

Nara Nada Yoga

We are living in an era of unprecedented and dramatic change to our economic and ecological systems. This change is something that we are only beginning to deeply understand as to how they interconnect with our own personal sense of well-being and even survival.

In Japan, around 500 years ago - during the turbulent years of war of the Sengoku Era - the military commanders of the samurai warrior class developed a passion for zazen meditation, flower arrangement and the tea ceremony. During this time of great conflict and unrest each of these cultural activities began to flourish. As a natural consequence, the warrior class developed mindfulness as a source of strength to overcome the emotions of fear, frustration and anxiety. For them, seated in zazen meditation, enlightenment was simply a means of release from these negative emotions that threatened their ability to survive in a time of war.

Presented here in this CD, are sound meditations that we hope our guests visiting Sasayuri-ann can find useful in their personal meditation practices. We present them for you, so that you may continue to lead a prosperous life at the dawn of a new era of impending global upheaval in the 21st century.

As sentient beings, our bodies, minds and souls are innately sensitive to physical sensations and phenomena as perceived through our five senses. The power of sound, its vibrations and reverberations have a particularly powerful effect to awaken the soul. This is why mankind has since ancient times used the sounds of musical instruments and the human voice in ceremonies, rituals and meditation. Their purpose is to enable the majestic *sound spirit, word spirit, incense and fire spirits* to awaken the soul. Spirit, we can say, is the vibrations that awaken our various senses.

When we look at the laws of quantum mechanics, we come to understand that the human soul or spirit - even though invisible - has a vibrating frequency; just like all substances or matter. In the world of stress and disharmony that we live in, meditating is a practical means to recover a healthy spirit and energy. By returning to a state of *nothingness, emptiness, vibration of the creative source and love* - our natural and original state of being - we can experience the higher frequencies of nature and rediscover the simple and naturally abundant feeling of being wondrously alive.

This selection of recordings brings to you the voices and sounds of Japan. Even if you have limited experience with meditation it is easy for you to feel these sounds and vibrations that have, for many centuries, offered listeners the opportunity to experience a state of meditation and harmony with nature. We hope you can use these recordings as an entry point into meditation. They can enable you to relax beyond the chaotic ramblings of the mind and return to that place inside yourself where you can regain a sense of your heart and soul.

These sound recordings have been presented in a way that is easy for anyone and everyone to naturally and effortlessly experience what meditation is all about. Usually, only wise Zen masters, who have practiced meditation for many years, can enter a deep state of meditation within a short period of time.

However, the sounds recorded on track numbers 5, 6 and 7 included on this CD, make it possible for anyone to experience a deep meditative state quite easily.

There are three primary types of sound to aid your meditation practice; *Waterfall*, *Buddhist Bell* and *Tanpura*.

While seated in a stable posture, with your legs half-crossed - if possible, sitting with one foot placed on the opposite thigh - close your eyes and try to focus your attention on the continuous sound. At the beginning of each track, the continuous sound lasts for 40 seconds. This sound will suddenly stop and is then followed by a period of silence lasting for 70 seconds. The continuous sound is heard again for 40 seconds, and then silence again for 70 seconds. This sequence is repeated 5 times, followed by a longer period of silence lasting 7-8 minutes. When you listen to these tracks during meditation, please try to choose a place that is as quiet as possible. To enhance the experience of silence, the continuous sound suddenly stops and this dramatic change from sound to silence triggers your five senses to enter a state of suspended calm more easily.

Track 5: The roar of the Fudo Falls in the valley of the Akame 48 waterfalls.

Track 6: The ring of a Buddhist bell that emits sound waves at a frequency of 528 Hz.

Track 7: The drone of the tanpura, a traditional instrument in Indian classical music.

To enter a state of meditation, mental focus and body-mind awareness are the first steps. Conventional wisdom tells us that to develop this level of concentration is not easy and takes a lot of practice. However, by focusing your attention, with your eyes closed, on the continuous sounds on these tracks, the mind is able to more naturally and easily enter a state of mental clarity, called *muga-ichinen* in Japanese; a strong concentration of consciousness to one object or sound, in a state of selflessness.

With your eyes closed, the abrupt end to the continuous sound triggers your five senses to a focused state of heightened concentration; it is an experience of void, close to what we can say is the original state of the universe. During this period of silence, your awareness will automatically transition into a deep meditative state. This state of consciousness is called *muga-munen* or *munen-musou*, a state of selflessness, without thought. It is an experience of the void or nothingness.

However, as is the nature of the mind, this state of calm does not usually last for long, perhaps 2-3 seconds. After these few seconds your awareness returns to the mental state of *tanen-tasou* - consciousness with thoughts - the regular preoccupations and delusions of the mind. Through repeated experience, the mind more easily transitions to *ichinen-musou* - the strong concentration of consciousness to one object or sound - and begins to remember this state of deep mental unification that is experienced in the silence.

Nada is a Sanskrit word meaning 'continuous sound'. *Nada Yoga* means yoga using sound, whereby you initially achieve a spiritual concentration by listening to the continuous pure sound, and your concentration then changes into a state of meditation. In other words, *Nada Yoga* is 'meditation yoga through sound', which is different to the various forms of music therapy.

In the past, many Indian saints and sages such as the mystic poet Kabir (1407-1518) practiced *Nada Yoga*, by concentrating and meditating on sacred sounds. Tenpu Nakamura (1876-1968), regarded as a yoga saint in Japan, created methods to cultivate consciousness and concentration from his own meditation experience, and spread them within Japan. Since ancient times, mankind has been using sound vibration to enter the mysterious state of trance and to meditate on their inner world.

What is *Nara Nada Yoga*? In ancient times, the Nara region was the eastern end of the Silk Road passing through the entire Eurasian continent, as well as the founding place of the nation of Japan. Various cultures, civilizations, religions, and philosophies flowed from west to east in the same direction as the flow of the jet stream. The movement of people also came to this terminal station of the Silk Road. Nara was a cultural crucible and one of the reasons why Shugendo, a mountain yogic tradition originates from Nara. This form of faith has elements of Shinto, Esoteric Buddhism, Taoism and Onmyodo (The Way of Yin and Yang).

Nara Nada Yoga is a sound meditation including the primitive otodama (sound spirits) using the horagai (triton conch shell) and taiko drum performances from Shugendo, combined with the kotodama (sacred words) and expressions of mantra, transmitted from ancient India. Nara, as the birthplace of ancient Japanese civilization, has evolved and developed into the modern age, which naturally makes it an appropriate place to create this series of sound meditations to then transmit them to the rest of the world. This is the vision of Shotetsu Matsubayashi, the owner of Sasayuri-ann, who has practiced these techniques for many years and who continues to chant on a daily basis.

In meditation, first close your eyes, focus your consciousness on the simple continuous sound, you will then naturally enter a state of meditation at the moment of the sudden silence. Various delusions and emotions often cloud our mind. The process to remove this mental cloud is what we refer to as meditation. But like the hard disk of a computer, the human brain is repeatedly outputting thoughts, emotions and other responses to stimuli from the nervous system about 30,000 times a day. Therefore, it is not easy to remove the delusions, thoughts and emotions from our minds to allow ourselves to experience a clear mind and heart.

By selecting your preference from tracks 5, 6, or 7, you can sit and meditate for 5 or 10 minutes every day, and eventually you will come to effortlessly experience the state of Zazen meditation, unswayed by delusions and emotions. This simple practice of Zazen meditation does not interfere with, but actually enhances your daily routines.

A constant state of meditation and mindfulness cannot usually be maintained in daily life. Only when practicing zazen meditation regularly can you maintain a clear mind. By listening

to this CD with your eyes closed, you naturally come to experience the state of empty mind, called *munen-musou*, a state of selflessness, without thought. Once you come to easily experience this mental state, then you can try listening to the CD with your eyes half-open. This form of *zazen* is practiced by adjusting your line of sight about one meter ahead.

While you listen to the continuous sounds on the CD, you will come to recognize and become comfortable with this mental state of spiritual union, called *muga-ichinen*. You will also begin to experience the meditative states of *muga-musou*, *munen-musou*, regardless of the visual stimulation that enters your brain. When you develop your ability to meditate with these approaches, you will be able to maintain a state of mindfulness, without being influenced and swayed by the rollercoaster of emotions in everyday life.

Even if you are sometimes overwhelmed with your emotions, by developing your mind to be unmoved by feelings and external stimulus, you will be able to more naturally return to the original state of calmness. Being aware of these mental and emotional conditions, enables you to quickly shift your consciousness more effortlessly. We hope this meditation CD can provide an access point, the guidance and way towards a more abundant and fulfilled way of living, helping you to restore your original heart and soul, your feelings of peace with harmony and co-existence in nature.

Our wish at Sasayuri-ann is to provide our guests with the opportunity to realize this traditional Japanese experience of mindfulness, so that we can all find a good balance between our souls and material wealth and well-being. This is necessary if we are to recover a healthy global environment.

Rather than living life focused on the surface appearances of things, true abundance comes through experiencing our relationship with the deeper levels of reality. This can happen through an effortlessly practice of meditation.

The owner of Sasayuri-ann - an expert in the ancient tradition of Shugendo *yamabushi*, as taught at Kinpusen-ji Temple in Yoshino, Nara Prefecture - has produced this CD hoping that Nara, as the birthplace of ancient Japan, can again prosper as the place, the new Nara, from which to transmit Japan's ancient and rich spiritual culture to the world.

Gassho, in prayer
Shotetsu Matsubayashi
Owner of Sasayuri-ann
<http://mindfulness-japan.jp>