

THE BEGINNING OF AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON WOMEN AND THE FEMALE IN BUDDHISM

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."

Allione, Tsultrim. *Women of Wisdom*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. Offers the spiritual biographies of six great historical female Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.

Aoyama Roshi, Shundo. *Zen Seeds: Reflections of a Female Priest*. Patricia Daien Bennage, trans. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1990. Collection of short Dharma teaching stories told by the most famous female monk alive in Japan today. The stories include anecdotes from her own life.

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.

_____. *Bringing Buddhism Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Women's Rituals*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011. A view of lay Buddhist practice in contemporary Japan with a depth of ethnographic detail that will enable readers to feel they are visiting a Japanese lay Buddhist home [from the Foreword]. Rather expensive.

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.

Blackstone, Kathryn R. *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therigatha*. Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1998. “A detailed exploration of the quest for liberation on the part of the early bhikkunis” based on the *Therigatha*; see entry under Rhys Davids.

Boucher, Sandy. *Opening the Lotus: A Woman’s Guide to Buddhism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. Begins with an account of basic Buddhism, then gives a bit of the history of women in Buddhism and asks questions regarding how being female affects Buddhism and how Buddhism affects being female.

_____. *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. On the meeting of feminism and Buddhist practice in America today.

Cabezón, 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.

Falk, Nancy Auer and Rita M. Gross. *Unspoken Worlds: Women’s Religious Lives*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1989. “With thoroughly integrated

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.]

Faure, Bernard. *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity and Gender*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003. This work centers on Buddhist conceptions of women and constructions of gender [from the Introduction]. “Faure asks, does Buddhism offer women liberation or limitation? and argues that Buddhism is neither as sexist nor as egalitarian as is usually thought.” [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.]

Findly, Ellison Banks, ed. *Women's Buddhism Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000. A large collection of articles, mostly by women, on women's ordination, women as teachers, political and social change, art and architecture, and body and health.

Friedman, Lenore. *Meetings with Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987. Short biographies of the lives and teachings of the most well-known female teachers in America, mostly lay. Includes Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett.

_____ 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

Grant, Beata. *Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003. Offers a short biography of each nun and her poem in Chinese and English. Covers the time period from 220 CE through 1911.

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).

Horner, I. B. *Women under Primitive Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1930, 1st ed., reprinted 1975 and 2011. One of the earliest studies of women in Buddhism at the time of the Buddha and just after. Explores laywomen as mother, daughter, wife, widow and worker; discusses the life of nuns, entrance into the Order, life in the Order, special rules for women, and women's Enlightenment experiences.

The Journal of the Zen Mission Society: Women and Buddhism. Vol. VII, nos. 1 and 2, January-February 1976. All articles in this issue of what has now become *The Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives* are on issues relating to women practicing Buddhism.

Kabilsingh, Chatsumarn. *Thai Women in Buddhism*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991. Chronicles the history of these women and suggests broader possibilities for women's involvement.

Kennett, Rev. Master Jiyu. "News from the Tiger's Lair: '...and to the Source Kept True,' Part VII: Concerning Women." *The Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Vol. 5, no. 3, Autumn 1990, pp. 2-20. Rev. Master's statement on the situation for women in Buddhism. She quotes the Buddha, Dōgen's "Raihai Tokuzui" (in the *Shōbōgenzō*), and Bankei's *Unborn*. A good source of older material on women.

_____. *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.

Klein, Anne Carolyn. *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self*. New York: Beacon Press, 1995. "In tracing points of contact between Buddhist and feminist perspectives, this book describes the major cultural and philosophical pictures of the self associated with each of them" [from Klein's Preface]. This is a book I come across often in bibliographies.

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. The website for the Rubin Museum of Tibetan Art, which is in New York City, is also worth a look.

Murcott, Susan. *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentary on the Therigatha*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991. Cf. Rhys Davids’ work listed below. The book contains the same enlightenment poems, as translated by Murcott, along with their biographies, and Murcott’s commentary, which is influenced by her feminist views.

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.”

[Written by the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies.]

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.

Rhys Davids, C.A.F., trans. *Poems of the Early Nuns (Therigatha)*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1997. Enlightenment poems of nuns who lived at the time of the Buddha, “the earliest extant evidence of women’s experience in any of the world’s religious traditions.”

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.

_____. *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994. A study based on tantric texts, which shows that women had an important creative role in the early development of tantric practices which promoted “an ideal of cooperative, mutually liberative relationships between women and men while encouraging a sense of reliance on women as a source of spiritual insight and power.”

Silaratano, Bhikkhu Dick. *Mae Chee Kaew: Her Journey to Spiritual Awakening and Enlightenment*. Udon Thani, Thailand: Forest Dharma Books, 2009. The story of the life of a modern Thai nun and how she became one of the few known female arahants of the modern world. Well-told.

Simmer-Brown, Judith. *Dakini’s Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala, 2002. A study of dakinis (who are personified as female) as emanations or expressions of Mother

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.

Tsai, Kathryn Ann. *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to Sixth Centuries* (a translation of the *Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan* compiled by Shih Pao-ch'ang). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994. Very short biographies of 65 nuns; the title speaks for itself.

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.

_____, ed. *Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community*. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Sukhi Hotu Publications, 2008. Thirty-seven articles from another Sakyadhita Conference on subjects related to the title.

_____, ed. *Leading to Liberation: 12th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women*. Sakyadhita, 2011. A collection of over sixty papers, on all sorts of topics related to women in Buddhism, from this conference, held in Bangkok, and which Rev. Master Andō and Rev. Astor attended.

_____, ed. *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1988. Abridged proceedings of the first International Conference on Buddhist Nuns with articles on diverse topics related to living as a Buddhist nun in the modern world.

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).