



# The Jewel Tree of Tibet: The Enlightenment Engine of Tibetan Buddhism

By Robert Thurman

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## The Jewel Tree of Tibet: The Enlightenment Engine of Tibetan Buddhism

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Few teachers in the West possess both the spiritual training and the scholarship to lead us along the path to enlightenment. Robert Thurman is one such teacher.

Now, in his first experiential course on the essentials of Tibetan Buddhism, adapted and expanded from a popular retreat he led, Thurman -- the first Westerner ordained by His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself -- shares the centuries-old wisdom of a highly valued method used by the great Tibetan masters. Using a revered, once-secret text of a seventeenth-century Tibetan master, along with a thorough explanation for contemporary Westerners, *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* immerses you fully in the mysteries of Tibetan spiritual wisdom. A retreat in book form as well as a spiritual and philosophical teaching, it offers a practical system of understanding yourself and the world, of developing your learning and thought processes, and of gaining deep, transforming insight.

Tibetans think of their cherished tradition of Buddhism as a "wish-fulfilling jewel tree" for its power to generate bliss and enlightenment within all who absorb its teachings. Happiness, in fact, is the true goal of Tibetan spirituality, and the wish-fulfilling jewel tree will put you on the road to that reachable goal. This beautiful jewel-tree imagery, which acts like a mandala or a yoga pose to focus your attention on truths larger than yourself, will help you break through worn-out ideas and habits, strengthen positive abilities, develop more energy and creativity, and change your life -- and future -- for the better. As Thurman writes, "Readers learn to cultivate the sensitivity and appreciation to love more fully, feel compassion more intensely, and become a fountain of cheerfulness for all they meet and know."

Because the path to enlightenment requires more than sitting in meditation, *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* offers a rich, intellectually riveting course with many specific spiritual practices, including: eleven steps to create the spirit of enlightenment, here and now; the truths and stories of the ancient Indian and Tibetan sages; and guided meditations to experience the blessings of the wish-fulfilling jewel tree. You can do these practices with others or on your own, while living your daily life. And as you travel this road to deeper self-realization, self-understanding, and infectious happiness, you will also learn how the principles of Tibetan Tantra can open the doors to "infinite compassion and continuity," and how to discover

states of consciousness that transcend even death.

One of the most explicit teachings of the steps to the path of enlightenment available, explained by a skilled Western teacher, *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* will enable you to honor the full subtlety and hidden depths of the Tibetan Buddhist path and realize at last its deeper mysteries and rewards -- for yourself and others.

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### Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Robert Thurman is probably best known for his translation of the sacred text *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, although he has published many works of both translation and exploration of Tibetan Buddhism. *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* is a significant addition to Thurman's contribution to this field of spiritual scholarship. His deep knowledge and devotion are in evidence on every page. His style is straightforward and inviting. He also provides a short introduction to the history of Buddhism which is as clear and straightforward as possible for what can be an exceptionally complex and entangled topic.

In short, Thurman writes for real people with an interest in (perhaps longing for) a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. In addition to a clear and inviting style and providing the reader with an accessible understanding of important spiritual matters, this book is exceptionally openhanded and openhearted. While Thurman wants us to share the dharma of the Jewel Tree he also wants the reader to know that they are already on their path- no matter what their faith or non-faith, political beliefs, no matter what manner of thinking may appear to divide, separate, or individualize us: Thurman presents a view of the self in which we can see that it is possible to overcome these limitations and alienations and to see ourselves as inhabiting common ground with the suffering, the joy, and the seeking of others. His bias is ecumenical in the best and most generous sense of the word.

This is an excellent book for the person just awakening to their spiritual path and for the seeker of many years.--*Julian Riepe*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Based on Thurman's six-lesson retreat on Tibetan Buddhism, this accessible book guides readers through the process of enlightenment. Throughout, Thurman (*Inner Revolutions*) draws from the Fourth Panchen Lama's text *Mentor Devotion* to ground his teachings, a surprising choice given that it's an advanced dharma that he concedes is "semiesoteric." Thurman successfully spins the text's interpretation so that it becomes more transparent to a Western audience. He describes Buddhist karma, for example, as "Darwinian evolution with an individual twist," and also cautions readers not to adopt some blissed-out, mind-emptying idea of Buddhism just because they imagine that it's Eastern and therefore superior. "When we seek to enter the path of enlightenment, we have to engage with society." On the other hand, he notes, we also need to embrace ascetics like monks and nuns, and invest generously in their work toward liberation. The book has some truly beautiful moments, as when Thurman encourages readers to meditate on the loving-kindness of their mothers (even the bad mothers, he says, made sacrifices to keep their children alive and fed), or when he offers 11 steps to compassion, love and happiness. Although there are a few hiccups - moments when it becomes obvious that the "root text" of *Mentor Devotion* is a tricky one indeed - this is a fine tool on the road to enlightenment.

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#### From [Booklist](#)

Thurman has been a key figure in bringing Buddhist thought to Western culture as a translator of Tibetan texts, a writer, and a teacher. In his newest treatise, he adapts his popular audio "retreat" series, *Sounds True* (2001), to book form. Here, Thurman presents the Tibetan jewel tree as a powerful image that can help individuals see the infinity of life and the interconnectedness of all things. Seeking enlightenment is the process of inward revolution, which should, eventually, make us realize that we must share our discoveries,

and work toward the happiness of all beings. Clearly, this is Thurman's own life mission, which he accomplishes by making his books accessible to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike through clarity of expression and economy of ideas. Although more useful as a counterpart to the audiotapes than on its own, *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* offers readers a great deal of material that they can incorporate into their daily lives, include in meditative practice, or simply think deeply about, which has its own rewards. *Janet St. John*  
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