



The Dharma of the Princess Bride: What the Coolest Fairy Tale of Our Time Can Teach Us about Buddhism and Relationships

Ethan Nictern

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An engagingly contemporary approach to Buddhism--through the lens of an iconic film and its memorable characters

Humorous yet spiritually rigorous in the tradition of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and *The Tao of Pooh*, drawing from pop culture and from personal experience, *The Dharma of "The Princess Bride"* teaches us how to understand and navigate our most important personal relationships from a twenty-first-century Buddhist perspective.

Friendship. Romance. Family. These are the three areas Ethan Nichtern delves into, taking as departure points the indelible characters from Rob Reiner's perennially popular film--Westley, Fezzik, Vizzini, Count Rugen, Princess Buttercup, and others--as he also draws lessons from his own life and his work as a meditation teacher. Nichtern devotes the first section of the book to exploring the dynamics of friendship. Why do people become friends? What can we learn from the sufferings of Inigo Montoya and Fezzik? Next, he leads us through all the phases of illusion and disillusion we encounter in our romantic pursuits, providing a healthy dose of lightheartedness along the way by sharing his own Princess Buttercup List and the vicissitudes of his dating life as he ponders how we idealize and objectify romantic love. Finally, Nichtern draws upon the demands of his own family history and the film's character the Grandson to explore the dynamics of "the last frontier of awakening," a reference to his teacher Chogyam Trungpa's claim that it's possible to be enlightened everywhere *except* around your family.

With *The Dharma of "The Princess Bride"* in hand, we can set out on the path to contemporary Buddhist enlightenment with the most important relationships in our lives.

The Dharma of the Princess Bride: What the Coolest Fairy Tale of Our Time Can Teach Us about Buddhism and Relationships Details

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Author : Ethan Nichtern

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From Reader Review The Dharma of the Princess Bride: What the Coolest Fairy Tale of Our Time Can Teach Us about Buddhism and Relationships for online ebook

Elizabeth R says

"Recall the child who has not yet engrained the belief that there is some big problem with being a person. Let yourself be visited by that child frequently, the one who still leans in, opening toward the world rather than bracing or strategizing against it."

It took me forever to finish this (and longer to review it), and I still give it 5 stars. This is one of those books I had to digest slowly. Read, think, rest, repeat.

What we have here is basically a primer on Buddhism, filtered and separated through The Princess Bride movie to make it much more approachable and perhaps palatable than it might otherwise be. It was an effective tool for me. Furthermore, all the analysis was aimed towards relationships--to our family, to our friends, to our partners, to ourselves. It's a book whose time has come, I think. The author is not too stuffy, nor too precious, nor too self-centered or self-congratulatory. He strikes a good balance between vulnerable and wise; I would happily go hear him speak.

Even as I was still reading the book, I was thinking, I should probably reread bits of this on a regular basis so I can really absorb and learn from it. Rare indeed is the nonfiction book that evokes that impulse in me!

Cecelia says

I read the book despite not having seen the movie. I liked it. Nictern's insight's about how to live sanely while seeking a loving heterosexual relationship made sense in the abstract, since I did not know who the characters were. Then sadly, I rented the movie and hated it. What a comedown! These deadpan slapstick spoofs of a genre have disappointed me in the past (Blazing Saddles, This is Spinal Tap, Life of Brian). Princess Bride was dumb too. It did not nudge my funny bone from it's boredom at all. Oh well. It's a cult film. The author has seen it a hundred times perhaps as a tonic for the doldrums. All I can say is I'm not cool I guess and I was glad when it finished. Sorry world!

Eric says

I have meditated, sometimes once a week, for years. As part of that meditation (with a group), we have a reading, occasionally from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, sometimes from Pema Chödrön. In all that time, as much as I've appreciated Pema (in particular), I've never actually read a Buddhism book until this one. My wife came across this at a free little library, and as The Princess Bride is one of my top five movies, it seemed like a natural read for me. And it mostly was. I really appreciated how well (most of the time) he used it as a jumping off point to teach about Buddhism and how it sees the world and life. And I fully expect to reread it. I especially appreciate how he answered a question that my wife and I have always had -- that Buddhism's unattachment suggests disengagement from everything, and with the present state of the country,

especially, we can't abide by that right now. And now, having finished the book, I can't recall his answer, other than my sense that I liked it. I almost feel like I read it too quickly, and that I need to reread it slowly, along with others. I do remember a few things though. In particular, the idea that Buddhism is, at its heart, telling stories. And in our society, our movies are our stories, our cultural ethical touchstones, what we use to reflect on our world. I've had discussions with folks about superhero movies, and which ones uphold that vision and which ones fail. And I've had people look at me funny and say "I just watch them because they're fun." But as Nichtern says, as we become a less churchgoing society, we still need something to wrap our bigger questions around. There are a couple things that kept me from saying it was amazing, though. The first was that I felt like the tie between the movie and book's concepts was often tenuous, and sometimes stretched close to breaking. But it did remind me of how wonderful the movie is and how beautiful some of the messages in it are. The second was that I felt like the target audience was a little above my meditation skill level. He recommended meditating on particular ideas with a retention that I can't come anywhere near. Still, I'm tempted to try.

Olivia says

When I first stumbled upon this I couldn't help but have expectations, "It's about Buddhism AND The Princess Bride so it must be amazing!" In actuality it came off to me as a mixed bag. I think I like Nichtern's writing and ideas, but the book felt all over the place to me. I can tell he really likes TPB and who can blame him, however the connections sometimes felt forced. I initially thought this might serve as an entry point for those interested in Buddhism but unsure where to start but I think this might confuse people.

Overall he had some interesting things to say and made me want to watch the movie again but I don't think this is one I'd recommend as whole heartedly as others to someone. I think my favorite (and the most effective part) was talking about practicing presence with family. I am interested in reading his other book so I suppose that says something.

Brian says

More "Dharma" than "Princess Bride", the author uses characters and situations from the movie (and book) along with other pop culture references to teach and illustrate some basic Buddhist concepts. The book focuses mostly on our relationships to others and offers a lot of good ideas and advice concerning mindfulness, compassion, and forgiveness. A good book to check out if you are interested in Buddhism and/or a fan of "The Princess Bride", but not the fun, breezy read I thought it might be.

Richard Heilbrunn says

Bravo

Ethan relates this Dharma tale on many levels. Like a New York Deli everyone can find something to nibble on, digest and grow with.

Kathryn says

This nonfiction book is written by an American practitioner of Shambhala Buddhism; he has a deep love for *The Princess Bride* (1987), and explains relationship through both the movie and Buddhism. I enjoyed the book, and not just because I love *The Princess Bride*.

The author's father was (and is) best friends with Christopher Guest, who played Count Rugen (also known as the Six-Fingered Man} in *The Princess Bride*. In this book the author explores relationships through the characters and relationships in the movie, including the relationships between Fezzik and Inigo Montoya, between Westley, the Dread Pirate Roberts, and The Man in Black, and between the Grandfather and his Grandson

I enjoyed this book, and now I want to reread *The Princess Bride* (1973) by William Golden!

Laura says

I like the personal manner the author uses to "talk to" the reader. I would have preferred it if he had not used swear words to put some points across - it really didn't add anything helpful, and is ultimately unskillful. This is a very readable book though, and I was surprised at how deeply he went into the dharma from his talking points. Some very helpful subject matter, that I have already passed on to friends in little soundbites. I will certainly read this book again as it bears studying deeper.

Barbara E. says

Such an amazing book! Such a good combination of memoir, spiritual text, and a willingness to acknowledge the role of pop culture in spiritual life, especially when it comes to how you understand your relationships. Some of the reviews here seem concerned that the book isn't enough about the Princess Bride, but I am so thankful, as a fan, that he gives sufficient attention to the movie without letting it take over his work.

I also highly recommend *The Road Home* by Nichtern as well.

Marybeth McCarrick says

My father died when I was in my twenties. I had a videotape copy of "The Princess Bride" (my favorite movie). And I made it a weekly ritual that I would watch the movie EVERY WEEKEND! I'd shout along with Inigo Montoya "you killed my father". Watching the movie really healing a piece of my pain. Knowing I could get through the week because I could cry all weekend got me through that terrible year of missing my dad so much.

I loved this book. It combined the meditation, which I have always found so helpful, and the movie that was so powerful for my getting through my grief. Thank you so much to Ethan Nichtern. I feel you expressed so simply the power of this movie in my life.

Loretta says

Loved this. I am a huge fan of the movie, but never particularly thought about it as a "buddhist" movie. And Nichtern doesn't quite do that - it's more that he takes characters and elements from the movie and uses those as jumping off points to talk about, like the subtitle promises, Buddhism and Relationships. The writing is clear, honest, and funny, and I'd recommend it to anyone curious about Buddhism in the modern world.

Gloria says

I liked this book it's about how the Princess bride aligns with Buddhist thinking, the author uses the Princess Bride to look at relationships and what we can learn from them. It is also about how the book affected the author personally. If you liked the Princess Bride and also like Buddhism you are likely to find this a good read

Nate says

Enjoyable read making connections between Buddhist practice and insights from the Princess Bride, with an underlying argument that ancient ways of belief have relevance to modern life, and wisdom can be found in our contemporary culture that validates and complements these beliefs.

Richard says

This was an enjoyable exploration of some of the concepts of Shambala Buddhism viewed through the lens of the book and movie 'The Princess Bride'. Obviously, it helps if you have read the source book or viewed the movie at least once. If you have and if you enjoyed it as much as the author (and me) then this is an entertaining journey through some of the tenents of this branch of Buddhist thought as explained by the narrative of The Princess Bride. Part memoir, part dharma talk and part nerding out over a fantastic movie, this book is worth a read if any of the above interest you.

Seth says

I went in expecting more about The Princess Bride (book & movie) or even the author's relationship with Christopher Guest (his dad's best friend) but instead I got a wonderful treatise on Buddhism and relationships. The subtitle really is the true title here, and that's a great thing. If you enjoy The Princess Bride and you've ever meditated (Buddhist or otherwise) you should read the book.
