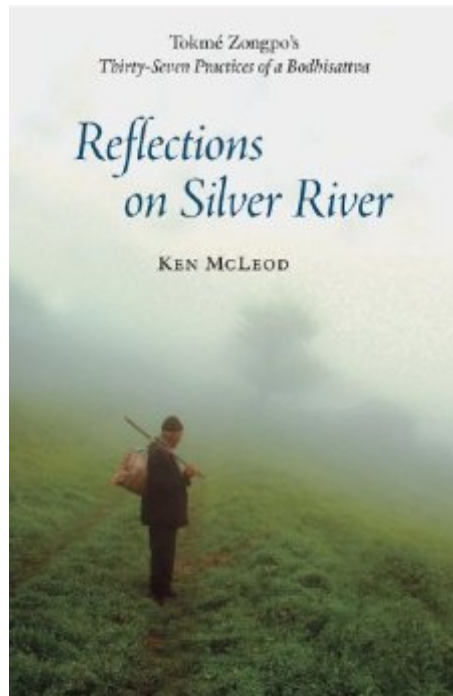


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Reflections On Silver River: Tokme Zongpo's Thirty-Seven Practices Of A Bodhisattva



Synopsis

Reflections on Silver River consists of a new translation of Tokmeḽ• Zongpo's Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva and a verse-by-verse commentary. In just thirty-seven verses, Tokmeḽ• Zongpo summarizes the bodhisattva path. While this revered and loved text from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition has been translated many times, Ken McLeod's plain and simple English beautifully reflects the simplicity and directness of the original Tibetan. McLeod's commentary is full of striking images, provocative questions and inspiring descriptions of what it means to be awake and present in your life. Practical instruction, brief and to the point, is found in each of the verse commentaries, providing straightforward responses to the question, "How do I practice this?" McLeod is clearly writing from his own experience. Yet, instead of anecdotes and personal history, he challenges the reader to engage various scenarios, and consider for ourselves how compassion, clarity, presence and balance could take expression in his or her life. This masterful translation and commentary shine the light of wisdom on the challenges of contemporary life and illuminate a path the modern reader can tread to freedom, peace and understanding. Reflections on Silver River has three parts. The first is an informative introduction to the text and to Tokmeḽ• Zongpo. The introduction is followed by the translation of Tokmeḽ• Zongpo's Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva. The third section is the main part of the book, a traditional verse-by-verse commentary. At less than 200 pages, Reflections on Silver River is a highly accessible introduction to Tibetan Buddhist practice as well as a valuable resource for the experienced practitioner, regardless of his or her tradition of training. McLeod himself is a teacher, translator, author and business consultant. He pioneered one-on-one meditation instruction, has taught numerous retreats and classes, published a highly regarded translation of Mahayana mind-training under the title The Great Path of Awakening, wrote an encyclopedic treatment of meditation practice in Wake Up to Your Life, and composed a poetic and evocative commentary on the Heart Sutra in An Arrow to the Heart.

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Customer Reviews

I am nowadays reluctant to open the pages of traditional Tibetan teachings. They ring with superlatives, and talk too easily of perfection and wonders. Ken McLeod's translation and commentary on the thirty-seven practices of the bodhisattva does none of that. His writing is raw, a plain example of how to negotiate life with dignity rather than pride, with questions rather than answers, with humanity rather than sainthood. He demonstrates the fragility of self-knowledge and the grace of striving in the face of emptiness and death. Many have been drawn to the 'esoteric' teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. Doctrines and practices are handed down by secret initiation among an exclusive class. There are dire warnings. It's exciting, but intimidating. What happens if you don't get it right? At the other end of the Buddhist scale lie the teachings of a man who walked the roads of North India at about the same time literature was being invented in Greece. He questioned life itself, not as a concept but as a painful experience. His way diverged from the philosophers, soothsayers and religious teachers of his time. Rather than perfecting practices and following rules, the Buddha exemplified the way of self-knowledge. In this book by a lifelong Buddhist practitioner we are not instructed on what is correct. No secret knowledge is revealed. Instead, the author exposes his fears, doubts and qualms. He uses his own disappointments and pain to explore the cryptic, ambiguous verses of the fourteenth century Tibetan monk Tokmé Zongpo. This book offers glimpses of a very human Tokmé Zongpo, not the holy Tibetan lama who never made a misstep. I relate to it personally, a little differently each time I pick it up.

Ken McLeod is one of the few western teachers in a position to be able to offer an authentic translation and commentary on this wonderful Tibetan text. His pragmatic approach to traditional

teachings and 40+ years of experience as a Buddhist teacher and student are very much in evidence here. Togme Zangpo's '37 Practices of a Bodhisattva' is a less well known text than 'Seven Points for Training the Mind' or 'Eight Verses on Mind Training' but is very much part of the same lojong (mind training) tradition. Beginning with traditional warnings against wasting our precious human life and the dangers of attachment, Togme Zangpo continues by setting out how a bodhisattva ('awakened being') should behave and his advice is no less relevant to today's world than it was in 14th century Tibet. Being a lojong text, '37 Practices' goes on to explain how to deal with anger and criticism from others and transform these into loving kindness and a wish to free all beings from suffering. The final verse summarises this aim: To dispel the suffering of beings without limit, With wisdom freed from the three spheres Direct all the goodness generated by these efforts To awakening â" this is the practice of a bodhisattva. Ken McLeod's commentary goes straight to the heart of the matter with examples that speak to our own lives as they are today, while diluting none of the message from the original text. He offers practice advice on how to use the difficult areas of life as part of the path and the same straightforward and no-nonsense approach to the teachings evident in his earlier work 'Wake Up to Your Life'.

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