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The Star Spangled Buddhist: Zen, Tibetan, and Soka Gakkai Buddhism and the Quest for Enlightenment in America

Jeffrey Ourvan

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“Ourvan offers a succinct but illuminating overview of Zen, Tibetan, and Soka Gakkai Buddhism."—*Publishers Weekly*

Approximately four million Americans claim to be Buddhist. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Americans of various faiths read about Buddhism, are interested in its philosophical tenets, or fashionably view themselves as Buddhists. They’re part of what’s been described as the fastest-growing religious movement in America: a large group of people dissatisfied with traditional religious offerings and thirsty for an approach to spirituality grounded in logic and consistent with scientific knowledge. *The Star-Spangled Buddhist* is a provocative look at these American Buddhists through their three largest movements in the United States: the Soka Gakkai International, Tibetan/Vajrayana Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism.

The practice of each of these American schools, unlike most traditional Asian Buddhist sects, is grounded in the notion that all people are capable of attaining enlightenment in “this lifetime.” But the differences are also profound: the spectrum of philosophical expression among these American Buddhist schools is as varied as that observed between Reformed, Orthodox, and Hasidic Judaism.

The Star-Spangled Buddhist isn’t written from the perspective of a monk or academic but rather from the view of author Jeff Ourvan, a lifelong-practicing lay Buddhist. As Ourvan explores the American Buddhist movement through its most popular schools, he arrives at a clearer understanding for himself and the reader about what it means to be—and how one might choose to be—a Buddhist in America.

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