

KARMA & EMPTINESS IN THE YOGA SUTRA

(PART ONE - DAY ONE)

**Quiet Retreat Teachings
by Geshe Michael Roach**



**November 28, 2002
Diamond Mountain Retreat Center
St. David, Arizona**

Afternoon: Day One ❄ November 28, 2002
Geshe Michael Roach

I think some of you may have read the book called *The Garden*, and today is the very day that the hero of the story meets the young girl, who turns out to be some kind of Angel.



I thought I'd tell the story about how I learned to cut diamonds. I was already working in a diamond company, but I wanted to learn how to cut them. I looked for a long time to find a teacher, and it was very difficult. Diamond cutting is almost like a secret skill that people don't teach easily, and for months I looked . . . no one would teach me.

But one day I mentioned to my co-manager . . . I had a very beautiful, incredible woman who was my co-manager. Her name is Rachel, *Rachel (Hebrew pronunciation)*. And so I told her I had trouble finding a teacher and she said, "Oh, my husband is a teacher." So we made all the arrangements and I went to the place.

They work a lot on Sundays because Saturday is the holy day. And so it was a Sunday morning in Manhattan, and mid-town in the diamond district was all shut down. I remember going to this dark elevator and up, I think about fifteen floors, and then into this room. And you pass through a lot of security. And then I came in and it was incredible, it was a dark room, almost all the lights out, the windows are covered with this gray powder, and this beautiful man met me, and his name is Schmuel, Shmuelof, and he's Israeli. He is not a big man but he was a boxer, before a diamond cutter, for the Israelis' Olympic team. And then later he was a sergeant in the army, and during the Seven Day War he fought. And I think all this changed his mind and he . . . he is a very warm and extremely gentle man.

And so he took me right in and he said, "Okay *Michael (Hebrew pronunciation throughout)*, this is how we do it." And he pulled out a stone from a special box, and . . . if you've ever seen a raw diamond, they don't look much like diamond. It looked like a potato—small, and it was olive green, like army green.

And he said, "We're going to start with this stone."

And I said, "How big is it?"

And he said, "Three carats."

And I said, "Schmuel, I don't know anything . . . a three carat diamond could be worth fifty or one hundred thousand dollars."

And he said, "Don't worry."

And so he put this little lumpy thing in my hand and he pulled out a thing called a *tang*. Most of the words are from Amsterdam—Dutch, and he said, "This is a *tang*." It means a "tongue," and it's a holder, like a wooden stick, with two legs on the back. You put the diamond in the front, and there's a bowl of lead, called a *dop*. Diamond cutting hasn't changed in about three hundred years.

So he said, "First *Michael*, we're going to put ze diamond in da *dop*."

So I said, "Okay."

Then he got a blowtorch and he put it on the lead and then he said, “Okay, stick the diamond in the lead.” It’s like a Jell-O now.

And he said, “Don’t hold it; just touch it and take your hand away.” But I was too slow and I burned my hand.

But the diamond goes in the lead and then it cools. And then there’s a huge iron table. It shouldn’t vibrate at all, so it’s made of heavy cast iron, and in the center there’s a wheel turning like an old phonograph wheel, about a thousand rpm’s.

And then, he showed me, you put the *tang* in your hand and you hold the diamond down on the wheel. First you take some special secret oil that your wife has made. It’s usually olive oil and ten other secret ingredients, and you put in crushed diamonds, powder — you crush the diamonds in a little pestle, and then you wipe the diamond grease — the diamonds and the grease together — on the wheel as it spins. And then you hold the diamond down.

So he said, “Hold the diamond down.” And I held it down and it, and it screamed at me. It went WHAAAAAAA. *[laughter]*

And I jumped and I said, “I think I broke it Schmuel.”

And he said, “No, no. Don’t worry. Press it harder.”

And I said, “It will break.”

And he said, “Diamonds don’t break.”

He pushed it down into the wheel and it’s screaming. . . it sounds like subway brakes. And the whole room is screaming and reverberating with the scream . . . and then I pick it up and it’s glowing like a red-hot coal.

And I said, “Schmuel, is something wrong?”

And he said, “No, no. Push *Michael*, push.” *[laughter]*

And I, I held it down and it’s jumping in your hand. It’s fighting against you. And the wheel is spinning and there’s little dust flying off, and he said, “Okay, now, pull it up and look.”

And you hold a special glass in your right hand, or if you’re left-handed, the opposite. And then you flip the holder up like a high-school cheerleader’s baton — it’s a skill. *[laughter]* And then *[laughs]*, and then you flip it up to your eye and you check it. And there’s a tiny little — tiny like a needlepoint — little smooth part on the potato.

And he said, “See, you’ve got a whiles to go.” *[laughter]* And so I held it down again and it screamed again. It’s very nerve-wracking for hours, this thing is screaming at you and it’s fighting against you and the wheel is jumping and your hand is shaking and the thing is red-hot, gleaming with fire, and little sparks sometimes flying off all over in the dark.

And it goes like that for hours — you’re fighting this diamond against the wheel. And then maybe, if it’s a hard diamond, maybe an hour later you have a little window cut into it and you can see inside and you can start to plan how to shape it.

So you fight like that day after day — I mean a hard diamond can take a couple of weeks. And sometimes, if it’s really hard, you’ll put a lead weight on the *tang* and you’ll go into the toilet and have a cigarette or something, and you come back. Sometimes it hits a soft spot and the diamond is gone. *[laughter]* But it’s fighting, fighting, fighting.

And then finally we got to the end. He taught me day after day. We did it all at night and on Sundays. Maybe a month later I had a pretty nice diamond. He used to check them every

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half hour or so and he would bend his head like that and say, “Oh, very good *Michael*,” meaning all the angles are crooked. *[laughs]*

And then I finished and it was all dirty and black and burnt.

I said, “Schmuel, it doesn’t look much like a diamond.”

He said, “Oh, come with me.”

And we went over to the window, and there’s a hot plate with a pyrex beaker on top of it, and its boiling. And he says, “Drop it in there but don’t touch it. It’s nitric acid.”

And you boil the hell out of this black, burnt, scorched diamond. And, and then it gets a little cleaner, gets pretty nice. You pull it out with some special tongs.

And then I said, “It still doesn’t look much like a diamond, Schmuel.”

He said, “Oh, *Michael*, not to worry. Come over here.”

And we threw it in a vibration, ultra-sonic cleaner. And then finally I pull it out, and I look at it and I say, “Schmuel, that’s not my diamond.”

And he said, “What’s wrong *Michael*?”

And I said, “It’s not green anymore. It’s pure white, beautiful, blue white.” It’s also about one-tenth of the size it used to be. *[laughs]*

I say, “What happened?”

He said, “Oh, that’s why I gave you a Congo River Green.”

I said, “What’s a Congo River Green?”

He said, “It’s a big hunk of worthless diamond. We use them in oil well drills, usually. And if you’re lucky, in the very middle you’ll run into a little tiny patch of a pure diamond. And you can have it. I mean it’s worth about fifty bucks now and your labor for the last hundred hours or so works out to about ten cents an hour. *[laughter]* I don’t think you should be a diamond cutter, *Michael*.” *[laughter]*

And I put that little diamond in special papers that we put them in and folded it up, and I carried it around for months in my shirt pocket, like the big diamond dealers do, just out of, you know, bragging and like, “Oh, its nothing.”

And every time I met someone, after about five minutes I’d bring the conversation around to my diamond and say, “Oh, I have a diamond right here.” And I’d open up the paper, and it’s all greasy now, but that beautiful, perfect little diamond was right there. And later I offered it to Khen Rinpoche. *[cries]*

And so I was thinking about all the other people in retreat here for the last, oh, it’s going on three years now — the retreat will continue for three years and three months, three days. I think if you could ask them, “Tell me what’s the main thing about three year retreat? What did you find out?,” they’d say, “It’s hard, it’s really hard.”

[cries] And like that green potato, they walked in to this retreat area, *tsam*, innocent, unknowing. And we smashed them and burned them and ground them down and put them in acid and shook them in the ultra-sonic vibrator. And now we’ve come down to beautiful, crystal, white, little diamonds inside of them. *[cries]*

And just to be in a room with those five, six people is something extraordinary now. The energy is very strong and they are very strong. I want to say just one thing to them. Now that you have been smashed and ground down into little perfect diamonds, you have to put that in your pocket and show it to everybody you meet. You have to share it with other people. You

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have a responsibility now. You can't just finish retreat and go somewhere. You have a heavy responsibility to share with other people what you learned, even if you're not sure you learned it.

So I thought we could start today. And I've asked each retreatant to lead us in a Thanksgiving meditation and one will do that at, when we begin. One of the retreatants felt that it would disturb her meditation if she spoke, and I respect that, and she won't be speaking. She'll have to speak double later. *[laughter]*

They haven't really spoken at all except for emergencies like rattlesnakes and things like that. They'll probably be quite nervous and it'll be difficult for them to speak, so you'll have to close your eyes and try to reach their hearts and we'll see how it goes. So if we could move the microphone and if there's a tape recorder I think it would be nice to have.



Retreatant Ani-Pelma: Welcome, welcome to our Thanksgiving Dharma talk. Our Holy Lama has requested that I lead you in a rejoicing meditation this afternoon.

I started contemplating on the topic of rejoicing and I am convinced that it only comes from a blissful state of mind. I decided to get behind the scenes. I focus this meditation on rejoicing, on the different states of mind. So we'll be meditating on several different thoughts, and not the physical objects that we see around us.

So please get really comfortable in your chairs. Loosen up your body. I want you to do some pretending. Pretend that your seat is in the middle of the ocean and that you are surrounded by calm waves, and that there's no one else in the room. Rest your hands on your knees. Relax your eyes. Keep them half open or completely closed. If you have any tension from excitement, think that it's just leaving your pores, all the excitement that you have. Relax your muscles.

The first object of meditation that we will focus on is your breath. So I want you to start to take some deep breaths, and let your mind follow your breath. Make your inbreath even with your outbreath, and we'll do a round of ten breaths.

[silence]

Ani-Pelma: The first state of mind that I want you to meditate on is the state of mind that is happy when others are happy. This is advice from Master Shantideva. Try to recall a special event in your life, when you have been really happy for a friend, and rejoice in that state of mind.

[silence]

Ani-Pelma: Rejoice in the state of mind that keeps you on the Dharma path to seek enlightenment for the benefit of others. It is the same state of mind that brought you here today. So rejoice.

[silence]

Ani-Pelma: Rejoice in the state of mind that has great attitude for your Lama, for these teachings, and all the work that has been done for you to come and find a chair to sit and meditate on. It probably took hundreds of hands, and little details, to create this space for you. So rejoice in this state of mind that has great gratitude.

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[silence]

Ani-Pelma: Rejoice in the state of mind that loves special people, and meditate on having that same love for every creature in the universe. And visualize yourself sending out light to all beings.

[silence]

Ani-Pelma: We dedicate this meditation to Diamond Mountain staff, Dharma teachers, administrative support, the Sangha – the monks and the nuns, the yoga, dance, and art teachers, the volunteers, the medical staff and dentists, Marjorie and Jerry, for our land, and all the people who are sending us prayers silently. I leave you with a poem:

Is it time to think, or stay still?
Listening to the moments of my breath
Constructs an empty space in my mind.
My hands go to work
And I shape and mangle my veins
Into a bright yellow sunflower
To soothe my soul.
I melt the goal of destruction into a nugget.
My flesh is burning with a red smoky passion.
I now understand what I have designed and created.
A gift of love from the heart and light.

Thank you. End of meditation.



Ruth Lauer *[chanted]*:

Om. Om.
Asato ma sat gamaya.
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya.
Mrityor-mam amritham gamaya.

(group repeats each line)

Lead me from grossness to subtlety
Lead me from pollution to purity
Lead me from darkness to luminosity
Lead me from desire to eternity
Lead me from the small self to humanity

Om. Om.



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It's Thanksgiving and I really wanted to thank all of you for coming. It's a really important time of our year when you all come. We can feel you weeks before and we start to get excited. And I know it's hard to come so far out of the way, and I know it's your precious time off, and we know that you are missing maybe family and friends to come here.

And it's a little hard here and it might get cold. I hope you have brought some layers to put on. The desert drops thirty, forty degrees when the sun goes down. And I also wanted to really thank all of the people who worked so hard to prepare these teachings for us. They have many other duties. They have to support themselves. They don't get paid. Usually they end up giving whatever they make to making it possible for the rest of us to be here.

And they — aside from helping all the people in retreat twenty-four hours a day, we dump tons and tons of extra jobs on them. *[laughs]* When you're sitting quietly, you get all these great ideas *[laughs]*, what you must have by tomorrow. And they have cheerfully and beautifully served us for the whole time perfectly. And they and the director and his wife, I know they are. . . I've heard the rumors, they are teaching. I know they are very busy with that. People have been in Ireland teaching recently, some in Singapore, some as far as Sierra Vista. *[laughter]*

And still on top of all of those tasks, they are serving all of us here and I think if you meet them, a lot of them are in red suits, not all of them, and all the people who help them, I think you should try to thank them, especially today on Thanksgiving. I think also. . . try to offer some help if you can. Ask them if they need anything. They might just need you to go away but, they'll let you know. *[laughter]* But I think they could use help too.

Today — it's a big coincidence, I'm sure — that today is the holiday, once a year, of the founding of Sera Monastery in Tibet. Tomorrow is the great festival of the birth and enlightenment and passing into final nirvana of the teacher of the first Dalai Lama, whose name was Je Tsongkapa. That holiday is called the *Ganden Mamchu*. *Ganden* means “the heaven of bliss.” *Ma* means “the twenty-fifth of the month,” which is tomorrow in the lunar month.

And then *chu* means “offering” and we usually, by tradition, offer *tongchu* which means one thousand butter lamps in honor of this great teacher who started the lineage of the Dalai Lamas, and this is our lineage. So the night before, we always take fifty of the butter lamps and we set them out as an offering to the person who founded Sera Monastery.

Sera Monastery is very important in our lives, foreigners who are trying to follow the path of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Many of the great teachers who have so kindly come to the west to help us crazy foreigners have come from Sera Monastery. We sat down before the teaching to try to make a list of all the great Lamas who have helped us from Sera monastery and it was about a hundred or more. And I thought it would be nice if we could put some of their photographs up around this tent with a little story of the Lamas that we know and who have helped us. And then we thought we would put some of the older paintings and drawings of the ancient teachers from Sera also.

All of the courses of the ACI, Asian Classics, that you and I have been able to learn from holy Lamas have come through Sera Monastery. There wouldn't be any of this, there wouldn't be a single word of teachings in the last twenty years or so, there wouldn't be a single person here who had learned to meditate properly and do retreats and study and serve other people if it

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wasn't for the kindness of, especially one Lama from Sera, who is truly the source of all our good. And that's of course, Khen Rinpoche [*cries*], who has served as the Abbot of Sera May College.

And probably the largest group of Dharma centers in the world is headed by the incredible Lama Zopa Rinpoche, who has brought Dharma to thousands and thousands of people all over the world. If you've ever met him you could see the pain of his health from twenty, thirty, forty years of serving us. He's given up every hour of his life to help people like you and me. And he learned that from Lama Yeshe, holy Lama who has passed away now, and who was the first to come to our country to try to help us. And he was from Sera also. And then the great Geshe Rabten, who has passed away, brought much Dharma to European countries. And I could go on.

There are about a hundred of them who have selflessly come to our countries to help us. They never charge money. Many of them have had great physical and financial hardship. You met Geshe Thupten Rinchen, holy Lama, at Sera who taught us all so many things. He didn't have enough money to buy food. He got tuberculosis from malnutrition, while we were eating and enjoying ourselves. This is the kind of person that Sera Monastery is producing for the last six hundred years.

Sera was founded in 1419. That was the year that Je Tsongkapa passed on. The founder's name is Jamchen Chuje Shakya Yeshe. I don't know a lot about him but I know that he was a close disciple of Je Tsongkapa.

Je Tsongkapa, in his later years, became very famous. The emperor of China, the most powerful man on the planet in a Tibetan person's eyes at that time, sent Je Tsongkapa a message. He said, "I wish to honor you. I wish to learn from you. Come to Beijing."

And Je Tsongkapa was hanging out in Ganden Monastery with no food, no clothing, no place to stay really. It was sure that he would be honored with great gifts of gold and silver and jewels and he would be able to teach the emperor of China. In those days there was a beautiful relationship between the great land of China and Tibet and many teachers going back and forth: Chinese teachers teaching Tibetans, Tibetan Lamas teaching Chinese, even the emperor, and the emperor and the whole Chinese people honoring the Lamas who came. And it was a fat chance for any Lama to go and teach the emperor.

And then Je Tsongkapa called Jamchen Chuje. He said, "I'm sort of busy. I've got to teach all these students here. You go."

And, you know, to show up at the emperor's court, the most powerful man in the world with a "No" from your teacher is sort of difficult. And Jamchen Chuje said "Of course, Lama, I'll do what you ask."

And he went to Beijing; I believe he was gone for eight years on the trip. And he taught the emperor. And we know that he must have been a diplomat to survive the court. We also know from paintings of Je Tsongkapa, which we've put up on the walls here, that Je Tsongkapa taught at Sera in the final year of his life. So Sera Monastery was opened with the blessing of Je Tsongkapa himself.

How did the Lama start the monastery? We have a record of how these monasteries started. Je Tsongkapa and seven or eight disciples went out to a place amazingly similar to this

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desert. They sat down in a little huddle. It was getting dark. Je Tsongkapa said, “Anybody have any food?” And they pull out a few pieces of bread and some yak butter.

And then Je Tsongkapa said, “We’re going to start a monastery. How much money have we got?” And everybody put in all their money. It was five dollars. He said, “Okay.” And he said, “We better eat before we start.”

And they pulled out the bread and some *tsampa* — barley flour — and they started to knead the flour into some *bak*, which is a Tibetan snack when you don’t have any money, and he said, “Hold on, we need the butter for something else.”

And they said, “Lama, you know, we don’t have much to eat here.” He said, “It’s okay,” and he took all the butter and he made some butter lamps and he made a little altar on a stone and he offered the butter to the Angels in the world.

I suppose everyone went to bed hungry, wondering how the hell are we gonna build a monastery with five dollars. Next morning they were awakened by a huge group of yaks stomping through the desert, and there were yak herders at the head and they stopped and got off the yaks and said, “What are you guys doing out here?”

And they said, “We’re gonna build a monastery. Je Tsongkapa says we’re gonna build a monastery.”

They said “you look pretty shabby and hungry.”

They said, “Yeah.”

They took about twenty yaks and unloaded all the supplies and said “You keep it.” And they just disappeared.

So we have the same job here. You don’t have to worry about anything. It’s not, it’s not money that built those huge monasteries. It was just guts.

I thought we should make a little karma for Diamond Mountain, like those butter lamps. Twenty years ago Holy Lama Khen Rinpoche, who didn’t have a nickel, he didn’t have anything in his refrigerator, we were told to keep the door closed when students came so they wouldn’t see. [*cries*] But people offered him things and he kept them and then he saved a little money and we sent it to feed the monks of the new Sera.

There’s a new Sera in India close to Mysore, because the old Sera was bombed into pieces during the invasion of Tibet. All the books were burned. Out of six thousand monks, only a hundred survived. They walked on foot over the Himalayas under artillery fire and strafing from airplanes. They took the shell casings and made butter lamps out of them as they fell down from the airplanes. They lived in tents for years in the middle of nowhere Mysore jungle. And people like Geshe Thupten Rinchen, your holy Lama, they carried cement in their bleeding hands upstairs to build the temple you sat in. And now there are three thousand, four thousand monks at Sera. And it’s a beautiful place now.

We still send them money for food. They still don’t have enough. New refugees escape every year. They come to Sera with nothing. They are taken in freely. They never pay anything.

Geshe Lobsang Thardu (Lothar), when I met him, was sleeping with twenty young monks in a single room. At night I heard banging and noises. I peeked out of my bed. The young monks had long bamboo sticks and they were knocking little pieces of bread out of the rafters, to eat something. I said “Geshe Lothar, what’s going on?”

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He said “I hide the bread up in the rafters. They’re all starving. I need to have some for tomorrow but they, the kids knock it off at night and eat it.”

So they’re not that bad now, but still many people catch tuberculosis from lack of food, like Gyalrong Khensur Rinpoche, Vinaya master who taught you while you were there.

So I thought, let’s all, today, if you can, when you are leaving or during the break, you take something, I don’t care if it’s a dollar or a dime but you get your hand in the karma of Sera Monastery. I think there’s a box or a basket and you just put anything in there. We hope to offer a small. . . the first part, it’s called *phud*, to Khen Rinpoche, holy Lama, and then the rest will go to the food fund to feed the young monks. And that will be like the butter lamps on that cold night. And then we’ll see if any yak herders show up tomorrow. Maybe it will just be some wealthy lady from somewhere. I don’t know. But we’ll send that karmic bottle out on the ocean.



I want to tell you a little bit about what we will study, and then we’ll take a break before we start the first verse. Holy Christie and I, in New York City in the stress and busyness of the final months there, we thought we would take some yoga classes to be able to sit for three years without moving. We went to a beautiful yoga center in, in the city. And I felt a little silly — we arranged for private classes because I was afraid that people would see how uncoordinated I am. And they gracefully agreed. And I also felt a little uncomfortable; there were Hindu gods’ statues spread around and, sort of, I got a Hare Krishna feeling, and I was [*laughter*]. . . I’m not denigrating Hare Krishna, it’s a beautiful thing, but I was a little nervous, and I wasn’t quite sure.

And I remember standing in the entryway and waiting for the teacher, and people are lining up for yoga classes. It’s sort of amazing; it’s a steady flow, hundreds of people coming in to twist their bodies into knots. I was sort of amazed. And people are walking around me and saying, “How’s your *chakras* doing?” and, “How are your *nadis*?” and, “Is your *prana* flowing today?” and I’m like, “Wow, this is amazing.”

Why? The whole system about *chakras*, inner centers of energy in your body, and *nadis*, channels for the inner winds, is extremely secret in Tibetan tradition. Here, hundreds of, looks to me like kids ‘cause I’m getting old, coming in and talking about these things like they were jelly beans and [*laughter*] I’m, like, amazed.

In Tibet you study twenty years in a monastery like Sera and maybe one person out of a thousand will graduate as a Geshe. Only one in about ten thousand becomes a first level *hlarampa* Geshe like Khen Rinpoche. And if you are *hlarampa* Geshe, which I’m not, then in ancient Tibet you were allowed to go to tantric college.

There were two great tantric colleges, Gyume and Gyuto. Our holy Lama attended Gyume. And then for five years you study the secret teachings. It involves learning about mandalas, doing chanting, proper rituals, study of the basics of the secret teachings. If you do very well in these secret teachings then you might be taken into a corner, privately, and taught the second level of secret teachings, called *dzok rim*, in which you work with the inner channels and *chakras*, the inner energy centers, and you are taught secret methods of turning your body into an Angel’s body.

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It's not granted to people lightly, because it's difficult and it's very rare and precious. And it takes extremely great faith and effort and courage to practice. And somewhere during those secret years you will be introduced to the asanas, the yoga exercises, as part of your secret practice, and then special methods of breathing, and other secret practices which prepare your body for the transformation into a Buddha.

So I was amazed. I saw these people flowing in and everybody already knows all this stuff. And I started some classes. I had very wonderful, kind teachers. One of them is here today, and she has done the chanting for us, and we are very fortunate to have her come. Other teachers have also visited and will be visiting to teach.

These people have spent ten, twenty, thirty years of their lives. They have learned from great Indian masters. They have been like Je Tsongkapa — nobody cared twenty years ago about these things. They were considered weird or crazy. They couldn't support themselves with yoga, they had to have other jobs. They stuck it out. They made countless trips to India, like some of us have done. You know when you step on the plane in New York, you're going to get sick in India. *[laughter]* And they have gone, bravely, and they have worked very hard. They represent a true lineage. They have studied with great teachers. We have other yoga teachers here from other lineages and they have put out the same effort.

So one day this kind teacher, who happens to be here and you should give her a hug, offered Christie and I a copy of the Yoga Sutra. And even though I was very busy, I flipped through it and put it away. I said, "I'll probably have time in retreat."

Then we went back for another class. Our holy teacher was busy. We had another teacher, came in, and he is a great teacher, he and his partner are very dedicated and have opened that yoga center. And strangely, he handed me a copy of the Yoga Sutra. *[laughter]* A different copy.

So I said, "This is odd, two people in a row in one week handing me the same Sanskrit Sutra." After that we all went to Sera Mey for classes with holy Lama Geshe Thupten Rinchen, and I had an opportunity to go to Mysore, briefly, and meet with a very great holy teacher there, of yoga. And we sat down in a small group and he starts spouting this Yoga Sutra again. And I still don't have time to look at it.

Then we came here, we started retreat. We were planning to meditate eighteen hours a day. We discovered you can't do that. *[laughter]* It was a very painful discovery. It took months to find out. Some of us went to the edge of crazy.

The people here have really earned your hard work. You should know. Many of us have been sick, many have had very difficult trials thrown up by the demons. And you should know that all your hard work is being earned. Every retreatant has pushed themselves to the very edge of their health and their sanity, really, and emotionally to the edge of where a person can go. And you should appreciate that your hard work is being earned. They feel deeply your trouble, your effort, your hard work, and I think all of them have, therefore, pushed themselves to the very edge. It's painful for me to see sometimes. *[cries]*

So we started, especially in the summer, in the afternoon for an hour or two, we thought we would start to look at some books that would help our practice, because it's impossible to meditate at that time, in the summer especially. And the caretakers sent us a big bottle of jelly beans. We eat half of them and we open up a book and we don't fall asleep.

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So I started to look at the Yoga Sutra, and I brushed off my ancient college Sanskrit and start to struggle through it. Christie's Sanskrit is getting quite good, as are some of the retreatants.

And we work through it, and it's an amazing, beautiful, extraordinary presentation of the entire content of the ACI courses. Plus the tantric teachings.

So I was extremely impressed and overjoyed to have been granted that book by my teachers. And I thought it would be wonderful for us to study it.

We asked for some extra texts in Sanskrit that we needed. They were gotten from a wonderful man in California who has like a research center for yoga. And by accident, I'm sure, there was an email slipped in that said, "NBC and The Wall Street Journal have discovered that twenty million Americans have suddenly signed up for yoga." Twenty million people in the country in the last twelve or eighteen months have started to practice what is, in our lineage, the highest, one of the highest and most secret trainings a person can ever encounter. *[laughter]*

You can call it some kind of weird coincidence. You can see it as the success of three years of hard work. But however you view it, suddenly twenty million American people are experimenting with some of the highest practices of the lineage of the Dalai Lamas.

Those practices can turn your body into that of an Angel. They are preparatory, just before the final transformation into a body of light, of an Awakened Being. I don't mean it's such a big deal to look like a light bulb. I mean, at the same time, you gain the ability to travel to countless planets at the same moment, and to appear on those planets as any kind of being at all, and lead, and guide every living creature to total bliss.

Each of us has this future ahead of us, if you're not that way already, I don't know. I often think I'm the last one. I appreciate the chance to try to catch up. But imagine, twenty million people suddenly dabbling with a teaching which can enable each one of us to reach the final stages of our, the goal of millions of lifetimes. People who see an ad for a yoga class and go, even for one hour and never go back, have extraordinary seeds in their minds from thousands of previous lifetimes, to have even seen the advertisement. It's not an accident that these things happen. Those twenty million people have spent thousands of lifetimes in serious pursuit of high spiritual goals they may not even remember.

And there are things you need to know for your body to change like that. You need to learn the other parts of the path. Even in the Yoga Sutra, which is something like a hundred and ninety six or seven verses or lines, there are only three lines about yoga exercises. You can say one percent of the book. And what we think of as yoga is really only one percent of the practice. It's all part of a much higher and longer practice that was passed on in India and in Tibetan monasteries.

And so I have a dream, a vision, what we have all learned from our holy Lamas from Sera is the missing part, I think. I think if those twenty million people who are trying to stand on their heads could somehow hear the rest of the Yoga Sutra, if they could somehow see how it all works, if they could see how the yoga fits into a larger plan, each one of us becoming a holy Angel who could serve countless beings at once, which is the goal of our whole, very existence, then what a wonderful thing would happen.

If we could meet with people and talk about the Yoga Sutra, which is really all of the instructions which all of you have learned from holy Lamas and through them the ACI courses.

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Ninety-eight percent of the Yoga Sutra is not about yoga exercises. It's about the knowledge which we have been granted by our holy Lamas, of how to make your body and mind change at the very end of your practice.

So I have a dream, a vision. It's a very strong. . . I have no idea how we'll pay for it, but John Stilwell knows, and Winston knows, and Salim-bai knows. We're going to get some old cars and we're going to drive around the United States, after retreat, and we're going to go to bookstores and yoga centers and Dharma centers or anybody who won't kick us out, and talk about the other parts of the teaching that can help people who do yoga, the exercises, not just to be healthy but to actually escape from all forms of pain and to become a being who can help every single other living creature in the universe, at one moment.

And anybody who will listen, then I thought we could just sit and talk about it, the Yoga Sutra, what it means. We thought to put out a book about it, like a story book, based on the Yoga Sutra and also other high teachings. If we can publish a book then we'll have an excuse to go to bookstores and things like that. So people are working on that. And I don't know exactly how it will go, but we're gonna go, even if we have to take a Greyhound bus. And we just need little *tsampa* bread, and we'll use the butter for butter lamps.

And I thought to go to a number of cities in a big left-hand circle around the United States. And if you happen to live in one of those cities, or you just want to come along, then I hope you will come. I think it would be really beautiful. Je Tsongkapa used to wander around Tibet with his students like that. They'd jump on a yak and go, and they would circulate in a big circle, following the seasons. And they would just have *satsang* — they would just sit down and talk with people. And then maybe we can help twenty million people. And I believe that we will discover something.

When you do a long tantric retreat like this one, three years, at some point, it's a tradition to leave and go on an Angel hunt. It's called *singalee* practice. The karma of working so hard or serving the retreatants so hard for three years, or even a year or two, the karma is so powerful that you are able to see some of the Angels who are walking among us all the time.

And so I dream that maybe we won't so much teach as be taught. I think we will run into these holy beings, people who have devoted their lives to that path and who have gained the goals that a monk in Tibet might gain after their secret studies. I believe that there are dedicated people in the yoga tradition who have gained those goals. We can't see it yet, but I have a feeling that by going out and trying to help people we will be allowed to see them. Then we'll come back and sit down, collect our five dollars together and build Diamond Mountain – a place to study to supplement all of the centers and the schools in New York and Godstow and other places.

I hope — I feel very strongly — that eventually we should consciously try to begin small centers in those cities which we visit. I know that there may be fifteen or twenty places like that, but I often think about how I met holy Lama Khen Rinpoche. He was the only Geshe teaching within a thousand miles of where I lived. I met him almost by accident. And it frightens me to think that I, if I die, I would be, I might be born again in a place where no one knows these things, no one is teaching these things. There's only television and eating and working yourself until you die.

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I don't want to come back to a world like that. I think we owe it to our future selves and to our children that there are places to go to learn these holy things. It's our responsibility and our honor to carry on the tradition we have been granted by our teachers. I think we have to work hard now, after that tour, and create places where people can come to learn both the open teachings of the ACI courses and the higher, secret teachings, of which yoga is really a part.

I'd like to take a break now. There are supposed to be three or four thangkas, religious paintings from Tibet, up on the walls here, and more will be going up each day, I understand. They tell the story of the Lamas from Sera, and also the small colored ones tell about the life of Je Tsongkapa. There's supposed to be a special area maybe Venerable Ann, if she's here, could stand up and point to it, where there are special paintings of Je Tsongkapa, where areas have been marked out. If you get a chance please look at those tiny areas, what's going on in them.

In one there's two weird guys who look like, I mean not to be disrespectful but they look like Halloween costumes, staring at each other, and there's another section where there's a big procession going on, people carrying something special and leading it in with an incense stick, there's another area where Je Tsongkapa is teaching. And then there's a big thangka of Je Tsongkapa himself in his yogic aspect, as a yogi. And I think there's one more thangka of Je Tsongkapa getting stabbed in the heart by Manjushri, the Lord of Wisdom, and getting his knowledge. So during the break you might want to look at some of those drawings and paintings. And then afterwards we'll start the Yoga Sutra.



I know there may be some new friends visiting today and — I know I don't need to tell the older yogis here, but the new ones — the lineage we're in: Gelukpa, Tsongkapa, Dalai Lamas, is tough. When you take a teaching you have to absorb it properly. You have to listen carefully. You have to take good notes. Every single person in this room should have a notebook in their lap. It should be open to the first page, Patanjala Yoga Sutram. Your pen should be in your hand.

It's not really a joke. It's extremely expensive, karmically, to hear a teaching on a book like the Yoga Sutra. You may never have a chance again. And by listening, by attending, you accept a very serious and heavy responsibility to continue this lineage on to your own students. Each person in this room, by listening, takes a responsibility to impart this wisdom clearly and accurately to their own students. It doesn't have to be in a teaching like this. It may be over coffee in a Starbucks on Third Avenue or something. But it's your duty not to let these things die in the world.

The great teachers of many yoga traditions have written commentaries on this text. Each of the great teachers of the popular yoga traditions in this country underwent serious problems in their home country, India. They struggled to learn these things and keep them alive. They often didn't have anything to eat. Those big gurus you see driving around in expensive limosines nowadays, all of them starved for many years trying to save these lineages, trying to preserve this knowledge.

Now the responsibility shifts to us. So in our lineage, when you take a teaching, then this evening, as you enjoy your Thanksgiving dinner, you should review it mentally. And if you're in

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a group of friends, which is a very good way to review, and you see people talking about the new Harry Potter movie, you [laughter], you change the subject subtly. You say, “What did you think, what he said about that third verse?” And you have to review this teaching; you have to look at your notes tonight, and as you meet other friends here, talk with them this evening about what was said. Thrash it out between you.

And it’s a tradition in our lineage that the next day, in the morning, before the next class, you should look at your notes again. I think it’s even more effective to get together with some friends and just talk about it over breakfast. And don’t be shy — if there’s some people here that look like you’d like to get to know them, then hang out with them, say, “My name is so-and-so. Where’re you guys staying,” and meet in some coffee shop in some motel somewhere and sit down.

Each teaching, in the evening and the next morning, review it. If you don’t do it you will lose everything. You won’t remember anything on Wednesday. After the teaching is finished, get ahold of a transcript or a tape and go over it one more time. Then you’ll be prepared to help other people.

Lineages shouldn’t be passed on haphazardly or sloppily. They haven’t survived for two thousand years, in the case of the Yoga Sutra, because of laziness. We’ll be going very deep on a few of the lines. To do the whole Sutra carefully would take a year or two. We’ll do that at Diamond Mountain later. You can talk to Winston about where the place is. I think later — after the traveling around the country — we will come home here and there will be some very heavy, serious classes about the Yoga Sutra and Sanskrit and Tibetan, and also on the higher secret teachings.

I see Diamond Mountain as a place where serious people can come to learn the higher teachings also. I think those same teachings will be given in New York City. Not in as great depth, but they will be done thoroughly. And they will not be granted to anyone who hasn’t finished the eighteen ACI courses. So you have your work cut out for you, if you wish to hear those higher teachings.



We’ll go through each verse, and sometimes it’s only a piece of a verse — you’ll see a short English line on top and a long Sanskrit line below. That means I felt that there was one part of a verse that was especially important for this teaching, short teaching. I’ve asked to have readers read the English, and also just to read the Sanskrit sounds. You won’t make them perfectly, but you will learn them later at Diamond Mountain.

Each verse we’ll cover, in about five or six different ways. First we’ll talk about the Sanskrit words. I call them key words. These are words that I think, are either very important to know if you’re going to talk to those twenty million people. Sometimes it’s just a neat word that occurs in our Tibetan lineage a lot and I thought you’d like to hear about it. So we’ll cover the Sanskrit word first, word by word, the meaning of the word.

We’re going to talk more tomorrow about how Sanskrit plays a role in our lineage but you should know that both Sanskrit and English ultimately come from an older language which is called Indo-European. So really Sanskrit is very powerful for us. I think you can even feel it when we chanted today. Because English and Sanskrit are actually sister languages, almost every

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Sanskrit word can be found in English. So I find it personally helpful to learn the English words that come from the Sanskrit word that we are trying to learn. To me it's exciting that the language that I grew up with came out of Sanskrit, and I thought you might enjoy hearing what we call cognates, English words that come from the Sanskrit word, and I thought it might help you remember the Sanskrit word better.

After that we'll talk about how the ancient Tibetan translators translated the Sanskrit word. This gives us a very clear idea of its meaning, because the Tibetans, over a seven hundred year period, translated five thousand such texts from Sanskrit. They left us with beautiful instructions on what the words really mean.

Next we'll talk about the meaning of the words all together in a verse. Then an important step I think, that I think maybe is sometimes ignored, is to show how the verse fits into the whole Yoga Sutra. There's a flow to the Yoga Sutra which is difficult to recognize if you haven't been trained in many sutras, and I thought it might be helpful to explain how the verse fits into the whole book, and the flow of the Yoga Sutra. I also feel that it's useless to read a book if it doesn't have any connection with your real life, and so after that we'll try to talk about why this particular line is important for your own life and your own happiness.

The last thing we'll do with each line is to talk about how you can serve other beings with this verse. How can we help people who are in pain or sad. How can we be of service to others with these verses. So each verse, we'll cover, from the words up to the service of other beings. I don't know how the time will go. I asked Winston to give me a watch but I'll probably ignore it. You don't get a chance like this very often. We'll have another break if we need. So I'd like to ask Winston to read the title, and then we'll start.

[Winston McCullough: The Yoga Sutra of Master Patanjali. "A Short Book about Yoga"]

I'll talk about the key words. If I say, "read the next verse," and I haven't covered a key word, Winston or someone has to bang me, okay?

I'd like to talk first about Master Patanjali. Let's just talk about the word "Patanjali." *Pat* in Sanskrit means "to fall through the air" or even "to fly through the air." The ancient Indo-European root, the ancient source of both Sanskrit and English is *pet*. And you find this word, this root, in English in, oh, three or four words. One is, *impetuous*, which means "to fly off at the handle." You find it in the word, *repeat*, the "p-e-a-t," which means "to befall us again." And there's an ancient Sanskrit word, *patra*, which means "the flyer," which is the word for "feather" in Sanskrit and for "flower petal."

"P" often changes to "f" by the time it gets to English. "R-a" changes to "e-r," and so the word, feather, comes directly from *patra*. The *feth* in feather, and the "p-e-t" in flower petal comes from *pat* also, because it's light as a feather, and flower petal was named from feather. "R" often changes to "l." *Anjali* or *Anjala* means "sacred water" or "sacred ointment." It comes from a Sanskrit word, *anj*, and the ancient, ancient root, in Indo-European is *ongw*, and that came into our language in the word *unguent*, the "u-n-g," in the word *ointment*, the "o-i," and in the word *anoint*. All of those words come from that root.

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So why do you call a great master, “fell in the ointment?” [Laughs] *Patanjali*. There was a great yogini, like a Vajra Yogini practitioner, in ancient India about two thousand years ago. Her name was Gonika. She was a great woman practitioner of the secret teachings. She was getting old. She was afraid she wouldn’t have someone to pass them onto, which is a fear that anyone who gets old and has great knowledge starts to have. And so she put some holy water in her cupped hands and she made a prayer that she could have a son to whom she could pass on these teachings. And she raised the holy water in her hands and when she opened her eyes and looked down, there was a tiny little baby in her hands. And he grew very quickly into a man, and that was Patanjali.

People think these stories are just silly old stories of Indian or Tibetan superstitions. I heard the same thing from Tibetans when I told them that Jesus Christ was born of a woman who never had sex with a man. And in the ancient scriptures it’s said that holy beings never create problems for their mother when they are born. They should be born without pain. And so people like Padmasambhava, which means “the yogi who grew out of a lotus flower” in Tibet, or people like Patanjali or Jesus, they are born miraculously, they don’t cause pain to their parents. They are not coming here by karma, they are coming here by choice. So I say, don’t be naive and think it’s a silly story. But his name was “the one who fell into the holy water.”

In Tibetan language, this is *Chur-hlung*. *Chu* means “holy water.” The *R* at the end of *chur* is a locative, “into the water,” and then the *hlung* means “to fall.” So the ancient Tibetans translated Patanjali’s name as, literally, “fell into the water.”

Pandita Chur-hlung’s name is found in an extraordinary book called the *Mahavyudpatti*. This is an ancient dictionary that was used by the great Tibetan translators, like Marpa, Milarepa’s teacher. When they translated the holy books from Sanskrit into Tibetan they used this book called *Mahavyudpatti*. It’s like a dictionary.

We still have this book; it’s in the *Kangyur*, which is our canon, our holy canon of holy books from India. And in there is a list of thirty-eight of the greatest wise men from India, those who followed after the Buddha. As you can guess, Arya Nagarjuna is there; Arya Asanga, from whom we learned the bodhisattva vows lineage; Arya Vasubandhu, who taught the Abhidharma teachings, which you people have studied in the ACI courses; Master Chandrakirti, who you have also studied in the ACI courses; Master Dharmakirti who you have also studied; Guna Prabha who taught the Vinaya teachings, the monks’ teachings on monks’ way of life and nuns’ way of life that we follow. And then right down there in the middle is Master Patanjali. He comes right before Master Chandrakirti in the *Mahavyudpatti*. So he was considered among the thirty eight greatest teachers of ancient India. We call them, in Sanskrit *Upadhyaya*, and in Tibetan the word is *Khenpo* and that’s the “Khen” in Khen Rinpoche’s holy name. Nowadays it has come to mean the head of a monastery.

Patanjali is an amazing wise man. He wrote the Yoga Sutra, which is really an incredible resensation of all the teachings of those other masters. It covers all the major ideas of the ACI courses. It covers all the major concepts presented in a whole twenty years in a Tibetan monastery and it goes further, into the secret teachings. So he had an extraordinary grasp of the entire range of the teachings from ancient India, and in some extraordinary way, he has placed them into a tiny, short, little book.

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From the issues he discusses at length, I would guess that he lived somewhere around 200 AD. There are big arguments about when he lived. Nobody really knows. The ancients didn't care about that sort of thing. They just cared if it was a good book or not. But if I had to guess, personally, and it's only my idea, he discusses many of the issues that were hot around 200 AD, 300 AD. We'll talk more about that later.

He was also a great physician. He wrote a book on *Ayurveda*, the ancient medical knowledge of India. Some people say he didn't write it. It's written under another name. Tradition says he did write it. I think he wrote it. Anyone who has that great of a knowledge of the inner channels, the *chakras*, the subtle drops of energy within a human body would naturally be drawn to the study of medicine also.

In Tibet, medicine is studied through the four great medical tantras. I believe that it would be very wonderful to study those at Diamond Mountain in the future. There are many highly qualified Tibetan physicians in Tibet, Mongolia and Northern India, or all of India. I've had the honor to translate for several of His Holiness's physicians, and I think it would be wonderful to have them here and teaching courses on a visiting basis. They are too busy to stay I think.

A lot of the medical tantras are related to the higher practices of the secret teachings of which what we consider yoga is a part, the study of the inner workings of the inner winds, inner channels, inner energy centers, which if developed properly, change into the body of an Enlightened Being.

Master Patanjali also had a deep interest in dance. He is considered the father of classical Indian dance, which is a very great and high science. And I think again, this is natural for a person who is interested in the subtle energies of the body which are linked to your meditative states.

And I want to say one thing clearly, since we're on the subject. People ask me, "Do you mean to say we should all go run to take yoga classes? I'm not very interested in exercise, actually."

And I want to answer, clearly. There will come a time in your Buddhist studies, during the secret and most advanced parts, when you will be doing exercises which are very similar to modern yoga techniques. These are meant to work on the subtle channels and to speed up the process of enlightenment.

People ask me, "Well what yoga tradition should I look into?"

I don't think it matters. The modern yoga traditions in this country, like the *Sivananda* tradition, *Ashtanga* tradition, Master Iyengar's tradition, the *Jivamukti* tradition, even the *Vikram* tradition and other ones I'm not familiar with, they all have the same basic ways of manipulating the body. I think what's crucial is that you find a teacher that has a good heart. The exercises are not very effective without a good heart.

So should you run out and take yoga now? I used to make fun of the Venerables in New York who did yoga — I confess and regret it here — *[laughs]* you can report to them. But if you feel like there's a spark of something there for you in the future, then you have a seed for it and you can do that. I don't think more than half an hour a day at the beginning is needed. You don't have to worry that it takes a lot of time. As you go along farther you may wish to do more. But a short, even fifteen, thirty minutes, could be helpful in your future advanced studies.

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Now I have students who are deeply into Tai Chi, I have a wonderful student who is a black belt in Kung Fu, one of the retreatants. They want to know, “Does this do the same thing to my subtle channels?”

I think it does. If you have a dedicated teacher and if you follow that path with compassion, then I think it can have a similar effect.

Some people can get the same results without any kind of physical activity. Some people are special that way. And so I think that each person has to follow their own inclinations.

People ask me, “Where can I find a good teacher?”

I think every single teacher that we have had in the retreat borders, one of Tai Chi, and we’ve had, I think maybe seven or around that, teachers of modern yoga techniques. I haven’t met all of them but from what I hear by notes among us retreatants, I think they all have a very big heart. I think they are all highly qualified and I think all of their traditions are authentic. And I think they might know someone in your city, where you live, if there is no one in your own place where you live.

But don’t get nervous and think that we’re all going to be jogging and standing on our heads. It’s not the point. Sometime in the future, as a small but very important part of our higher studies, it can be very useful to be able to manipulate the inner channels by means of our outer body. You can also do it from the inside, through deep meditation techniques, especially through *tong-len*, breathing exercises, and we’ll be learning all of those in a tantric way in the future. So if you have any inclination, that’s fine. If you don’t, that’s fine too. You will still move along quite well.

Where were we? Patanjali. So he was a great teacher of dance, and some of the people who are studying the higher teachings in the retreat have been taking formal classes in classical forms of dance and also modern dance. This can also be very powerful on your inner channels and it was a deep and strong tradition in Tibet, especially among the monks, to do sacred dance. This tradition was hurt very badly during the loss of Tibet and during the loss of Mongolia. We had the honor of studying briefly with the last great master in Mongolia of sacred dance, and also some in Sera still survive quietly. And this can be very powerful method of working on the inner channels also.

It’s not bad to get a start now, and then when the time comes, we will go into it in the proper way. But it’s good to get a start now.

People ask me, “I’m too old.”

I say, “Hell, I’m 50. I can st... – you’re not too old, and frankly you don’t have a choice.”

So take it gently, softly, easily, happily and it doesn’t matter what your age is. Working with the inner channels is something that I think a person who has seen a lot of life can actually do better.

So Master Patanjali was a great dancer and he’s recognized as the father of Indian classical dance as well. He wrote an incredible commentary on the Sanskrit language, called the *Mahabhasha*. It’s a commentary on *Panini*’s presentation of Sanskrit grammar.

Those of you who’ve studied the Vajra Yogini *sadhana*, teachings, there are many places where we visualize secret sounds throughout our bodies. You shouldn’t think that you are putting a picture of a squarish letter in your heart, with a weird half moon over it or something.

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It's not like that. It's already there. You're trying to see something which is already there. That letter has been singing to you your whole life. You can't hear it.

And so the study of Sanskrit is not some silly linguistic thing in India. It's an attempt to hear the sounds of the inner channels which, if you can develop properly, changes your entire body into that of an Angel who can help countless living beings. So it's natural that Master Patanjali would have all these interests.

Now I'd like to speak about the Yoga Sutra. If we go too long we'll just pick it up tomorrow, okay? I won't keep you too late. We'll go back to the meaning of the words.

Yoga comes from a Sanskrit word *yuj*. The Ancient Indo-European root is *yeug*. And that comes into English in the words "yoke," meaning to join two animals together for plowing. It's found in the word "jugular," as in "jugular vein," because the root "j-u-g" in Latin means that thing which connects your head to the rest of your body, which is your neck. So the word for neck comes from the root that the word for yoga comes from. The word "join" comes from the same root, the "j-o-i," and the word "joust," which means for two horsemen to meet each other, connect, to join. So you get this feeling of how the root means "to connect" or "join."

The word in Tibetan is *neln-jor*. This is a case where the way that ancient Tibetan translators translated the word helps us a lot to understand what yoga means. They sat with ancient Indian *pandits* for years. They discussed the best way to translate words into Tibetan. There was a royal edict, a command from the king, that no book should ever be translated without two pandits from India and two Tibetan translators working side by side for accuracy. Later on there was, by royal decree, a standardization of all the Tibetan words that came from Sanskrit. And you should realize that all the books we study in the monastery, the five great books, and all the books, all the courses in ACI are based on Sanskrit originals.

So *neljor* comes from two words, *nelnma* and *jorwa*. *Jorwa* means "to connect." Another form is *jar*, and even in modern Tibetan the word for glue is *jarsi* which means "sticky stuff." So *jar* means: the *jor* means "to connect." You also know this word in *jorlam*, the path of preparation, which connects you up to the direct perception of emptiness.

Nelma, the first half of *neln-jor*, is a very difficult word to translate. It means something like "the deep inner essence." So *nelnmar jorwa* or *neln-jor* means "any practice which connects you to the deep inner essence." The word for the inner channels, *nadis*, and the inner energy centers, *chakras*, and even the inner diamond body is called the *nelme lu*, the deep inner body, the diamond body.

So the word "yoga," as translated into Tibetan and as understood a thousand years ago by the great masters was that it's a practice which connects you to the deep inner essences, with connotations of emptiness. Sometimes emptiness itself is called *nelma*. So the function of yoga, the meaning of yoga, is to connect us to our deeper selves.

I think it's good for new people to hear the explanation of the word "yogi" and "yogini." Somebody who does yoga is called *yogin*. It means "somebody who has yoga." So you might see it spelled "yogin." And then when you use the word *yogin* in a sentence, it has to drop the *n*. So sometimes you might hear people talk about *yogis*. The feminine form is *yogini*. And of course you see that in the word *Vajra Yogini*. In Tibet the word *yogi* was not used lightly. Only very special people were galled *yogis*, or *yoginis*. There's even a vow against calling yourself a *yogi* or *yogini*. And there are connotations to deep and secret practice.

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There are four great groups of secret teachings in ancient India and Tibet. The third group is called *yoga*. The fourth group is called *anuttara yoga*. The name of the third group implies connecting yourself to the holy an . . . they call it *druptap, sadhana*, “reaching the holy Angels,” “reaching the Angels.”

It’s a pun, you see, because in one way at the beginning you come to see them, and they teach you. They might look like normal people to other people but because you’ve been sincere in your practice, there comes a breakthrough one day, and perhaps someone even around you at this moment in this tent, you realize has been an Angel all along. And then a connection is made, a *yoga*, and they start to instruct you.

But the word *sadhana* or *druptap*, like the Vajra Yogini *sadhana* that we do, has a second meaning. To reach an Angel means to become that Angel. And that’s really what the word *yoga* means, “to reach the Angels.”

First you reach them just by meeting them. Maybe they look like normal people to everyone else. That’s not surprising. You know the story about Master Asanga, who tried to save a dog who’d been hit by a cart and gained compassion at that moment, and then the dog became an Angel, and Master Asanga ran around town with a dog on his shoulders and everyone said, “He’s crazy.” But only Master Asanga saw the Angel.

So *yoga* means trying to reach them, in both ways. And, I repeat, Angel is not a funny guy or girl with two wings and flutters around and tells you the lottery numbers for next week [*laughter*]. It’s a being, a Buddha, it’s a woman Buddha or a man Buddha, who can appear as a normal person, but they are operating on every planet in the universe at the same time. We all want to be like that. It’s our ultimate goal. When you’re a child you want to grow up and drive a car. When you’re a human you want to grow up and be an Angel and serve countless living beings, help them from the terrors of death and the suffering life that we live. It’s what we all want to be, deep down. So *yoga* is a beautiful word for joining ourselves to that being, and then becoming that being.

I like the word *sutra*. It comes from a root *syu* in Sanskrit. The Indo-European word is the same, *syu*, and we see it in the English word “sew.” The W came from the U and the S-E came from the S-Y. There’s another word, “suture,” meaning a wound closed with a thread. And so the ancient meaning of the word “sutra” is “a thread,” and it comes from roots that mean “to sew.”

What’s that got to do with the book? The idea is that holy teachings, short holy ideas, are strung along the thread in a book. Sometimes you can think of it as pieces of thread twisted into a thread, like cords of a rope are twisted into a rope. The Tibetans translated “sutra” as *do*. *Do* has about three different meaning, but the first one is “brief.” *Do* means “crux,” “brief,” “a short book.” Even in modern Tibetan we say *dordu-ma* means, you know, “to put it in a nut-shell.”

Do has another beautiful meaning. It can mean “the intersection or the juncture where two or three rivers come together,” which would be called *sindo*. Or even an intersection where three highways, two, three or four highways come together would be called a *lamdo*. In Sanskrit it’s the idea *triveni*, “the three sacred rivers coming together.”

This has a very deep meaning for us. There are three major inner channels in the human body that, if properly cultivated, help you turn into an Angel. And we are often working at the

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intersection, or the *do* or the *sutra* of these three streams to help create that body. And the physical exercises of what we call yoga in the modern times can help that process in a very rough way. So you get a feeling that “sutra” means “crux,” essential crux of a system which will enable us to reach the Angels. This is the meaning of the word Yoga Sutra.

I’d like to ask that the first line be read.

[Winston McCullough: *Anitya-ashuchi dukkha-anatmasu nitya shuchi sukha-atma khyatir avidya*. Things that cannot last seem to us as if they will. (II.5a)]

This is one of those cases where I’ve taken out only a piece of the verse because we don’t have time, unfortunately, to do the whole verse.

I’ll be very frank. I have this vision of my first yoga classes: there are hundreds of young people, I guess mostly from NYU, walking in and I’m looking at them and they are about to embark on this thing which is, to me, a highly secret teaching. I’m making a judgment, and it may be wrong, and I have to say that at the beginning – I don’t know that each of those young people wasn’t a tantric deity or a high Lama, but it may be the case that there are people who are looking upon yoga as a system of physical exercise. They hope that by attending these classes they will become stronger; almost everyone is hoping they will lose some weight. Frankly, me too. And everyone is wondering if they’ll look like David Life or someone healthy, strong, trim. And that can be a reason. . . I’m afraid if it’s what it looks like to me, and my eyes are certainly not pure yet, but it could be that people are thinking about their physical body and its health and its strength and they undertake yoga as exercises.

And if I had to grab one of those people and sit with them in a room, I would say, “Look, Yoga Sutra, accepted by every school of yoga in the world as the grandfather or grandmother of all yoga teachings, the most ancient, or the principal book on yoga teachings: there’s a line in there that says, ‘Things that you think are going to last won’t last.’ Don’t be naive, you know. You are getting older as you stand on your head. You are one hour older at the time you walk out of the class than the time you walked in. The process of aging is going on while you exercise. You are dying as you exercise.”

There’s nothing sadder to me than to meet a person who put all their hopes in a exercise program, and even spent years and got good at it, and then they simply got old and couldn’t do it anymore. This is not the purpose of yoga. This is not the purpose of the holy teachings of Patanjali, Master Patanjali, or all the other great saints. Yoga exercises are only a tiny sliver of a larger plan that can take you beyond death itself. And if anyone ever asks you, “Why the hell did a Buddhist monk teach Yoga Sutra out in Arizona?” you can say, “He has only one concern, that people have to die.”

And there’s a way not to die. And people have found it, people have achieved it. Maybe people sitting quite close to you. Then imagine how it might feel to such a person to sit and watch a room full of people who must die simply because they don’t know something.

So the first line from the Yoga Sutra that I think anyone should hear is this line. Your body won’t last, your friends, your husband or wife, or children, the people around you in this tent, if they don’t learn the real teachings of how to reach the Angels, they will die. It’s a life and death matter. This place, Diamond Mountain, all the teachings of ACI in New York, all the

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efforts of the Lamas from Sera, they have only one goal, that's to help people who are dying, help people not to lose the people they love around them.

Nitya, anitya. *Nitya*: the root is “n-i” in Sanskrit. The ancient Indo-European is *en* and it came into English in the word “in.” The idea is that there's something about you; inside you have an independent nature that protects you from dying. And that's not true. *Nitya* means “will last forever” because it exists in and of itself, which is wrong.

The Tibetan word is *takpa*, which means “unchanging.” Then actually everything is *anitya*. “A” is the negative in Sanskrit and in Greek and it comes into English in the negative, in Greek words like “apolitical,” or “amoral” or “atheist,” meaning “not”: even in the word “ignorance,” the “a” changed to “i.”

There's a power which is making our bodies get old during a yoga class. That power can be stopped and reversed. But to learn it you have to want to learn it, and you have to admit to yourself that even if you become a very good yoga student, you're still getting older every year, and there'll come a time when you can't do those poses. There'll come a time when you can't walk up the stairs to the yoga class. There'll come a time when you can't put your foot out of your bed. And that has to drive you to learn how to stop it. The original purpose of yoga is to stop those terrible things. These are accidents. You don't have to live like that. *Mitakpa* is just the negative of *takpa* meaning “changing,” which means “not unchanging,” everything is changing, all the time. Next verse.

[Andrea McCullough: *Bandha karana shaithilyat prachara samvedanach cha chittasya para sharira-aveshah.* And they realize that the body itself is a prison. (III.39b)]

There are no key words here. I just thought it was a great verse. [laughter] *Prachara* means “a prison” or a fenced-in area. The “c-h-a-r” came into English in the word, “incarceration.” The “c-a-r” in “incarcerate,” comes from the “c-h-a-r” in *prachara*. This is actually a verse about a very high tantric practice of moving your mind out of your body into another body because your own body has become like a prison, called *trongjuk* in Tibetan. It's one of the six teachings of Naropa. But the point is that all of us are stuck in this kind of a body, flesh, blood, bones. You don't have to stay in that kind of a body. You weren't meant to be in a body like this. You were meant to be in a body made of light, a body that could go to countless people at the same time and help all of them. And so it's important that we look upon this mortal body, as a prison that we want to bust out of, using the techniques of yoga. Next verse.

[Ven. Elly van der Pas: *Sthira sukham asanam.* The poses bring a feeling of well-being which stays with you. (II.46)]

Master Patanjali really only devotes one line to the physical exercises, out of almost two hundred lines. This happens to be that line. I thought, if you're going to talk about Yoga Sutra to people interested in the exercises, you better throw in this line.

Let's talk about *asana* first. *Asana* is a Sanskrit word that means “a seat.” It comes from a root, “long a-s”: *as* which means “to sit down.” I've checked very carefully and the word “ass” is not a derivative [laughter] of *as*, but it certainly seems like sitting down involves your ass.

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The word comes from a root “*as*.” The Indo-European word is *es*, and that came into English in the word “is”: “to be,” and the word “essence,” and the word “yes.” So all of these words have the same root as *asana*.

Asana means, then, a seat or a position in which you meditate, originally, and one big function of the yoga exercises was to be able to sit for long periods in a yurt in a desert and meditate. And if you read great books like the *Hathayoga Pradipika*, the first series of *asanas*, there’s more of the book spent describing how to sit for meditation than there is for describing the more active yoga exercises. So originally *asana* or yoga exercise meant a comfortable way of sitting or exercises to enhance the quality of your meditation sitting.

There’s a very important word, *vajrasana*, which means “the *vajra asana*.” *Vajra* means “diamond,” *asana* means “seat,” and it’s said in scriptures that on every planet there’s a *vajrasana*. It’s what we call Bodhgaya nowadays. In the old days it was called Vajrasana, “the Seat of the Diamond.” Every Enlightened Being is said to become enlightened in that place, on the diamond seat, in the Bodhgaya or the Vajrasana of their own world. Even nowadays, when we bless our seat for a long retreat we do a *vajrasana* mantra.

The Tibetan word is *den*. It also means “a seat.” Carpets nowadays, even in Tibetan, are called *kaden* which means “a seat” – something you sit down upon. Sera Monastery is called *Densha*, “A Seat of Higher Learning” and Vajrasana is called *Dorje den* in the Tibetan language. So we get the feeling of *den* meaning “seated properly,” and the original purpose of the yoga was, was to work on your channels and to allow you sit in long meditations where you were also working on your channels from the inside. We’ll talk more about working on your channels from the inside, because if you don’t work on them from the inside, just working on them from the outside doesn’t allow you to reach the goals.

So you can say that these yoga exercises bring you some kind of *sukha*. *Sukha* means “pleasant.” I like the word, *su*; the first part of the word is *su*. *Su* comes from an . . . the ancient Indo-European root is *esu*. When that prefix came into Greek language, the S disappeared, and you get “u,” like “euthenasia,” or “euphonic,” or “euphemism,” or “eurhythmics” [laughs] which means “good sound.” So “e-s-u” – the “s” drops out and becomes “e-u” in our languages. In Sanskrit, the “e” dropped out and it became *su*, which means “good.”

Kha means “a hole.” Space is sometimes called *kha*. When you say *khachari* paradise, it means “to move in the space,” *Kha-a-chari*, which is Vajra Yogini’s paradise. And so *kha* has come to mean some kind of open space or cavity or hole. And people say that *sukha* came from a word that meant “a good hole in the middle of a wagon wheel,” which means the wagon wheel runs smoothly, and that’s where the word *sukha* came from. This is a case where the accent of the word *sukha* is useful in understanding the word, and I think those of you who study Sanskrit in the future at Diamond Mountain, you will learn things like, like the accent, which is not taught much nowadays.

The ancient Indo-European word is *ghai*. And that came into our language in the word “chasm,” the “c-h-a” comes from *ghai*; the word “gap,” the “g-a” comes from *ghai*; the word “gape,” “to make a hole out of your mouth”; and, there’s one more, “yawn” [laughs], the “y-a” comes from “g-h-a.” So it means “a good hole” which means “to feel good or to ride smoothly.” Of course it’s not the goal of *asanas* or yoga postures to just feel good. It’s *sthira*, “ultimate happiness,” ultimate feeling good, which cannot be done in a mortal body like the ones we have.

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But that's the one line that introduces the ideas of a yoga exercise which has now become what people call yoga. And it's important to know, I think.

Next, next line, please, and I think we will probably not finish all the lines today. We'll probably go another fifteen minutes and we'll finish the rest tomorrow. So one more, maybe one or two more lines.

[Ven. Lobsang Chukyi: *Sa tu dirgha kala nairantarya satkara-asevito dirdha bhumiḥ.* Your practice must be steady, without gaps. (I.14b)]

The key word here is *nairantarya*, and it means “without gaps.” Master Patanjali's sutra is following exactly the same structure as the Heart Sutra — which you were reciting as I came in — by accident, I guess [*laughs*]. The Heart Sutra is an outline of the five great spiritual stages that every one of us will go through. Master Patanjali's book is the same. This line comes in a section which is describing the first two paths, called the path of collection and the path of preparation, or the path of accumulation and the path of preparation. These are the first two stages of every person's spiritual growth, and in a few lines later, Master Patanjali describes the five specific parts of what we call *jor lam* in exactly the same way as they are described in all Buddhist texts. But he starts to talk about the idea of practice, and the first thing you'd want to tell anyone who is trying to learn these deep things about their channels, is that you gotta keep it up steadily. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is constantly telling us, “It takes time and it takes hard work, and you have to be steady. You have to keep it up every day.”

The word *antar* came into English as “inter,” as in “interruption,” meaning you don't practice steadily. The Tibetan is *bar*. I stuck it in there because you know the word *bardo*. *Bardo* means the place in-between your death and your next birth. So you get a feeling for how *antar* means an interruption. And it doesn't matter whether we're talking about meditation or yoga *asanas* — exercises — or retreat or study. It all boils down to the same thing. You have to do it every day; you can't have an interruption. You can take days off to rest, and you should, but they should be planned. “Every Sunday I'm going to rest; every Saturday I'm going to rest.” But the other five days you can't get anywhere if your practice is not steady.

It's much, much better to start with five minutes a day and do it every day, than to start with an hour and a half and then do it less and less every week that goes by. It's just very simple and very practical advice from Master Patanjali. Start with small, modest practice, but don't skip any days. And you can't succeed in the higher teachings unless you get in the habit of doing it every day.

So cut down on how much you do. Don't try to do an hour and a half of yoga, or an hour and a half of study, or an hour and a half of meditation. Fifteen minutes is fine, ten minutes is fine. But get in the habit of doing to every day, at the same time. Otherwise you will surely fail. Next verse.

[Brian Pearson: *Vyadhi styana sanshaya pramada-alasya-avirati bhranti darshana-alabdha bhumatva-anavasthitatvani chitta vikshepas tentarayah.* And the fifth of the obstacles is laziness. (I.30e)]

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Okay, obviously this is only a piece of the Sanskrit verse in which Master Patanjali presents the obstacles that you're likely to run into on the first two paths, especially the path of preparation. The key word here is *alasya*. "A" is the negative like we spoke about with *anitya*. I like the word *las*; the Sanskrit word is *las*. The Indo-European root, the older root is *las*, and it means "to be lively or frisky." And it came into English in two words, the first is "lust," and the second is, "lascivious" [*laughs*] meaning "frisky." *Alas* means not so frisky, and here it means, laziness.

Those of us who have been in three year retreat have discovered a deep spiritual truth. [*laughs*] The only reason you don't do your practice is because you don't want to, you don't really want to. It's not that you're too busy, we can't say that. We've got not one single other thing to do really. It's frightening. We've got twenty four hours a day, those beautiful, incredible, extraordinary caretakers and their helpers and the director and his wife, anything we want comes in. You know, I try to throw them off balance, I say, "I need a book from Manalva, Gujarat State, India, printed in 1930, by next week." And it comes. [*laughter*] And anything we need to eat, anything we need at all, it comes. So we have no excuses except our own *alasya*.

You just don't want to do it. You don't really want to do it. That's the only thing that lies between you and becoming the Angel we talked about. You just don't really want to do it, whether it's meditation or yoga or studying a scripture or helping out with washing the dishes. There is no other excuse than you don't really want to do it. People do what they want to do. It's not that you don't have time, you just don't really want to do it, or you would make the time. We do what we want to do.

And so, *alasya* is the first great enemy to be beaten back. It continues all the way up to the highest stages of Buddhist practice. You will have to be fighting against your own *alasya*. There's a special kind of *alasya* that doesn't want to go higher. "I'm comfortable at the level of teachings I have now. I'm comfortable. I understand these teachings I've gotten so far. I'd like to sit here for awhile." You can't be like that. The minute you feel comfortable at a certain level, you have to move up to the next level. You have to fight your way up to the next level. People are waiting, people are hurting. We have to go to the higher teachings as soon as we are capable. We have to try to move up as fast as we can go with our body and mind.

There will be times when you try too hard and you move too fast and you hurt yourself, and then you have to get back up and keep going, but you can't have that kind of laziness, that is waiting, or doing some practice that you find comfortable, and not trying to stretch further. The higher practices are difficult, they require great faith. Many people's faith breaks at that juncture, but we have to try.

Antaraya: the key word, *antar* again means "to go between." *Aya* comes from a Sanskrit word, just the simple letter *i*, which means "to go." The ancient Indo-European root is *ei*, and it shows up in English as the "i-t" in "circuit," or "exit," and "itinerary," the I that starts out "itinerary," all meaning "to go or to travel." So *aya* comes from those roots; it's a form of those roots, so it means "goes between." *Barche*, the Tibetan listed here, means an interruption. "*Kho nga la barche mun che song*," in modern Tibetan means "this guy's a pain in the ass and he's interrupting my work." So *barche* means "interruption," an obstacle. It comes in a very important word, *barche me lam* which you know, means "the period of direct perception of emptiness," which goes on in an uninterrupted flow. Go ahead with the next verse please.

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[Amber Moore: *Tat pratishedha-artham eka tattva-abhyasah*. And if you wish to stop these obstacles, there is one. and only one, crucial practice for doing do. (I.32)]

Master Patanjali, in the first of the four chapters of his work, describes the obstacles that can block our practice. He makes a long list. It's very close to the list of Master Nagarjuna in his *Suhrlehka*, which we talked about once over dinner together at Vajrapani Institute, if you ever remember. But the two lists are very similar. And he says, *eka tattva-abhyasah*: there's one crucial practice for stopping all of these obstacles. I'll tell you about the the word first, and then the practice.

I think the key word is *abhyasa*. That's made of *abhi* and *asa*. *Asa* we've had already, which means "to sit down" or "to work hard," which means to practice. And then *abhi* is the *abhi* in *Abhidharma* which means "higher" or "moving right up to the end" and it appears in the English word "epitome," E-P-I, and "episcopal," words like that.

Master Patanjali is saying, "Look, there's one practice that can stop all of your obstacles, even laziness." And my dear yoga teachers have also told me many times, when I'm struggling with my head about to collapse, "Look, do it for somebody else." And you can [*cries*] push yourself a little further, all the time, if you're doing it for someone else, if you're not just doing it for yourself. You can always push yourself, you can find energy and power deep within you, no matter what you're doing: meditation, study, trying to serve those crazy demanding retreatants, you can always find a little more power if you forget yourself and try to do it for other people.

Imagine how it feels to be able to see every single living being there is in the universe at the same time. Imagine how that might feel. There isn't anything more joyful than struggling, working hard, to serve all of them. There's nothing to compare with that kind of happiness. There's no single happiness available to a human being which is higher than working on that level. It's what all of us are meant to do. It's what you really want to do. It's no fun being a grubby selfish little thing. We all want to be a being who can serve countless others, just in a moment's time, in every moment. That kind of happiness overcomes every other obstacle. You'll never have any obstacle that you can't get over once you are working for all living creatures, once you can see them.



Okay, see you tomorrow. Don't forget you're a lineage holder now. You have to look it over again this evening. Do it the easy way, and it's the most powerful way, you know — go up to somebody here that looks nice, that maybe you don't even know, and say, "Where're you gonna be tonight? You want to have dinner together, you want to hang out?" And then just talk about these ideas. That's the fun way to review. Do it again tomorrow morning, and then we'll see you tomorrow afternoon.