



The Practice of Perfection: The Paramitas from a Zen Buddhist Perspective

By Robert Aitken

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Robert Aiken, author of *Encouraging Words* and *Taking the Path of Zen*, is America's most senior Zen Roshi. In this new book he presents the Ten Pāramitās, of Transcendental Perfections—namely, giving, mortality, forbearance, zeal, focused meditation, wisdom, compassionate means, aspiration, spiritual power, and knowledge—two-thousand-year-old ideals that can serve us as both methods and goals. The Pāramitās are the “skillful means” a person may employ to nurture and develop his or her spiritual and moral life.

In religious instruction we are often met be restrictions, and are told what *not* to do. The Pāramitās, explained from a Zen perspective, offer the seeker ten positive means of action, ten ways to live a life of clarity and grace in a modern world where neither seems easy or even possible. The transcendental perfections can lead us toward a life that is both spiritually invigorated and socially engaged.

Aitken Roshi's way of teaching—anecdotal, careful, insightful, and easily accessible—leads us further along the path of harmony and balance. Each of the inspiring and instructional essays in this book is followed by a section in which Aitken answers questions most often asked by his own students in their course of study. *The Practice of Perfection* will be useful to seekers of all cultures and faiths.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Aitken, one of the foremost teachers of Zen in the West, has written several notable books on its practice, including *Taking the Path of Zen* (Farrar, 1982), a fine introduction to the subject, as well as a translation of *The Mumonkan* (LJ 1/91), one of Zen's central collections of koans. Here he does an admirable job of exploring the meaning of the paramitas, or perfections. The paramitas, a part of all Buddhist traditions, are somewhat in the nature of guidelines or ideals, attention to which can deepen one's understanding and Buddhist practice. Aitken devotes one chapter to each of the ten perfections, giving for each several pages of background and explanation followed by a question-and-answer section transcribed from dialogs with students. This is an excellent book, geared primarily toward those with some knowledge and experience of Zen practice. A fine complement to Aitken's other works, it is highly recommended for collections with an interest in Zen.

Mark Woodhouse, Elmira Coll. Lib., N.Y.

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From [Booklist](#)

Based in Honolulu, Aitken is the most senior American Zen master and an author and translator of books on Zen, especially the practice of lay Buddhism in the West. Here he explicates the 10 *paramitas* ("perfections," or guides to conduct) of Mahayana Buddhism. Each discussion is followed by responses to his students' most-asked questions, addressing not only the topic at hand, but also the role of the teacher, the transformation of the self through sitting meditation (*zazen*), koan study, and the Mahayana tradition of responsibility for the welfare of others. Though known as a rigorous and traditional Zen master of both Rinzai and Soto lineages, Aitken calls the *paramitas* "inspirations, not fixed rules" and eschews perfectionism. This will be a good companion to *The Mind of Clover* (1984), Aitken's beautifully written exploration of Zen's Ten Grave Precepts (the uniquely Buddhist commandments). Both will appeal to those interested in Buddhist practice and ethics and, more broadly, to those who look to books for help with that perennial question: how to live. Glossary and extensive notes follow the text. *Penny Spokes*

From the Inside Flap

America's most senior Zen Roshi presents the "Transcendental Perfections": Giving, Morality, Patience, Zeal, Meditation, Wisdom, Compassion, Aspiration, Spiritual Power, and Knowledge. These 2,000-year-old ideas serve as both methods and goals to develop one's spiritual and moral life. Includes question and answer sections.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Emmanuel Young:

This The Practice of Perfection: The Paramitas from a Zen Buddhist Perspective is great publication for you because the content which can be full of information for you who all always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it facts accurately using great manage word or we can point out no rambling sentences inside it. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but hard core information with

lovely delivering sentences. Having The Practice of Perfection: The Paramitas from a Zen Buddhist Perspective in your hand like obtaining the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous 1. We can say that no publication that offer you world throughout ten or fifteen second right but this guide already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt in which?

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Robert Beaubien:

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