VIRTUS *et* AMOR · CONSULTANCY



ANDREW MITS

# WAY OF A SAMURAI

*Discipline, honour and the sword at rest, for the samurai of love.*

VIRTUS ET AMOR · THE SECOND BOOK OF THE GRANDMASTER POSTURE

WAY OF A SAMURAI

# Contents

01 · The samurai of love · *The strongest warrior is the one who never needs to draw.* 3

02 · Bushidō · *The way of the warrior, written down.* 4

03 · The seven virtues · *Seven characters to carry every day.* 5

04 · The sword at rest · *Power, held still.* 7

05 · Musashi · *The way is in training.* 8

06 · Hagakure · *Let the old self die every morning.* 10

07 · The three minds · *Immovable. Empty. Remaining.* 11

08 · The samurai's day · *Discipline is love for your future self.* 12

09 · The way in three arenas · *Athletes, leaders, merchants.* 13

10 · We live. We kick hard. · *We are samurai of love.* 14

Sources · *The books behind the way.* 15

01 · THE SAMURAI OF LOVE

# The strongest warrior is the one who never needs to draw.

The samurai were the warrior class of Japan for some seven centuries, until the 1870s. Their swords are in museums now. Their way is not. It is alive in every person who chooses discipline over comfort, honour over advantage and love over fear.

We do not train fighters. We train people who carry weight: athletes on the start line, leaders in the pressure room, merchants across the counter. The way of the samurai is the oldest manual there is for exactly that work.

> *The legends say a samurai's sword was so sharp it could cut a silk scarf falling onto its edge, and that the best of them hoped never to draw it. The sharpness was not for killing. It was discipline made visible.*
>
> ANDREW MITS PHILOSOPHY

**691** years from the first warrior government of Japan, in 1185, to the ban on wearing swords in public, in 1876. The class is gone; the way remains.

## THE CHERRY BLOSSOM

Japan has an old saying: 花は桜木、人は武士. Among flowers, the cherry blossom; among people, the warrior. The blossom falls at the height of its beauty, in a day, without complaint. It was the samurai's reminder that Life is short, and that it must be lived at full height while it lasts.

That is why our art carries cherry blossom on every page. Not sadness: urgency, and beauty.

## VIRTUS ET AMOR

The Romans called the warrior's excellence *virtus*. The samurai called it honour. We add the half the old warriors sometimes forgot: *amor*, love. Courage without love becomes cruelty. Love without courage becomes wishing. The samurai of love carries both.

> **THE PRACTICE**
>
> Write one sentence that begins: "My sword is..." Name your skill, the thing you are sharpening. Then write who it protects. That is your way in one line.

02 · BUSHIDŌ

# The way of the warrior, written down.

Bushidō means the way of the warrior. For centuries it was lived more than it was written: taught by example, father to son, master to student, in the dojo and on the field.

In 1900 a Japanese scholar, Nitobe Inazō, wrote it down in English for the rest of the world: *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. He described a code of rectitude, courage, benevolence, politeness, honesty, honour and loyalty, held together by self-control. Those seven virtues are the backbone of this book.

**7** virtues of the way of the warrior, as Nitobe set them out: rectitude, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honour, loyalty.

A code is not a list on a wall. A code is what you do when nobody is watching and it would be easy to do less. The samurai trained the body every day so that the code would hold on the one day that mattered.

> *Be water, my friend.*
>
> BRUCE LEE

The samurai and the water teach the same thing: softness and power belong together, like breathing in and breathing out. A code that is only hard breaks. A code that is only soft dissolves. The way is both.

**THE PRACTICE**

Choose the one virtue of the seven that you need most this month. Write its character on a card and keep it where your eyes fall first in the morning.

03 · THE SEVEN VIRTUES

# Seven characters to carry every day.

Each virtue is one character, one idea and one daily practice. Learn them like a grandmaster learns openings: until they play themselves.

義
GI

## Rectitude

The right decision, made without wavering. In sport, the fair play nobody sees. In business, the deal you would be proud to explain to your children. Rectitude is the spine of every other virtue.

勇
YŪ

## Courage

To see what is right and to do it. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the decision that something else matters more. The start line, the hard conversation, the price said out loud.

仁
JIN

## Benevolence

Love, mercy and the strong protecting the weak. Nitobe called it *bushi no nasake*, the tenderness of a warrior. The stronger you become, the gentler you can afford to be.

礼
REI

## Respect

Politeness as the outward form of care for others. The bow to the opponent, the greeting to the cleaner, the thank-you to the customer. Respect costs nothing and buys everything.

誠
MAKOTO

## Honesty

*Bushi no ichi-gon*, the word of a samurai: a promise that needed no written contract. Say what you will do, then do what you said. Your word is your brand.

名誉
MEIYO

## Honour

A life that matches its words. Honour is not reputation; it is the agreement between who you say you are and who you are when it is hard.

忠義
CHŪGI

## Loyalty

Faithfulness to the people and the purpose you serve, and theirs to you. In a team, loyalty flows both ways or it does not flow at all.

**THE PRACTICE**

Each evening this week, give yourself one honest mark out of ten for one virtue. Not seven at once: one, the one you chose. Mastery is built one character at a time.

04 · THE SWORD AT REST

# Power, held still.

Nitobe called the sword the soul of the samurai. The boy received it early and learned that it was not a toy but a trust. To draw it lightly was a disgrace. The highest art was to keep it in its scabbard, and to be so ready that it never had to leave.

Your sword today is your skill: your serve, your sprint, your negotiation, your price, your craft. Keep it sharp every day. Keep it sheathed in arrogance and in anger. Draw it only when it is right, and then fully.

## THE DAILY SHARPENING

A blade that is not cared for rusts in a season. A skill that is not practised dulls in a month. The sharpening is quiet, daily and unseen. Twenty minutes of your core skill, every day, when nobody is watching: that is where championships, companies and reputations are made.

**20** minutes a day of deliberate work on your core skill is more than 120 hours a year. Most people never give their craft that much attention on purpose.

> *The sharpness was not for killing. It was discipline made visible.*
>
> ANDREW MITS PHILOSOPHY

**THE PRACTICE**

Book your daily sharpening like an appointment: the same time, the same place, phone away. Twenty minutes. The sword at rest is still being polished.

05 · MUSASHI

# The way is in training.

Miyamoto Musashi was born in 1584 and became the most famous swordsman in the history of Japan, by his own account never defeated. In the last years of his life he withdrew to a cave to write *The Book of Five Rings*, finished in 1645, the year he died. He was a painter and calligrapher too: his ink paintings are treasured in Japan to this day. The warrior and the artist were one man.

The book has five parts, named for the elements of the world: Ground, Water, Fire, Wind and Void. And it begins with posture.

> *Adopt a stance with the head erect, neither hanging down, nor looking up, nor twisted.*
>
> MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, THE BOOK OF FIVE RINGS

> *In all forms of strategy, it is necessary to maintain the combat stance in everyday life and to make your everyday stance your combat stance.*
>
> MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, THE BOOK OF FIVE RINGS

## THE NINE PRINCIPLES

At the end of the first book, Musashi gives nine rules for anyone who would learn his way. In Victor Harris's English translation:

1. Do not think dishonestly.
2. The Way is in training.
3. Become acquainted with every art.
4. Know the Ways of all professions.
5. Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters.
6. Develop intuitive judgement and understanding for everything.
7. Perceive those things which cannot be seen.
8. Pay attention even to trifles.
9. Do nothing which is of no use.

### THE WAY OF WALKING ALONE

A week before his death, Musashi wrote twenty-one short precepts, the *Dokkōdō*, *The Way of Walking Alone*. Translations differ, but its first line is often rendered "Accept everything just the way it is," and its last, "Never stray from the Way."

> **THE PRACTICE**
>
> Read the nine principles every morning for nine days. On each day, live one of them on purpose, in order. On the tenth day, choose the one that changed you most.

06 · HAGAKURE

# Let the old self die every morning.

*Hagakure*, "hidden by the leaves", is the book of sayings of Yamamoto Tsunetomo, a retainer who spoke and a young samurai who wrote it all down in the early 1700s. It is fierce, strange and honest. Its most famous line is also its most misunderstood.

> *The way of the samurai is found in death.*
> HAGAKURE, TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM SCOTT WILSON

Here is how I read it. The warrior who has already accepted his death has nothing left for fear to hold. Let the old self die every morning: the excuses, the grudges, the cravings, yesterday's picture of who you are. What gets up is free. That is not a wish to die. It is permission to live without fear.

## LIGHT AND HEAVY

Among the maxims on the wall of Lord Naoshige, *Hagakure* records this one: "Matters of great concern should be treated lightly." And a master answered it: "Matters of small concern should be treated seriously."

Read them together and you have the posture of a champion. The big day is met calmly, because the small days were taken seriously. The final is played lightly, because every training session was played as if it were the final.

> **THE PRACTICE**
> Every morning, write one line: "Today the old me who ____ stays in bed." Name the excuse. Then get up without it.

07 · THE THREE MINDS

# Immovable. Empty. Remaining.

The martial arts of Japan name the states of a trained mind. Three of them belong to every high performer, in every arena.

不動心
FUDŌSHIN

## The immovable mind

A mind that fear, anger or applause cannot push off its centre. Not frozen: rooted, like a tree that bends in the storm and stays standing. The start line, the board meeting, the angry customer: fudōshin.

無心
MUSHIN

## No-mind

Action without the hesitation of over-thinking, because the skill has been trained so deep that it flows by itself. The thousand repetitions in training buy the one free movement in the match.

残心
ZANSHIN

## The remaining mind

Awareness that stays after the action is done: the follow-through of attention. The shot is taken and the eyes stay; the deal is signed and the care stays; the win is won and the respect stays.

一期一会
ICHI-GO ICHI-E

## One time, one meeting

A phrase of the tea masters: every meeting happens only once. Treat this conversation, this match, this customer, as the only one there will ever be, because it is.

THE PRACTICE

Before your next big moment, breathe three slow rounds and say the three words inside: immovable, empty, remaining. Then begin.

08 · THE SAMURAI'S DAY

# Discipline is love for your future self.

The way is not a mood. It is a day, repeated until it becomes a character. Here is the day of a samurai of love, in nine steps.

1. **Rise at the same hour.** The body loves rhythm; the will loves a decision already made.
2. **Give God the morning.** One minute of thanks before the phone, before the news, before the first worry.
3. **Breathe.** Five minutes of slow breath: a long breath out, the brake before the engine.
4. **Sharpen the sword.** Twenty minutes of your core skill, deliberately.
5. **Do the hard thing first.** Rectitude before comfort. The day is won early.
6. **Bow in every meeting.** Respect, rei, to everyone, the great and the small.
7. **Keep your word.** Makoto. If you said it, it is done; if it cannot be done, you say so first.
8. **Review in the evening.** One virtue marked out of ten; one lesson written down.
9. **Sleep on time.** The warrior who does not rest does not last.

**9** steps a day. Repeated for a year, they are more than three thousand acts of discipline, and that is how a character is forged.

09 · THE WAY IN THREE ARENAS

# Athletes, leaders, merchants.

The way of the samurai is not a costume. It is a posture you take into your own arena. Here is how it looks in the three we serve.

## FOR ATHLETES

- **Fudōshin at the start line:** breath low, eyes wide, the body ready and the mind unmoved.
- **Zanshin after the shot:** the attention stays until the point is truly over.
- **Rei to the opponent and the referee:** respect is part of the performance.
- **The daily sharpening:** the twenty unseen minutes that decide the season.

## FOR LEADERS

- **Gi in the big call:** the right decision, made without wavering, and explained without shame.
- **Jin for the team:** the stronger the leader, the gentler with the people.
- **Chūgi both ways:** loyalty given is loyalty earned.
- **Light in great matters:** calm in the crisis, because the small things were done with care.

## FOR MERCHANTS

- **Makoto:** the word of a samurai. Your promise is your brand.
- **"Do not think dishonestly"** and **"distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters":** Musashi's first and fifth rules, written for every trade.
- **Ichi-go ichi-e:** every customer is one meeting, once. Serve it like that.

> **THE PRACTICE**
> Choose your arena and copy its four lines onto a card. That card is your code for the next thirty days.

10 · WE LIVE. WE KICK HARD.

# We are samurai of love.

The samurai trained to be ready for the one day that mattered. We train for the same thing: the start line, the call, the sale, the conversation that changes a Life. The day that matters is coming, and it will find you either ready or not.

So we live. We kick hard. We are samurai of love. We carry the sword of our skill sharp and sheathed, and we carry the heart open. We bow to the opponent and we bow to God. We let the old self die every morning, and we rise free.

> *Be water, my friend.*
>
> BRUCE LEE

The sharpness is not for killing. It is discipline made visible. And the reason for the discipline is love.

SOURCES

# The books behind the way.

Quotations from Japanese texts are given in English translation; where translators differ, the wording used here is named. The history is kept to well-established dates.

∞ Nitobe Inazō (1900). *Bushido: The Soul of Japan.* The seven virtues; *bushi no nasake* (the tenderness of a warrior); *bushi no ichi-gon* (the word of a samurai); the sword as the soul of the samurai; self-control.

∞ Miyamoto Musashi (1645). *The Book of Five Rings.* The stance "with the head erect"; "make your everyday stance your combat stance"; the nine principles, in Victor Harris's translation (1974).

∞ Miyamoto Musashi (1645). *Dokkōdō, The Way of Walking Alone*, twenty-one precepts written about a week before his death; translations differ.

∞ Yamamoto Tsunetomo (early 1700s). *Hagakure*, translated by William Scott Wilson (1979): "The way of the samurai is found in death"; the maxims on Lord Naoshige's wall, "Matters of great concern should be treated lightly," and "Matters of small concern should be treated seriously."

∞ Andrew Mits (2026). *Andrew Mits Philosophy*, link 11, *The Samurai*: the sword that the best hoped never to draw; the old self that dies every morning.

∞ Bruce Lee (1971): "Be water, my friend."

∞ The proverb 花は桜木、人は武士, "among flowers the cherry blossom, among people the warrior."

∞ Fudōshin, mushin and zanshin, states of mind named in the Japanese martial arts; ichi-go ichi-e, a phrase of the tea ceremony.

## THE NUMBERS

∞ 691 years: from 1185, the first warrior government (the Kamakura shogunate), to 1876, the edict that ended the wearing of swords in public.

∞ 120 hours: 20 minutes × 365 days = 7,300 minutes, about 121.7 hours.

∞ More than three thousand acts: 9 steps × 365 days = 3,285.



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*The Grandmaster Posture for athletes, leaders and merchants.*

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