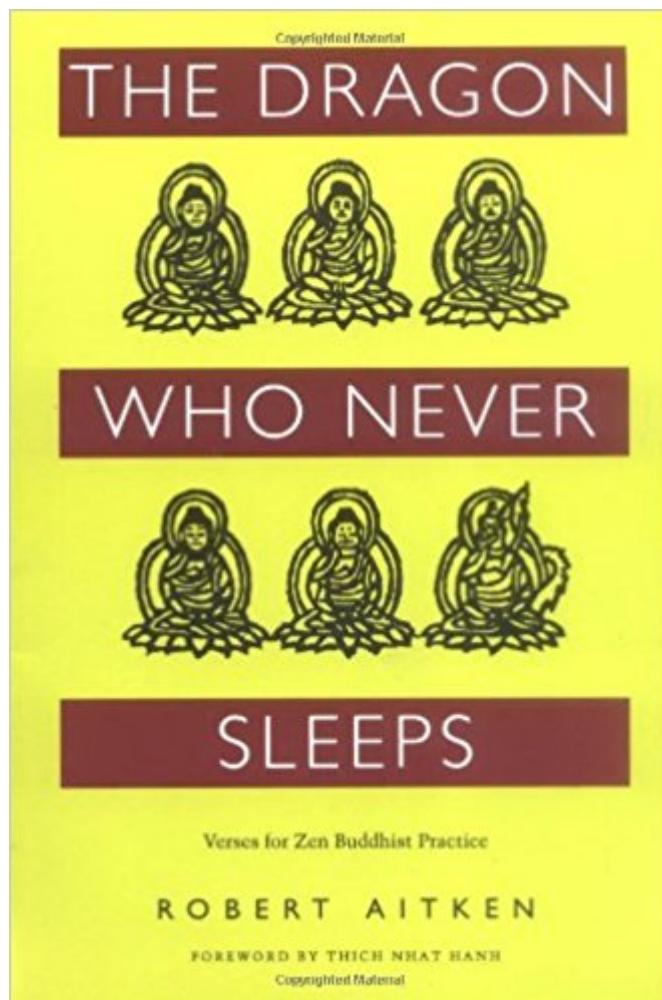


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The Dragon Who Never Sleeps: Verses For Zen Buddhist Practice



Synopsis

The Dragon Who Never Sleeps is a collection of gathas-poetic vows for daily living in verse form-that are similar to prayers. Reciting these gathas can help us to face life's difficulties with understanding and humor. They serve as gentle reminders to live in the present, accept ourselves, and offer joy to others.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Aitken was for many years the head teacher at the Diamond Sangha, a Zen Buddhist community in Honolulu. First coming in contact with Zen in 1944 while a civilian internee in Japan, Roshi continues his practice today in retreat in Puna of Hawaii. The book we have here is a wonderful accent to our daily practice of zazen. "The Dragon Who Never Sleeps" is a compilation of gathas, basically short axioms that help us all stay more focused in our life. With an openness and sincere commitment to help all beings, Aitken Roshi succeeded in this book to bring forth a sense of authenticity and everyday wisdom. Read this work first thing in the morning before sitting in zazen, then perhaps recite it periodically as the day goes by. These sayings help to settle a mind which is adrift instead of clear, while ironically once clarity is realized then the mind being adrift is no longer oppositional; so long as you realize it's adrift that's enough. This book furthers our Great Vow, or the way of the bodhisattva. Through reading it with a sincerity to hear instead of already knowing, this work will open the heart that is naturally present within us all. I will end the review with a wonderful gatha in this book written by Aitken Roshi:"Whenever I'm feeling discouraged I vow with

all beings to remember how Ling-yun saw peach trees bloom after thirty hard years."Great book!

I ordered a copy of The Dragon Who Never Sleeps: Verses for Zen Buddhist Practice to get more perspective on Zen practice. In this book Robert Aitken has helped me get past a barrier I had erected for myself: I was seriously overly-intellectualizing almost every aspect of practice. This fun little book shows how mindful practice can be just as simple or complicated as we want it to be, merely by presenting a wide range of "gathas" (prayers or vows). In some, Aitken Roshi shows his deep grasp of the misery of the world, pointing us toward broadening our awareness. Other gathas are silly, almost trivial, but point out how even commonplace events merit our careful attention. I recommend this book most highly to people who want to loosen up their practice a bit. One can be serious about practice without beating all the fun out of it.

Any of the many books written by this wonderful human being will offer insight and solace to the serious Zen practitioner. While all of Aitken Roshi's works are quiet and so very humble, the subtle impact of his wisdom and clarity slowly becomes obvious as the reader delves deeper into his ideas. The Dragon Who Never Sleeps is just such a work. This copy I purchased for one of my students (my own copy is nestled carefully in my Zen library). I recommend this book (and ALL of his others) without hesitation.

Small verses that take you straight back to the practice:"When I'm left with nothing to sayI vow with all beings to rest content in the knowledge there is really nothing to say".

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