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Author's Preface

Some 25 years ago Vemu Mukunda, born 1929 in Bangalore (Mysore) in the South of India, began to familiarize European audiences with the results of decades of research on the effects of sound and music on the human body and mind. In this context, his discoveries concerning the human voice were of outstanding importance. He coined the expression "Musical Therapy according to the Nada-Brahma System" and communicated in lectures, seminars and courses knowledge on the close kinship between music and the sound of the human voice and on their reciprocal effects on emotions and the human body. His research based on ancient Indian sources and also on ancient knowledge and traditions of other civilizations. For many years he had been planning to sum up his achievements in this sphere, but his failing health prevented him from writing a book.

After having completed my courses in the "Nada-Brahma System", I acted as an interpreter for Vemu Mukunda during almost all of his courses since 1993. From 1995 onwards I was authorized to represent him on account of his illness also at Musical Therapy congresses both in Germany and abroad. We had often talked about the demand for a book on the "Nada-Brahma System", but my hopes to write a book in English with his help, as suggested by him in 1996, did not materialize at that time. In 1998, he finally authorized me to decide on my own to write a book, and when I last saw him in London in November 1999, we had fruitful discussions on the contents of the book. Vemu Mukunda died in February 2000 in his house in Charlton near London.

Besides my profession as a lecturer at the Stuttgart University of Music and Performing Arts I have also been holding lectures and seminars on the "Nada-Brahma System" since 1993. Since then, this system has been meeting with such interest and there have been so many positive results and responses resulting from the practical application of the "Nada-Brahma System", that I consider it a duty and pleasure to write this book communicating to a wider public the life's work of Vemu Mukunda.

That way, readers are enabled to appreciate his fundamentally comprehensive approach to the importance and effects of musical sound and especially of the sound of one's own voice. This book was first published in German by the end of 2001. Thanks to the great many who recommended it we are now publishing the second edition in the spring of 2004. I am happy that it has also been translated into English and French.

The positive response during the past few years has always encouraged me to go ahead. Because many persons were interested in this subject and were demanding additional training courses, I decided to offer them. Hence, there will soon be many more music therapists to expertly spread and multiply this specific approach to musical therapy.

From the summer of 2003 onwards, I have been propagating the "Nada-Brahma System by Vemu Mukunda" under the registered trade name "Indivocal Musical Therapy". The name "Indivocal" clearly points to the "individual sound of the voice" which is the core of this approach to musical therapy.

May the significance of one's own voice continue to be in the focus of consciousness of many readers and its health-promoting aspects be experienced by many more.

I am grateful to Dr Navin Dalal who for many years was a music critic of the "Times of India" and the "Evening News of India", Bombay, and subsequently of both the "Rheinische Post", Düsseldorf, and the "Kölnische Rundschau", Cologne, and who is also a long-standing translator for a German medical publisher in Stuttgart, for having undertaken to translate my book into English.

Additionally, my thanks go to Hannah Wray who with competence and great engagement was helping me to complete this book.

Gunda Dietzel

Introduction

Vemu Mukunda: Musician and Natural Scientist

Vemu Mukunda was born in 1929 in Bangalore, South India. After his school days he studied in England and acquired his Ph.D in Engineering at Strathclyde University, Glasgow. For many years he was a nuclear research scientist, but private reasons prompted him to abandon his promising career in the sixties and to return to India while retaining his domicile near London. From that time he reverted to his lifelong passion for music. He had grown up in a family of musicians where it was a time-honoured tradition to play the Veena, one of the most ancient Indian stringed instruments. He became a Veena virtuoso mastering both Northern Indian music and the Carnatic music of the South, with particular affinity for the latter. Carnatic music is the music of the Hindu temples of South India and its spiritual and healing power has been a byword for millennia.



Vemu Mukunda gave many concerts in almost all parts of the globe. When Willy Brandt was the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Vemu Mukunda was entrusted with visiting German schools to acquaint pupils with Indian music. At one of the annual music festivals in Avignon, France, some of his friends encouraged him to conduct a test at a concert arranged for a large international student audience. He improvised on three Ragas, Indian tone scales which due to their structure and their musical use have always been associated with specific emotions. To Vemu Mukunda's great surprise, the reactions of the members of the international audience were so similar to the emotional reactions known in India that chance was ruled out: This was definitely a transcultural phenomenon. This decisive test result inspired Vemu Mukunda to initiate further research and was the basis for all other tests and analyses conducted by him.

During the decades following this discovery, he focussed on the effect of music on body and mind. He concentrated on the roots of the Indian approach to music as described in the Vedas, especially in the Sama-Veda, and also in later writings, such as the "Sangita Ratnakara" of the 13th century. He also discovered many pointers in traditional practices that have come down through the ages. In his capacity as a scientist and researcher he was particularly captivated by analysing the effect of music on the human being.

Many of his discoveries had already been described in the ancient "Nada Yoga", the Yoga of sound. However, he also compared this tradition with the knowledge and the rituals practised by other societies and civilizations. In the course of about two decades he collected a wealth of information which he integrated into a system known as "Nada-Brahma System" and which he pioneered in the Western world. He considered the results of his research and their practical applications to be a "first step" towards a possible transcultural curing system on the base of sound, rooted in the most ancient knowledge of "Nada Brahma".