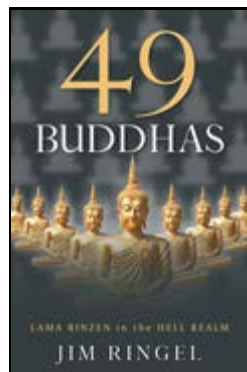


THE US Review of Books



49 Buddhas: Lama Rinzen in the Hell Realm

by [Jim Ringel](#)

Black Bee Publishing

reviewed by Brittany Smith

"Your Buddha says life is empty. Do you know what he means by that? He means just because you go looking for something, it doesn't mean it's there."

The dorje—it's the "Most Sacred of Objects" that Lama Rinzen Naraka must find to bring enlightenment to all. It has escaped him for many lifetimes and is indeed the reason he has been trapped in the Hell Realm for so long. Upon awakening from meditation, Lama Rinzen Naraka finds himself in an apartment in Denver on Colfax Avenue. In this life, he has been reincarnated as a detective and has been tasked with finding the killer of one of the most prominent insurance men in the city, Sonny Heller. Believing that finding Heller's killer will also lead him to what he seeks, he sets out to explore the snow-laden streets of Denver. On his quest for the dorje, Lama Rinzen Naraka meets many characters, some who are believers and are certain of its presence in Denver, and others who insist it doesn't even exist. Of the many individuals that Lama Rinzen Naraka meets in this lifetime, who can be trusted?

Throughout this first installment in the Lama Rinzen Naraka mystery series, the author presents a unique perspective of Western culture—one not from the perspective of an insider but from the eyes of a dutifully faithful Buddhist outsider who has sworn himself to observation alone and with no desire to conform to Western norms. Through Lama Rinzen Naraka's foreign eyes, Ringel offers a unique point of view of the relations between the locals and the many Asian immigrants that have settled in the area, creating a tense political atmosphere that is just as frigid as the Denver streets the lama travels on his journey. With enriching and thought-provoking lessons and deeply reflective prose, Ringel keeps reader's fingers on Lama Rinzen Naraka's pulse at every twist as he races to recover the lost dorje—in a hell that he himself is lost in—before his time runs out.

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