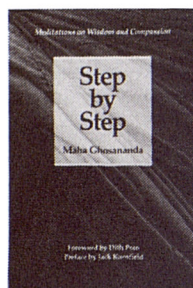


# Book Reviews

## Step by Step: Meditations on Wisdom and Compassion

Maha Ghosananda  
Parallax Press, 1992

Reviewed by Heila Downey



From the killing fields of Cambodia, steeped in the horror of death and destruction, appeared the venerable Maha Ghosananda—a ray of sunshine after the darkness of night, a light of hope for the suffering millions of Cambodia. Confronted with violence, he always saw an opportunity for reconciliation with the potential

for loving kindness. He calls this the law of opposites. Maha Ghosananda reminds us that national peace can only be achieved through personal peace, to which end he prays:

*Great compassion makes a peaceful heart.  
A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person.  
A peaceful person makes a peaceful family.  
A peaceful family makes a peaceful community.  
A peaceful community makes a peaceful nation.  
A peaceful nation makes a peaceful world.*

*Step by Step* is a collection of talks and meditations on love, compassion, wisdom and peace, drawn from Maha Ghosananda's experience as a respected and loved peace-maker and meditation master, making it available to the global family.

Whether it be talking of letting go of suffering, universal love, or anger, his gentle words will touch the reader's inner being, evoking spontaneous feelings of great love and great compassion and a need to reach out and save all beings from suffering.

Throughout *Step by Step* Maha Ghosananda's essence of light, love, and courage of heart reaches us with his ever-gentle, ever-present smile.

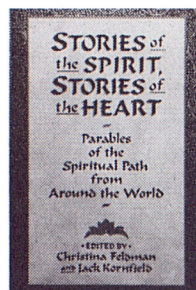
The editor's introduction details the more recent history of Cambodia and Maha Ghosananda's involvement in the peace process.

*Step by Step* is a treasure house of wisdom to be read and re-read.

## Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart

Christina Feldman & Jack Kornfield  
Harper San Francisco, 1991

Reviewed by Ellen B. Gwynn



The authors have assembled a lovely collection of nearly two hundred tales, anecdotes, and poems from a variety of sources, including Buddhist (early, Zen, and Tibetan), Sufi, Christian, Hasid, and Hindu, as well as European and contemporary folktales. They range from a few sentences to five or ten pages, and many are wonderfully appropriate for reading to children.

The selections are divided into sixteen chapters, and the introductory text of each chapter is a teaching of some aspect of the Buddha-dharma. The stories demonstrate universal spiritual themes such as compassion, selflessness, suffering, and insight. In one of my favorites, a Sufi story, a man observed a tiger leave what was left over from its prey every day for a fox that had lost its legs. The man marvelled at this and decided to sit quietly and trust that God would similarly provide for him. Many days later, when he was near death from starvation, he heard a voice say, "Open your eyes! Follow the example of the tiger and stop imitating the disabled fox!"

The authors regrettably relied on male pronouns when referring to nearly all the animals and unidentified people in the stories. Otherwise, the prose is artful and vivid. This book is a pleasure to read, and many of the stories will lend themselves easily to dharma talks.

## Longing for Darkness: Tara and the Black Madonna

China Galland  
Viking-Penguin, 1991

Reviewed by Nancy Herington

When I saw the cover of this book, a shiver ran down my spine, a sensation I feel when I recognize a mystery and a truth. The green Tara and Our Lady of Czestochowa side by side on the book's cover ... of course!

This spiritual adventure/mystery opens in Kathmandu in 1980, where Galland has broken her leg in a fall during a Himalayan trek. As she waits in a hotel room, then in a hospital room, struggling with pain and illness, she reviews her life and the events that have brought her here. It is, unfortunately, a history that is distressingly familiar.

Raised in a strict Catholic family, married at nineteen, Galland found herself at age twenty-one a single mother of two children, unable to find work or child care, "dogged by a gnawing sense of failure." She left the church and spent the next seven years in a desperate round of partying, school, work and a chaotic family life. With a third child, another failed marriage, and a problem with drugs and alcohol, she attempted to return to Catholicism.

Then she began Zen practice at Green Gulch Farm, and it was there that she heard of Tara, a female Buddha in the Tibetan tradition. Tara vowed to be enlightened only in a woman's body, a vow she fulfilled. "I had to search for this woman who found that being a woman is good enough," Galland writes, and so she began a ten year journey that took her all over the world.

This is a book of connections complex and subtle, delicate and intriguing. Galland isn't trying to prove anything. She is following an instinct and a yearning for wholeness and harmony in her spiritual life.

This isn't a book that simply tries to integrate the Judeo-Christian tradition with Eastern mysticism. It explores far beyond that. Ishtar of the Hittites, the Egyptian Isis, Demeter of Greek mythology, a black Kali in India, the Black Madonna at Einsiedeln, a little brown Madonna in Texas: is there a connection? Galland talks to everyone to find out: the Dalai Lama, Lech Walesa, a Jungian analyst, a philologist who teaches Greek, Latin, and Tibetan, priests, nuns, and a fascinating assortment of fellow travelers.

This isn't a book about past wonders only. We learn that there is a little image of Tara growing out of the rock in Nepal, that the Virgin Mary is appearing in trees in Poland and to some young peasants in Yugoslavia. Galland does not merely record such incidents. She plunges in with heart and mind wide open, participating not as an impartial observer but as a believer.

There were some minor irritations in this book. Galland often made me think of Alexandre David-Neel, another intrepid explorer and seeker who endured sickness, injury, and danger in her spiritual quests. I nearly wrote "conquests," since they both seem so determined to get something that their travels occasionally take on the quality of a news hound on the scent of a good story. During her precious minutes in front of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, Poland, Galland frantically snaps picture after picture, stopping only for a moment since she can't really see her while she is photographing. At Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, she is not so awed that she can't take a picture of two of the visionaries as they speak to the Virgin. And later, she badgers Marija, trying to pin down precisely what the Virgin meant. I have a feeling that, if Galland had been present for the Sermon on the Mount, she would have pestered Jesus all the way back to town

to define exactly what he meant by "poor in spirit."

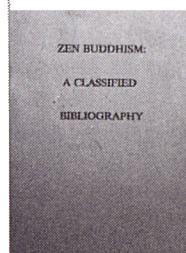
Overall, this is a book of marvels. Intensely personal, intellectually fascinating, full of poetry and recondite tidbits of knowledge, it inspires readers to explore their own traditions and imagery and to seek their own connections.

### **Zen Buddhism: A Classified Bibliography**

James L. Gardner

Wings of Fire Press, Salt Lake City, 1991

*Reviewed by Mu Soeng Sunim*



Perhaps more than any other branch of Buddhism, Zen has entered American consciousness in unsuspecting ways. It started as an avant-garde fad in the fifties and suddenly, it seemed, everyone with any claim to artistic or intellectual sophistication was talking about Zen. In retrospect, it seems that Zen itself was little understood in those

days, but all the talk about "Zen" provided a climate of receptivity in which the next generation could find an anchor and inspiration. On the question of whether Zen is truly understood even today, the jury is still out. Nonetheless, over the last forty years an impressive body of information has become available both to beginning and advanced students, as well as to scholars and academics researching the background of Zen. Even though one can today walk into any bookstore in America and pick out a handful of books off the shelf on Zen, there has always been a need for a comprehensive bibliography. (There is a similar need for a bibliography that will cover Vipassana, Tibetan, Pure Land, and all other branches of Buddhism.) With his bibliography, James L. Gardner has rendered a real service to readers and scholars of Zen.

The bibliography is a massive work of compilation, containing nearly three thousand entries for books, journal articles, essays, dissertations and other material on Zen. Most of the works cited are in English, but publications in some twelve other Western languages are also mentioned. Publications and articles dealing with disciplines directly or peripherally influenced by Zen, such as architecture, tea ceremony, gardens, martial arts, Morita psychotherapy, humor, cooking, and others are extensively included.

The entries in the bibliography have been broken down in convenient chapters. Thus, under "Zen in Japan," we get listings for publications on the Soto, Rinzai

and Obaku sects; on the history of Zen in Japan; and the influence of Zen on Japanese culture. There are entries for Zen in China, Korea, Tibet, and Vietnam, as well as Zen in the West. The entries on Zen in the West are particularly valuable, since they include articles and publications not generally available in bookstores, and can provide much-needed reference material for a researcher. In a surprising interface of Western philosophy and Zen, we get a chapter on Heidegger and Zen, and it's a pleasant surprise to see the number of articles on this little known area of East and West coming together. Another pleasant surprise is the inclusion of entries on the Kyoto School of Zen, little known in the West but quite influential in the current philosophical developments in Japanese Zen.

One slight drawback of the bibliography may be that it is weighted heavily in favor of Japanese Zen. Thus we have extensive biographical entries on all the prominent monks and personalities in Japanese Zen, but very little on figures in Chinese or Korean Zen. But this may be less a fault of compilation than the simple fact that there are more publications about Japan in Western languages, or that more translations have been made from Japanese into Western languages. Hopefully as Western scholarship delves more deeply into the non-Japanese traditions of Zen, we will have more entries reflecting that.

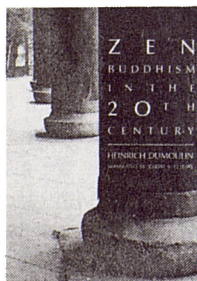
Anyone seriously involved with the past and future of Zen could not have asked for more in a bibliography. It is hoped that Mr. Gardner will continue to update his excellent bibliography periodically to include the latest research and publications in Zen-related topics.

### Zen Buddhism in the 20th Century

Heinrich Dumoulin

Weatherhill, Inc., New York, 1992

*Reviewed by Mu Soeng Sunim*



Heinrich Dumoulin is the pre-eminent historian of Zen. It is no less than ironic that a Jesuit theologian should devote himself to producing some of the finest scholarship on the history of Zen. His new book is an important and authoritative narrative of the philosophical and religious developments in Japan in the twentieth century and how these developments have in turn affected the philosophical development of Zen in the West. In the present book he surveys leading twentieth-century Zen philosophers, starting with

an affectionate and insightful portrait of D.T. Suzuki both as a bridge-builder between East and West and as a philosopher of Zen in his own right. There is a group portrait of the Kyoto School of Zen and its leading lights such as Kitaro Nishida, Shin'ichi Hisamatsu and Keiji Nishitani. Little known in the West, the Kyoto School of Zen has been on the cutting edge of philosophical developments in Japan in this century, and Dumoulin's portrait of this school is possibly the first uncluttered account to reach a general audience in the West.

There's an informative essay on the discovery of Dogen as a thinker. Dumoulin captures the impact of Dogen's thought on developments in Zen in Japan in this century, something which D.T. Suzuki never did. (Probably the first generation of Western practitioners of Zen got a rather one-sided picture of Zen as a result of this omission.)

He also reviews the transformation of the historical picture of Zen achieved through modern research and translations, and he discusses the integration of Zen with psychology and Christianity, focusing on interpreting Zen enlightenment and building bridges of understanding between the traditions of East and West. The information on the Zen background of Morita therapy, now beginning to become known in the West, is quite interesting.

The title of the book is slightly misleading; it should more properly read "Zen Buddhism in 20th-Century Japan." Dumoulin, now in his eighties, has been a resident of Tokyo since 1935, and was a professor of philosophy and history at Sophia University from 1941 to 1976. Thus his preoccupation with Japanese Zen and his omission of developments in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese Zen is understandable. But within the context of what Dumoulin knows best, it's an excellent and important book. □



*Sigita Subotita '92*