



Meditation for Inner Freedom

When The Relaxation Company approached Swami Srinivasananda about participating in their 'Yoga Masters Meditation Series' the timing was perfect to create an aural companion piece to the recently published *The Sivananda Book of Meditation*. Swami Srinivasananda enlisted master flautist Jorge Alfano's efforts and the result is a 2-CD set, *Meditations for Inner Freedom*, that combines a CD of guided meditations (some with flute accompaniment), with a CD of solo flute sacred sounds music. As a senior disciple of Swami Vishnu-devananda, Swami Srinivasananda has made this Meditation CD a tribute to and furtherance of the message of his Guru.

Music

Jorge Alfano is founder of the Sacred Sounds Institute and he was inspired by his time with Swami Vishnu-devananda to compose the forty-minute Chakra Suite that is reissued on this CD. The range of inspirations for him span the meditative traditions of five ancient cultures and he uses the indigenous flutes from each of the traditions to create this seventy-minute disc of calming and inspiring music.

Meditation

To use this CD is to experience being in tune with and in the company of the wise. The experience is intensified by Swami Srinivasananda's own deep personal knowledge of meditation. In this CD he directs us on a meditation journey of eight steps:

Introduction— The listener is taken through the fundamental concepts of a meditation practice which are at the same time profound, and immensely practical, and which include a powerful extract from Swami Sivananda's writings. Meditation cannot be taught, just as sleep cannot be taught, but conditions and circumstances of the body and mind can support the meditative state.

Consecration— Swami Srinivasananda chants the Dhyana Slokas (Gajananam) to consecrate the meditation space. This segment is a practical aid to students and new teachers who would like the proper pronunciation and intonation for this sacred chant.

Relaxation— The listener is guided through the deep and subtle relaxation process for savasana (corpse pose). At twenty-eight minutes this is the longest segment on the CD, a profound relaxation exercise as well

as a means of imparting yogic concepts and knowledge. A period of silence follows each section allowing the listener to relax completely. Each subsequent section contains a period of approximately three minutes' silence when the listener can experience the expansive and nurturing inner silence using the newly-learned techniques.

Posture— Here the listener is taught how to sit in the simple cross-legged position (sukhasana or easy pose) correctly. Alignment of the hips and spine are emphasized. With body and mind focussed and relaxed, asana (steady posture) can be maintained. Guidance on how to sit correctly in a chair is given to those who have physical limitations. This section also introduces the practice of bringing the mind to a point of focus.

Breath— The mind, emotions and prana are inextricably linked through the breath. Here the listener is led through a guided practice of maintaining a steady yogic breath, during which the breath quiets and the intensity of the breath reduces. The listener learns of the mind/breath connection and of the process in which the mind becomes absorbed in the breath.

Tratak— Tratak, or candle-gazing is an excellent exercise to steady the wandering mind and a powerful tool to develop concentration. The listener is taught how to concentrate on a candle flame and then visualize the image of the flame internally at the point between the eyebrows (ajna chakra).

Mantra— Here we are introduced to the divine vibration of Sanskrit mantras and given a concentration exercise using a mantra. Saguna and nirguna (with- and without-form) mantras are presented using OM and OM Namo Narayanaya as examples. The practice begins by chanting each mantra aloud, then with eyes closed the repetition of the mantra is co-ordinated with the rhythm of the breath. The divine attributes of Om Namo Narayanaya (peace, love, and protection of the universe) are explained, with a note that it was Swami Vishnu-devananda's personal mantra.

Full Sitting Meditation— We arrive at the culmination of the practice. The meditation session lasts for twelve minutes and we are guided through the correct sitting position, breath control, placing the mind at a point of focus at the ajna or anahata chakra, and the use of the mantra. After the silent meditation the Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra is chanted.

