

Mahamudra Thoughts

Mahamudra thoughts are an ancient method of working on the clearing out the inner channels and chakras from the inside. The purpose of all mahamudra is to see emptiness, or ultimate reality, directly. When we do see emptiness directly, all of our inner winds or prana are concentrated in the central channel of our inner body. Since the inner winds and our thoughts are linked together like a horse and its rider, we can bring the winds to the central channel if we bring the thoughts there: wherever the rider decides to lead, then the horse must follow. Later we will work from the outside, to bring the wind-horse to the central channel, which will also help the rider arrive there.

Our discussion of mahamudra thoughts will start with some general notes about what "mahamudra" means. We begin with some introductory text from His Holiness the First Panchen Lama.

The First Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chukyi Gyeltsen (1570-1662, seen at right) was one of the greatest masters of Tibetan Buddhism. He wrote over 250 separate books and essays, totalling more than 5,000 pages; the vast majority of these works are commentaries upon a wide variety of tantric practices.

The following explanation of the "Great Seal," or Mahamudra, is taken from "A Lamp for Making Things Even More Clear": An Expanded Explanation of the Root Text for Mahamudra according to the System of the Precious Tradition of the Virtuous Ones. This text is a detailed explanation of a shorter verse piece that he wrote on the same subject, entitled "The Highway of the Victorious Buddhas": A Root Text on the Practice of the Mahamudra in the Precious Tradition of the Teachings of the Virtuous Ones. These two works together are considered one of the best presentations of Mahamudra ever written.



There are two methods for practicing the Great Seal (Mahamudra); here is a description of how to do the first, which is that of the open teachings. This is in fact precisely the method of practicing that state of wisdom in which one perceives emptiness: the explicit subject matter of the books on the Mother [the Perfection of Wisdom], in their more extensive, medium, and briefer forms.

The texts on the Mother of the Victorious Buddhas praise this method as the very life of each of the three paths of the three ways: [the way of the Listeners, the way of the Self-Made Buddhas, and the Greater Way of the Bodhisattvas]. That supreme realized being, Nagarjuna, is in the following words telling us that there

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exists no path which is not of the very same type, no path which is different from this same method, that can bring one to freedom:

You said that there was but one way:
That there was but a single path
To freedom, none other at all,
Only one that the Buddhas
And the Self-Made Buddhas,
And the Listeners too must take.

And that's not all: even in the Way of the Diamond [the Tantric Way] there is no way of viewing your world correctly which is any different than this one; no separate way which is in any way any greater. As the holy one, the Sakya Pandita, has said as well:

As far as viewing your world correctly is concerned,
Nowhere is there taught a way which is separate,
A way which is any different
Between the teachings of the perfections
And those of the secret word.
If there were any way of viewing the world
That were somehow greater than the lack
Of imagined existence taught in the way
Of the perfections, then all those angels
Would also exist in this same way.
Nothing possesses this imagined existence,
And so there exists no difference.

It was the Savior, Nagarjuna, whom the Victorious Buddhas foretold would appear to explain to us the meaning of reality—who would blaze this path in our world. And as for those who would come after him, it is just as Lord Atisha has said:

Who is it that's perceived emptiness?
It's Chandrakirti, the follower
Of Nagarjuna, he whom Those Gone Thus
Foretold would appear,
A being who had seen reality,
Who had seen the way things are.
Enlightenment is possible
For anyone who follows
The instructions come down through him,
But not with something different.

So what you will find here is a book of instructions on the Mahamudra, the Great Seal, according to the true thought of the realized being Nagarjuna,

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as his words have been explained to us by Master Chandrakirti. I will write my work in accordance with the precious teachings of our glorious Lamas—teachings which possess the power of blessings that have come down to us through an unbroken stream of wise and accomplished beings, instructions for meeting the real nature of our minds.

"Well then," you may ask, "just what does the word *mahamudra*, or the 'great seal', mean here?" The sutra called *The King of Concentration* says: The nature of all existing things is the seal. . .

The point is that "seal" refers to the nature of every existing thing: their emptiness. And anyone who perceives this emptiness is liberated from every trouble of life; this makes the seal "great," or we can say the "highest" of all things—since, as the line [in the *Amarakosha* dictionary of Sanskrit] goes,

"Great," meaning "highest," or "immeasurable". . .



The following selection is taken from Notes on the Differences in Worldview Meditation on the Great Seal (Mahamudra) in the Tradition of the Virtuous Way (ACIP digital text S6370-153, ff. 96b-97a). This is an account of a reply given by Master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851) to a question one of his students had posed on the practice of the Mahamudra.

The Lord, Wensapa, once commented upon the differences in deepness in the practice of the Mahamudra as follows:

I'm unable to put at this moment in writing
Any ultimate instructions for Mahamudra
Which are any different from those just presented
And unknown to those of the Land of Snows.

[*Wensapa Lobsang Dundrup was an eminent Lama of the Gelukpa tradition who lived 1505-1566.*]

Admittedly one can ascertain readily the difference between the Mahamudra as it was generally understood by other Buddhists in the Land of Snows in those days and as it was taught in the tradition of the Virtuous Ones [the Gelukpa] as a meditation on worldview.

It appears though that it would be difficult to distinguish between the Gelukpa teachings on middle-way worldview and what we call the "Mahamudra of the Virtuous Ones." We see, for example, the following exchange in *Entry Point for Sons and Daughters of the Buddhas*, a biography of the life of the Lord, Konchok Jikme Wangpo. [*Konchok Jikme Wangpo, another high Gelukpa Lama, 1728 - 1791.*]

One day, after delivering a teaching, our Lord spoke the following question:

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Think about the practice of Mahamudra according to the open teachings. Is it simply a way of meditating on the worldview of the Consequence group [of the Middle Way]? In this case there would be no compelling need for this as an additional practice; it would differ from our normal worldview teachings only in name. It is, moreover, somewhat difficult to establish that it is actually a distinct practice. What do you all think is the right way to address this question?

Nomonhan Rinpoche offered the following reply:

The answer I think is simple; we are meant to take the term "Mahamudra" as referring to a practice of the wisdom where bliss and emptiness are inseparably combined.

["Nomonhan" was a title by which the Mongols referred to a high Lama. The one referred to here is probably Kundrul Nomonhan Rinpoche, a close disciple of Jigme Konchok Wangpo.]

And the response came:

But isn't the "wisdom where bliss and emptiness are inseparably combined" something that belongs to the system of the Secret Word?

The student replied:

Well yes, that is the case.

On the other hand, there is the following section from the *String of Drops of Nectar, from the Lips of the Holy Ones*, notes to a teaching on the Mahamudra taken by the Lord, Konchok Tenpay Drunme:

Even our Lord Lama [Je Tsongkapa] is said to have imparted both a teaching on the Mahamudra and the teaching on worldview as it is generally presented; and thus there did come to be separate expressions for the newer and older forms of the practice.

[Konchok Tenpay Drunme was yet another famed Lama of the tradition of Je Tsongkapa; his dates are 1762-1823.]

But consider the actual meaning of the practice; in this sense, there is no difference between the two forms, where one is more subtle than the other. The only point is that—when you undertake to meditate the one way—you first seek to understand the deceptive nature of the mind. And you do so because it is easier to go on to the ultimate nature once you've done this first. And so I would have to say that the only difference is one in how the meditation is carried out.

I could also think, said our Lama, of differences such as the following as well: the Mahamudra approach makes it easier for beginners to get the object of meditation to appear clearly; and because of this fact, it is easier for them to eliminate subtle dullness; and since one is primarily engaged in stopping

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distraction, then agitation is prevented automatically; and it serves as an extremely powerful factor that would ripen your mind for the eventual practice of the Mahamudra according to the way of the Secret Word.



The Six Flavors of Emptiness

A Meditation on the Great Seal

The following are six different "flavors" of emptiness that are taught by the different schools of classical Indian Buddhism. They are culled from different texts in the lineage of Tsongkapa the Great (1357-1419). Please note that not all of them would be called true "emptiness," but rather "selflessness" in different classical schools.

Emptiness, Flavor #1

The lack of a self which is unchanging, whole, and independent.

[According to the Independent group of the Middle-Way School, this is the gross lack of a self to the person.]

Emptiness, Flavor #2

The lack of a self which is self-standing and substantial.

["Substantial" can mean a lot of different things; here it refers to the lack of a "driver" or "director" of the five heaps over the five heaps. According to the Mind-Only School, this is the lack of a self to the person. According to the Independent group, this is the subtle lack of a self to the person.]

Emptiness, Flavor #3

The fact that a visible object and the valid perception which grasps the visible object are devoid of any separate substance.

["Devoid of any separate substance" means: "It is not true that they come from a separate karmic seed; rather, they both arise from the same karmic seed." According to the Mind-Only School, this is the lack of a self to things. According to the Independent group, this is the gross lack of a self to things.]

Emptiness, Flavor #4

The fact that the fact that any particular thing is called what it is is something which is devoid of existing by definition.

[Put simply: The fact that things are called what they are is not something which is automatic. According to the Mind-Only School, this is also the lack of a self to things.]

Emptiness, Flavor #5

The fact that objects are devoid of existing from their own side through any unique identity of their own, rather than existing simply by virtue of having appeared to an unaffected state of mind.

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[According to the Independent group, this is the subtle lack of a self to things, or real emptiness.]

Emptiness, Flavor #6

The fact that objects are void of existing from their own side through their own identity, rather than existing simply through names [words] and terms [thoughts].

[According to the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School, this—and only this—is emptiness, and there are no separate degrees of emptiness (although emptiness can be divided according to the object that has it: the person or "things," meaning the person's parts). This interpretation is the ultimate one accepted by Lord Buddha; the realized being Nagarjuna; Je Tsongkapa; Khen Rinpoche; for all of tantra; and moreover by anyone who has seen emptiness directly.]



Moving from Thoughts to Winds

The following description of the three main channels of the body through which thoughts and winds ride together is excerpted from A Lamp which Illuminates the Very Heart. This text was written by Chone Lama Drakpa Shedrup of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery, who lived 1675-1748 and is shown at left in a carving from a rare manuscript at the Library of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg.

The channel of taste, the solitary channel, and the central channel are each known by a number of different names.

The central channel is also called the *avadhuti*; and the destroyer; the channel free of both; the channel of darkness; the channel of the mind; the channel of the heart; and the channel of dissolution.

The channel of taste is also called the *rasana*; the channel of what holds; the channel of the sun; the channel of the particle; the channel of speech or holy words; the channel of wisdom; the channel of experience; and the channel on the right.



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The solitary channel is also called the *lalana*; the channel of what is held; the channel of the moon; the channel of courage; the channel of the holy body; the channel of skillful means; the channel of the lord; and the channel on the left.



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Grab the reins of the horse, and the rider has to come with it. In the yoga tradition, we work with the outside of the body to affect how the winds travel on the inside. As they go, so go the thoughts; and if the thoughts go to the central channel, we see emptiness directly.

The following presentation on the physical mahamudra practice from the yoga tradition comes from one of the greatest classics of yoga ever written: Light on the Yoga of the Sun and Moon, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. It was composed by the yogi Swatmarama, and is thought to date from about 1700.

Please note that the practices described in the following section should NEVER be attempted without the personal guidance of a teacher trained in an authentic lineage. They are presented here only for purposes of a preliminary introduction to the theory of mahamudra winds. This warning is quite serious, since—if done improperly or without the proper preparation—these practices can be detrimental to both physical and emotional health.

सशैलवनधात्रिणां यथाधारोहिनायकः ।

सर्वेषां योगतन्त्राणां तथाधारो हि कुण्डली ॥१॥

*sashaila vana dhatrinam yathadharo hinayakah
sarvesham yoga tantranam tathadharo hi kundali*

1

The Lord of Serpents is the foundation
Which supports all the lands of earth,
With their mountains and their forests;
And just so is the coiled inner fire
the foundation which supports
all the secret practices of yoga.

सुप्ता गुरुप्रसादेन यदा जागर्ति कुण्डली ।

तदा सर्वाणि पद्मानि भिद्यन्ते ग्रन्थयोपि च ॥२॥

*supta guru prasadena yada jagarti kundali
tada sarvani padmani bhidyante granthayopi cha*

2

When the sleeping inner fire is awakened
Through the kindness of your spiritual guide,
Then all the lotuses are pierced,
And the knots as well.

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प्राणस्य शून्यपदवी तदा राजपथायते ।

तदा चित्तं निरालम्बं तदा कालस्य वञ्चनम् ॥३॥

*pranasya shunya padavi tada raja pathayate
tada chittam niralambam tada kalasya vanchanam*

3

Then too the inner winds
Travel the path of emptiness;
Then too you have stepped upon the royal road;
Then too the mind has nothing at all to see;
Then too you have cheated The Lord of Death.

सुषुम्ना शून्यपदवी ब्रह्मरन्ध्रं महापथः

श्मशानं शाम्भवी मध्यमार्गश्चेत्येकवाचकाः ॥४॥

*sushumna shunya padavi brahma randhram mahapathah
shmashanam shambhavi madhya margashchetyeka vachakah*

4

The sunray channel;
The path of emptiness;
Hole of the Pure One;
The great way;
The burning ground;
Lady Blissgiver; and
The middle path:
These are all different names for the same thing.

तस्मात् सर्वप्रयत्नेन प्रबोधयितुमीश्वरीम् ।

ब्रह्मद्वारमुखे सुप्तां मुद्राभ्यासं समाचरेत् ॥५॥

*tasmat sarva prayatnena prabodhayitum ishvarim
brahma dvara mukhe saptam mudrabhyasam samacharet*

5

As such you should make every effort
In the daily practice of the seals,
In order to awaken The Empress of Power
Who lies sleeping at the opening
To the door of the Pure One.

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महामुद्रा महाबन्धो महावेधश्च खेचरी ।

डिखेखेडयानं मूलबन्धस्ततो जालन्धराभिधः ।

करणी विपरीताख्या वज्रोली शक्तिचालनम् ॥६॥

*mahamudra mahabandho mahavedhashca khechhari
uddiyanam mulabandhas tato jalandharabhidhah
karani viparitakhya vajroli shakti chalanam*

6

Here are the ten different types of seals,
Which destroy aging and death
The Great Seal;
The Great Lock;
The Great Spear;
Skydancer;
Flight;
The Root Lock;
The piercing lock
Of the Water Catcher;
The one known as the Reverse Action;
The Diamond Fluid;
And Inciting Her Power.

दं हि मुद्रादशकं जरामरणनाशनम् ।

आदिनाथोदितं दिव्यमष्टैश्वर्यप्रदायकम् ।

वल्लभं सर्वसिद्धानां दुर्लभं मरुतामपि ॥७॥

*idam hi mudra dashakam jaramarana nashanam
adinathoditam divyam astaishvarya pradayakam
vallabham sarva siddhanam durlabham marutam api*

7

These were taught by the Primal Lord;
They bring one the eight divine powers,
And thereby the highest goal.
They are the pinnacle of all spiritual attainments,
And are difficult to perfect,
Even for the gods of the Winds themselves.

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गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन यथा रत्नकरडकम् ।

कस्यचिन्नैव वक्तव्यं कुलस्त्रीसुरतं यथा ॥८ ॥

*gopaniyam prayatnena yatha ratna karandakam
kasyachinnaiva vaktavyam kula stri suratam yatha*

8

One should make great efforts to keep them concealed
From others—as you would a chest of precious jewels.
Like the sexual play of a woman of nobility,
They are something which should never be spoken of.

अथ महामुद्रा

पादमूलेन वामेन योनिं संपीड्य दक्षिणम् ।

प्रसारितं पदं कृत्वा कराभ्यां धारयेद्दृढम् ॥९ ॥

atha mahamudra

*pada mulena vamera yonim sampidya dakshinam
prasaritam padam kirtva karabhyam dharayed dirdham*

9

Next we explain the Great Seal:
Press the heel of your left foot firmly into your perineum;
Extend the right foot out and grasp it tightly with your hands.

यथा दडहत सर्पो दडाकारः प्रजायते ।

ऋज्वीभूता तथा शक्तिः कुडली सहसा भवेत् ।

कठे बन्धं समारोप्य धारयेद्वायुमूर्ध्वतः ॥१० ॥

तदा सा मरणावस्था जायते द्विपुटाश्रया ॥११ ॥

*yatha dandahatah sarpo dandakarah prajayate
irjvibhuta tatha shaktih kundali sahasa bhavet
kanthe bandham samaropya dharayed vayum urdhvatah
tada sa maranavastha jayate dviputashraya*

10-11

Put a lock at the area of your throat,
Holding the inner winds in the upper part.
The lady of power will straighten them—
The coiled inner fire— Straight as a stick,
The way a snake rises when you strike it with a stick.
Then too her two-sided support
Will come to a state of death

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ततः शनैः शनैरेव रेचयेन्न तु वेगतः ।

यं खलु महामुद्रा महासिद्धैः प्रदर्शिता ॥१२ ॥

*tatah shanaih shanaireva rechayen na tu vegatah
iyam khalu mahamudra mahasiddhaih pradarshita*

12

Exhale the breath then, ever slowly
Never with any force.
Truly this is the Great Seal
Taught by those of high attainments.

महाक्लेशादयो दोषाः क्षीयन्ते मरणादयः ।

महामुद्रां च तेनैव वदन्ति विबुधोत्तमाः १३ ॥

*mahakleshadayo dosah kshiyante maranadayah
mahamudram cha tenaiva vadanti vibudhottamah*

13

The highest of all
The Awakened Ones too
Have said that this Great Seal
Destroys the great negative thoughts and such;
As well as problems of the bodily humors,
And death and all the rest.

चन्द्रांगे तु समभ्यस्य सूर्यांगे पुनरभ्यसेत् ।

यावत्तुल्या भवेत् संख्या ततो मुद्रां विसर्जयेत् ॥१४ ॥

*chandrange tu samabhyasya suryange punar abhyaset
yavat tulya bhavet sankhya tato mudram visarjayet*

14

Practice this as well
With the limb on the side of the moon,
And then again with that on the sun's side
When the count for the two is equal,
You can leave off with this seal.

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न हि पथ्यमपथ्यं वा रसाः सर्वेपि नीरसाः ।

अपि भुक्तं विषं घोरं पीयूषमिव जीर्यति ॥१५॥

*na hi pathyam apathyam va rasah sarvepi nirasah
api bhuktam visham ghoram piyusham iva jiryati*

15

At that point there is no longer
Any distinction
Between something being
Healthy or not to eat;
Everything, even things
With no good taste,
Taste wonderful.
One can even taste
The most terrible poison,
And digest it
As if it were
The nectar milk
Of the gods.

क्षयकुष्ठगुदावर्तगुल्माजीर्णपुरोगमाः ।

तस्य दोषाः क्षयं यान्ति महामुद्रां तु योभ्यसेत् ॥१६॥

*kshaya kushtha gudavarta gulmajirna purogamah
tasya dosah kshayam yanti mahamudram tu yobhyaset*

16

Anyone who practices
This Great Seal
Is able to put a stop to
Tuberculosis, leprosy,
Obstructions of the lower intestines,
Failure of the liver
Or related organs,
As well as the imbalances
Of the bodily humors
Which precede these conditions.

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कथितेयं महामुद्रा महासिद्धिकरी नृणाम् ।

गोपनीया प्रयत्नेन न देया सस्य कस्यचित् ॥१७ ॥

*kathiteyam mahamudra mahasiddhikari nirnam
gopaniya prayatnena na deya sasya kasyachit*

17

It is said
That this Great Seal
Is what makes one
Of high attainments
Out of ordinary people.
It should be kept privately;
It is not something
That just anyone
Can teach to others.

A Note on the Secret Practice of the Mahamudra

The following introductory description of the practice of Mahamudra in the secret way was written by Keutsang Lama Lobsang Jamyang Munlam (b. 1689). It is found in his work, The Excellent Path of Total Virtue, which Leads to Liberation: Lecture Notes on the Practice of the Great Seal, in the Tradition of the Oral Lineage of the Virtuous Ones (ACIP digital text S6517).

And so the real practice of Mahamudra, the Great Seal, is actually the wisdom which sees emptiness as it is, and according to the system of Nagarjuna.

This brings us to the second part of our presentation, which is the actual explanation of Mahamudra. First we will explain Mahamudra according to the secret teachings, and then according to the open teachings.

The first of these two is described in the following verse:

What comes later is the great bliss
And the clear light which you reach
By mastering those unexpected methods
Such as working at crucial points
In the body of diamond itself.
This is Mahamudra, the Great Seal
Of the glorious Saraha, and Naropa,
And Maitri: the essence of the heart
Within the entire collection of secret teachings
Of the unsurpassed way; and revealed
In the works on practice and the core.

[Translator's note: The author has excerpted this verse, and much of the following comment, from The Root Text on Mahamudra and its commentary, by His Holiness the First Panchen Lama.]

Here in our explanation, we will treat the secret teachings on Mahamudra first, even

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though they *come later*. These are *the essence of the heart* within the ultimate *collection of secret teachings*. As such, people of wisdom must never neglect this practice: they must devote themselves to seeking it out.

Now we must begin with certain preliminaries: the three of cultivating the wish to become an enlightened Angel; taking an authentic empowerment; and carefully observing our commitments and vows. They in turn lead to the stage of creation. Once you are firmly established in this form of yoga, you are ready to go on to the secret Mahamudra.

Here you bring the inner winds to pass through three stages: to enter, stay, and then dissolve within the central channel. You accomplish this by gaining *a mastery of unexpected methods*, both inner and outer, which are unique to the *secret teachings of the unsurpassed way*: methods like *working at crucial points in the body of diamond*.

From this then you achieve the wisdom of simultaneous ecstasy. This is described as the “approximate” *clear light* when you use this wisdom to perceive emptiness through using a mental image; and it is “real” *clear light* when see this same object directly. These two kinds of clear light, the approximate and the real, are the two principal paths of the secret Mahamudra.

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Ancient Sources of the Asanas

For THY Series Two, the following ancient books have been used as resources:

The Book of Three Beliefs (Yichey Sumden)

Written by the teacher of His Holiness the First Dalai Lama, Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), translated by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally. This is a Tibetan explanation of the famed *Six Practices of Naropa*, an extraordinary yogi and scholar from northeastern India who lived about 1000 AD.



The asanas described in this text have been passed down for the last thousand years through the Gelukpa lineage of the Dalai Lamas. These and the teachings of Naropa were passed on to Geshe Michael and Christie McNally over a total of more than 25 years by Sermey Kensur Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin, abbot of the Mey College of Sera Monastery (one of Tibet's "Great Three" monasteries); Kedrup Geshe Thupten Rinchen, Senior Teaching Master at Sera Mey; and Gyumey Khensur Rinpoche Trinley Topgye, abbot of Gyumey Dratsang, one of the two leading

tantric colleges of Tibet. The carving of Je Tsongkapa (above) is from the Potala Palace of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet.

The Illustrated Asanas of Naropa (Naro Trulkor Peri) from: A Collection of Alphabets and Assorted Illustrations from India, China, Russia, Kashmir, Nepal, and Mongolia (Peri Namdrang)

This text is by the Tibetan lama Ngawang Lobsang Tenpay Gyeltsen, the Changlung Pandita (1770-1846). It was carved either in Inner Mongolia or China, and was found among 100,000 other manuscripts at the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg. It is the only known work which includes actual illustrations of the yoga asanas of Naropa, along with brief descriptions. Relevant captions have been translated by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally. The carving of Master Naropa here is from the Potala Palace.



Mahamudra Essentials

An introduction to Tibetan Heart Yoga Series 2: Mahamudra, The Great Seal

Illustrations for the Practice of the Machine of the Body, for Heart-Sages in the Tradition of “The Heart Drop of Longchen” (Longchen Nyingtik Trulkor)

This Tibetan manuscript was printed in the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim. It illustrates the yoga asanas connected with the chakra and channel practices of the Tradition of the Ancient Ones (Nyingmas) of Tibet. These practices were discovered in a buried or “revealed” text by Rikdzin Jikme Lingpa (1729-1792), and are based on the teachings of Master Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363). The entire text has been translated by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally.

Light on the Yoga of the Sun and Moon (Hatha Yoga Pradipika)

After the *Yoga Sutra*, this is the most famous of the ancient works on yoga from India. It was written by the yogi Svātāmarama in Sanskrit, and is thought to date from about 1400. The text describes some of the most important asanas, with an emphasis on those that are helpful for meditation. The relevant chapters have been translated by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally.

Gherand’s Compendium (Gherand Sanhita)

This Sanskrit text by the Indian yogi Gherand is thought to date from the 1600’s, and again describes the most important asanas. Relevant sections translated by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally.

The Glorious Treasure of Essential Points (Shri Tattva Nidhi)

This is a text including information on yoga practice, with illustrations of 120 asanas, from the southern India area of Mysore. It was written in the script of the Kannada language of the Mysore area, and is attributed to Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, who was the Maharaja of Mysore and lived 1794-1868. This is an early presentation of the tradition which helped give birth to the modern yoga practices of Masters Shri Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga) and Shri B.K.S. Iyengar, as well as their teacher Shriman T. Krishnamacharya and his son, Master T.V.K. Desikacharya. Please note that illustrations taken from this text have not yet been copyright-approved; they are for in-house use only, and should not be reproduced until we complete the proper arrangements.

The Yoga Sutra

Although the *Yoga Sutra* itself does not contain any instructions for specific yoga asanas, we will be drawing upon this ancient Sanskrit work for specific sections of the asana instructions. The *Yoga Sutra* is believed to have been written around 300 AD, and is considered the “Mother” of all yoga teachings. Its author is the Indian master yogi, Patanjali. Quotations that we use from the *Sutra* will be excerpted from *The Essential Yoga Sutra: Ancient Wisdom for Your Yoga*, a fresh translation and easily-understandable commentary upon the work by Geshe Michael and Christie McNally, published by Random House/Doubleday, 2005.