



# Evolving Dharma: Meditation, Buddhism, and the Next Generation of Enlightenment

By Jay Michaelson

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## **Evolving Dharma: Meditation, Buddhism, and the Next Generation of Enlightenment** By Jay Michaelson

*Evolving Dharma* is the definitive guide to the meditation revolution. Fearless, unorthodox, and irreverent scholar and activist Jay Michaelson shows how meditation and mindfulness have moved from ashrams and self-help groups to classrooms and hospitals, and offers unusually straight talk about the “Big E”—enlightenment. Michaelson introduces us to maverick brainhackers, postmodern Buddhist monks, and cutting-edge neuroscientists and shares his own stories of months-long silent retreats, powerful mystical experiences, and many pitfalls along the way. *Evolving Dharma* is a must-read for the next-generation meditator, the spiritually cynical, and the curious adventurer in all of us.

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**Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #193996 in Books
- Brand: Brand: EVOLVER EDITIONS
- Published on: 2013-10-15
- Released on: 2013-10-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.97" h x .77" w x 6.01" l, .92 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Since Buddhism was transplanted to America by counterculture movements in the 20th century, the gulf has widened between those who see the practice as a spiritual/religious endeavor and those who regard it as a secular phenomenon. Michaelson (*God vs. Gay?*) tackles difficult questions about Buddhism's evolution in Western culture, as mindfulness practice grows slowly but steadily as a popular secular activity. He examines the history of postmodern Buddhism, describes the path of practice and enlightenment through his own personal accounts of bliss and darkness, and considers future directions. Working from the foundational idea that meditation has become a set of tools for the refinement and improvement of the human mind, the author addresses the pitfalls and benefits of the more traditional spiritual/religious approach and its counterpart, the rational and scientific Western worldview. He is fortunately unafraid to come to grips with the darker sides of the tradition (for example, sexual and power abuses by teachers and gurus) in his discussions about Buddhism's future and its ethical obligations to the world and to itself. Serious practitioners—secular or religious—and curious individuals alike would benefit greatly from reading Michaelson's intelligent and compassionate examination of mindfulness practice. (Oct.)

Review

"Jay Michaelson gets it. His voice is contemporary yet serious, informed yet engaging—and much needed today."

—Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*

"Taking the reader from the banks of the Ganges to the offices of Google, *Evolving Dharma* shows how meditation is transforming our world. A must-read!"

—Deepak Chopra, author of *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* and *Spiritual Solutions*

"Michaelson tackles difficult questions about Buddhism's evolution in Western culture, as mindfulness practice grows slowly but steadily as a popular secular activity. He examines the history of postmodern Buddhism, describes the path of practice and enlightenment through his own personal accounts of bliss and darkness, and considers future directions. Working from the foundational idea that meditation has become a set of tools for the refinement and improvement of the human mind, the author addresses the pitfalls and benefits of the more traditional spiritual/religious approach and its counterpart, the rational and scientific Western worldview...Serious practitioners—secular or religious—and curious individuals alike would benefit greatly from reading Michaelson's intelligent and compassionate examination of mindfulness practice."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"I highly recommend this book. Its scholarship on the past is solid, its review of the present is revealing, and its sense of possibility grounded in both kindness and vision."

—Daniel Ingram, author of *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha*

"All of us need to Occupy the Dharma, to take meditation and mindfulness back from the spiritual 1% and enliven our lives. This book demonstrates and instructs us how to do exactly that. *Evolving Dharma* is essential reading if you're an aspiring brainhacker, a BuJu, a seeker, or anyone who wants to see the light, lighten up and brighten up on the path from head to heart that is the delightful journey of awakening."

—Lama Surya Das, author of *Awakening the Buddha Within*

“*Evolving Dharma* tells a story that is changing the world: the mainstreaming of meditation and the democratization of wisdom. This is not only the best book on contemporary mindfulness; it is the first of its kind.”

—Josh Baran, former Zen monk and author of *The Tao of Now*

“What a fantastic book! Smart, tender, incisive, and visionary. If you only read one dharma book this year, read *Evolving Dharma*.”

—Kenneth Folk, teacher, Kenneth Folk Dharma and Buddhist Geeks

#### About the Author

Dr. Jay Michaelson is a writer and activist who has practiced Theravadan Buddhist meditation for twelve years. He is the author of five books, most recently *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality* (Beacon), a 2012 Lambda Literary Award finalist and Amazon.com bestseller, and *Everything is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism* (Shambhala). His writing appears regularly in the Daily Beast, the Forward, Tricycle, and the Huffington Post.

Unusually for an author of a book on meditation, Jay is not a full-time meditation teacher but rather a longtime leading LGBT activist. Jay's advocacy work has been featured in the New York Times, NPR and CNN.

Michaelson own contemplative journey includes twelve years in the dharma, including several long-term vipassana retreats in the United States and Nepal. He is affiliated with the Practical Dharma movement and the Contemplative Development Mapping Project, and has participated in the Mind and Life Institute, Wisdom 2.0, Buddhist Geeks, and other emerging dharma communities. Having taught at institutions from Kripalu to Burning Man, and at over two dozen university campuses around the country.

Jay is also an accomplished scholar of religion who holds a PhD in Jewish Thought from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a JD from Yale Law School, an MFA from Sarah Lawrence, and a BA from Columbia. He has held teaching positions at Yale University, City College, Harvard Divinity School, and Boston University Law School.

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