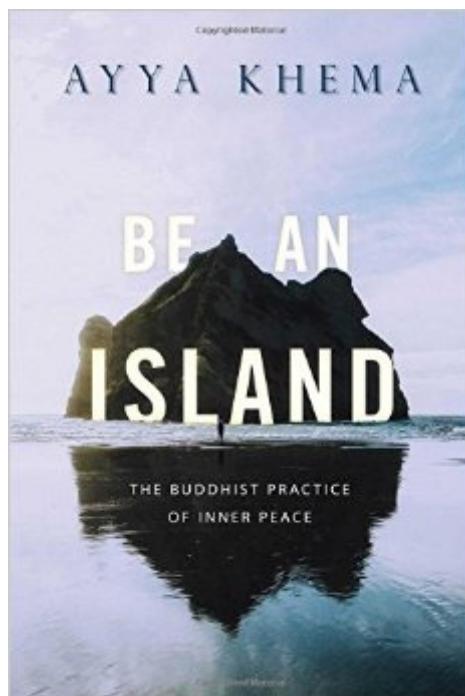


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# Be An Island: The Buddhist Practice Of Inner Peace



## Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere*, Ayya Khema's *Be an Island* guides us along the path of Buddhist meditation with direct and practical advice, giving us contemplative tools to develop a healthy sense of personal being. *Be an Island* is at once an introduction to the teachings of Buddhism and a rich continuation of Ayya Khema's personal vision of Buddhist practice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are serious about learning Dhamma, go to the bookstore and buy all Ayya Khema's books. Based on her personal experiences, she was able to explain many hard-to-understand Dhamma concepts in plain and simple words that make you go "ah!" and "wow!". Simple yet profound, she was very strict to the original teaching of Buddha's Dhamma yet present it in a way that we modern people can understand without any difficulties. You don't have to worry about any water-downed psuedo Buddhism teaching you found in the bookstore today. She was a revolutionist when it comes to improving the status of women sangha in Theravada tradition, a credit to the Buddhasasana. I am thankful to be able to learn from her writing, must be my good kamma. If you are reading this review, don't let the good kamma slip away. Get this book and learn to be an island.

This marvelous little book gives hours of pleasure, confidence, and encouragement: as well as instant calming and vision for your spontaneous needs should you require immediate assistance. I

found it to provide guidance and inspiration on any occasion that presented itself-I had but to open randomly to any page. Here is only one example of its gifts: "Only one single moment exists, and that's the present one. The future is a figment of our imagination. When the future really happens it becomes the present." (This from the 'Nuts and Bolts' section.) I was raised Roman Catholic and I find so much value and love from these practices. I am learning to love myself as I have always been taught to love God but somehow missed the part about loving yourself. Sister Khema makes a bridge between religious gulfs, feminine issues, and meditation practices. She has masterfully put together Buddhist teachings in so understandable a method that you come away from reading, even just a paragraph or two, with inspiration and love. I recommend this book to all my friends. Sincerely,

Pat

Ayya Khema, who personified Theravada Buddhism in her meditative practice and compassionate life, leads you as if by hand to the isle of inner peace. Warmth and practicality permeate this book, which is more a teaching than a tour guide. Ayya Khema reveals important insights in such a way that you hardly notice you've been taken well down the Noble Eightfold Path. You arrive at the end of the journey ready to believe her final assertion: "There is no reason why an intelligent, healthy, committed person should not be able to attain [mindfulness] with patience and perseverance." Add this to your list of desert island readings.

The author is a leading Theravada Bhikkhuni (Southern Buddhist ordained nun), an American citizen, born Jewish in WWII Germany. It is evident how much Buddhism means to her. She's been included in a number of anthologies (e.g. by Bhikshuni Lekshe Tsomo). The title is from the Maha Parinibbana Sutta: "abide as an island...loving the Dhamma as an island & refuge." Per Theravada, she uses Pali spellings vs. Sanskrit equivalents. The Library of Congress Cataloging data lists it as Buddhism-Psychological Aspects; it addresses several major psychological issues:p. 18: "eventually through practice, our intentions change & adapt themselves to the Dhamma."p. 29: "Motives are like icebergs-1/3 visible & 2/3 hidden."p. 43: "We confront ourselves in others [Jung calls this projection]p. 81: "Sometimes people think of the teaching as a sort of therapy, which it undoubtedly is, but that is not its ultimate aim."p. 93: "It's only an illusion that, through the presence of other people we confront the world around us. In reality, we are constantly meeting our own inner defilements or strengths. What goes on around us serves as a series of triggers for our reactions."p. 94: "if we feel a serious lack in ourselves, this will color our attitudes & reactions."p. 96: "cultivating love for ourselves ...makes it easy to be loving toward others."p. 97: "The holy life means becoming

whole, of one piece." [Jung's individuation]p. 106: "more is not better." [scientifically the world is NOT linear]She also describes some Buddhist terms unfamiliar to me (as a student of Vajrayana):p. 117:3 kinds of liberation-signless (impermanence), wishless (suffering), & voidness (coreless)p. 126: path moment - provides valuable insight into Mahamudra (MM) & Dzogchen (Dz) mindfulness. She provides some insights into gratitude, contentment, & dependence on other people, but some of her statements seem a bit over the top to me-too much of a monastic worldview & a bit extreme for lay practitioners. For example,p. 42: "To look for love is a totally unsatisfactory & unfulfilling endeavor."p. 95: fear arises from hate [seems backwards to me]; we should love our breath, our cushion...p. 103: scratching & scarring the mind [interesting concepts, but a bit too black & white IMHO]p. 104: "sorrow, pain, grief, lamentation are all defilements. There is no rationale behind any of them." [what about empathy/compassion?; IMHO attachment is the problem, but then I have a MM/Dz view]. In some chapters she seems rather dogmatic (if not anal-retentive)-especially about precepts (reminds me of the 413 commandments of orthodox Jews). I cannot accept some of her statements: p. 113: happiness & peacefulness are synonymous; happiness & pleasure are opposites. How can one reconcile her guidance to be egoless but also self-loving?This book increased my understanding of Theravada, monastics, & even MM/Dz. Though I don't agree with some of it, I think this is a valuable book that helps one view oneself & the world a little differently.

Ayya Khema is the best writer on Buddhism I know. She has a unique ability to explain the sometimes esoteric meanings in Buddhist teachings in a way you can understand. Her books, including this one, are some of the few I find myself going back to again and again.

Mesmerizing. If you have a true desire to seek inner peace and enlightenment - this is a must read. I could read it over and over. It is so soothing and honest and helpful. Very clear understanding of why we self sabotage and how to move forward in peace. Beautifully written.

The author's theme of becoming independent in one's practice and looking inward for spiritual guidance, i.e. taking refuge inwardly, rather than searching elsewhere. She has some good practical examples and suggestions.

Unfortunately Theravada Nuns are frequently considered inferior to Monks. Any Ayya Khema book will dispel that prejudice. She was a strong woman who "Walked the Walk". Her works are in the same league as Bhikkhu Bodhi, Walpola Rahula, & Bhante Gunaratana, 3 Monks who I ,greatly,

admire. I recommend her books.

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