

## **Women and Buddhism**

compiled by Stephanie Kaza, 1995

### **I. Buddhist Feminist Theory**

1. Gross, Rita. *Buddhism after Patriarchy*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.

The most thorough feminist history and analysis of Buddhism to date, with chapters on gender and egolessness, gender and buddha-nature, and gender and emptiness. Includes a visionary androgynous reconstruction of Buddhism more suited to women in the 20th century.

2. Gross, Rita. "Buddhism and Feminism: Toward their Mutual Transformation" in *Eastern Buddhist*, vol 19 (1,2), 1986.

3. Gross, Rita. "Feminism from the Perspective of Buddhist Practice", in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol 1(1), 1981.

4. Kaza, Stephanie. "Acting with Compassion: Buddhism, Feminism, and the Environmental Crisis" in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, Carol Adams, ed. New York: Continuum, 1993.

An examination of six areas of overlap between Buddhist and feminist principles and practices that support an ecofeminist perspective. Includes examples of Buddhist women as environmental educators and activists.

5. Klein, Anne Carolyn. *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhist, Feminists, and the Art of the Self*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

A feminist discussion of three central Buddhist concepts: mindfulness, compassion, and emptiness, presenting an empowering and healthy role model in the cosmic female Buddha, the Great Bliss Queen.

### **II. Historical-Sociological**

1. Bartholomeusz, Tessa. *Women Under the BoTree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Written from the perspective of the nuns themselves, this book chronicles the introduction of Buddhism in the 3rd century, the revival of Buddhism in the 19th century, and Buddhism today as it shapes the lives of women practitioners in a male society and religious hierarchy.

2. Carroll, Theodora Foster. "Buddhism and Population" in *Women, Religion, and Development in the Third World*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983.

Buddhism and views on abortion, contraception, attitudes towards sex vs. Western attitudes. A look at the precepts, karma, and other key concepts that influence women's practices of birth control.

3. Karabinus, Audrey. *Women in North American Zen Buddhism*. M.A. thesis, 1987.

Sociological research on the disparity between egalitarian teachings and social realities in Zen practice through a survey of 98 Western Zen Centers. Questions on women's participation in leadership, division of labor, gender neutrality in chants, and child care availability. The author found accounts of sexism in masculine style of practice, stereotyped sex roles, preponderance of males in leadership and authority roles, hierarchical structures, and power abuse.

4. Klein, Anne. "Primordial Purity and Everyday Life: Exalted Female Symbols and the Women of Tibet." in *Immaculate and Powerful*, ed. by C.W. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan, and M.R. Miles. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

Comparative analysis of female religious imagery and social roles in Tibet. A look at religious vocations, family structure, and myth in eastern Tibet as it applied to and affected women, with specific information on Yeshey Tosgyel, the Great Bliss Queen.

5. Paul, Diana. *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition*. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979.

A classical piece of research on views of women in Buddhism as temptress, mother, nun, teacher, bodhisattva. Selected Buddhist texts for each chapter with commentary and analysis.

6. Shaw, Miranda. *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

A fresh reading of Tantric texts to reconstruct the role and view of women in these often obscured and mystified practices. Presents a relational view of spirituality in partnership.

7. Tsai, Kathryn Ann. *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the 4-6th Centuries*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

A translation of a sixth century text outlining the stories of 65 exemplary nuns whose determination and struggles brought them closer to enlightenment.

### **III. Realized Beings**

1. Allione, Tsultrim. *Women of Wisdom*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Translations of the biographies of six Tibetan women mystics by a practicing Tibetan nun turned mother.

2. Blofeld, John. *Bodhisattva of Compassion: the Mystical Tradition of Kwan Yin*. Boulder: Shambhala Books, 1978.

Collected stories of experiences of wisdom-opening related to Kuan-Yin told in personable style with description of principal iconographic forms and images. Includes directions for Kuan Yin visualization meditation.

3. Dowman, Keith. *Sky Dancer: the Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

A revealed text written in 9th century, rediscovered in 17th century, and translated into English with thorough annotations and commentary. The text describes a path of practice using mantras, tantric symbology, poetry, and "twilight language" to cultivate the inner wisdom Dakini.

4. Macy, Joanna, "Perfection of Wisdom: Mother of all Buddhas", pp 315-333, in *Beyond Androcentrism*, ed. Rita Gross. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977.

The Perfection of Wisdom as a feminine form, the pregnant point of potential action, light, emptiness, space, the mother of the Tathagatas. Comparison and contrast of the Buddhist model with the Hindu image of the feminine.

5. Willson, Martin. *In Praise of Tara*. London: Wisdom Publications, 1986.

History of the origin of the tantra of Tara with translations of original canonical texts and directions for practice. Tara's main titles as Bodhisattva, the Mother Goddess, and as Tantric Deity. Color plates of Green Tara and line drawings of her many manifestations.

#### **IV. Books by Women Buddhists or Teachers**

(Note: This area has expanded tremendously in the last few years with books by Sharon Salzberg, Sylvia Boorstein, Pema Chodron, Aya Khema, and others.)

1. Beck, Charlotte Joko. *Everyday Zen*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

Edited versions of informal talks on Zen practice from retreats and public lectures. Subjects include authority, fear, what practice is and is not, the fire of attention, anger, relationships (as not to each other but to the true self), true and false suffering, the observing self. Guidelines for zazen and other forms of Zen practice.

2. Kennett, Roshi Jiyu. *The Wild, White Goose, vols I and II*. Mount Shasta: Shasta Abbey, 1978.

The journals of one English woman's training in a Japanese Zen monastery to priest ordination and teacher, persevering under challenging situations and overt sexism and anti-Western prejudice; many details of Zen monastic practice in Japan. The books are footnoted to offer insight into her reactions and development of awareness over time.

3. Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1983.

Meditations and exercises based on Buddhist practice and philosophy to be used in empowerment workshops, transforming despair and pain to positive, productive energy for peace work.

4. Macy, Joanna. *World as Lover, World as Self*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990.

A collection of talks and essays drawing on deep ecology, systems theory, and Buddhist texts and practices as resources for change and development of "the ecological self".

5. Mountain, Marian. *The Zen Environment*. New York: Bantam, 1983.

One woman's journey to awareness, leaving a comfortable life to seek the Way. The story is written as a conversation between everyday life and zazen practice. An informal introduction to Zen in fresh language, told from the spontaneity of personal experience.

6. Packer, Toni. *Seeing without Knowing*. Rochester: Genesee Valley Zen Center, 1984.

Comments on Zen practice from a radically creative teacher who split from the traditional forms and practices of Rochester Zen Center to form her own practice group.

#### **V. Women and American Buddhism**

1. Boucher, Sandy. *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988; revised 1994, Boston: Beacon Press.

The book of history and overview of women active in American Buddhism, told in easy, personal language and interview style. Includes sections on problems with male teachers and engaged Buddhism and political activism. The last chapter is a vision told in the year 2015, imagining the spread of Buddhism and the role of women in shaping Buddhism in America.

2. Eppsteiner, Fred, ed. *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1985.

Essays by Joanna Macy, Charlene Spretnak, and other women and men on Buddhism and Buddhist practice in social, political, and economic realms of the world.

3. Friedman, Lenore. *Meetings with Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America*. Boston: Shambhala Books, 1987.

In-depth interviews of over a dozen American women Buddhist teachers from the Zen, Vipassana, and Tibetan traditions, including an overview of women's historical roles in Buddhism.

4. Hopkinson, D., Hill, Michele, and Kiera, E. *Not Mixing Up Buddhism*. Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1986.

Short essays on Zen Buddhism from women's perspectives, drawn mostly from Kahawai journal of women Zen students at the Diamond Sangha, Hawaii. Includes comments on abortion, everyday life, family practice.

5. Oda, Mayumi. *Goddesses*.

Delightful, sumptuous interpretations of traditional Buddhist bodhisattvas and spirit guides by Bay Area Japanese-American artist; inspired by her strong connection to her grandmother and everyday Buddhist practice.

6. Sidor, Ellen. *A Gathering of Spirit*. Cumberland, R.I.: Primary Point Press, 1988.

Transcripts of talks by Zen and Vipassana women teachers at one of the early landmark conferences on women and Buddhism.

7. Women and Buddhism, a special issue of *Spring Wind*, Buddhist Cultural Forum. vol 6 (1,2 and 3). Zen Buddhist Temple--Ann Arbor, 1214 Packard Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Collected articles on aspects of women and Buddhism including: Buddha's attitude toward women, everyday practice, personal accounts of monastic experience, compassion as powerlessness or relatedness, complete list of women's monasteries and retreat centers in the West, views on abortion, bibliography of books and articles, and a chronology of historical events in the realm of women and Buddhism.

8. Ywahoo, Dhyani. *Voices of our Ancestors*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987.

Native American teachings from the Cherokee tradition as influenced by Buddhism. Strong emphasis on the earth as living being, the body as temple, and a vision of peacekeeping for today's age.