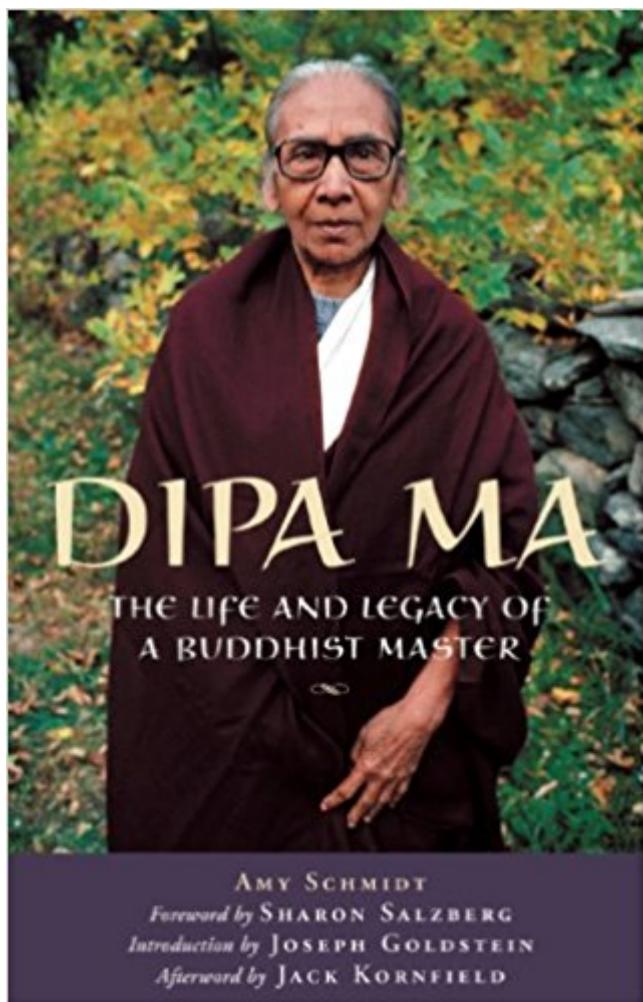


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Dipa Ma: The Life And Legacy Of A Buddhist Master



Synopsis

This biography of one of the few women in her generation to devote herself entirely to the pursuit of meditation also includes Dipa Ma's spiritual teachings, which have made her a major figure in contemporary Buddhism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Schmidt, a resident teacher at Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Mass., offers a study of the life and teachings of Nani Bala Barua—â•the Indian saint more commonly known by her affectionate nickname, Dipa Ma (1911—â•œ1989). Schmidt begins by offering a swift but engaging outline of Dipa Ma's life, including her marriage at age 12, her struggle as a single mother to practice meditation, her mastery of such "supernatural powers" as mind reading and time travel and her eventual establishment in a tiny Calcutta apartment as a gentle, playful and world-renowned teacher of mindfulness—â•indeed, Dipa Ma deeply influenced such American Buddhist heavyweights as Sharon Salzberg and Jack Kornfield, who provide the foreword and afterward, respectively. Schmidt then highlights a number of Dipa Ma's teachings, such as "the mind is all stories

"An inspiring and beautiful book about one of our most beloved elders, a modern Buddhist saint."

—â•Jack Kornfield, author, *A Path with Heart*"Reading these reflections of Dipa Ma rouses the faith that being in her presence always did." —â•Sylvia Boorstein, author, *It's Easier Than You*

Think "This is a real treasure. Dipa Ma comes through as such a gentle, disarming, fierce, sweet presence. She is completely irresistible." — Toinette Lippe, author, *Nothing Left Over*

Dipa Ma's life story was a journey of losing her mother at a young age, multiple child loss, late age childbearing, widowhood, single parenting, etc etc... Enough loss & suffering to incorporate all of our own and honor its shameless potential. Dipa Ma confirms how richly transformative such suffering can prove to be once one commits to vipassana practice. This is a very emotionally embodied female householder version of an enlightenment journey, far removed from the repressingly tidy versions of male monastic legends and the even tidier examples of virgin saints. All this, and - she was the teacher of pivotal and now famous American vipassana senior teachers: Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzburg, to name a few. And nobody's heard of Dipa Ma, but everybody's heard of them! While that is the ultimate success of teaching (to be surpassed by one's students), Dipa Ma's role in the east-west vipassana lineage needs to known about for a variety of reasons. This book tells the biography through factual research along with a collection of teaching quotes by Dipa Ma from a variety of interviews as well as student anecdotes. Very easy to read and hard to put down! The last part of the book shares Dipa Ma's Metta meditations, progressing from basic beginner to more extensive ones - very cool. Sometimes she would tell a beginner to just practice Metta for months until they were capable of other practices. Those with self-deprecation/self-acceptance karma benefit greatly from Dipa Ma's insightful guidance. She taught as far outside the box of the monastic-based tradition as from deep within it, because that's what a yogini does.

This is the story of how one sick, poor tiny Bengali woman became a spiritual giant whose influence, through those who met and studied under her, has spread around the world. It is a most unlikely story, for Dipa Ma seems to come almost out of nowhere. Her life, like so many people living in such dire conditions, consisted of a series of tragedies--infertility (this in a terribly patriarchal society where children made the woman), the deaths of several children she bore, the death of her husband, poverty, and then declining health. It looked as if this little beetle of a woman would see an early grave. The only thing going for her was an intense aspiration to practice meditation. But even there she was stymied for decades by her husband and/or her health, until finally the first was gone and the second going. What did she have to lose? She crawled into the meditation center, but once she got going not even a dog attack (which put her in the hospital to get rabies shots) could stop her. Her concentration went off the chart, and by the end of her first retreat she attained stream

entry (sotapatti). Her health did an about face, and higher paths soon followed. Dipa Ma developed at an unprecedented speed, as, later, her daughter and son did. (Clearly genetics plays a role.) Under Anagarika Munindra's guidance she developed an extensive repertoire of powers (siddhis), exhibited shaktipat, an unusual facility for jhanas and a great power of loving-kindness. Soon students--housewives, school kids, even monks--began coming to her tiny one bedroom apartment in Calcutta (the conditions she lived in never really improved) for teaching and guidance, and her fame spread. Through Munindra Westerners began beating a path to her door, among them such luminaries as Jack Engler, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg and Jack Kornfield. The rest, as they say, is history. The book is a brief portrait of this amazing woman. Its biographical section is actually quite scant. There are not a lot of details, no foot or endnotes, but many testimonials. Famous and unfamous alike attest to the ways this woman impressed and changed them, and many of these accounts are quite moving. Clearly she was a prodigy, a saint by any measure. Wonderful things really do come in small packages.

This book was quite enjoyable to read, I could imagine some vivid images of Dipa Ma teaching and hugging and stroking the hair of her students. All the stories about Dipa Ma from so many great teachers, students, friends and family pieced together a well rounded tale, just full of helpful teachings. After reading this, I still hear Dipa Ma's voice in my head telling me to squeeze in another late night practice...to make sure I practice as much as I can, every day. Very inspirational and HIGHLY recommended to all Dharma students and meditation practitioners. May all beings everywhere benefit from these teachings.

This book does not say everything but it is certainly a valuable introduction to the life and legacy of one of the greatest masters who helped Buddhism being established in the western world. I personally discovered Dipa Ma through this book and definitely acquired the feeling that with her everything was for real. She was a frail short woman with an extraordinary power: the power of love when set free out of the usual boundaries of our minds. A true master.

In this book about Dipa Ma I found very interesting full of great wisdom her grace will live on in millions of people her special way of teaching with great respect for all life will live on in the hearts of many to show them the way home gratitude to all who contributed namaste

Dipa Ma was a shining light for everyone fortunate enough to know her, either in person or through

stories about her life. Those people who think the Buddhist path is limited to a few, or is "slower" than other paths, will be astonished as each chapter unfolds and reveals Dipa Ma's accomplishments and huge heart. She was a master of not just Buddhist, but also Vedic higher states and siddhis (powers), and most importantly, she taught many others how to gain enlightenment.

She had inspired a lot of those who were not born Buddhists to believe in Buddha's teachings. "Dipa Ma" researched, composed and written by Ms. Amy Schmidt was admirable. Yet I wish there would be some accounts of how she managed to attain such insight against so many odds in her life. I wish I could know the details of the path that she had travelled.

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