

River of Memory: Dharma Chronicles

Lama Jampa Thaye

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River of Memory is the memoir of Lama Jampa Thaye, a British meditation master and scholar who helped to establish numerous Buddhist centers around the world. It covers the spread of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism through the West through his travels, learning, and teachings.

Lama Jampa Thaye was raised Catholic, but joined a Buddhist society in 1972. This began his lifelong dharma practice, which was formalized in a ceremony known as refuge in 1973. His detailed account of his spiritual education also covers the teachings he passed on to others, alongside a thoughtful rumination on where the practice of Buddhism might be headed in the West.

River of Memory fits into the tradition of practitioners honoring their teachers and documenting the instructions they received; it preserves the lineage of dharma transmission through the generations well. "The reality to which dharma points is timeless," Lama Jampa Thaye writes. "The young people who will make the dharma their own in the future will be the ones who know that. They won't want a watered-down, 'secular' or 'modern' Buddhism; they will want the power that will transform their lives."

Indeed, Lama Jampa Thaye argues that modern practitioners need to honor the traditions of the practice, rather than separating techniques such as meditation from the spiritual aspects of dharma. He blames the use of Buddhist teachings as a self-help practice on "cultists and spiritual entrepreneurs" who are more interested in marketing themselves than they are in committing to their own spiritual practice or those of their followers.

While not all have access to travel, great teachers, and lengthy retreats, the memories and reflections contained in *River of Memory* illuminate means of spiritual exploration for the inspiration of others.

SARAH WHITE (July / August 2021)

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