bilawal.

His devotees believe and accept that Sri Adi Shankaracharya as an 'Avatar' of Lord Shiva. (Avatar= incarnation of God). Apart from being the champion of 'Advaita' philosophy, one of his invaluable contributions towards Hinduism was the reordering and restructuring of the ancient 'Sannyasa' order (*life of renunciation, one renounces material possessions to concentrate purely on spiritual matters*). These 'Sannyasis' interpreted the eternal code of life contained in the Vedas that flows as the dynamic force underlying and unifying all humanity to reach the masses. Adi Shankaracharya is the ideal 'Sannyasi' (Saint). It is commonly accepted that he lived in the 8th Century CE, though there are historical sources that indicate that he lived in an earlier period. He was born in 'Kalady', Kerala and, despite his short life span of 32 years, his accomplishments seem a marvel even today, with our modern conveyances and other facilities. Adi Shankra composed 72 devotional and meditative hymns such as 'Soundarya Lahari', 'Sivananda Lahari', 'Maneesha Panchakam'. He also wrote 18 commentaries on the major scriptural texts including the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and 12 major 'Upanishads'. He also authored 23 books on the fundamentals of the 'Advaita Vedant'a philosophy which expound the principles of the non-dual 'Brahman'. These include 'Viveka Chudamani', 'Atma Bodha', 'Vaakya Vritti' and 'Upadesa Sahasri', among others. (Sringeri, 2023)

To hear Bharatiya Vrund Gaan singing Adiguru Shankaracharya's song 'Nirwana Shatakam', [click here](#)

Shri Sohanlal Dwivedi

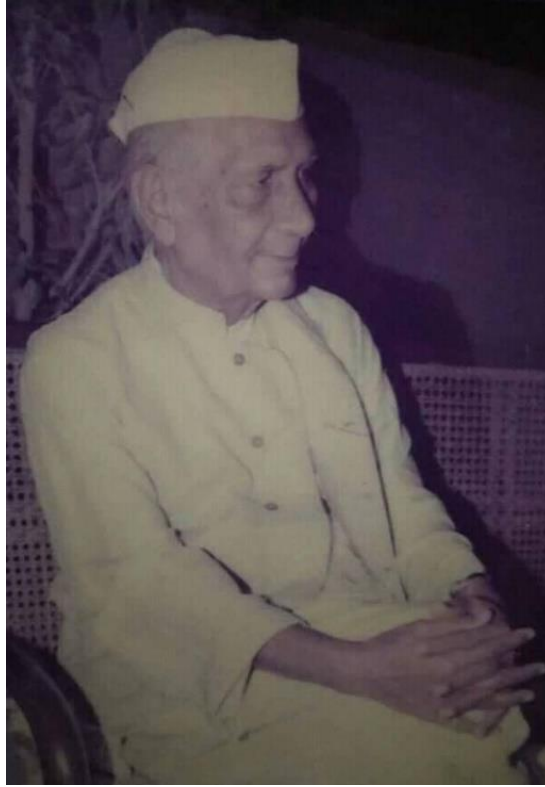


Figure 75 - Shri Sohanlal Dwivedi, Retrieved from <http://kavitakosh.org/kk>

The Indian choir sing a popular Hindi Poem 'Koshish Karanewalon ki kabhi haar nahi hoti', written by Sohanlal (Dwivedi, 2023). This composition is one of the favorites of the singers. I composed this song in a folk style to give a new musical variety to the Indian choral singing. I introduced humming, alap, notation and part-singing in the composition.

Sohanlal Dwivedi was an Indian poet, Gandhian and freedom fighter, known for his patriotic poems such as 'Tumhe Naman', a poem on Mahatma Gandhi, 'Ali Racho Chand', 'Khadi Geet', 'Giriraj, Nayanon' 'ki Resham Dori se', 'Mathrubhumi', 'Prakriti Sandesh', 'Jay Rashtra Nishan', 'Re Man', 'Vandana' and 'Himalay'. Mr Dwivedi was born on 22 February 1906 at 'Bindki', a small town in Fatehpur in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. He secured a master's degree in Hindi and did higher studies in Sanskrit. In 1970, the Government of India honored the 'Padma Shri', the fourth highest Indian civilian award, to Mr. Dwivedi. He died on 1 March 1980.

To hear SHIVA, the youth choir members singing Sohanlal Dwivedi's song 'Koshish Karanewalon', [click here](#)

Shri Sundaram

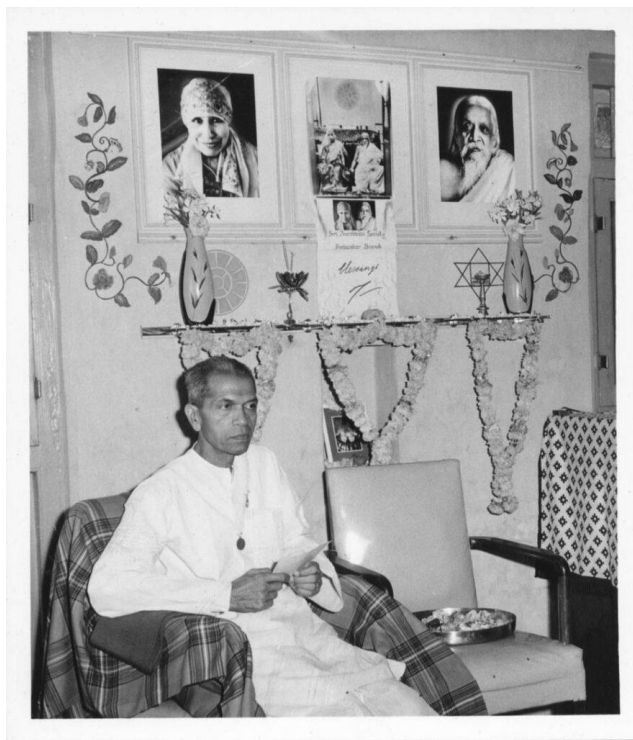


Figure 76 - Shri Sundaram, Retrieved from <https://overmanfoundation.org/what-sri-aurobindo-means-to-me-by-sundaram/>

The adult and youth choir sings the famous Gujarati prayer 'Amane Raakh sada Tav Sharane', written by Sundaram. We harmonise this composition in three parts, adding humming, alap, notations and overlapping.

Born on 22 March 1908 as 'Tribhuvandas Luhar' to 'Purushottamdas Keshavdas Luhar' and 'Ujamben' in the village of 'Miyanmatar' (located in the district of Bharuch), Sundaram was a legendary poet of Gujarat. At the age of eighteen, his first poem 'Ekanshe De' was published in 'Sabarmati', a Gujarati magazine. After graduating from Gujarat 'Vidyapith', he started teaching in 'Sonagadh-Gurukul'. In 1934 he received the prestigious 'Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak', a gold medal considered to be the highest literary award in Gujarati literature for his anthology of poems, 'Kavyamangala'. He visited Pondicherry in 1940 and had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He visited Pondicherry again in 1943 and two years later joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram as an inmate with his wife 'Mangalagauri' and daughter Sudha. He presided over the 'Gujarati Sahitya Parishad' in 1970 and died on 13 January 1991. His book 'Avalokana' earned him the Delhi Sahitya Akademi Award in 1969. In 1975 he received an Honorary D. Litt from the Sardar Patel University. On 16 March 1985 he received the 'Padma Bhushan' Award, the third highest Civilian Award, from the then President of India, Giani Zail Singh. In 1990 he received the 'Shri Narasinh Mehta' Award for his contribution in the field of education and literature from the Government of Gujarat. On 13 January 1991, he left his body. (Banerjee, 2021)

To hear the adult choir singing Sundaram's song 'Tav Sharane' accompanied by string players, [click here](#)

Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar



Figure 77 - Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/vd-savarkar-death-anniversary-commemoration-pm-modi-indian-politicians-101708919072596.html>

The adult choir sings one of the most famous Indian Patriotic songs 'Jayostute' written in Marathi language by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar; Popularly known as 'Veer Savarkar', born on 28 May 1883 in 'Bhagur' village to father 'Damodar pant' and mother 'Radhabai', he was educated at the local 'Shivaji' High School before he enrolled in the Ferguson College, Poona, in 1902. He was permitted to take his BA degree and with the help of 'Shyamaji Krishnavarma' attained a scholarship to study law at Gray's Inn in London. He was an Indian independence activist and politician who formulated the Hindu nationalist philosophy of 'Hindutva', and was a leading personality. He died on 26 February 1966 in Mumbai. (Krishnavarma, 2022)

To hear Savarkar's song 'Jayostute', the original composition, [click here](#)

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore



Figure 78 - Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Photo from the Nobel Foundation archive, Retrieved from <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1913/tagore/facts/>

The adult choir sings two famous Bengali poems written by the legendary poet, Pandit Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore FRAS was a Bengali polymath - poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer and painter. He reshaped Bengali literature and music as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The author of the "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse" of 'Gitanjali', he became in 1913 the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Tagore's poetic songs were viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside of Bengal. (Rabindranath Tagore Facts, 2023)

To hear Bharatiya Vrund Gaan singing Tagore's song 'Esho Shyemolo Shundoro', [**Click here**](#)

Conclusion

These pioneers in Indian culture, politics and philosophy have influenced the choices of lyrics I have used in the choral compositions. I admire their huge achievements in poetry and language and feel fortunate that I can incorporate their works in my music, in such a variety of languages. Their philosophy and thinking have shaped not only my own faith, but that of the Indian nation as whole. This is reflected in the many musical compositions of India, and I have also strived to shine a light on their beautiful prose.

For most of the choir songs, I composed and arranged music scores in Sanskrit and Roman scripts. The choir also performs the national integration songs of India composed by various composers such as Kaanu Ghosh, Dinesh Majmudar and many folk songs composed by Shashank Fadnis, Govind Upadhyaya.

Chapter 10 - Press Reviews, articles and blogs

Feedback from audiences and critics is a crucial tool for measuring the effectiveness of creative content and the impact it has. I can build on this to improve my own compositions and the way I manage the choir as a whole.

In this section, I have included media links, press reviews and reports of my past concerts detailing what reporters have written about Indian the choir concerts and my compositions. I have included social media links to help the readers know what the community and audience written about my choir and ensemble concerts. Some of the reviews are old but it helps the readers to know where I started my music journey from Manchester and expanded to the national and international level.

Asian Lite News Article: Nov 2014 - the Indian choir at The Lowry, Salford Quays
[An evening of soulful rendition – Asian Lite News Archive](#)

Asian Voice: Feb 2016 - Sounds of Divine India, five concerts tour
[BVG- Sounds of Divine concerts... \(asian-voice.com\)](#)

Asian Voice: June 2019 - Swaranjali Concert at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester
[Swaranjali concert by Bharatiya Vrund Gaan and SHIVA... \(asian-voice.com\)](#)

Asian Voice: June 2023 - Guru Vandana at Southbank Centre
[Guru Vandana to celebrate spiritual gurus of India... \(asian-voice.com\)](#)
[Guru Purnima concert to bring musical spirituality to London \(iglobalnews.com\)](#)

Facebook Page - BVG: the Indian choir of England
[Bharatiya Vrund Gaan - The Indian Choir | Manchester | Facebook](#)

Facebook Page - Raga Jyoti: Indian Music Ensemble
[RAGA JYOTI - The Indian Classical Music Ensemble of England | Facebook](#)

Facebook Page - Shakti Vrund: Folk Music Group
[Shakti Vrund UK - Folk Music of Gujarat | Facebook](#)

Hallé Concerts Society Blog: March 2024 - Manchester Classical Wins a 2024 RPS Award
[Manchester Classical Wins a 2024 RPS Award - The Hallé \(halle.co.uk\)](#)
[Manchester Classical feedback - The Hallé \(halle.co.uk\)](#)
[Manchester Classical brings free performances and irresistible food to The Bridgewater Hall this weekend \(manchesterwire.co.uk\)](#)

I-GLOBAL News Article: Nov 2022 - the Indian choir at St. Peters, Manchester

[Sur Madhur: A first-of-its-kind Indian music choir comes to Manchester \(iglobalnews.com\)](#)

I-GLOBAL News Article: April 2023 - the Indian choir and classical dancers

[Subrang Arts brings soul-stirring Indian Sounds of Colour to life in UK \(iglobalnews.com\)](#)

Indian Music Teacher at the Bhavan, Manchester (September 1999 to January 2023)

[Our Teachers - Bhavan Institute of Indian Art and Culture](#)

LinkedIn - [Rakesh Joshi](#)

Manchester Evening News: Jan 2013 - Concert at The Lowry

[Local music maestro to perform at The Lowry - Manchester Evening News](#)

METRO Northwest: Sept 2008 - Reviews and News article

[Five questions for Rakesh Joshi | Metro News](#)

Southbank Centre event information 'Guru Vandana': July 2023 - Indian choir and ensemble concert at the Southbank Centre

[Raga Jyoti Presents Guru Vandana \(southbankcentre.co.uk\)](#)

Stroud News: March 2016 - the Indian choir concert

[Review: Indian Choir give uplifting performance at Stroud Subscription Rooms | Stroud News and Journal](#)

The Print: Newspaper article: August 2023 - BVG choir performing at the Indian High Commission, London

[Hundreds gather for Independence Day celebrations in London – ThePrint – PTIFeed](#)

The University of Salford Blog: May 2023 - Rangdhwani concert by BVG Indian choir and Sabrang Dancers

[Rang Dhvani – The Sounds of Colour: An Interview with Artistic Director Rakesh Joshi - GRADUATE VOICE \(salford.ac.uk\)](#)

Twitter - [@RAKESH JOSHI \(@raaqiyoti\)](https://twitter.com/raaqiyoti) / (twitter.com)

Raga Jyoti
Presents

Divinity

Divine & Spiritual Indian Music Compositions
Digital projection about India matching with the theme music

Artistic Director: Rakesh Joshi
National Tour in February 2010 by
Raga Jyoti-The Indian Classical Music Ensemble
in collaboration with members of the Hallé Youth Ensembles

VENUES

Sun 7th Feb: 7pm Fairfield Halls, Croydon • www.fairfield.co.uk
Tickets: £10 (concessions £2 off), Family Tickets: £32, Box office: 020 8888 9251

Sun 14th Feb: 7pm The Lowry, Salford Quays • www.thelowry.com
Tickets: £12 (concessions £2 off), Family Tickets: £36, Box office: 0843 206 6010

Sat 27th Feb: 7.30pm Curve, Leicester • www.curveonline.co.uk
Tickets: £10, £12, £15 (£2 discount available), Box office: 0116 242 3595

CURVE **THE LOWRY** **Fairfield**

For further details please contact: raaqiyoti@gmail.com

Figure 79 - Advert in the newspaper

पूर्व-पश्चिमनो सुभग सम्बन्ध करतो भारतीय आध्यात्म संगीत कार्यक्रम: रागाज्योति

रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका

रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका... रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका... रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका...

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माय नेम छज्ज जान : शाहरुख Chak-89नी मुलाकते



माय नेम छज्ज जान : शाहरुख Chak-89नी मुलाकते... माय नेम छज्ज जान : शाहरुख Chak-89नी मुलाकते...

रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका... रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका... रागाज्योति: शैलिक पत्रिका...

Figure 80 - An article in the Gujarati newspaper, 'Gujarat Samachar'

Asian Voice - Saturday 27th February 2010

Raga Jyoti presents Divinity Concerts

Raga Jyoti - The Indian Classical Music Ensemble is created and artistically directed by Rakesh Jeshi of Manchester. Raga Jyoti musicians present an exciting variety of the Indian classical, contemporary, folk and fused music compositions. The Ensemble was created in the year 2001 with the special musical message of the Light beyond the Millennium. A group thirty talented Indian and Western musicians present specially composed music in traditional Indian style.

This year, on 7th Feb at Fairfield Halls, Croydon and on 14th February at The Lowry, Salford Quays, Rakesh Jeshi & team musicians of the Raga Jyoti have performed beautiful concerts at two high profile venues of the UK. Approximately 500 audience at each venue have attended and enjoyed the concerts.

On Saturday, 27th February, Raga Jyoti musicians will be presenting Divinity concert at one of the finest and new venues of the UK, Curve in Leicester (www.curve.co.uk)

In the past, Raga Jyoti has performed at Leeds Town Hall, Action town hall, a special performance for Prince Ravi Shankar (Great Star maestro) at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester at Oldham Coliseum - part of the Commonwealth Games in 2002, in Tameside music festival and at The Lowry, Salford Quays (Electricity & Divinity concerts in 2005-2006-2010).

Raga Jyoti musicians aim to present beautiful Indian classical and contemporary music orchestra for the audience at the UK and the world, with special message of peace, divine harmony and friendship for all diverse communities.

Figure 81 - an article in the Asian Voice newspaper

The newspaper article in Gujarati (Figure 79) says that Raga Jyoti's Divinity concerts was highly enjoyed by the audience. It was a great example of hearing Indian raga music in combination of the Western and Indian musicians. The concert was a perfect example of cultural diversity and inclusion. I-Global Newspaper wrote a few times about Indian choir concerts, especially how effective the first concert was after the pandemic in November 2022 and following the successful concert in July 2023 at the Southbank Centre.

Conclusion

The variety of sources of reviews in the press has advertised the choir to many parts of the community. As a result, I have been approached by adults and young people from different locations asking to join the choir and to ask more about future projects. The press reviews have been overwhelmingly positive and have helped to grow the choir in this way. The positive feedback has been a real blessing to me in encouraging me to continue with my work in the knowledge that music and hard work does bring joy and satisfaction to others.

The audiences have also grown as a result, as people have contacted me to request that their details be added to mailing lists in order to receive information on future concerts. Compared to when it started, the choir is now attracting much bigger audiences, and from wider backgrounds. The unique nature of the choir has been highlighted in a number of these reviews and I have also been approached by musicians of other backgrounds to enquire about future collaborations. For example, a Manchester-based harp player, heard about the choir and approached me to ask if I would like to use the harp for these choral concerts. Also, sitar and mridangam players from London have asked me if they could join the performances providing their musical support.

The reviews have celebrated the diversity of languages performed, with positive feedback from choir member interviews as well as from audiences who do not necessarily understand the lyrics. This has cemented my wish to continue singing in different Indian languages and so to expand the choir's repertoire.

Overall, the positive reviews and comments have reassured me that my work is developing in a direction enjoyed by audiences and performers alike. As I have stated in my interview with the University of Salford (May 2023), "Nothing is impossible if you have pure dedication, passion, and faith in your aim and focus." These wonderful reviews encourage me to continue on my path.

Supplementary material

Learning and development trip to India

The roots of Indian music and Veda are in India. There are no Indian choral experts nor Indian music Veda scholars in the UK who can provide me with accurate guidance and mentorship to support my DMA. Further to my discussion with my supervisor Prof. Alan Williams, visiting India for further research in Veda, choral tradition and meeting gurus was an extremely important part of my DMA study and personal development in Indian music. The University of Salford approved and supported my research trip. I am thankful to the research department of the University for providing a small contribution towards my travel and accommodation. I managed all other personal allowances.

I planned to visit Veda schools and meet key gurus and scholars at their institutions in India who could guide me to understand the origin of choir singing in Indian music, traditional choral techniques and composition styles for Indian ensemble (traditional and modern approach). Also, I wanted to observe live music sessions in which they teach at their music schools and institutions. Meeting scholars personally on this was a very inspirational and life-changing experience for me. It helped me to understand my DMA subject well and write my chapters in depth. I visited Delhi, Chennai, Rishikesh, Haridwar and Pondicherry during the period of 19 February to 6 March 2020.

Gandharva choir, Delhi

India's capital territory is a massive metropolitan area in the country's north. I met 'Padmashri' Pandit Madhup Mudgal, a North Indian classical singer, music director and conductor of the 'Gandharva' choir. 'Gandharva' choir is one of the finest and most traditional choirs of India. I attended his vocal class, tabla session and observed a 'kathak' dance class. I followed his guidance on how to develop an Indian choir in the UK. 'Pandit Mudgal' explained and discussed how his father 'Padmashri' Pandit Vinaya Chandra Maudgalya started the 'Gandharva' choir and what techniques they use. One very useful conversation was about how he introduced part-singing for the raga-based compositions. During my visit, I met a few choir singers of 'Gandharva Mahavidyalaya' (music institution) who had previously visited the UK in 2018. 'Bharatiya Vrund Gaan' also learnt and performed two compositions together with the 'Gandharva choir' for their concert at the University of Salford.



Figure 82 - Rakesh Joshi with Pandit Madhup Mudgal, Delhi

The Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai

While composing and conducting music for the Indian ensemble and choir, I am always interested to learn more about Indian classical dance styles and postures, and about the rhythm required for various classical and folk dances in the composition of music for dance drama and ballets. As a composer, it is equally important for me to interact and collaborate with the dance teachers and choreographers to understand the dance style, techniques and theme of traditional dances such as 'bharatnatyam', 'kathak', 'odissi', 'kuchipudi' and folk dances. For my learning and development, I visited the 'Kalakshetra' Foundation of Carnatic Music and Dance. Kalakshetra is a world-famous dance institution and specializes in the 'bharatnatyam' dance style of South India. I stayed on the campus for three days. As an observer, I attended music and dance classes, and met a few teachers. I found all the sessions very useful for my personal development in music. I attended three dance concerts with live music, lectures about dance 'mudra' (postures), 'talam' (rhythm) and Vedic chanting. Revathi Ramachandran, director of Kalakshetra discussed with me how (late) Rukmini Devi Arundale, founder of 'Kalakshetra' started the institution and introduced classical dance to their students. My personal meeting with dance scholars and teachers, helped me to understand South Indian vocal and rhythm techniques for the 'Bharatnatyam' and music for dance-drama. The most inspiring and joyful session was attending the dance and music sessions in the open air, under tree. I used my learning and knowledge to compose a music piece for a dance which we performed in April 2023 at Epsom Theatre, London.



Figure 83 and 84 - Kalakshetra's auspicious banyan tree, the music and dance classes happen under the tree.



Figure 85 - Kalakshetra's auditorium

Parmarth Niketan, Gurukul (Sanskrit school) - Rishikesh

My main purpose in visiting Rishikesh was to attend and observe the Veda schools at Parmarth Niketan. I visited the Sanskrit 'Pathshala' (Vedic schools) to observe how scholars teach and the students recite the 'mantra' and Vedic hymns, especially while reciting in a large group. By attending a couple of sessions, I learnt how accurately they were reciting Vedic Ṛchas by using four tones: 'Udatta', 'Anudatta', 'Svarita' and 'Deergha Svarita'. Their Sanskrit pronunciations were so authentic while reciting the hymns. I was very impressed when I saw that young children between the ages 8-12 years were reciting Samaveda and Ṛgveda mantras. It was a life changing learning experience for me. I met a few scholars, took their personal advice and bought a few books. In my daily life, I practice Veda by reciting and composing for the Indian choir. I will share my further knowledge with the choir by introducing the Vedic chanting techniques. Rishikesh and Haridwar are cities in India's northern state of Uttarakhand, in the Himalayan foothills on the bank of the Ganges River. The river is considered holy, and the city is renowned as a centre for studying yoga and meditation. Also, the Vedic Yoga Centre (VYC) is located on the banks of the holy Ganga in the stunning town of 'Laxman Jhula' (swinging bridge). Rishikesh is regarded as the 'Yoga Capital of the World'. The Centre is a peaceful oasis for learning and practicing the ancient science of yoga, specifically Vedic yoga.

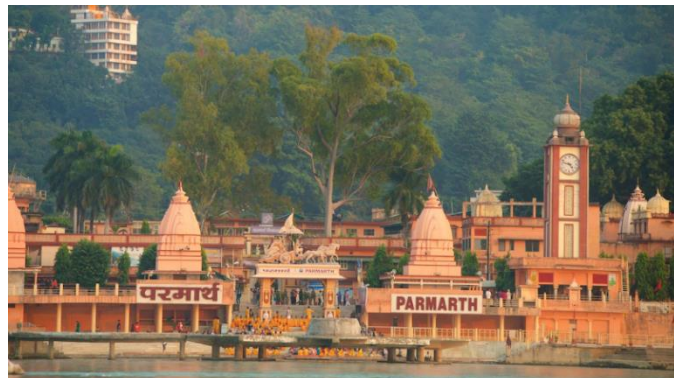


Figure 86 - Veda School, Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh



Figure 87 - 'Arati' at the riverbank of Ganges, singing prayers and hymns of the river Ganges, Haridwar.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

My music compositions are related to ragas and spirituality. From a young age, I was inspired by the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Mirra Alfasa). The peaceful mantras of Sri Aurobindo and the meditative music of Mirra Alfasa and Sunil Da (a musician at the ashram), connected me to spiritual music and the life divine. I visited the international music school of the ashram to meet various poets, music teachers, scholars and yoga teachers. BVG adult choir sings a few poems and songs written by devotees and composers who live in Pondicherry. We sing a few poems written by the late 'Sundaram', disciple of Sri Aurobindo who used to live in Pondicherry. I met Sundaram's daughter Sudha and heard a few stories from her about how 'Sundaram' connected with Sri Aurobindo and about how he wrote his poems and literature. I visited the meditation centre 'Auroville'. I meditated in the golden dome, and received an opportunity to perform prayers compositions at one of the venues called 'Bharat Niwas'. It was a once in a lifetime experience for me. My personal experience inspired me to plan the choir's residential music retreat in Pondicherry.



Figure 88 - An image of Auroville, Pondicherry

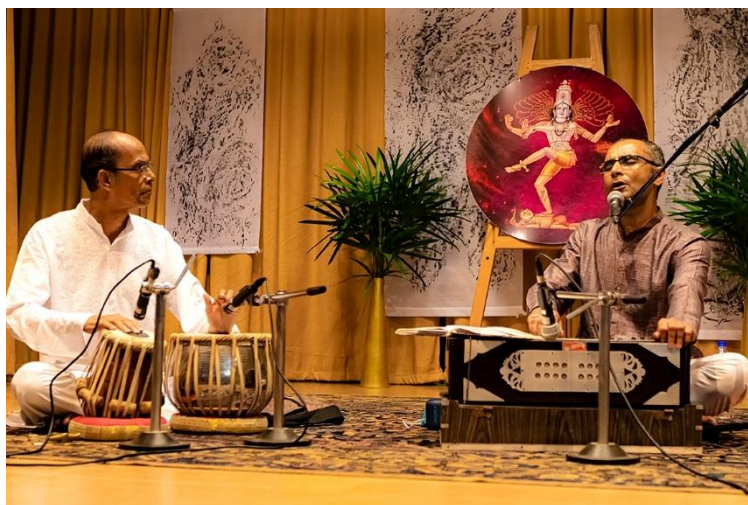


Figure 89 - Rakesh Joshi playing harmonium and singing prayers, accompanied by tabla player, Auroville.

Previous concerts and music projects posters for information

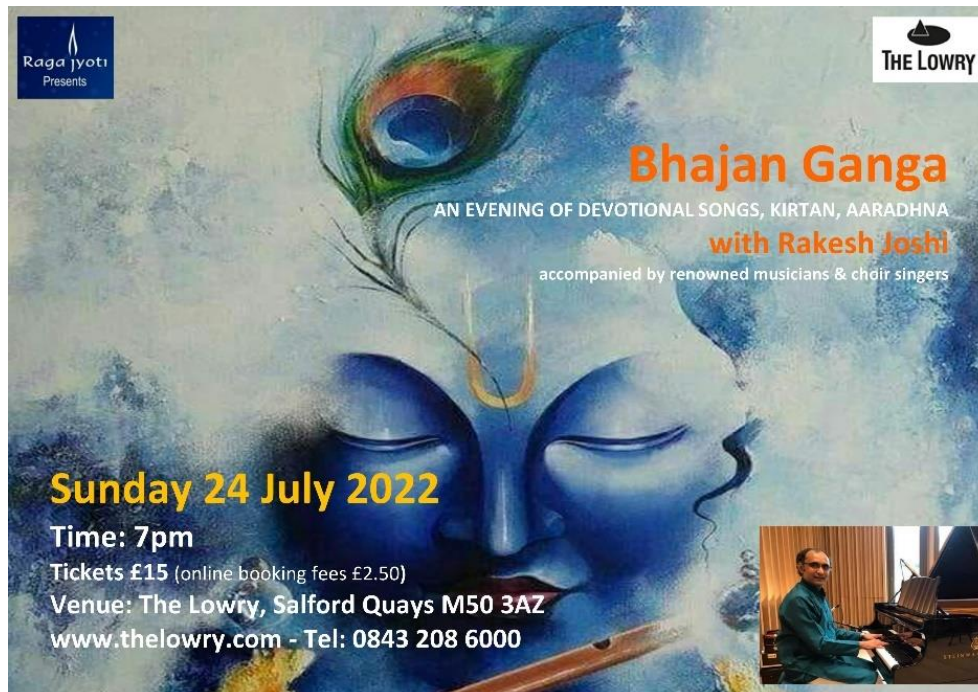


Saayam RavaMadhuram
An evening of Bhakti Sangeet & Sugam Sangeet
by Rakesh Joshi
Presenting popular and newly composed bhakti & Sugam Sangeet compositions
Come to enjoy soothing, uplifting and joyful devotional and light songs

Saturday 25 June 2022
Time: 7pm
Tickets £15
Venue: Krishna Avanti Primary School Hall
Camrose Avenue, Edgware, London HA8 6ES
for further details please contact: ragajyoti@gmail.com / 07973 306 125

Raga Jyoti Presents

Figure 90 - poster of my Solo vocal and the Indian choir concert, Krishna Avanti School, London



Raga Jyoti Presents

Bhajan Ganga
AN EVENING OF DEVOTIONAL SONGS, KIRTAN, AARADHNA
with Rakesh Joshi
accompanied by renowned musicians & choir singers

Sunday 24 July 2022
Time: 7pm
Tickets £15 (online booking fees £2.50)
Venue: The Lowry, Salford Quays M50 3AZ
www.thelowry.com - Tel: 0843 208 6000

THE LOWRY

Figure 91 - Poster of Bhajan concert at The Lowry

[listen here](#)



Figure 92 - Migrant Voice project with the world musicians, June 2019

Raga Jyoti Presents
101

SHASTRIYA VANDANA
Musical Tribute to
Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar

Rakesh Joshi
(Vocal, Piano & Compositions)
Tabla: Sandeep Popatkar
Violin: Vijay Venkat

Monday 12 April 2021
4:30pm (UK time)

Live Streaming on YouTube-Facebook

f
YouTube

Figure 93 - Tribute to Sitar Maestro Pandit Ravishankar - first online concert after Covid-19

[listen here](#)

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Appendix: Curriculum Vitae

Mr. Rakesh Joshi

Mobile: 07973 306 125

Email: bvg.theindianchoir@gmail.com

Nationality: British

Qualifications

2011: Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE, the University of Huddersfield, UK)

1998: GMOCF (Music Technology Course, Tameside College, Ashton Under Lyne, UK)

1996: CAOP (Advance IT Course, Anoopam Mission, Gujarat, India)

1995: Master of Commerce (M. Com, Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India)

1993: Diploma in Music (D. Music, Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India)

1993: Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com, Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India)

1989: Higher Secondary School (HSC, D. N. High School, Gujarat, India)

1986: Secondary School Education (SSC, M. U. Patel High School, Gujarat, India)

Present study

2018: DMA, research study in music (the University of Salford, UK)

Employment History

Present Employment: 1

Job Title: Artistic Director, Composer and Conductor

BVG - the Indian choir of England and SHIVA – the Indian Youth choir of England

November 2014 - Present

Present Employment: 2

Job Title: Artistic Director and Composer

Raga Jyoti- Shatriya Vadhya Vrund (traditional Indian ensemble)

January 2001 - present

Present Employment: 3

Job Title: Engagement and Business Support Officer

Department for Education, Civil Service

November 2019 - present

Previous Employment History

Job Title: Music Educator, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Manchester Ltd (www.bhavan.co.uk)
(October 1999 to January 2023)

I taught Indian classical music for the subjects: Hindustani vocal, Harmonium and keyboard. My classes took place at the Manchester Grammar School for Boys. I provided support in writing syllabus for the Indian music examinations. I organised vocal workshops and provided support in organizing music concerts. With dedication and passion, I enjoyed promoting Indian arts and culture in Greater Manchester. I taught Indian music to Grade 1 to 8 students.

Job Title: Case Worker, The Home Office
(June 2012 to July 2019)

Job Title: Projects and Program Manager, Milap Charitable Trust
(February 2003 – December 2009)

I planned and delivered the successful music-dance-arts events at the national venues of UK such as the Lowry, the Bridgewater Hall, Southbank Centre, St. Georges Hall-Liverpool, Dartington summer school, Lake District summer music school. I booked professional musicians, dancers and artists, prepared contracts for the artistes and the venues. I managed and delivered educational and development work for the national youth orchestra and ensemble of the Indian music. I have provided my support in preparing and submitting grants application from Youth Music, Arts Council England, PRSF, Musicians Benevolent Fund and private sponsors. I wrote yearly business reports for the charitable trust and the youth orchestra. I organised meetings, took minutes, and circulated amongst the trustees.

Job title: Finance Assistant, The University of Manchester
(March 2002 to January-2003)

Job title: Radio Broadcaster, Asian Sound Radio, Manchester
(October 2000 to January 2002)

Job Title: Music Teacher, Kala Sangam Arts Academy, Bradford
(January 1999 to September 2000)

Musical, Artistic and Technical skills

- Professional experience of planning, organising and delivering successful music and arts projects, such as orchestras, studio recordings, music workshops, summer retreat and music education masterclasses.
- Strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to build effective relationships with colleagues and stakeholders at every level within an organisation.
- Leadership skills, as a composer and director of the choir and ensemble, I managed many national and international music projects.
- Smart arts management skills and ability to work with CEOs, artistic directors of music orchestras and government officers. Good organisational skills, and the ability to develop and implement effective administrative processes. I have basic knowledge of Sibelius, music writing software and Cubase, the sound recording software.
- Smart communication skills with modern approach.
- Always open to the new artistic and musical collaborations for the development of the choir and ensemble.
- Professional experience of supporting and managing recruitment campaigns and auditions for the choir and ensemble.
- Professional experience and knowledge of music and arts management. Good understanding of managing the budget and finance of the music group. Friendly nature and ability to work on own
- Expertise in maintaining and developing Public Relations.