

## The Tibetan Five Rites of Yoga

The Five Tibetan Rites is a yoga routine based on a ritual of exercises discovered in the early 1900s by a British army colonel, Colonel Bradford, who was living in a Himalayan monastery. They are practiced around the world and are said to prevent aging. In 1939, Peter Kelder published *The Original Five Tibetan Rites of Rejuvenation*, which helped spread the rites in the western world. Mr. Kelder has since updated the book *The Eye of Revelation - The Original Five Rites of Rejuvenation*, Borderland Sciences Research Foundation, 1989, ISBN 0-945685-04-1.

The rites are comprised of five different movements (with a sixth added for good measure), with each movement performed up to 21 times (Tibetans believe 21 is a perfect, mystical number). It is best to start with 3 repetitions of each exercise and gradually increase the repetitions. The entire routine can be completed in less than 10 minutes.

For thousands of years, medical practitioners have maintained that the body has seven principal energy centers which correspond to the seven endocrine glands, also known as chakras. Chakras are essentially energies within spinning vortexes. As a vortex is increased, the life force becomes stronger and more directed.

Recent medical research has uncovered convincing evidence that the aging process is hormone-regulated. The five ancient Tibetan rites are said to normalize hormonal imbalances in the body, thereby holding the key to lasting youth, health, and vitality. The rites stimulate the energy system in the body, wake up the chakras, and get energy moving from your core outward to your extremities. The theory behind the rites is that your kundalini (spiritual energy) is stored and lies at the base of your spine and that these rites access that energy in a very efficient, fast, and user-friendly way.

An important part of the Tibetan exercises is a conscious synchronization of breathing while performing physical activity. Before beginning the exercises, practice the basic 4 -stage breathing technique ( inhale, hold, exhale, hold empty lungs).

No exercise should be so intense that it makes you feel exhausted. For example, if you are "loosing your breath", it indicates that your body is in an anaerobic (low oxygen) condition and that you should slow down. If you can not talk normally after performing an exercise, you should slow down. When performing the exercises, the main emphasis should be on breath synchronization and fluency, rather than on speed and number of repetitions.

Some call these rites isometric exercises. Although they are helpful in stretching muscles and joints and improving muscle tone, this is not their primary purpose. A slow vortex causes that part of the body to deteriorate, while a faster one cause nervousness, anxiety, and exhaustion. Abnormal vortexes produces abnormal health, deterioration, and old age. The rites normalize the speed of the spinning vortexes by keeping them spinning at the same rate and working in harmony.

Here are the Five Tibetan Rites and how they work on the body (remember to breathe deeply using the diaphragm during the movements).

<p><b>Rite 1</b></p> <p>The first rite is the practice of spinning, which effects the emotional body by speeding up the vortexes. Children naturally spin while playing. As one spins clockwise, Lamas say that negative residues are flung out of the body and the</p>	

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bridge is strengthened between the left and right hemispheres. Spinning stimulates the body's energy system and wakes up the chakras.

**Spinning:** Extend your arms out to the sides and spin (in a clockwise direction). Go as fast as you can without losing control (slow down or stop if you get dizzy). Try to do 21 revolutions.

Follow your right arm so that you spin around to your right. As you begin to spin, focus your vision on a single point straight ahead and continue holding your vision on that point as long as possible. Eventually you have to let it leave your field of vision as your head spins with the body. As this occurs, turn your head around quickly and refocus on your reference point as soon as possible. Using a reference point helps prevent dizziness. Stop spinning as soon as you feel slightly dizzy. Lie on the floor and breathe deeply before you begin the next rite. Raise your hands above your head to stretch the back.

In India, the Maulawiyah, or whirling dervishes, spin unceasingly in a religious frenzy. They always spin clockwise. The older dervishes are virile, strong, and robust, far more so than most men of their age. Lamas say that this excessive spinning may be detrimental as it over-stimulates some of the vortexes, which first accelerates the flow of energy but then blocks it. This building up and tearing down action causes the dervishes to experience a kind of "psychic rush," which they mistake for something spiritual.

Lamas do not carry the whirling to an excess. While the whirling dervishes may spin hundreds of times, the Lamas only do it 21 times, just enough to stimulate the vortexes into action.

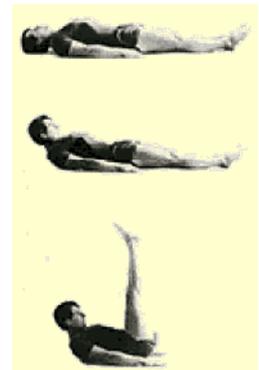


### Rite 2

Rite two is similar to Western abdominal exercises. By raising the head to the chest, you create an extra stimulus to the solar plexus chakra and the conception vessel moving through the center of the trunk.

Use a thick rug or pad to protect your back as you lie on the floor. Lamas perform the rites on what Westerners call a prayer rug, which is about two feet wide and six feet long. The rug is fairly thick and is made of wool and a natural fiber. It is used solely to insulate the body from the cold floor, but since religious significance is attached to everything the Lamas do, it is called a "prayer rug."

**Leg Raises:** First lie flat on the floor, face up. Fully extended your arms along your sides, and place the palms of your hands against the floor, keeping the fingers close together. Then, raise your head off the floor, tucking the chin against the chest. As you do this, lift your legs, knees straight, into a vertical position. If possible, let the legs extend back over the body, toward the head; but do not let the knees bend. Then slowly lower both the head and the legs, knees straight, to the floor. Allow all the muscles to relax, continue breathing in the same rhythm. Breathe in deeply as you lift your legs and breathe out as you



lower your legs.

Upon sitting up, stretch your legs out in front of you. Starting at the thigh area, stroke down the outside of your legs with your hands until you reach your feet. Grab your feet on the outside, pulling your head as close to your straight knees as possible.

**Rite 3**

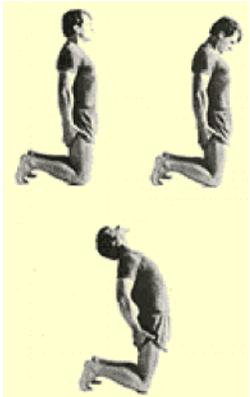
Rite three opens the solar plexus and heart. We begin life by drawing energy in through the umbilical area. Lamas believe we continue the habit of sucking into the solar plexus, which is the seat of the emotional body, without being aware of what we are taking in. All kinds of emotional energies enter in this way. Psychically, we attract negative emotions that relate to those we ourselves are carrying. Thus, fear or anger inside us acts as a magnet to people who are carrying the same kind of energies.

Contraction interferes with the functioning of the solar plexus ganglion that relays messages to the brain relevant to our sense of safety and stimulates the "fight or flight" reflex. This rite provides an extension and a powerful lifting of the entire trunk, which is the opposite of a defensive, contractive stance. By performing this motion, you are reversing the energy flow and raising the energy to the heart area.

**Camel:** This is a classic back bend. Kneel on the floor, knees under your hips, toes flat, with the body erect. Place hands on back of legs just under the buttocks. Tilt the head and neck forward, tucking the chin against the chest. Then, tilt the head and neck backward, arching the spine backward, and look upward. After arching, return to the original position, and repeat 21 up to times. Inhale deeply as you arch the spine, exhale as you return to an erect position. This rite opens up the front of the body and spine.

Establish a rhythmic breathing pattern. Breathe in deeply as you arch the spine. Breathe out as you return to an erect position.

When you are finished with this series of motions, extend your arms at shoulder level straight out in front of you and lean back without arching your back. You will feel this stretching the fascia lata at the outer thighs.



**Rite 4**

This rite causes a pleasant stimulation throughout the sacral area which stirs the meridians and the energies going to and from the groin and down the legs. This rite strengthens and tones the legs and buttocks.

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RITE STRENGTHENS AND TONES THE LEGS AND GLUTES.

**Tabletop:** Sit on floor with your legs extended, body erect, feet flexed and about 12 inches apart, palms flat on floor next to your hips, fingers pointed toward your feet. Tuck the chin forward against the chest. Now, tilt the head backward as far as it will go. At the same time, bend your knees and push up to a "tabletop" position, arms straight. Let your head fall back gently. The trunk of the body will be in a straight line with the upper legs, horizontal to the floor. Then, tense every muscle in the body. Finally, relax your muscles as you return to the original sitting position. Rest before repeating the procedure.

Breathe in as you raise up, hold your breath as you tense the muscles, breathe out completely as you come down. Continue breathing in the same rhythm as long as you rest between repetitions.



### Rite 5

Rite five brings an immediate change in the energy currents of the body. It makes one feel strong and invigorated and brings a happy glow to the face. This is the most powerful rite in terms of speeding up the chakric vortexes.

**Up Dog and Down Dog:** Begin on all fours, toes flexed, palms on floor, weight distributed evenly among your knees, your palms, and the balls of your feet. Throughout this rite, your hands and feet should be kept straight. Start with your arms perpendicular to the floor, and the spine arched downward, so that the body is in a sagging position. Slowly lift your buttocks toward the sky, with a flat back, lowering your head, so your body makes an inverted "V." Tuck your chin to your chest. Pause, then lower your buttocks while pressing your palms into the floor, until your legs are in a plank position (parallel to the ground), moving your chest out and shoulders back. Inhale on your way up; exhale on your way down. Repeat, up to 21 times. In the rite, your body is moving in concert, moving energy up the spine.

Follow the deep breathing pattern used in the previous rites. Breathe in deeply as you raise the body, breathe out fully as you lower it.



### Rite 6

Tibetans say that this special sixth rite will make you into a super-being.

**Deep Breathing:** Stand comfortably and exhale as you bend from the waist, placing your hands on your knees. Expel the last bit of air from your lungs and without taking in new breath, return to an erect position. Place your hands on your hips, with fingers to the front and press as hard as you can while sucking in the abdomen. This will raise your shoulders and chest. While holding in the abdomen, also squeeze the pubococcygeal muscle up to emphasize the upward thrust. Hold this position and bring your closed eyeballs to the point between the eyebrows so that all this lower chakric energy will rise up to the highest centers. When you must take a breath, breathe in through your nose and then exhale

through the mouth as you drop your arms down to your sides to relax. Take in several normal breaths through the nose and mouth before beginning again.

## OTHER TIBETAN EXERCISES

### Simple Spine Stretch

This exercise facilitates energy throughout spinal column and increases flexibility of neck, which brings you into a deep state of relaxation and facilitate meditation.

Sit cross-legged, place your palms down on your knees and slowly turn your head to gaze over one shoulder. As you do this you will feel the pleasant stretching and twisting of your spine. Breath in as you turn your neck and head over the shoulder and exhale while returning to the center. Repeat in the other direction and continue several times. Create an even rhythm with your breathing and movement.

To strengthen digestion and bring balance and harmony to the body while increasing vitality:

Sit cross-legged and straight-backed as comfortably as you can and place hands on knees with fists clenched and palms up. This keeps the energy circulating in the body, rather than dispersing it. Run your tongue from the left corner of your mouth, across the gums, and up around the roof to draw a circular path. This is a counter-clockwise motion. Repeat this 36 times until your mouth is full of saliva. Swallow the saliva in three parts, which represent heaven, earth and man. It should be a vigorous swallow with the intent to send it down into the abdomen. Listen for the sound of the saliva in the belly. Repeat two to three times.

### The Turtle

The turtle stimulates all the nerves bringing energy in and out of the brain while relaxing and opening the neck area. The neck is vital as a passageway of the central nervous system and thus is the key to our entire body. All the yang meridians converge at the base of the neck behind the head, which makes it a powerful place of protection to the body. Esoterically, the neck is the place where we hold our will. If we make the neck more fluid and flexible, we may change the rigid perspectives that causes us so much difficulty in life. The turtle exercise opens the throat area and stretches the spine while strengthening and dissolving tiredness and stiffness of the neck and shoulder muscles. It is important to do this exercise slowly in the rhythm you imagine a turtle would use.

Inhale as you touch your chin to your chest. Feel the stretch on the back of your neck and let your shoulders relax downward. Now, bring your shoulders up toward your ears like a turtle pulling back into its shell while you begin to exhale slowly as you tilt your head back to rest on the back of your neck. Repeat at least twelve times. The turtle should be practiced in concert with two other motions, which greatly influence the endocrine glands and the chakras.

**FIRST MOTION:** As you lift your neck in exhalation, squeeze your anal sphincter as if stopping the flow of urine. This is the action of the all-important pubococcygeal muscles that strengthen the pelvic floor. Hold the pubococcygeal muscle tight until you again bring the chin down during inhalation. Relax while you inhale. As you become proficient at combining these internal and external motions, you can hold the pubococcygeal muscle through one or two whole cycles.

**SECOND MOTION:** Rub the breasts for women and the lower abdomen for men, in unison with the rest of the exercise. This seems very complicated at first and demands some effort to master. Men: place both hands

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exercise. This seems very complicated at first and demands some effort to master. Men: place both hands, fingers downward, over your lower abdomen just above the pubic bone. As you execute the turtle, rub both hands in a clockwise motion from the pubic bone to the right, up to the belly button, and down your left side back to the pubis. Do this until you feel heat in the lower abdominal area. Women: place your hands with the fingers facing down towards the pelvic bone, between your breasts. Starting with the fingers between the nipples, rub up and outward to each side of the breasts, down around and up through to the starting position, having traced all the way around the breast. Do this about three times as fast as you do the rest of the turtle moves, about thirty-six times to the twelve motions of the turtle. Once you have arrived at perfect hormonal and physical balance, you will no longer need to do the rubbing part of the exercise. DO NOT do this exercise during menstruation because at that time you will be wanting the energy to flow out of the body, not up. It is very common for women who practice this exercise daily to stop menstruating. This fact should give you a clue about how powerful these internal exercises are in terms of regulating the flows of bodily energies. After completing the Turtle, your body will be relaxed and balanced. This is a good starting point for meditation, as your focus and consciousness will be deep within.