Clarion Review

Body, Mind & Spirit

Teachers of Wisdom
Igor Roglic Kononenko
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★★★★☆
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Teachers of Wisdom, an award-winning book of biographies, commentary, and quotes, with an excellent preface, introduction, and appendix, was first published in Slovenian in 2007. Notwithstanding its poor cover art and minor typographical and grammatical errors, this valuable collection pays homage to the profound truths and breathtaking wisdom of dozens of saints and sages.

Igor Kononenko, who holds a doctorate in computer science, is a professor, researcher, author, and passionate student of metaphysics and spirituality and their relationship to science. Irena Kononenko, who holds degrees in languages and psychology, is a teacher, psychologist, and Bach flower essences therapist.

Together, the Kononenkos have compiled the biographies and ideas of wise and enlightened men and women, beginning with Rama, an Indian avatar, through contemporaries such as Eckhart Tolle, Mother Meera, and Malidoma Patrice Some. Seventy-nine figures made the final cut; more than one-third are from India, and there are only nine women. The dearth of women, the authors acknowledge, is a sad testament to the “patriarchality [sic] of practically all cultures in the (known) human history.”

Teachers of Wisdom is organized chronologically by the (sometimes estimated) birth years of the sages. Each entry is accompanied by a small likeness of the sage, and each image seems to have been carefully chosen to impart the essence of the individual. The salient facts of each teacher’s life are chronicled in a short biography, with special emphasis on their spiritual path and awakening. The Kononenkos add a movingly written extrapolation of each biography.

For example, in their tribute to Milarepa, they write, “When he passed over to Nirvana (together with his physical body) in his hermitage Chubar in Himalaya, miraculous signs appeared in the sky all over the place … Educated people read about Milarepa and, with the same attitude and love, herdsman on the mountains listened about him [sic].”

With its many hundreds of citations gathered together in one place, Teachers of Wisdom is a must-have book for anyone with a casual to all-consuming interest in spiritual matters and masters. From the well known to the obscure, each entry is a stand alone object of contemplation with the potential to guide the reader to “know the knower and all will be known,” in the words of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Patty Sutherland