



ISSN 1076-9005
Volume 4 1997: 175-177
Publication date: 14 February 1997

Walking on Lotus Flowers, Buddhist Women Living, Loving and Meditating. By Martine Batchelor. London and San Francisco: Thorsons, HarperCollins, 1996. Pp. xiv, 205. ISBN 0-7225-3231-8, £9.99; \$18.00.

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This is a wonderful book with eighteen fascinating stories about Buddhist women practicing in the East and the West; most of them teaching too. The life stories are written from the viewpoint of meditative experiences, and illustrate the challenges of daily life. The author, Martine Batchelor, is a Frenchwoman who herself spent ten years as a Buddhist nun in a Korean monastery. She is presently living in England, and teaches meditation in Europe and South Africa. She gladly asserts that most of the forty women whom she interviewed were, and are, able to transcend the problems that they encountered as women in a Buddhist world; one that still gives male practitioners a higher status than female practitioners. Batchelor estimates that the status of Buddhist nuns in the East varies from 15 percent equality with their male colleagues for Thai nuns (who are technically laywomen as in Thailand a formal ordination for nuns no longer exists) to 90 percent equality for Korean nuns. There *are* famous women teachers in Thailand; though very few. The author leaves it to the readers' judgment to evaluate the status of equality in Western countries.

The common thread in the lives of the eighteen women the author finally chose to include is mindfulness. After short biographical notes the women come alive through detailed and practical descriptions of their main meditations and daily practices. As the stories focus more on life than on ideas, they easily catch the readers' attention and provide varied and rich nourishment. What distinguishes this garland of stories from other books on women in Buddhism is, as already mentioned, the focus on meditation practices and daily life. Of particular interest is the emphasis on women born and living in the East. Thus thirteen of the eighteen stories function not only as a practical introduction to meditation techniques and approaches but at the same time allow a rare insight in the lives of Buddhist nuns in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand. Most of the stories give a concise and down-to-earth introduction in basic and advanced meditations of the Theravaadin, Zen, and Tibetan traditions of Buddhism.

The eighteen life stories are divided into four approaches to Buddhist practice which make up the four chapters of the book. In part one, "The Meditative Path," the Western nuns Ayya Khema and Tenzin Palmo, a Korean, a Chinese, a Japanese, and a Thai nun, communicate without using big words the simple but not easy ABC's of meditation. In part two, "Training The Mind," we learn about enlightened education in the Korean, Chinese, and Tibetan traditions; the latter being presented by the Western nun and author Thubten Choedroen. In chapter three, "The Creative Life," we learn how a Western and a Japanese painter as well as a Korean writer integrate their creative talents with formal practice. The last chapter, "Healing the World," covers a wide range of engaged-Buddhist activities: from the

Korean nun disc jockey of a Buddhist radio station to the Vietnamese peace activist and colleague of Thich Nhat Hahn, sister Chan Khong; from a Korean healer to a Buddhist psychotherapist in England. The book concludes with the teacher, author, and mother Christina Feldman from England. This book is extremely readable thanks to the clear style of the author and the fine editing of Gill Farrer-Halls. It also contains a list of further reading and a short but concise glossary of terms.