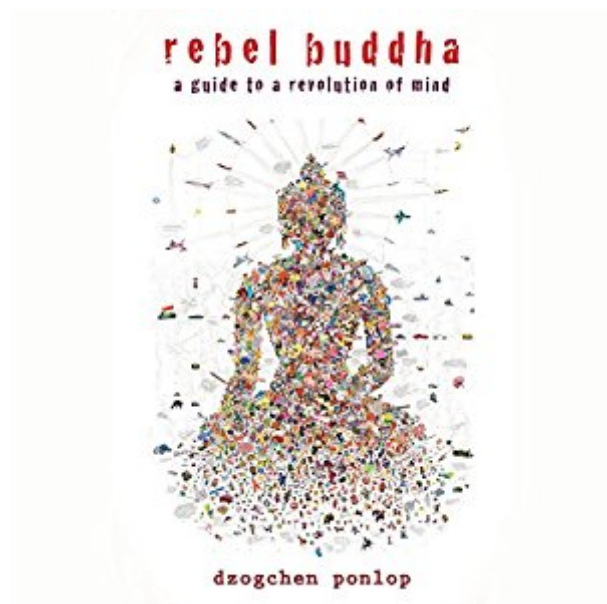


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Rebel Buddha: On The Road To Freedom



Synopsis

There's a rebel within you. It's the part of you that already knows how to break free of fear and unhappiness. This rebel is the voice of your own awakened mind. It's your rebel buddha - the sharp, clear intelligence that resists the status quo. It wakes you up from the sleepy acceptance of your day-to-day reality and shows you the power of your enlightened nature. It's the vibrant, insightful energy that compels you to seek the truth. Dzogchen Ponlop guides you through the inner revolution that comes from unleashing your rebel buddha. He explains how, by training your mind and understanding your true nature, you can free yourself from needless suffering. He presents a thorough introduction to the essence of the Buddha's teachings and argues that, if we are to bring these teachings fully into our personal experience, we must go beyond the cultural trappings of traditional Asian Buddhism. We all want to find some meaningful truth about who we are, he says, but we can only find it guided by our own wisdom - by our own rebel buddha within. Introduction read by the author.

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Customer Reviews

Ponlop, part of the global diaspora, argues for Buddhism removed from the Asian decorations that cloak its power. He presents an accessible program of self-liberation from mental constructs and religious dogma. He expands upon two lectures that present dharma teachings with nearly no Buddhist vocabulary or Tibetan references. He explains how Buddhism in a globalized era demands freedom from exotic rituals, colorful trappings, or hidebound formulas that hold back both jaded

Easterners and gullible Westerners from the essence of what the rebellious Buddha taught as a science of the mind. Coming from the Himalayas, Ponlop finds that his northeastern Indian childhood prepares him as another global citizen. Distrusting outmoded forms of outward conformity to Buddhist tradition that may have exhausted their initial energy, Ponlop looks to the mind as the place to overcome confusion. He re-orientes the path to freedom, the way that follows Buddha's ancient and time-tested map, as aligned with samathi-vipassana (calm abiding-insight) meditation grounded in analytical forms of philosophical training. Self-discipline, meditation itself, and a shift to higher knowledge characterize his model. No easy solutions arrive. Logic and reason, contrary to what many may think Buddhism advocates, serve as the foundation for self-inquiry. Undoing the causes of one's suffering makes this self-analytical and then self-dissolving meditation a rigorous, recuperative therapy rather than an indulgent, navel-gazing posture. "Look at your mind when you wake up in the morning and discover that there's no milk for your coffee, it's raining again, the car needs gas, and your kids have the headphones on and are refusing to speak to you. In that moment, where is your equanimity, your compassion? If you need reminders that will urge you toward practice, you can easily find them in your own life." His book fills with comparisons. He speaks about working on an assembly line, visiting Disney World, and "hiring a bad hitman." He suggests moving the dharma teachings through another reboot, to refresh the tired system and to purge it of malware and viruses. He seeks to reclaim the living tradition behind the ornamentation, the mantras, and the distractions. The results told here can be uneven. Cultural adaptations for Western Buddhism are assumed more than discussed, and the conflation can be awkward of the two lecture series as appended and revised here. Ponlop fails to elaborate upon as much of the cultural and especially political renewal that the original Buddhist ideals encouraged as he indicated at the outset. This book may, as its contexts show, work better for those already grounded in basic dharma teaching, although given the lack of "Buddhist" terminology throughout, contrarily it may be more accessible to those uneasy about a more explicitly stated conventional primer. An appendix offers brief advice about meditating; this overview may motivate hesitant or brave readers to try out Ponlop's down-to-earth, non-dogmatic, and gently encouraging strategies. (P.S. See my reviews of Stephen Batchelor's "Buddhism without Beliefs" & "Confession of a Buddhist Atheist" for other postmodern comparisons; also my reviews of Dinty Moore's "The Accidental Buddhist" and especially, for meditators seeking liberation from rigid postures, Jason Siff's "Unlearning Meditation.")

Dzogchen Ponlop's excellent book, *Rebel Buddha*, is one of a great many books written in a

"modern Buddhist" vein, "modern Buddhism" being a term used by Buddhist scholar Donald Lopez to refer to "an international Buddhism that transcends cultural and national boundaries, creating...a cosmopolitan network of intellectuals, writing most often in English" (quote from the Wikipedia page for Buddhist modernism on 2/12/2011). Ponlop is an intellectual and a scholar as well as a meditation master and Buddhist teacher, and in *Rebel Buddha* he offers a friendly, inspirational, non-academic guide to putting Buddhist principles into practice that anyone - atheist, monotheist, agnostic, etc. - should find accessible. I must put *Rebel Buddha* in my short list of books about Buddhism that I would recommend to anyone new to Buddhism who is looking for a non-academic introduction to practical Buddhism, as well as to anyone who's been into Buddhism and has read many Buddhist books and is hungry for more. (A few other titles on my short list are Suzuki Roshi's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*; Chogyam Trungpa's books *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* and *The Myth of Freedom*; and Pema Chodron's *The Wisdom of No Escape*.) At essence, *Rebel Buddha* is about the cultivation of kindness and clarity for the sake of freedom and happiness for all beings. The short chapter "Untelling the Story of Self" (chapter 8) contains one of the clearest and most reader-friendly explanations of the Buddhist notion of emptiness that I have seen (and I've read many). No arcane metaphysics, no digressions into confusing dialectics, just a clear, practical, down-to-earth explanation. In fact, Ponlop says that while "we tend to philosophize" about emptiness and selflessness (aka "no-self"), and thereby turn it "into a far-fetched notion," emptiness can be recognized to be "ordinary" and you can "treat it the same way you treat everything else. The way you work on it is no different from the way you work with any other concepts you reflect on and analyze." And, "you not only hear it, but you feel it as well. It becomes your personal experience." Highly recommended.

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