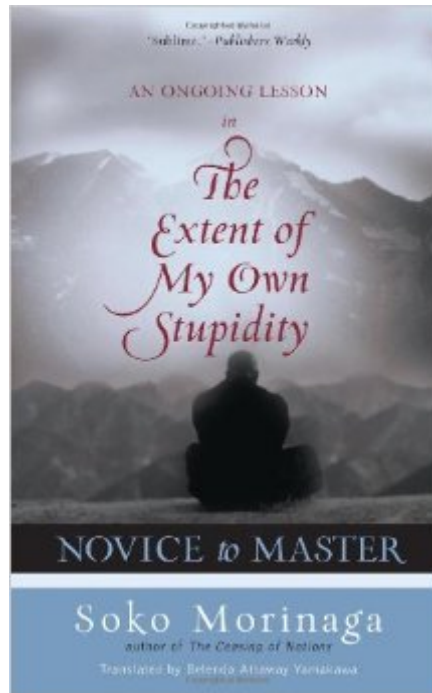


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Novice To Master: An Ongoing Lesson In The Extent Of My Own Stupidity



Synopsis

Everybody loves Novice to Master! As you'll see in the glowing endorsements and reviews included below, this modern spiritual classic has been embraced by readers of all types. In his singularly humorous and bitingly direct way, Zen abbot Soko Morinaga tells the story of his rigorous training at a Japanese Zen temple, his spiritual growth and his interactions with his students and others. Morinaga's voice is uniquely tuned to the truth of the condition of the human mind and spirit and his reflections and interpretations are unvarnished and succinct. His great gift is the ability to lift the spirit of the reader all the while exposing the humility and weakness in the lives of people, none more so than his own. Read on to see what everyone from Publishers Weekly to well-known Buddhist figures and even New York Times bestselling author Anthony Swofford have to say about this one of a kind book!

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Customer Reviews

on the day that i received this book, i found that i had read it from cover to cover in matter of a couple of hours. roshi morinaga's words left me with the realization that, although his wisdom may appear to be quite simple, it takes a lot of learning from erroneous mistakes throughout one's life in order to put zen training into action. after blazing through this book i had found myself drawn to give it another read a couple of weeks later. reading it again, i became aware that the roshi's simple wisdom was not to be taken in stride but to be pondered more deeply. the translation of his words is unpretentious and terse, the way zen literature, in my opinion, is best transmitted. roshi morinaga

opens our eyes to the initial tribulations of a zen novice such as the feelings of inadequacy in comparison to one's zen teacher, the stubborn fight that the ego plays among other things. i would strongly recommend this book for the serious zen student. may it help us all see our teachers in a more human light.

Rinzai Zen master Soko Morinaga talks to us in very funny and frank language about the strains he's encountered in his own Zen training over the years. We are left without any doubt that he began as bemused and puzzled as you and I are perhaps in our own current practice. And it's ongoing! He is a Zen master, but still experiencing the limits of his own stupidity. It's wonderful news for you and I! We can take a sigh of relief now! There is one particularly hilarious segment where he discusses pissing. He began addressing an audience who received a short break between talks. Out of concern for them Morinaga said, "Did you all have time to urinate?" The audience seemed a little stunned by this question. Maybe they were surprised that the person saying this was a monk. "Pissing is something that no one else can do for you. Only you can piss for yourself." He said this in front of this pretty large audience, and they all broke out in laughter! Yet this is a very critical statement. Dogen Zenji once had said something along very similar lines. He had been out in the field one day and a young monk said, `master, you should not be out here in the hot field doing work, you are master. You should go inside, leave the work for me." Dogen replied with something like, " If you did it I would miss the experience, I must work for myself." This is not a word for word account, but you get the picture. I cannot capture all of the wonderful teachings you will find in this book for you in such a short review. You will have to purchase it and see for yourselves. This book makes practice above anything else, FUN! Enjoy yourselves! Zen master Soko Morinaga makes my sides hurt all throughout here. But the most precious part of it all, is how insightful it is. Not only does it make you laugh yourself silly, but it helps us all come closer to tackling the great question of life and death. Enjoy this book.

The best darn zen book I've ever read. It has 2 or 3 pearls of wisdom applicable to anyone's life experience while also giving a detailed picture of traditional Japanese zen training at one of the oldest and most prestigious monasteries in Japan. Hard realities are delivered with a gentle demeanor unlike none I've ever encountered before.

This wonderful book reads like novel and leaves the reader subtly transformed by the author's insights. Along the way, Morinaga paints an evocative and often quite humorous portrait of monastic

Zen training as it functioned in Japan at the end of World War II. Though the setting and culture may seem distant and unfamiliar, Morinaga's elegant prose shines with gentle and generous wisdom that easily transcends the specifics of time and place, bringing another world vividly to life. There is undoubtedly something for everyone here whether you're looking for inspiration, dharma teaching, or just an enjoyable read. I would recommend this book highly to anyone at all.

In this autobiography, Soko Morinaga gives us a feeling for living in the real-life daily struggles of practicing Zen. Morinaga takes us behind the abstracted mystifying experience one is left with from zen koans by telling us about his actual life. He recounts how hard it was to follow his master's instructions and fulfill the standards of *_samu_*, the Zen discipline of work. Morinaga starts out by proclaiming the difficulty of the task of verbalizing the inexpressible and then approaches fulfilling that task by sharing the everyday details of his process. His earthy opening story dashes at pretense. As the second speaker at a conference in which the first speaker had spoken at great length, Morinaga asked the audience if anyone needed to go to the bathroom. Morinaga then explains that like going to the bathroom, enlightenment is something no one else can do for you. In one very touching scene he recounts how as a child he struggled with watching his grandfather's death. Later he tells of a woman who seems at peace with her oncoming death. The book, as the subtitle suggests, is divided into two sections: first his novice years; second his years as a Zen master. Because Morinaga gives us a real picture of Zen, this is an important, valuable, and enlightening book.

this book adds very necessary layman emotional elements to the canon of often removed zen buddhism texts which focus on things that seem so far away from the lives of ordinary people who get up and go to work every day and don't shave their head. yet it is still able to capture the essential points without being like zen-lite. it reads like novel, and teaches like einstein. one of the most original around.

What a great read. The roshi gives his history as an aimless student in Japan who ends up at the monastery, where, despite his obstinacy and mistaken notions, the master there sees something in him. Morinaga details the stringent daily life of the monks, and also the joy of awakening, in simple, generous prose that can touch the beingness that is beyond the exhaustible and the inexhaustible. It made me happy to read it.

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