

BUDDHISM * MEDITATION * LIFE

LION'S ROAR

The Dharma of **DINOSAURS**

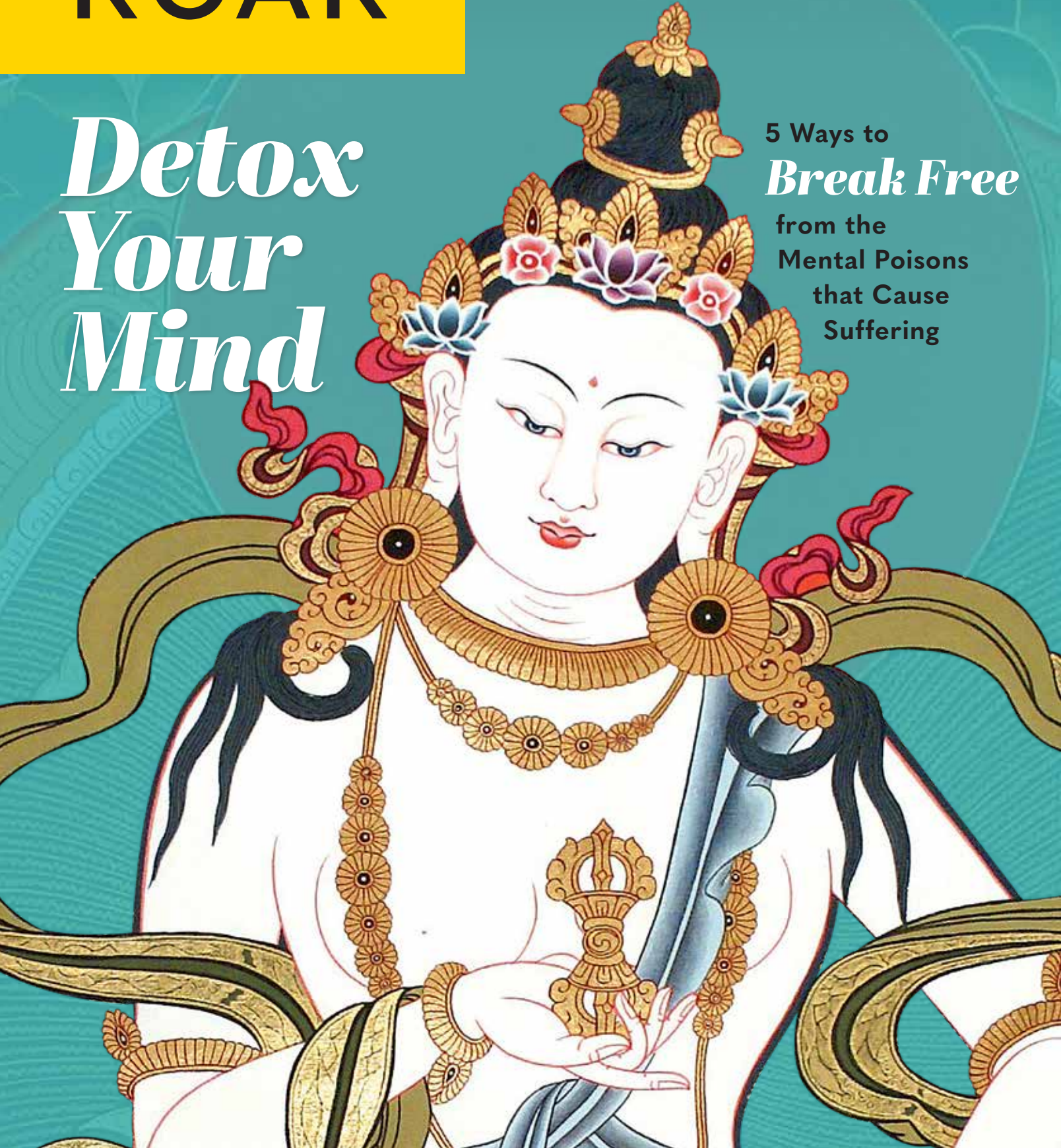
GARDENING: An Act of Love & Hope

The Intimacy of **COVID**

Explore Buddhism: **WOMEN OF WISDOM**

*Detox
Your
Mind*

5 Ways to
Break Free
from the
Mental Poisons
that Cause
Suffering



HER STORY

A novel reimagining the life of the Buddha's wife is one of the new books TRACY FRANZ looks at this issue. Plus all about Zen and visiting the holy Ganges.



WHAT IF WE REIMAGINED the story of the Buddha from the perspective of Yasodhara, the wife he left behind? *Bride of the Buddha* (Monkfish), a novel by scholar and writer Barbara McHugh, does just that. This unique telling traces Yasodhara's path as a spiritual seeker in her own right: from her childhood curiosity about ascetics, to leaving her home to train with a holy woman, to (in McHugh's imagining) concealing her gender and becoming Ananda, the Buddha's closest confidant—and the disciple who eventually convinced him to allow women to ordain as Buddhist monastics.

As McHugh writes in her historical notes, “The danger of demanding total conformity of a particular story to

history is that we can become attached to facts as defined in any given era, confusing them with unchanging truth and closing ourselves off from other viewpoints.” Blending new scholarship, established myth, and skillful storytelling, McHugh delivers an inspiring portrait of a woman challenging the patriarchy.

Out this spring are three new Zen titles. In *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Zen* (Wisdom), writer, illustrator, and Buddhist priest Seigaku Amato offers a uniquely useful handbook for practitioners. “Whether taking the first step into their journey, ordaining as a priest, or leading a practice community,” writes Amato, “the goal of this work is to be a resource for the practice of Soto Zen Buddhism.”

Amato's manga-like ink depictions and clear, conversational explanations illuminate essential Zen practices, such as meditation (*zazen*), work (*samu*), and eating (using *oryoki*), plus basic Zen history and iconography, altar use and setup, ceremonies, holidays, musical instruments, and vestments. Each topic is grounded in practical application. Amato writes, “Zen practice is about being in your very life, not about an ancient story that takes place in a far-off time where all conditions for practice are perfect. The conditions of your life are the perfect conditions for practice.”

Buddhist priest and poet Norman Fischer recounts a life lived in inquiry and practice in his latest book, a collection of

essays published during the course of his career (a number in *Lion's Roar*). **When You Greet Me I Bow: Notes and Reflections from a Life in Zen** (Shambhala Publications) reveals the evolution of this prolific writer and Buddhist thinker. In addition to past work—some of which has been revised—Fischer offers new commentary in the opening of each chapter as a framework for situating his past and present (and indeed ever-evolving) thinking.

Arranged thematically into four sections (relationships, emptiness, culture, and social engagement) this body of work points to the heart of practice and, ultimately, what it is to live this human life. Fischer writes, “A bow expresses our love and respect, but the space between us when we bow also expresses that we understand our aloneness, and that we can never assume we understand one another. We meet in the empty space between us. A space charged with openness, silence, and mystery.”

The Life and Zen Haiku Poetry of Santoka Taneda: Japan's Beloved Modern Haiku Poet (Tuttle Publishing) offers a rare in-depth view into the life and work of Santoka (1882–1940), an ordained Zen priest known for his innovative free-verse style of haiku and his wide-ranging travels in Japan. Compiled by Santoka's friend and biographer Oyama Sumita and now translated by William Scott Wilson, this book is a tapestry of biographical notes, journal entries, translator's notes, and poetry. “Santoka wrote that ‘haiku is the art of one's state of mind,’ and his verses reflect each and every step along his way,” observes Wilson. Interspersed throughout the book are ink brush-style paintings by Gary Miller Haskins that offer another glimpse into this monk-poet's life. An audio recording of over three hundred of Santoka's haiku—read both in Japanese and in English—is also available to readers.

“Too many of us are driven by grief rather than informed by it, allowing our fear of impermanence and powerlessness to justify our brutish disempowerment of others,” writes Breeshia Wade, in **Grieving While Black: An Antiracist Take on Oppression and Sorrow** (North Atlantic Books). Drawing on her experience as a Black Buddhist end-of-life caregiver—coupled with illuminating historical, cultural, psychological, and philosophical analyses—Wade unpacks the grief and trauma of systemic oppression and offers a profound path to justice and redemption.

“By granting each other self-determination,” writes Wade, “by seeing each person as they need to be seen as opposed to how society says they should be seen, by listening when someone says we've hurt them, and by not running from ourselves and the weight of our responsibility, we can work toward dismantling the systems that cause harm... Liberation is not a goal; it is an intentional practice.” Every page in this slim volume is a revelation. Read slowly—and more than once.

We all want to meet adversity with equanimity. We want to live purposeful lives. But how can we focus our attention on what truly matters when we are constantly surrounded by distraction? In **A Quiet Mind: Buddhist Ways to Calm the Noise in Your Head** (Orange Hippo), Jodo Shinshu priest Shoukei Matsumoto offers advice for dealing with the external—and internal—noise of everyday life. Beautifully illustrated with watercolor paintings, this book delivers guidance through personal reflection, Buddhist teachings, and relevant Japanese concepts. “It feels like life is moving faster and faster and becoming more and more competitive. To still your mind amid such confusion, slow down and feel the connections you have with all other things. Listen

for the sounds they make together in wonderful harmony and chime with them.” Matsumoto explores such topics as finding quiet time, training the mind, letting go of attachments, and walking your own path.

It's not easy housetraining a new pet—and it's not easy housetraining our minds either. Writer and illustrator Sally Devorsine introduces us to an adorable, rollicking, naughty puppy in her new children's book **Thank You, Percival** (Wisdom Publications). “No matter who we are or what we might look like on the outside,” writes Devorsine, “we all have one thing in common: a jumpy puppy *mind*.”

Based on a story told by Jigme Khyentse Nuden Durje, this delightful tale offers both a compelling, easy-to-understand metaphor for the nature of mind and some fun practices for taming it. “By training like this again and again and again, you will get used to knowing what you're doing while you are doing it and become the master of your thoughts, your words, and your actions.” Devorsine's charming illustrations, like her words, inspire reflection on our constant and love-worthy (but sometimes stinky) companion.

The final selection for this season is **River of Offerings: Twelve Journeys Following the Path of the Ganges River** (Mandala Publishing) by yoga practitioner and photographer Jennifer Prugh. In this striking collection of images and stories, Prugh details her many pilgrimages to India, and her experiences as she encounters the sacred Ganges River. With her, we bear witness to the raw truth of life and death, to profound beauty and unspeakable destruction. Prugh writes, “Through sustained attention and intention, we give ourselves to the moment or to each other fully, and then we let go, as with any offering when it meets a stream, or any river when it meets the great flow of the sea.” ○