

# The Importance of the Yuthok Nyingthik, or its twelve uncommon and special characteristics

Written in Tibetan by Dr. Nida Chenagtsang

English translation by Ben Joffe

*I prostrate, give offerings, and go for refuge to the King of Medicine, Yuthok Yonten Gonpo!*

The *Yuthok Nyingthik* (*The Heart-Essence Drop of Yuthok*) was transmitted to Yuthok Yönten Gonpo in the twelfth century by the dakini Tsono Palden Treng (“The Chief Goddess Glorious Garland/Rosary”). It was then taught to Yuthok’s heart-son Sumtön Yeshe, who made notes based on Yuthok’s direct oral instruction. After this, Yuthok edited these himself and (it came to) comprise a complete dharma-cycle. It is called in full ‘*The Heart Essence of Yuthok, the Sunlight of Compassion, the Dharma-cycle of the Blessings of the Practice of the Guru that dissolves all Suffering and Darkness*’. These days, the Yuthok Guru sadhana cycle is widely known for its inclusion in the ‘*Nectar of Good Qualities*’ from the Mahayoga cycle of teachings in the *Rinchen Terdzoe* [the ‘*Treasury of Precious Termas*’, the collection of revealed scriptures assembled by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche in the late 19th century]. The entire Dharma-cycle of all of the assorted (magical) ritual procedures, medicine empowerment rites, Creation and Completion stage and Great Perfection practices is also included as part of the original block-prints from Chagpori (‘Iron Mountain’), Drophen Ling [‘The Center for Benefiting Beings’, the traditional Tibetan medical institute established in Lhasa by the regent of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Sangye Gyatso in 1696]. In accordance with the wishes of the great medical professor Gojo Wangdu, and after obtaining authorization from the great and esteemed scholar Troru Tsenam, the Ngakmang Shipjook Khang or Tantric Community Research Institute typed up copies of the Chagpori set for the first time and everyone was able to see it.

In Yuthok’s heart-son Sumton Yeshe’s hymn or words of offering we read:

“This guru sadhana of the definitive meaning of the Highest (Yoga) Tantras is the blessed oral lineage that is not known to all. It is the swift path that bestows Buddhahood in one lifetime, it is unadulterated by the admixture of individual fabrications or mental assumptions.”

The uncommon significance or twelve special characteristics of this oral lineage, of what Sumton Yeshe describes as ‘the guru sadhana which is the definitive meaning of the Highest Yoga Tantras’ will be explained as follows:

1. (It brings) blessings quickly
2. It’s easy to accomplish
3. It’s simple and convenient
4. It’s comprehensive (i.e. it includes all the essential points)
5. It’s connected with medicine
6. Its sequence of practice is clear
7. It’s non-sectarian in its doctrine
8. It’s of an appropriate or convenient length
9. It’s timely
10. It’s (capable of) ‘taming’ (i.e. spiritually/morally/mentally refining) anyone

11. It's a set of instructions without equal
12. It condenses the ultimate meaning and all of the essential points of the Buddha's teachings

The points will be explained a little below.

## Characteristic One – Speedy Blessings

The guru-sadhana confers blessings in even just seven days. As is clearly stated in the King of Medicine Yuthok's song of realization:

“If you are able to have confidence in yourself, if you can pray one-fixedly, if you are able to cast off doubts and second thoughts, if you have hope for a place of refuge in one lifetime, then the two obscurations (i.e. of afflictive emotions and cognition) will immediately be kept in check

Having met me in actuality, in meditative visions or in dreams, I will reveal the supreme path of temporary and ultimate attainment.”

As Kongtrul Yonten Gyatso lays out in his commentary and in his notes for readers on the practice of the outer, inner, and secret aspects of *The Sunlight of Compassion, the Blessings of the Guru Sadhana that Dissolves All Suffering and Darkness* in his *Well-spring of All Good Qualities*:

“As Yuthok taught:

“There's greater merit in praying to me for one year than in praying to other gurus for a whole lifetime; there's more merit in praying to me for a month than in praying to others for a whole year. Rather than praying to others for a whole month, by praying to me for just a day, one minute, or a mere instant, blessings will come quickly. If this isn't true, for having deceived sentient beings, may all the Buddhas and their spiritual offspring of the ten directions smash my skull into pieces like shattered plaster.”

Thus, by virtue of the power of his prayers of aspiration in general the special compassion and blessings of this venerable being are especially exalted for us beings that need to be tamed in these degenerate times, and the blessing-powers of his guru sadhana in particular are extremely fast-acting.

As it says in the sadhana itself:

“For beings in this degenerate age who don't have the blessing that accomplishes simultaneously even as one practices, who are impatient and have little follow-through, and who can't draw out their practice – if individuals with faith practice this sadhana which is my own life-force with without distraction for seven days, I promise that I will hold to these instructions and will reveal myself thoroughly: for the greater practitioner in actual life, for the average one through meditative visions, and for the lesser one through dreams.”

This extremely quick (accomplishment) of blessings is clearly explained in the teachings of the 'Great Roar of the Lion', which are true and without deception:

“If with belief that is free of doubts, greater practitioners commit themselves to practice of the Creation and Completion stage, average practitioners commit themselves to the approaching-accomplishing recitation-

meditation practices, and the lesser practitioners commit themselves to the daily yoga(s) which establish a connection with the guru and lineage, they will spontaneously accomplish the two kinds of benefit (i.e. the benefit for others and for themselves), without any effort at all.”

In the history called the *‘Iron Hook of Virtue’* it says that after he had finished writing the four root tantras of the Tibetan healing system (the *Gyushi*) and had been graced with a direct vision, had ‘seen the face of’ the lords of the three families (i.e. the Sugata, Vajra and Lotus family beings), (Yuthok) stated that:

“For any of you beings who see, hear, remember, or touch me, all of your faith and hostility will go from bliss to bliss.

Because you are inheritors of the lineages of all the Sugatas, regardless of whether you imagine me above the crown of your head or in the centre of your heart, the very instant you do, the blessing-current of all the Buddhas of the ten directions will surely enter (into your being)” etc

Thus, from these extensive prophecies, we can see truly the swiftness of Venerable Yuthok’s blessings.

## Characteristic Two: Ease of Accomplishment

Both the preliminaries and the main practices of the Yuthok Nyinthik are described as easy to accomplish. The method for accomplishing the preliminaries that is taught in the root-text has two aspects: the approaching-recitations of time and the approaching-recitations of signs. Of these, the approaching-recitation of time is the accomplishing of the uncommon preliminaries as well as all of the guru-sadhana within seven whole days or a week. Yuthok himself states that “(you will) attain at the same time as practicing”, and Kongtrul Yonten Gyatso says, regarding establishing a connection and entering into a relationship with the guru and lineage, that one is even allowed to just do the preliminaries over four days and the guru-sadhana over three.

Regarding the guru-sadhana as well, Kongtrul says:

“This is in fact made up of (four parts) – the system of guru yoga of the outer sadhana, the complete Medicine Buddha Creation and Completion stage practices of the inner sadhana, the Assembled Mandala of the Three Roots of the secret sadhana, and the daily practices of the condensed sadhana – each of which is a stand-alone practice.”

From this, we can see how the sadhana is easy to accomplish both in its (complete) four-fold form and as individual stand-alone practices.

## Characteristic Three: Convenience and Simplicity

As Venerable Yuthok says: “If one’s compassion is great, whatever one does will be Dharma.” If one makes loving-kindness one’s primary foundation, any medical undertakings and altruistic actions one might accomplish will also become Dharma. For this reason, the daily preliminaries of the *Yuthok Nyinthik* are those things that are done

compassionately to preserve and benefit others. These can be seen as convenient applications (of the teachings) in the midst of our daily lives. No matter what sadhana one's doing only has a few chants and prayers and so on, and all and any of the sadhana cycles are convenient (to perform).

This wonderful convenience can be seen with Yuthok's teachings on Phowa, or the Yoga of Transference. The preliminary Phowa recitations, the main yogic practices, and the different ritual applications of Phowa for others, are laid out in their entirety on a single page. The seven physical 'magic wheel' exercises that are part of the channel and wind practices of Tummo, or Inner Heat Yoga – the first two of which purify stale wind in the channels, and the remaining five which are for unblocking or untying the five channel-wheels or chakras – are also laid out simply and with great precision. (The various aspects of) the Great Seal or Mahamudra – mental stability, mental agitation, resting in the natural state, and the basic essence – are also extremely condensed and are explained in a practical way.

## Characteristic Four: Comprehensiveness

All of the essential points of the path of Vajrayana are contained within the thirty-five sections of teachings within the single volume of the *Yuthok Nyingthik*. Its practices include the preliminaries (ngondro) that are the root of Mahayana; Guru yoga; Creation Stage practices; Creation Stages practices combined with Completion stage ones; the Approaching-Accomplishing sadhana practices of the Three Roots as well as the practices for resolving obstacles; Completion stage practices; Channel-Wind and Magic Wheel practices; the 'Path of Skilful Means' Karmamudra or physical consort practices; and Mahamudra and Dzogchen practices. Its collected ritual procedures include medicine 'accomplishment' rites or empowerments, protection-circles/charms, fire offering ceremonies, sadhanas for the Dharma-protectors, the root goddesses, sages and so on, practices for calling down pra or special spirits for mirror-divination, the 'signs on the path' practices for the resolving of mental obstacles, and the medical traditions on the resolving of physical obstacles, and so on. In short, it teaches all of the most important elements of Vajrayana in their entirety.

## Characteristic Five: Connection with Medicine

Pretty much all of the fifteen cases of symptoms and treatments of the three humours of rlung, mkhris, and bad (kan) are taught in the context of the gags sel or 'obstacle resolving' practices of the Yuthok Nyingthik, which in their secret aspect involve the resolving of demonic obstacles, in their inner aspect involve the resolving of obstacles of the mind, and in their outer aspect deal with the resolving obstacles of the body. As such, even someone who hasn't studied Tibetan medicine will benefit greatly from this section of the text. In later times, Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorje's volume of extended commentary (on these and the *Yuthok Nyingthik*), which is known as *'The Pith Instructions of the Ten Million (Pearl) Relics'* or just *'The Pearl Relic'* for short, became a pre-eminent part of medical tradition.

## Characteristic Six: Clear Sequence

The stages of practice have been taught clearly and without confusion: first there are the preliminary practices, which purify one's mind-stream. Then there are the Mahayoga practices which generate the antidote for anger, or the Creation Stage traditions. (Then comes) Lung Anuyoga which is the antidote for desire, or the Completion Stage teachings, after which comes the Great Perfection Ati Yoga which is the antidote for ignorance.

At the start, there's the guru-sadhana, *'The Assembly of the Three Roots'*, which has four aspects, the outer, inner, secret, and combined sadhanas. All the main bodies of the teachings on the Six Dharmas of the great saint Naropa are taught in order:

The Inner-Heat channels practice, which includes transmuting one's body into that of a deity in the Bardo, the purifying/training of the channels, the intermediate vital-breath practices, and the seven 'magic wheel' exercises of the channels, the daytime yogas of the fierce breath Tummo, which involve refining one's speech into mantra through the basis of the vajra-recitation and of the Illusory Body; the night-time yogas are those of Dream and Clear Light; the instructions on the Six Bardos, or interim states – the Powa or 'Transference' practice that allows one to practice at the moment of death, along with the 'Buddhahood without meditation' Powa practices of inserting one's consciousness into another body after death, and Self-Liberation into the Dharmata, the ultimate nature of reality, in the Bardo.

Then, as part of the methods for refining the seminal-drops of the mind, the Path of the Great Bliss of the Lower Gates of the Action-Seal (i.e. which involves a physical consort) and the Path of the Complete Liberation of the Upper Gates is taught based on the Great Seal of Mahamudra. Then, finally, the Pointing out Great Perfection practices of the Self-Liberation of Samsara-Nirvana are taught fully and extensively. The ripening empowerments and liberating instructions, methods of cultivation, signs of accomplishment on the path, and the resolving of obstacles and hindrances are taught in their entirety and in clear succession with great precision.

## Characteristic Seven: Non-Sectarian Philosophy

The 'body-offering' or Kusali practice that's taught in the *Yuthok Nyingthik* preliminaries epitomizes the (teachings of the) Pacification and Severance (traditions). The Six Dharmas of Naropa are taught fully and in sequence. Likewise, the Path of the Great Bliss of the Lower Gates method of relying on a physical consort, (which is found in) the Kalachakra, Chakrasamvara, and Guhyasamaja systems of Highest Yoga Tantra, is taught in its entirety. Condensed Mahamudra and Dzogchen are also taught. Given this, whatever tradition or philosophical system one happens to study, the *Yuthok Nyingthik* (remains) authentic.

## Characteristic Eight: Appropriate Length

The empowerments, sadhanas, ritual procedures, guru-practice and so on are all taught skilfully in an unembellished way. As it states in the (prophetic) introduction of the *Yuthok Nyingthik*:

“‘*The Vast and All-pervading Expanse of Great Bliss*’ that ripens those who are fortunate condenses the essential empowerment and contains its whole meaning for those of limited capacity.”

For complex beings, the *Yuthok Nyingthik* includes the extensive empowerment of the Vast and All-Pervading Expanse of Great Bliss, and in its ‘unelaborated’ system there is the condensed empowerment of the essential meaning. It includes the two-stage torma empowerment, the four empowerments of the Highest Yoga Tantras, the authorizations of the sages and goddesses, and the life-entrustment rituals of the medical protector Shanglon. All of these are represented in their entirety. All of the guru-sadhanas are also distinguished according to their level of elaboration, and are taught as either outer or secret pith instructions in perfect accordance with each practitioner’s capacity.

In the outer sadhana, ‘*The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*’, the way in which one meditates on the outer mandala encircled by the four classes of Yuthok goddesses is fairly extensive. If one can’t manage that though, one has the much simpler option of meditating on the guru in one’s heart-center and reciting/visualizing the short mantra there. The inner sadhana, ‘*The Oral Advice, or Pool of Siddhis (Spiritual Attainments)*’ is a combination of Creation and Completion stage practices of the Medicine Buddha. It summarizes all of the essential points, and through it, one meditates on the five guru-families in the five chakras and realizes the meaning of the four glorious (medical) tantras. Even though the visualizations of (the tantric meditational deities) Hayagriva and Vajravarahi found in the secret sadhana, ‘*The Swift Guide for Fortunate Individuals*’ are somewhat extensive, and although it’s taught that one should do 100, 000 approaching-recitations, in the ‘*Esteemed Oral Advice of the Path of Bliss*’ the meditational deities, chakras, and mantra-letters are all taught in a really condensed way. As such, one can see that the sadhanas of the *Yuthok Nyingthik* are extremely moderate in length.

## Characteristic Nine: Timeliness

By virtue of his clairvoyant perception of the future, Yuthok stated the following, which is his vajra-oath:

“For beings in this degenerate age who don’t have the blessing that accomplishes simultaneously even as one practices, who are impatient and have little follow-through, and who can’t draw out their practice – if individuals with faith practice this sadhana which is my own life-force with without distraction for seven days, I promise that I will hold to these instructions and will reveal myself thoroughly: for the greater practitioner in actual life, for the average one through meditative visions, and for the lesser one through dreams.”

Given that most of the Six Dharma/Yoga practices are also done during seven day long retreats, the *Yuthok Nyingthik*’s practices are in accordance with the psychology of today’s super-stressed and busy individual, and even those doctors that are mostly focused on somewhat more superficial activities can put its teachings into practice.

## Characteristic Ten: Works for (or 'Tames') Anyone

The *Yuthok Nyingthik* contains the medical teachings, accomplishing medicine empowerments, and medicine/medical elixir offerings required by doctors; it contains the ritual procedures, the deity propitiation rites, and the protective charms needed by ngakpas; it contains the sadhana practices for acquiring divinatory powers (i.e. calling down pra) needed by astrologers and diviners; it contains the 'magic wheel' exercises (for manipulating) the channels and winds needed by yogis; it includes the technologies of desire and Great Bliss needed by people who are filled with, and are working skilfully with lust; it has the Great Seal of the path of complete liberation needed by the disciplined; it contains the pointing out instructions of the Great Perfection that are absolutely indispensable to Dzogchen practitioners; it possesses the life-enhancing sadhanas needed by the sick; it contains the three rites of pressing down, burning, and casting out that are indispensable to great sorcerers; it has the wrathful mantras that guard the teachings that are truly needed by the protectors of the faith; and it contains the medicine empowerments and fire offerings of the four tantric activities that are needed by everybody. People with discernment can thus grasp that, this guru-sadhana that establishes a connection with the lineage, is a supreme and most precious path for practitioners of whatever doctrine of the Secret Mantra, one that can point out the way for anybody.

## Characteristic Eleven: Unparalleled Instruction

The procedures found in the texts of the *Yuthok Nyingthik* for acquiring divinatory powers or pra spirits that are sought out by doctors of the faith and astrologer-diviners are hard to find anywhere else. The instructions given in the inner guru-sadhana, or *'The Oral Advice, the Pool of Siddhis'* that allow one to realize the meaning of the *Gyushi* or *Four Medical Tantras* through the power of meditation, are also clearly unique and wonderful. Furthermore, as the great Sumton put it:

“This blessed oral lineage that is not known to all, is the swift path that bestows Buddhahood in one lifetime”

If one examines the *Yuthok Nyingthik* corpus carefully, (one will realize) that one isn't likely to see the essential points of meditative cultivation taught so clearly anywhere else. For example, in the context of the subtle channel-refining practices of Tummo that transform one's body into the form of a deity, there is the teaching where, once one has had some meditative experiences from this practice, one does vajra-recitations/breathing for seven days as part of a darkness retreat, so as to transform the winds of speech into mantra. This teaching is an uncommon oral-lineage darkness-retreat practice.

The experiences of non-conceptuality and of bliss-and-clarity that emerge during meditation as signs of achievement on the path of the guru-sadhana and Completion stage practices, the ten signs of attainment of the Completion stage, the special, direct perception of Samsara as the seminal-drops of light, are taught in an extremely clear way and are unlike any other teaching. In the context of the technology or 'path of skilful means' of the Great Bliss of the Lower Gates (i.e. the Karmamudra teachings), the *Yuthok Nyingthik* describes two categories of yogi, 'those who are trained in and those who aren't trained in (rtsa) rlung or the subtle channels-and-winds practices'. The teachings that are given for the latter, for those people who haven't trained in the subtle-wind

practices, are really unique instructions that aren't taught anywhere else. It's clear too that the teachings on achieving the rainbow-body by relying on the path of the Great Bliss of the Lower Gates and a physical consort are really unique as well.

## Characteristic Twelve: The Importance of the Teachings

According to Yuthok's oral-lineage biography, the *Yuthok Nyingthik* was first taught in the pure-land of Tanaduk by the Medicine Buddha. In the interim, it was taught in Oddiyana by the Lotus-Born Master Padmasambhava, where it was requested by Yuthok the Elder, after which it was finally taught to Yuthok Yonten Gonpo the Younger by the wisdom-dakini Palden Trengwa, through which it became known as the profound, pure-vision Dharma-cycle (it is today).

This is how the primary teaching of Sowa Rigpa appeared in history, through Yuthok the Younger's great compassion:

“Resolving the 404 kinds of illness that torment this precious human body, which is made up of the three poisons and five elements can be understood as the single most important dimension of the medical treatments of Sowa Rigpa. For this reason, the generation of pure and authentic bodhicitta in every possible way is taught as the single and foremost remedy. Nothing has been taught as more primary.”

From this we can see that maintaining the welfare of sick beings as one's primary aim is the sign of extensive and authentic bodhicitta, and is the achievement of mastery as a Bodhisattva. From this profound path, Yuthok the Elder achieved in his lifetime the state of an Awareness-Holder or Vidyadhara – he lived until the age of 125, and then along with his consort and all of his holdings, achieved the Great Transference of the rainbow-body. And in the twelfth century, in front of many attendants, Yuthok the Younger passed into the rainbow-body of the Great Transference without any obstacles as well. So there can be no doubt at all of the great significance of the guru-lineage of the *Yuthok Nyingthik*.

If one were to summarize all of the essential points, most of the special features mentioned above can be gleaned from the prophetic introduction to the guru-sadhana. The prophetic introduction from the *Yuthok Nyingthik's* guru-sadhana of the blessings goes as follows:

“How wonderful! The single embodiment of the compassion of the Buddhas of all the times and directions! The glory of the beings of the Land of Snows, the most supreme of the five locations!

The All-Beneficent King of Medicine who cures every ill of the three poisons, who through the indivisible guna is the consummation of the later generations

The inhabitants of the degenerate age will fall and burn with the five poisons, they will indulge in sin and evil behaviours

The gods and demons will be disturbed, and an unimaginable array of diverse kinds of sickness will arise, unnameable in their variety

In order to protect those beings who have no opportunity for happiness, (I shall bestow) from the authoritative commentaries that are the innermost essence of the hundreds and thousands of methods of the Science of Healing Sowa Rigpa, the three aspects of the indispensable quintessence of the oral-lineage –

Of these there are the offerings, sadhanas, and praises to the Medicine Buddha; the outer, inner, secret, and innermost secret sadhanas; and from the '*Sunlight of Compassion which Dissolves all Suffering and Darkness*', there are the cycles of the common Creation and Completion stage practices, and of the pith instructions, and protector practices.

The history of all the initial common (practices) is the '*Iron Hook which leads those to be tamed to certainty*' '*The Vast and All-pervading Expanse of Great Bliss*' that ripens those who are fortunate contains the whole condensed meaning of the essential meaning empowerment for beings of limited capacity

'*The Vajra-knots of the Tantric Vows that are the Vital Life-force of the Secret Mantra*', the inner, outer, secret, and condensed sadhanas of the Creation and Completion Stages

The collected (iconographical) visualization (instructions) of the five kinds of individual sadhanas of the dakinis, the two (parts of) oral advice – these are the root of the secret sadhana.

'*The Supreme and Common Attainments of the Fortunate ones that fulfil all wishes*', the medical tormas supplementary practices from the outer tormas rituals,

Are '*That which Satisfies all kinds of Guests and gives rise to every Attainment*'

The most profound Completion Stage practices which are the vital heart-essence of the Dakinis, are '*The Accomplishing of the desire for True Buddhahood in One Lifetime for those who are Fortunate*'

'*The Pointing Out Practice of the Self-Liberation of Samsara-Nirvana*', the '*Prayer which dissolves all hindrances and resolves all Signs on the Path*', '*Receiving the Blessings of the Pith instructions of the common Creation and Completion Stage practices*', the supplementary fire offering practices '*that conquer the Demon of the Lord of Death*',

'*The Little Text of protective circle practices that extends one's own and others' lives*' – all these are the direct, pith instructions that swiftly accomplish results and protect from fear.

The practices for obtaining divinatory powers, the authorization rites for the deity practices, and the suppressing rituals for unruly spirits, the two ritual diagrams that delight and enact (wrathful) actions for beings,

All the propitiation rites for the protectors, the list of mantras, which are their life-essence, '*the Razor of the Poisons, that roars like thunder*' – all these are the weapons that liberate hindrances and enemies of the faith, which (go along with) the clearly listed collected ritual procedures of the extensive pith instructions.

These are the thirty five sections of teachings from the *Sunlight of Compassion*, which are the unification of the spiritual life-force of the Three Roots. They are the consummation of the life-force practice of the Buddhas of the three times, which resides in the heart of those with fortunate karma.

May the nine categories of oath-bound protectors defend against those masters and disciples who steal the teachings and belittle the kind teacher, who do not uphold the lineage and do not practice, who are unripe or unworthy, who violate their vows and disparage the teachings!"

From this description of the very essence of the thirty-five Dharma sections, we are able to understand every one of the uncommon essential points of the *Yuthok Nyingthik* completely.

*(This commentary) was written in Winterthur, Switzerland on the 3rd of April 2015 by Dr Nida, who received the three-fold empowerment, reading transmission, and oral instruction for this Dharma-cycle and who has absolutely pure, unadulterated faith in it.*

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