



Inner Revolution

Robert A.F. Thurman , Dalai Lama XIV (Foreword by)

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The New York Times calls him "America's number one Buddhist." He is the co-founder of Tibet House New York, was the first American Tibetan Buddhist monk, and has shared a thirty-five-year friendship with the Dalai Lama. Now, **Robert Thurman** presents his first completely original book, an introduction to Buddhism and "an inspiring guide to incorporating Buddhist wisdom into daily life" (USA Today). Written with insight, enthusiasm, and impeccable scholarship, **Inner Revolution** is not only a national bestseller and practical primer on one of the world's most fascinating traditions, but it is also a wide-ranging look at the course of our civilization--and how we can alter it for the better. "Part spiritual memoir, part philosophical treatise and part religious history, Thurman's book is a passionate declaration of the possibilities of renewing the world" (Publishers Weekly, starred review).

Inner Revolution Details

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From Reader Review Inner Revolution for online ebook

Katrin says

So far this book is giving a concise description of the essence of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. I like it.

Christopher Rahilly says

I enjoy all of Robert Thurman's books. He has a great style that make Buddhism accessible to everyone. If you have an interest in reading a life changing book, this would be at the top of the list in my mind.

Martine says

Robert Thurman, professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies, presents his insights and clear explanations regarding enlightenment and serving others.

Wilma Rebstock says

This is a wonderful and wise book. Although I have read bits of it over a long period of time, I can always go back to it and feel the material is fresh and I wonder that I don't seem to realize it in a more sustained manner. I expect to reread it multiple times.

Suzanne Rioux says

A journey through the early histories of India and Tibet and the beginnings of Buddhism as a philosophy and way of life. Thurman juxtaposes in later historical epochs the "cool" (read transformation from the interior of people and societies) revolution of Buddhism in Tibet and the "hot" (read violent politically and socially) revolutions of the nation-building centuries in the West. His narrative journey through the historical underpinnings of Buddhism ends with his prescriptions for the founding of a new "politics of enlightenment".

Chad says

Very good book to read for a time when I was feeling a little lost.

Daniel Gargallo says

THIS BOOK IS WHY WE NEED STEPHEN BATCHELOR.

What starts off as a well-constructed book chronicling the need and nature of Buddhism (and the interesting story of Robert Thurman) gradually devolves as Thurman articulates the history of Buddhism as public policy. He makes some good points. He makes some compelling arguments. But unfortunately, his staunch mahayana tendency, religiosity, and obsession with an idealization of Tibetan people as spiritually more evolved human beings are all nails on a chalkboard.

By 2017 it is possible for anybody with the time to access primary sources and Pali instructional material. It is possible for us to access the writings of many different schools of Buddhism from across the world and read century-old arguments. It is possible for us to educate ourselves and challenge and even doubt humans with institutional religious authority. In writing this book and calling for the cool, inner revolution Thurman has an interesting and attractive platform for anybody who likes what the Buddha was all about. The 4 Noble Truths and 8 Fold Path were uttered by a human being for the benefit of human beings, and whether or not he was the reincarnation of a deity or the cosmos is the tapestry of myth is irrelevant--we will all die or suffer and the prescription for our suffering lies in understanding the causation and cessation of suffering.

I think it's great that the Dalai Lama promotes Buddhism. I think it's wonderful that Buddhism was such a focus of Tibetan policy before Mao took over. But Thurman's argument about why the religiosity has anything to do with any individual's ability to follow the Eight Fold Path stems from his fundamental belief that the ONLY people capable of internalizing Buddhism are people in the religious universities of the Dalai Lama's school of Buddhism. It chauvinistically disregards Theravada Buddhism, Zen, and other schools of Buddhism while degrading nations (like Japan) as being spiritually inferior because of policies that attempted to separate the influence of monasticism from public life (Nobunaga). At one point of his book he claims that there was a day in the 20th century when ALL Tibetans experienced enlightenment and confidently asserts that Tibet was a total utopia thanks to the perfect policy brain of the Tibetan religious institutions.

In other words, the weakness of this book is that it centers the institutions of religious Buddhism at the heart of inner enlightenment inconsistently with the thesis of the book calling for individuals to pursue enlightenment. As the book progresses, his Tibet-centrism comes out unabashedly and incoherently transforms into a strange pseudo-libertarian political manifesto calling for consensual tax systems and for the United States to cut its military budget and dedicate the money to build "enlightened" democracies on the Tibetan model.

This book ironically illustrates the counter-productivity of institutional religious control and has shown me why Stephen Batchelor's writing on Buddhism Without Beliefs is so important. I can't help but feel that if Thurman edited out the Tibetan nationalism and the religiosity this would be a phenomenal book.

Jenny Prince says

Apparently August is "Happiness Month" at the Multnomah County Library, and this is just the book for the job. I guess.

I'm really not at all sure about this book. Buddhism, though more appealing than most religions (Zen Buddhism in particular, which devotes more interest in personal experience than scripture-reading), still possesses some yet-unnamed quality that quickly turns me off. Of course, it could just be the author. A close friend of the Dalai Lama, Robert Thurman was the first westerner to be ordained a Buddhist monk, and he renounced his monkhood only a short while later after returning to the Americas. He seems... opinionated. A little angry, even, and certainly decided about what's good for other people.

I haven't finished it, and I don't know if I will. This may just be the book for you, so don't let my review, undoubtedly jaded by any number of factors, deter you from reading it yourself. The subject matter is close to my heart, so I don't want to interfere with anyone else's "Inner Revolution."

Jamie says

Reading Robert Thurman induces me to smile...I think he'd be fun to play frisbee with. He never returns my phone calls though.

Flyegirl says

Professor Thurman, is my go to Author on all Tibetan Buddhism information, and this is by far one of my favorite book by the good professor. It took me more than one read to begin to comprehend the practice that the Professor shares in this book, and I do believe that it will take the rest of my natural life to practice and create the Inner Revolution I most create to be free from all attachments
I remember learning of Adam Yauch death and thinking well there's one being who has certainly created and lved a tru Inneattachnebr Revolution.

Bish Denham says

If you are interested in a brief history of Buddhism, this is a good place to start. It dragged a bit towards the end, but generally, was informative.

Peter says

at the end of page 92 I discover that the next page is 103! Back to the library I go!
so, with a short hiatus for the wonderful (it really is fantastic) la public library to deliver an undamaged copy, i read through to the end and it's a fine book, by a fine thinker.
interesting to be able to look back at the author's 1998 writing with the hindsight of occupy wall street movement and other dramatic changes since then.
there's an appendix, "some contemporary ideas for an actual political platform based on enlightenment principles" which is indeed, a platform with which i heartily agree.
mr. thurman writes in more detail than i've read about global history and the interesting contemporaneousness of asian, european and african periods of relative enlightenment.
and, he gives great detailed histories of several Indian and Tibetan periods. His conclusion is that Tibet is the

only example of a culture/society that has achieved widespread and mainstream achievement of enlightenment, albeit to a limited extent. Hence, the significance of everything Tibetan.

Jess says

My Buddhism professor! He's awesome!

Janet says

This was a truly inspirational book with relevant information for everyday

Benji says

A few years ago, I'd have soaked up this book up, swallowed it whole. But now? I find myself arguing with it and thinking its theories to be too sacarine and simplistic. To me, the thesis seems to be, "treat your life as if its a movie you're watching about somebody else" and if you can do that, then you'll be free of your own worst enemy, yourself, and all the potential unhappiness in the life that you're watching.

Also, I'm one third in without a great deal much gained by this. But, I'll keep going -- this is my first Ramadan and so this is a good thing even if it plunges me into despair and a sort of existential crisis. Unlike before, I realize now that Buddhism isn't easy, because it's not inherently at-ease with the world as it once used to seem. I get upset with it, reading just 7 pages at a time, then I go to Murakami and he seems to confront these same issues, often finding the same results, but in a compelling way because unlike this writer, he doesnt seem to view Buddhism's answers to suffering as inherently correct and complete, and even pinpoints the more painful parts about letting go and become more of a compassionate spectator. Likewise, for me, it's more a question of, is suffering even something that I should be trying to avoid, lessen, or remove from my life? I used to value simplicity, but there's a thing as too much of it. So now, I'd say that I think NO. Also, if you view death as a very firm end to everything, then it seems OK and acceptable to grasp at the ephemeral things life has, even while being aware of their ephemerity. To reject it all because of the ephemeral and transitory things is to shoot yourself in the foot because the toe itches, it seems to me. OR maybe even because of that very reason, that's all the chance to get the most out of it, even while stumbling over yourself and making yourself very unhappy a lot of the time.
