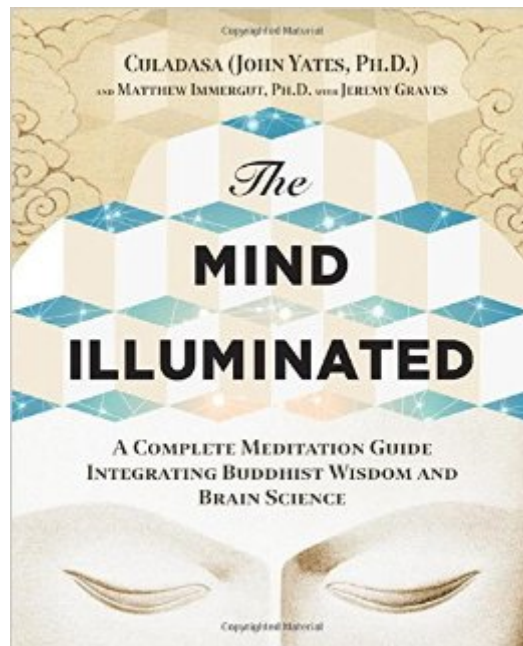


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# The Mind Illuminated: A Complete Meditation Guide Integrating Buddhist Wisdom And Brain Science



## Synopsis

Providing step-by-step guidance for every stage of the meditation path, this uniquely comprehensive guide for a Western audience combines the wisdom from the teachings of the Buddha with the latest research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Clear and friendly, this in-depth practice manual builds on the nine-stage model of meditation originally articulated by the ancient Indian sage Asanga, crystallizing the entire meditative journey into 10 clearly-defined stages. The book also introduces a new and fascinating model of how the mind works, and uses illustrations and charts to help the reader work through each stage. This manual is an essential read for the beginner to the seasoned veteran of meditation and can be read from front to back, or used as a reference guide, choosing chapters as needed based on the current state of the reader's practice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have never met Culadasa or anyone associated with him. I have practiced meditation for at least several years in each of seven different traditions, including every major wing of Buddhism except Tibetan. "The Mind Illuminated" is the most brilliant book about meditation ever written, in any language, in any century. There is absolutely no Asian religion stuff, although crucial traditional meditation technical terms are referenced and explained when helpful. Straight up meditation, western style, everything carefully and consistently explained in psychological terms that are only a little more sophisticated than everyday English useage. It is a big book because of such detailed explanations, not because it is complex or digressive. Nice bite size chapters, beautifully organized. The choice of Bhavanakrama as the structure for his discourse is technically marvelous. Regular

meditation practice is a huge life commitment of your time that you must weigh carefully, so this book is also most suitable for those thinking of beginning practice. If I had read this book forty-five years ago, I would never have bothered with ten trips to India, Nepal, and Thailand. Some years ago in retirement I considered that I was fully cooked with meditation, but with this book I am inspired to begin again, and now I am an old hermit having a blast. I have shelves of books on this topic, but this one is the best. I have practiced my way through 60% of the book, and I am still amazed at its conciseness and solutions to major technical problems identified in traditional texts, particularly the Lankavatara Sutra. Everyone until now learns meditation by going to a meditation retreat for that purpose. This is the first satisfactory book that can replace retreats for learning meditation. Not because of the 'Stage' chapters that tell you what to do in meditation, but because of the 'Interlude' chapters that explain what is happening in the mind at each stage. The explanatory line drawings are very clever and helpful. Culadasa's professional experience as a neuroscientist drives away all the mystery and mysticism usually associated with meditation, and you feel more in personal control of your experience. Few who have gone to meditation retreats repeat the experience. Most 'meditation retreats' have a serious religious and cultic agenda that is a turnoff for many. Mind control and recruitment is always an issue, as well as group hypnosis, although actively denied. I have attended 20 retreats of a week or longer. Secondly, I warn you of what the retreats do not: Progress in meditation depends on your unwinding and private review of your inventory of personal memories while sitting in meditation. Such unplanned memory events recur throughout your practice until you successfully integrate each presented memory. Next time, it is usually a different memory. However, beginning meditators are surprised at the clarity and emotional impact of these memories, and these memories are most frequent when the practice first gains traction. Meditation is par excellence self-therapy, but definitely not for those who wish to avoid recalling unpleasant past experiences. If you get into a place that troubles you, you can always contact the people at the author's website.

The subtitle here, *The Mind Illuminated: A Complete Meditation Guide*, understates this astonishing book's comprehensiveness and profundity by half. This is a 475 page long magnum opus that's exponentially more useful than all of the previous guides to meditation I've read (and I've read plenty, having been involved in Buddhist study and practice since the early 1970's). For a newcomer to meditation this book is the best possible introduction as well as a lifelong companion. For someone with an established practice, be it in the Theravadin, Tibetan or Zen tradition (or for that matter secular mindfulness or non-Buddhist contemplative approaches) *The Mind Illuminated* is a

treasure trove of encouragement and clarification of key points in practice that no other book I'm aware of addresses. It comes as close as any book possibly can to having not just a teacher but a living meditation master with personal experience of every step of the path into your home. While grounded in decades of obviously very serious and intensive practice and study of Buddhism this book uses the absolute minimum number of foreign words and defines them precisely. Someone with a purely secular interest in meditation will have no problem with the content, while devoted adherents of particular contemplative paths will feel supported. The tone throughout is kind, warm, clear and encouraging. Anyone who's practiced meditation for years knows that motivation for practice often waxes and wanes, and that it's all-too-easy to run into dead ends that seem impossible to overcome, to stagnate in one's practice, or to stop sitting altogether out of frustration or fear. Culadasa anticipates all of this, starting with a chapter titled "Establishing a Practice" that in and of itself is worth the price of the book, and following up with dozens of pith instructions that seem to address even the subtlest mistakes in practice, obviously born from a combination of deep realization and extensive experience coaching meditators ranging from beginner to very advanced. My only regret about this book is that it wasn't published decades ago!

This book is the best instruction book on buddhistic meditation I have read since Daniel Ingram's 'mastering the core teachings of the buddha'. However, Culadasa's book lacks the controversy surrounding the latter one. His book does not really deal with Buddhist orthodoxy but is a very precise and motivating manual how to meditate and how to achieve the higher meditation states that have been described over and over again in the oldest Buddhist literature (Pali canon and Visuddhimagga). These achievements are well-known within the Theravada literature and modern practice and can be achieved by proper practice (never withstanding the popular new wave/zen light misconception that the practice doesn't really matter and that there is nothing to be accomplished). I have never read a better and to-the-point manual how to start a dedicated meditation practice and how to actually do any relevant meditation exercise in a way that it leads to results. The book is extremely good in combining classical meditation instructions with the right mind set for motivation and positive reinforcement of the practice. If one has a decent background in some meditation discipline and some knowledge of the maps of what might happen with dedicated practice, then this book is in my opinion the only book one needs, together with actually doing the practice, to really get started and get a long way to achieve certain states and insights that can result from meditation. This is the one and only Dharma book you want to take to an inhabited island for a long time.

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