NOTE: This bibliography grew out of a day-long retreat/workshop entitled The Female in Buddhism: One Buddha Nature, held for the Bear River Meditation Group, affiliated with Shasta Abbey, on 22 October 2011. It has been compiled by Rev. Vivian Gruenenfelder who led the retreat. She has included the comments but adds, "I have not read all these books myself and can’t vouch for them personally."


Arai, Paula Kane Robinson. Women Living Zen: Japanese Soto Buddhist Nuns. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Arai combines her experience of living in a Zen monastery for female monastics with detailed historical research to demonstrate the strength of the practice of female nuns in Japan in recent times. She details their fight for equality, which was finally achieved, at least at an institutional level. She notes that the first Japanese to be ordained was a woman.


Barrett, William E. Lady of the Lotus, A Novel: The Untold Love Story of the Buddha and His Wife. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1975. An historical novel in which Barrett eliminates much of the myth regarding the Buddha’s life and tells the story in human terms, focusing on Yasodhara and what the events of the Buddha’s life were like from her perspective. It has its flaws, but gives a very interesting perspective.

Benson, Rev. Master Kōten. The Mandala of the Buddha Mothers Refuge of All Beings. This is a booklet produced by Lions Gate Buddhist Priory, of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. It is an edited version of Dharma talks
given by Rev. Master Kōten at a retreat given at Shasta Abbey in May 2004 entitled *Female Buddhas: The Equality of Buddha Nature*. The booklet opens with a chant written by Rev. Master Kōten which sets up the mandala. Talks on the meaning of the mandala follow, and there is a diagram of the mandala at the end. All the Buddhas inhabiting the mandala are female.


Cabezon, Jose Ignacio, ed. *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*. Albany: State University of New York, 1992. Contains articles, mostly by women, on attitudes toward women in Buddhist history and in contemporary Buddhist culture (including an article on Buddhism and abortion in Japan), the rhetoric of gender, gender and symbols, and Buddhism and male homosexuality. It is somewhat unique for this last. This is an often-cited work; it is rather scholarly in nature and its focus can be narrow, but the work is seminal.

Dresser, Marianne, ed. *Buddhist Women on the Edge: Contemporary Perspectives from the Western Frontier*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1996. Essays by contemporary American women Buddhist writers and teachers on what it is like to train as a woman in Buddhism and how women are and can change the face of Buddhism as it comes to the West. Contains a useful selected bibliography. While the one I am constructing here contains only books on women, Dresser’s contains books by women which aren’t necessarily about women.

readings and original introductions, *Unspoken Worlds* provides an illustration of cross-cultural patterns in women's religious lives. Carefully selected works by eminent scholars have been judiciously edited by Falk and Gross to weave them into a coherent whole that evolves from simple, vivid portraits of individual women to analyses of complete systems.” [Book description by amazon.com.] This book is about women's religious lives in general, not Buddhism specifically. It is expensive, and it is seminal.

Farrer-Halls, Gill. *The Feminine Face of Buddhism*. Quest Books, 2002. “In religious hierarchies around the world, women traditionally take second place. Buddhism is no exception to the rule---other than increasingly in the West, where women make up the majority of those who attend Buddhist centers and practice meditation. This book rights the balance by exploring the key, but usually silent, role of women in Buddhism past and present and in America as well as abroad. Spanning three Buddhist traditions (Theravada, Zen, and Tibetan), it features powerful writings by historical and contemporary Buddhist women. It also interprets Buddhist scriptures, the lives of saints, and traditional religious art in the light of feminine archetypes and perspectives. Subjects include female Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, women as "unofficial" Buddhist teachers, male and female symbolism, and how to harmonize masculine and feminine values in our daily lives.” [Book description by amazon.com.]


Feldman, Christina. *Woman Awake: Women Practicing Buddhism*. Berkeley: Rodmell Press, 2004. “Traditionally women are socialized to embrace values based on conformity, passivity, and surrender of the self, which can eventually contribute to feelings of low self-worth and powerlessness. Using the central tenets and practices of Buddhism, *Woman Awake* offers readers an opportunity to break out of negative belief systems and move toward increased self-acceptance, strength, and vitality. Through a thoughtful selection of exercises and reflections, readers are guided to expand their awareness of life and its connectedness to all things, as well as their own dignity and place within the universe. For those women new to Buddhist meditation, Christina Feldman offers sensitive and valuable guidelines on breathing and relaxation, using an approach that encourages
readers to overcome their social conditioning and appreciate their own qualities in new and significant ways.” [Book description by amazon.com.]


_________ and Susan Moon, ed. *Being Bodies: Buddhist Women on the Paradox of Embodiment.* Boston: Shambhala, 1997. The relationship between body and mind has always been a topic of speculation and spirited discussion. The authors of the pieces contained in this anthology address the problem from the unique dual perspective of being women and being students of Buddhism [from Amazon.com]. "In speaking very personally about their own experience, from birth to menopause to sickness and death, the women whose voices are collected in these essays have hit universal chords for all women who are spiritual seekers."— Publishers Weekly


Gregory, Peter N. and Susanne Mrozik, eds. *Women Practicing Buddhism: American Experiences.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008. A series of talks and panel discussions, that came out of a 2005 conference by the same title, that discuss Buddhism in relation to “race, ethnicity, class, social activism, creativity, sexuality, feminism, other religious traditions, healing, meditation practice, the law, the workplace, family, and daily life,” by women about women’s experiences.

Gross, Rita. *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. This is perhaps the most often cited work on this subject that I come across. Strongly feminist in approach the book begins with “Strategies for a Feminist Revalorization of Buddhism,” presents a feminist sketch of Buddhist history, a feminist analysis of key concepts in Buddhism, and an
androgynous reconstruction of Buddhism (the Dharma is both female and male).


*The Wild, White Goose: The Diary of a Female Zen Priest*. This is Rev. Master Jiyu’s (she is the founder of Shasta Abbey and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives) autobiography of the time that she spent training in an all-male all-Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist temple in Japan. An extraordinary story. Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett wrote a number of other books, including *Zen Is Eternal Life* and two volumes of *Roar of the Tigress*, edited by Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy and published after her death, but these books are by a woman rather than about women.


Mohr, Thea and Ven. Jampa Tsedroen, eds. *Dignity & Discipline: Reviving Full
**Ordination for Buddhist Nuns.** Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010. “The seventeen papers included in Dignity & Discipline were presented at a 2007 conference in Hamburg, the International Congress on Women’s Role in the Sangha. These papers from leading scholars and Buddhist leaders from all around the world make this book a watershed moment in Buddhist history and a must-read for anyone interested in contemporary Buddhism.” [Written by Barre Center for Buddhist Studies.]

Mullin, Glenn H. *Female Buddhas: Women of Enlightenment in Tibetan Mystical Art.* Sante Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2003. This is a beautiful book of fine reproductions of art from the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation. Mullin writes excellent substantive commentary for each image. The images can also be viewed at [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org). The website for the Rubin Museum of Tibetan Art, which is in New York City, is also worth a look.


Napthali, Sarah. *Buddhism for Mothers of Young Children: Becoming a Mindful Parent.* New York: Allen and Unwin, 2010. Napthali is also the author of *Buddhism for Mothers* and *Buddhism for Mothers of Schoolchildren.* She applies her training in Buddhism to parenting.

Obeyesekere, Ranjini. *Portraits of Buddhist Women: Stories from the Saddharmarat-navaliya.* This is a translation of a 13th-century Sinhalese text of the stories of the earliest Buddhist women. Obeyesekere provides cultural context and insight into the social situation for these women in copious, highly readable footnotes.

________. *Yasodhara: The Wife of the Bodhisattva.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009. “This unusual book picks up the story of the wife of the Buddha, who remains unnamed in the Pali Canon. Gathering information from the Sinhalese commentarial tradition, the book shows that Yasodhara enters the picture around first century CE and lives on in the Sinhalese folk tradition. The portrait we get is a nuanced one: Yasodhara is first seen as a nun, obscure and undefined; then she is seen as an arahat (a saint), then even having magical powers. Although the story of Yasodhara belongs properly to the Buddhist folk tradition, it is nonetheless an insight into how the tradition developed over generations and centuries.”
Paul, Diana Y. *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahayana Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979 and 1985. Translations of portions of sutras which convey some aspect of the female in Buddhism (e.g., mother, temptress, daughter, nun, Bodhisattva, Buddha), with an introduction to each sutra written by Paul.


Schireson, Grace. *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009. One of the most recent and most complete collections of biographies of historical women in Zen. Valuable for having a lot of historical information in one place, and also for Schireson’s depiction of the good use that these women put to adversity in their training.

Shaw, Miranda. *Buddhist Goddesses of India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. This has a chapter dedicated to Prajnaparamita as Mother of All Buddhas and is a great summary — covers her origin, meaning, iconography, etc. The book includes other female Buddhas. Some female scholars argue that the author’s feminist views distort the accuracy of her interpretations.


Prajnaparamita. A good chapter (#3) on who and what Prajnaparamita is. Includes a wide-ranging bibliography which goes beyond the subject of the feminine in Buddhism but which includes many works on women.

Spring Wind - Buddhist Cultural Forum, Vol. 6, no. 1, 2, & 3, 1986. *Women & Buddhism*. A compendium of articles, mostly by women, on a wide variety of issues related to women in Buddhism, in a special issue of the journal of the Zen Lotus Society, Toronto. Includes a bibliography and a chronology of events involving women and Buddhism, almost exclusively from 1900 to the present.

Tisdale, Sallie. *Women of the Way: Discovering 2,500 Years of Buddhist Wisdom*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006. Tisdale begins with the very sketchy information that we have on Buddhist women, including mythical ancestors, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and modern ancestors, and fills it out by placing women in detailed historical settings which give us a view into what their lives might possibly have been like. Highly imaginative and fascinating, though, like historical novels, it is hard to know where fact ends and imagination begins. Includes Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett.


Tsomo, Karma Lekshe, ed. *Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Buddhist Women*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 2006. Ven. Lekshe is founder of the Buddhist women’s organization Sakyadhita, one of the biggest and most influential organizations of Buddhist women world-wide, especially effective in the developing world and the Third World. They hold conferences every two years and Tsomo publishes the talks given. This is one such collection and includes articles by both Western and non-Western women on topics such as Buddhist women and society, Buddhist women in world history, Buddhist education, everyday practice, meditation practice, Dharma and discipline, monastic training, engaged Buddhism, the ordination issue, and Buddhism today.

_________, ed. *Buddhism through American Women’s Eyes*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1995. Thirteen essays on women’s practice in daily life, e.g., the emergency room, in relationships, being a mother, dealing with stress, twelve step, the monastic experience, etc.


Willis, Janice D., ed. Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987. Seven essays by well-known writers on the female in Buddhism; topics include historical female teachers, the dakini, the female principle in Tibetan Buddhism, the nun’s life in Tibet, etc.

Yin, Ven. Bhikshuni Wu. Choosing Simplicity: Commentary on the Bhikshuni Pratimoksha. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2001. A marvelous commentary on the teachings of the Vinaya for female monks and how the rules of monastic discipline may be legitimately, but not legalistically, practiced in the modern world. (May be of less interest to lay women, but fascinating and helpful for a monk.)

Yu, Chun-Fang. Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. A fascinating account of how “he” becomes a “she” as the cult of Avalokitesvara moves from India to China, where she becomes the very popular and highly revered object of devotion, Kuan-yin (Guan-yin).