

Manly Palmer Hall

**THE TEACHINGS OF THE
GLORIOUS BUDDHA**

PART ONE

BUDDHA THE FRIEND OF MAN

There is no character more sublime among all the servants of humankind than that of Lord Sakyamuni, who has justly earned the title of "The Light of Asia." It would be fitting for all nations and races to be educated in respect for those selfless and compassionate beings who renounced the life they cherished and went forth to defend the cause of their fellow human beings before the Divine.

The Christian world, fragmented by so many religious and racial barriers, often disdains the philosophical doctrines of the Far East. It fails to recognize that great minds are not the exclusive domain of any one country, but belong to all humanity. In the inscrutable and unknown East shines a light that has dispelled the spiritual darkness of hundreds of millions of people. We cannot afford to ignore this glorious light.

Buddhist teaching is the most widespread the world has ever known, and it is said that its adherents number half of all living humanity. It is therefore fitting, in this cultured age, that we have at our disposal all possible information concerning the most difficult of all sciences: the science of living. Gautama Buddha was a master of the art of living, and his penetrating, logical, and reasonable perspective on life and its responsibilities will be very useful in correcting current customs that bind the minds of humankind.

God acts in diverse ways, through many means and in many places, but if ever there was anyone through whom the Almighty worked for the cause of human understanding, it was the compassionate Lord of the Lotus. The Buddha's teachings, full of simple truths and sound deductions, in no way contradict the principles of Christianity; on the contrary, they help the Western world in its great task of studying its own scriptures.

Studying the condition of the great prince Siddhartha, upon whom—or rather, within whom—the golden powers of Buddhahood descended, or rather, developed, we discover that we are facing a twofold mystery. First, we have the historical individual; we find him fighting against the religious intolerance of his time, becoming a champion of the common man, and offering the same hope of immortality to the humble and the powerful alike. Second, and parallel to this, we have the cosmic myth related to a grand chain of celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, of whom the humble pilgrim in golden robes was the twenty-ninth. While there is little doubt that he actually lived, the true mystery of Lord Gautama and his pilgrimage in search of wisdom lies in the spiritual interpretation of the historical allegory. The wondrous initiate, who won the golden mantle of immortality through his sincerity and devotion, demonstrated the infinite possibilities latent in the evolving consciousness of every being.

Jesus is often referred to as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and it is interesting to note that the Buddha is also given the complementary title of Sakyashina, which means "lion".

The life of the Buddha is a remarkable tale of altruism, service, and lofty ideals. He was the son of a king, surrounded by luxury, all of which he renounced to become a mendicant pilgrim seeking answers to the questions of human destiny. It is said that in his youth, seeing so much misery around him, he decided to dedicate his life to finding answers to the three great questions: Where do we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? This decision was the result of four remarkable events.

which some accept as literally actual events and which others describe as visions that were made to him so that he would not forget the great ministry for which he came into

the world.

The first of these mysterious events compelled him to focus his attention on the problem of old age, sickness, and death. "Why do we grow old?" he asked; but no one could answer him. "What is the origin of sickness, which suddenly and without apparent reason withers life and deprives man of even temporary happiness? What is that silent, cold form lying on the deathbed? Does consciousness die there? Is death the end of everything, or is it a liberation, a portal opening to another mansion beyond?" The young prince pondered these questions deeply, but could find no answer. Then came the fourth vision, revealing to him the image of a saint, with a peaceful and calm countenance, possessing the certainty of immortality in his soul. Thus, the prince was shown, through the example of the humble beggar, that peace and understanding were true happiness.

Driven by the great needs of humankind, the Prince of India quietly left his palace and, abandoning all earthly attachments, journeyed poor and alone through the mountains and valleys of Hindustan, questioning all who came into contact with him to see if they could shed any light on the mystery of human life. He never received an answer. The wise men argued and philosophized about many things, but none could unravel the knot of human destiny. He mortified his flesh, and through his ascetic austerities, he gained a great reputation for holiness. He prayed, fasted, and traveled surrounded by disciples who adored him for his tireless zeal and remarkable courage. Finally, weakened by nakedness, tormented by severe asceticism, and malnourished, his body gave way, and suddenly the young pilgrim realized that all his fervor and self-mortification had gotten him nowhere, that he was as far from the solution as when he lived idly in his father's palace.

As a result of this frank dialogue with himself, Gautama asked for food and ate it with relish. Immediately his disciples abandoned him, and the idol of India collapsed from its throne. The great saint had eaten like a sinner. Abandoned and beset by uncertainty, he continued walking, tempted by the demons of the lower worlds and weakened by the recognition of his own failure.

Finally, weak and abandoned, Gautama took refuge beneath the broad branches of the Bodhi tree, where he resolved to remain until he had definitively resolved the problems that tormented him. Slowly, as the hours passed, a great peace descended upon him. His mind, no longer gripped by anguish and doubt, became enlightened. Gradually, he rose above the worlds of space and was thus able to clearly grasp the entire drama of human existence; he saw both the causes of things and their remedy. The demons that had tormented him until then bowed before him in reverent worship. All of Nature rejoiced. The gods bestowed their blessings, and the World Teacher was ordained for his ministry. It was then that Prince Gautama became Lord Buddha. Perfect in wisdom and understanding, free from the veil of illusion, he rose from his seat beneath the Bodhi tree and set out to preach the gospel of liberation. Passing through ancient Varanasi, he stopped at the village of Sarnath, where he encountered five of the disciples who had abandoned him. He persuaded them to listen to him, and there, on a small hill surrounded by those five, the Lord Buddha preached his first sermon and made the first five converts to what would later become the most widespread religion in the world. For a period of more than forty-five years, he preached the gospel of enlightenment, which he called the Doctrine of Dharma.

The philosophy of the Middle Way. He condemned all extremes; he abolished the mortification of the flesh and instructed his disciples in a magnificent moral philosophy, which is as valid today as the day it was first preached. He set in motion the turning of the wheel of law and is today recognized as one of the world's great benefactors. Finally, after more than eighty years of service to humanity, he left this world, surrounded by his disciples, his last words being:

"I now depart for Nirvana; I leave you my precepts. The elements of the All-Wise One will disintegrate, but the Three Gems will endure. Monks, I tell you that, since the parts and powers of man are to be dissolved, you must work diligently for your salvation."

(The three Gems are: the life of the Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha, and the Order of the Buddha).

Thus ended the earthly existence of one of the most wondrous souls ever to strive to liberate humankind from the constraints of ignorance, a soul who lived and entrusted his life to the philosophy in which he had taught others. The Buddha lived to see the religion founded upon his doctrine attain a position of influence and power. It is said that he himself cremated his own body on the funeral pyre after all attempts to ignite it failed; his ashes, divided into eighty thousand pieces by Emperor Ashoka, were carried to all corners of the known world, and to contain them, those who loved his teachings erected magnificent monuments, dagobas, and towers.

That is enough regarding man, and let us now consider the spirit of Buddhism, much older and more intricate than the humble being who manifested it among men.

Buddha, the Compassionate One, who, having mastered the lower desires for life, opened within himself the Buddhic Eye, as recounted in the legend of the Bodhi tree, finally established that two great laws were the true key to the mystery of being, and these have come down to us as the Law of Reincarnation and the Law of Karma. It is said of the Buddha himself that he remembered more than five hundred of his previous earthly lives. On the walls of one of his temples in Java, there is a series of reliefs carved into the rock that are believed to depict all his appearances on earth from the time when he was a sea turtle. His disciples so enjoyed pointing out his great and sincere devotion to others that they even considered him a friend of humankind in his turtle incarnation, describing him guiding a group of shipwrecked sailors to shore. Few have earned the title of "Friend of Humanity," but in the East no one disputes Lord Buddha's right to be called the great humanitarian, the great religious reformer and servant of humanity.

Buddhists teach that the life of a great liberator typifies a set of specific spiritual processes that occur in the human body and certain aspects of our ever-evolving consciousness. It has been assumed that all the demigods and celestial beings of the ancient world not only personified great forces of Nature, but also certain fixed principles in the constitution of the human soul. The Buddha symbolizes the effort and pilgrimage of every seeker of truth, and also the inner spiritual consciousness in its search for its lost throne, from which it will one day govern the nature of humankind.

The human spirit is like a humble, wandering beggar, seeking wisdom on the surface of the lower worlds, ascending with its gaze fixed on the high snowy peaks, holding its alms dish or lota, not to collect coins but those waters of life that are essential for the growth of the soul.

We are told that when the Buddha wandered about, destitute and alone, Needing clothing, he entered a cemetery and took the tattered shroud of a corpse, made of yellow cloth. In the East, the yellow robe is widespread and has become universally accepted as the garment of the Buddhist monk. A vast organization has adopted as its symbol the shroud that the Master took from the dead man, and thus arose the Brotherhood of the Yellow Robe, in honor of the beloved Master, whose members feel uplifted and inspired by the privilege of wearing a garment copied from the one the Lord Buddha had taken from the cemetery. More than one Eastern mystic aspires to become worthy of wearing such a garment. Meanwhile, he prepares for that great day, and wandering through unknown lands, we also find him with his braid, which he uses to fasten his robe or which, encircling his neck, descends to his heart. Because he is a mystic, he sometimes climbs that mystic rope, much stronger than any of his braids,

which is composed of his spirit, his mind, and his body, intertwined in a single rope strong enough to support his consciousness as he ascends, leaving behind the ruined temple of the lesser man.

The yellow cloak represents the transformed life energies which, radiating through the vital body, form around it a halo of golden light. No Christian will ever be too good to wear a golden garment like the one the Buddha earned the right to wear, for the yellow cloak symbolizes the luminous aura that Christians paint around the head and body of their saints, the bridal garment of which Saint Paul spoke. We are all princes of India, regardless of nationality or creed, and each of us will one day leave the kingdom of the earth, just as Lord Buddha did, to go in search of that eternal light which is the life of humankind.

Beyond the lower nature of man, beyond that part of his constitution that always craves comfort, the gratification of its desires, and chases after fleeting happiness, there exists a realm for which we must all renounce the dominance of that lower nature. We will not abandon our worldliness out of obligation, but because we will discover that there is something more important, something more permanent, and more desirable. One day, like the young prince, we will perceive the wretched and sorrowful fate of those trapped in the lower worlds and feel the need to cast aside these things and seek eternal treasures. Then we too will abandon the regal garb of materialism and begin our pilgrimage to the high peaks that lead to the mansions of the Adepts, amidst the precipices of the Himalayas. We too will read the message of the lotus, and having seen the glory of its open flowers, we will recognize that we are but buds awaiting the time when they will blossom with the glory of awakened consciousness.

Thus, the Buddha, not yet baptized by the magnificent power of true spiritual enlightenment, sought, under every clime and across every region, the answer to the problem of human consciousness. Wandering through the caves of northern India, he went from one adept to another, but his search was in vain, until finally, within himself, he found the answer to the eternal question. His own body, purified by prayer and meditation—which in this sphere of consciousness is service and daily mastery of problems—had become so ethereal that it radiated the golden inner light of the spirit and appeared adorned in garments no king could buy. The great eye—the esoteric duplicate of the physical organs—opened, and he was given to see the answer to every human problem; answers that evidenced the divine omnipotence and all-encompassing guidance of a just and merciful God.

The same will happen to every individual when he—or rather, his focus of Consciousness—resting beneath the Bodhi tree of your spine—masters the ethereal and tempting forms that come to break your silence. Then, your consciousness freed from the lower bodies and the eye of the spirit opened after its pilgrimage, you will see the grand plan within which your being exists. Millions of years ago, when the initial wave of life first stirred upon our planet, we beheld the manifestation of an eternal pilgrimage that, millions of years later, continued through forms we could not recognize; and millions of years to come, we will still be justifying the eternal pilgrim, seeking greater and fuller understanding. The opening of each new eye brings us the certainty of others still dormant, and the development of each new faculty shows us even more clearly the vast number of faculties still latent.

It is said that the Buddha was called the lion. The lion is the king of animals, and for many centuries all members of the cat family, to which the lion belongs, have been considered sacred. There are two reasons for this. The first is that when a cat lies curled up, usually with its head touching its tail, and considering the special magnetic currents that circulate through a cat's body, it was imagined as a symbol of the universe and the

spiritual currents that move around and through it. Hence, the feline family was considered sacred by the Egyptian priests of Bubastis, especially calico cats. The second reason for their veneration is the ability attributed to all cats to see in the dark, thus symbolizing spiritual vision, capable of seeing into the darkness of the lower worlds. There is a third reason why both the Buddha and Christ were called lions; The lion is the symbol of courage, and those who lack courage soon abandon the great struggle for spiritual enlightenment.

The statues and images of Buddha that can be seen today in shop windows usually depict the Lotus Lord with a small golden bead on his forehead, between his eyes. This symbolizes the active center of spiritual consciousness, or the divine spark within man, located in the frontal lobe, between the physical eyes, just above the bridge of the nose. Many images also contain symbols worth studying; for example, the beautiful buds and flowers embroidered on his garments, which undoubtedly represent the spiritual centers, activated and rotating within his aura. In many statues, one of the Buddha's hands points upward and the other downward. One of the most famous paintings depicting Plato and Aristotle shows one of the philosophers pointing to the heavens and saying, "We were born of heaven," and the other, pointing downwards, replying, "We were born of earth." In the Buddha, the balance between these two attitudes and the Middle Way is symbolized by his hands, one reaching upward and the other downward. In other images, we see him with his hands forming a wide circle on his lap, and his feet crossed beneath them. This symbolizes the completion of the two great energy circuits operating within the human body, both forming the figure eight, or the strange shape traced by nature on the head of a cobra.

Although Gautama left this earth centuries ago, there is little doubt that the adherents of his religion outnumber those of any other. In recent years, numerous Christians have embraced the Buddhist faith as a result of a more authentic understanding, for the average person does not realize that Christianity, as a doctrine, includes all other religions. Much of the breadth of Christianity has been lost through the narrowness of some who call themselves Christians, but the time will come when every student of the truth will rejoice in finding it everywhere.

You will understand that the knowledge a Christian can gain from the religions that preceded their own, if used properly, will help them to be a better Christian. In the teachings of all the Enlightened Ones, you will find many connections that have been omitted, or rather, obscured by narrow-minded individuals, and without which Christianity is far too complicated for the average person. The Buddha was one of the children of the Great Light; he was sent by the Great White Brotherhood to work among humankind. He faithfully fulfilled his task as a messenger of the powers of light, and, regardless of creed or doctrine, everyone should pay homage to such altruistic beings who have worked for their betterment. Few have renounced so much in the name of Truth as Prince Siddhartha, and in his teachings, he expounded, without reservation or fear, the truths in which he believed. Just as Jesus tore the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem and revealed to all humanity the mysteries of creation, so too did the great Buddha, the Light of Asia, tear the veil of the Temple of Brahman and bring to the poor and humble, to the Shudras and the slaves, those truths which have now spread over more than three-quarters of the known world. The East loves him for all the good he did, opening the gates of immortality to the poor and humble, transforming the cycle of slavery into a cycle of progress. In times past, Buddhist priests traveled to Burma, Korea, Japan, China, Java, Siam, and many other countries, spreading the doctrine of compassion and brotherhood among millions of suffering souls. Instead of converting with the sword, Buddhism expanded by converting through love and proved that things can grow in peace and prosper through cooperation, and its faith is integrated with a

series of educational doctrines that help men develop their own still-latent faculties.

Each of us should feel what a wonderful thing it is to be able to help those who suffer. Today we are still the pilgrims, the mendicants, struggling in life in search of truth; we are where Gautama stood at the time of his great renunciation; before us lie the two paths, the path of selfishness and the path of self-denial, and in the middle of them stands the Lord Buddha, the radiant teacher of the Middle Way, who wisely positioned himself between these two harmful extremes, practicing detachment and moderation. What then will our choice be?

The Great White Brotherhood, the School of the Great Masters, acts upon man through his fellow men, not through angels from heaven, and by dedicating our lives to the service of our neighbors we become potential channels for the transmission of good, allowing the power of light to make use of us.

The more we improve ourselves and develop our latent potential, guided by that motto and purpose of service, the closer the day will be when the spirit of Christ or Buddha descends upon us and, from unconscious channels, we become conscious vehicles for spreading truth among those hungry for it throughout the world. We must accomplish this dissemination of wisdom by employing the faculties we have developed throughout our journey.

When we think of that Master of Adepts, let us see ourselves in Him, clothed in the garments of a beggar, striving to exchange the garments of our lower bodies for the golden robe of Buddhahood, which we will have begun to weave from the moment we are freed from the mortal power of illusion. Let us understand that, like the Prince of India, we must carry our little beggar's bowl, eternally asking for alms, crying out for guidance, strength, and truth, and praying that we may gather into the small cup of our soul, and preserve there for the glory of God, the vital energies and forces that we now

We waste money recklessly in the midst of uncertainty.

PART TWO

THE FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is founded on the doctrine that ignorance is the cause of all the world's misery, and that only self-knowledge and awareness of one's relationship to the Great Plan can combat this ignorance. The Buddha taught that sin and injustice arise from ignorance. If humankind could see clearly, it would act rightly, but its clouded vision destroys the impulse to act and think rightly, which are absolutely necessary for an intelligent life and true spirituality. The Buddha's gods were god-men, human beings who rose above the ignorance of the race and who, settled on high peaks, contemplated the splendor of life with that fullness which ennobles all things, while humankind, dwelling in the valleys, sees so little that everything seems wrong.

The Four Noble Truths concerning wisdom and ignorance deserve the most careful consideration. Buddha condemned existence as the cause of all the miseries of the world. By existence, He meant that individual separateness in which one life is temporarily dissociated from the life of the Whole and becomes many lives. These, no longer perceiving their original and essential unity, cause, in their blind ignorance, the sins and sufferings of the world. Therefore, the first of the Noble Truths is:

"To exist as a separate personality condemns one to suffering and pain." The first form of suffering could be characterized as the yearning of isolated parts to know the whole of which they are a part. The composite vehicle in which man lives consists of various bodies and centers of sensation and consciousness. The Buddha taught that all the fruits of sensation were sorrows, and for this reason he called misery *Asrava*, which means "excretions from the world of sensation." Every day we see around us the fruits reaped by those who desire what they should not and cannot have, as well as the results of their tendency to shirk the responsibilities they should assume. We know that in most cases, man's desires and appetites are the cause of his own misfortune. The Buddha also taught that man's desire for possession was his greatest enemy, because the thought and desire to accumulate lead him astray from reason and intelligence. Thus we arrive at the second of the Four Noble Truths:

"The ultimate cause of misery is the desire to possess and hold onto what one possesses." Being attached to something implies suffering at the moment of its loss, and despising or hating something will bring the displeasure of its proximity. The desire to possess something beyond our normal reach is to become psychologically criminal and can lead to theft, rape, or murder. Valuing something is the starting point of the desire to possess it; this is why the Buddha taught to value only right knowledge, which alone is capable of proving the futility of everything else. When the soul understands the futility and transience of possessions, it will be freed from desire, and having been freed from desire, it will have escaped the net that the king of death casts to enslave human souls. This leads us to the understanding of the third of the Four Noble Truths:

"Liberation from pain is achieved by discarding all desires except the desire for right knowledge."

At the same time, we will understand that attachment is the cause of the fear of death, and when a person is not identified with their body, its fluctuations will leave them undisturbed, whereas if they love it, they will weep at its death, and if they hate it, they will weep at its arrival. As long as their eyes are capable of tears, their soul is not yet mature enough for wisdom. As long as they are capable of accumulating or distributing,

they are incapable of wisdom. As long as they value something above all else, they are unfit for wisdom, because perfect self-control is the Middle Way between joy and sorrow, between love and hate, between life and death. The Middle Way is the Buddha's Path. In order to tread this Middle Way, we must understand the Fourth Noble Truth:

"The Path of liberation and the cessation of all opposites is the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of immortality."

The oldest precepts of Buddhism state that no harm should be done to anyone, that all good should be favored and developed and all virtue fostered, that the mind, with its multiple and complex functions, should be brought under complete control, and that this is the path to reach Buddhahood.

There is a whole grand philosophy underlying these prescriptions, based on certain fundamental concepts. The first of these is that life, as we see it around us, does not represent the totality of existence. Existence bears the same relationship to life as time does to eternity. Time can be established at any point in eternity, but eternity will always be the sum.

of time. Similarly, existence can be established in life, but life is the sum of existence. Existence is unreal; life is real. The only thing capable of judging the smallness of existence is the greatness of life. The Buddha was an evolutionist. His gods were gods in growth. He never argued about the First Cause. The souls he served were souls that were growing. The spirits he assisted were spirits in development. He taught that evolution was the process of existence reabsorbing into life and that the greatest of all conquests was to reach Nirvana, in which the past, present, and future are absorbed into the eternal now. The Buddha also taught that attachment to existence prevents unity with life, that evil was everything that hindered the return of the parts to their primordial source.

The Buddha saw that there were two paths, one for the ignorant, forced to spin bound to the Wheel of Life and Death in its narrowest sense; and the other, for the wise, who, through self-knowledge and self-mastery, could free himself from the embers to which the ignorant cling in agony, and could thus find the Middle Way which, like the eternal now, separates the dead yesterday from the unborn tomorrow.

This was the philosophy of the Glorious Buddha, the philosophy of discarding everything so that the soul could gain everything. He taught that the desire for something requires sacrificing valuable treasures to secure the desired object, which was probably of little value and which we value simply by desiring it. For this very reason, desire destroys the sense of value, since desire places worldly conquests above those of wisdom and personalities above principles. Hence, the Buddha gathered the legions of logic and common sense and attacked the stronghold of desire, preaching that man was destroyed by his desires, that his soul was buried beneath his accumulations, and that his spirit was a slave to the garish trinkets with which he had surrounded himself. He taught that the rich have no rest, for they must sleep upon their bags of money with their swords in hand to defend them, and the poor have no rest either, for they are always annihilated in their attempt to steal wealth from the rich man's hoard. In the dissolution of the universe they will be seeing the void over which they argued, understanding that they had become attached to their possessions and that, having built nothing within, they lacked anything with which to face eternity.

The Buddha believed in law, fixed and immutable. Nature, as he understood it, was good, growing free from desire, which was his symbol of all evil. Hence, Nature, being impersonal, tolerates no whims and pays no attention to whether those it crushes in the eternal turning of its mechanism are saints or sinners. The Buddha promised no vicarious atonement to his followers, teaching that whatever God was, he loved all things equally and was far from being indulgent toward the whims of humankind.

He understood that this globe we live on and the worlds we know exist only for an

instant in space, that everything visible is constantly changing, and that, certainly, what flourishes today will wither tomorrow. Like the Brahmins who came before him, he symbolized the world as a turbulent ocean upon which humanity stays afloat in small boats battered by the winds, each trying to steer their vessel toward some particular port. It is useless to try to form an idea of a wave because before you finish its image, it will have changed and disappeared. So it is with living things. It would be useless to try to place a sign on the sea because there is nothing fixed on which to place it. The sea is life, as we see it, ever-changing, never repeating itself. Whoever tries to follow its patterns will have as many within themselves as the sea. Whoever seeks something permanent in it will be chasing an unattainable will-o'-the-wisp. Just as Jesus walked on water, so too did the Buddha teach his disciples to stand firm upon the waves, and through the clear dispassion of their minds to serve the permanent in all things and not be led astray by the white foam and the breaking waves that, like all human endeavors, remain for an instant at the crest and then are swallowed up to the bottom of the sea. Sovereign over ceaseless change, permanent, unmoved, the Buddha sat in meditation, for perfect peace and tranquility were the symbol of his attainment. Surrounded by a multitude of things, he remained conscious of only one: the eternity and permanence of his immortal spirit.

Scattered throughout the East are statues of the Buddha meditating. His serene, magnificent, and expressionless face gazes down from high altars, dimly visible through the latticework of temple windows. One hundred thousand, a million images, large and small, new and old, some adorned and jeweled, others crumbling and overgrown with weeds, but always with the same expression, a wondrous and impassive countenance, in whose serene lines lie all expressions. Many Buddhist empires have crumbled, and millions of their statues have been felled by the merciless savagery of humankind. Seismic cataclysms have toppled the magnificent images, leaving them half-buried. Their temples have been burned down upon them and their monks exiled, but still the great face radiates peace, unaltered, unmoved, indifferent to the ebb and flow of things, and speaks more powerfully than words to the spirit of faith.

If Western men could know the Buddha's path to immortality, if only discord, agitation, and ceaseless confusion could give way to the peace and dignity of his ancient path, we would live much longer and accomplish much more. But the Western world is dominated by its desires; it lives only for its material senses; it deifies illusion; every soul has its price in gold and silver, and children are raised as unfeeling machines destined to bring the process of accumulation to its culmination. Never more than today do we need his teachings, which showed his disciples the fallacy of worldly pursuits, that happiness derives only from wisdom, and that peace is merely a byproduct, one of the many virtues resulting from right living and only from it. We live in a world of cycles, and at certain intervals, what has happened before is recapitulated. Someday we will recognize the necessity of self-control, and then We will remember more fondly than we do now the one who suffered so much and worked so sincerely to transmit that knowledge to the world. The Buddha's is the good law, because He says:

“He who is not happy with little will not be happy with much; he who does not appreciate the small will not be able to take care of the great; he for whom enough is not enough is outside the realm of virtue, for the physical body lives from one day to the next and if it is provided with what it really needs there will still be time for meditation, whereas if it is a matter of giving it everything it wants, 'the task would be endless.'”

The Buddha teaches his disciples to live not just for the day but for that great day when lives will seem brief and births and deaths like the swing of a pendulum, when their vices will eternally challenge their souls unless rectified; to be humble, simple, modest in all things, affectionate to all, not only to human beings but also to flowers and animals; to care for and serve every manifestation of life, that life persists upon life, and that therefore life owes a debt to life; that those who die so that others may live do not die in vain, but those who live upon them will use that freely given life to serve the one life that

gave everything.

H. G. Wells took the great Buddha, stripped him of his diadems, removed his golden robes, and deprived Faith of its later additions, presenting the Buddha as he truly was: the simple pilgrim, the loving, selfless heart, who wandered the world with his three great questions, fully aware that until they were answered, humankind could neither help itself nor cooperate with the plan that existence had given it. The answers he gave were:

Where do we come from? From the past, from what we have done before, from unfinished tasks, from the incomplete effects of our past vices and virtues, from the sins of our flesh, from the darkness of our ignorance, from the chain of lives that lifts us from the mire and filth, from the beginning of things, from faith in Dharma, from the fall of things into separateness, from the diversification of the One, carrying from life to life the burden of the past always with us, forming a strange group guided by the demon of Desire, of our faults and falls, dancing around our tortured souls. Thus we arrive in the present, bringing with us the virtues and vices of the past, impelled by the perpetual law from ignorance toward the unity of wisdom.

Why are we here? As a consequence of the past, for the past gives rise to the present, and from the present, the future is born. We are here to finish, or at least continue, the tasks we left unfinished from the beginning of things. We have been brought here by our joys and sorrows, and most of us have been led here by our desires. And here we will remain until the last of them has died, until the last possession has been relinquished, until the last fragment of personality we have carried with us returns to the great All from which it came. If we are born ignorant, we accumulate; if we are born wise, we share. For the wise person, the life lived here is an opportunity to rid themselves of the burden they have accumulated in the past, to be free of their opinions and viewpoints, their conceptions of life and death, and to leave all that behind in order to begin treading the Middle Way. Before the gateway to the future, the path forks: one leads to Nirvana, and it is the noble path of realization; The other retreats and deviates further and further until the spirit learns its lesson and decides to tread the Middle Path.

Where are we going? We are going to face what we have deserved, to encounter the effects of the causes we promoted. Those whose work has been incomplete will only roll around the periphery of the wheel to return and complete their tasks.

In contrast, those few who have trod the path of balance that leads to Nirvana, where, their actions exhausted, beings reunite with the Uncaused Cause from which they came, go to await the new destiny that the Creator deems appropriate to assign them. It is said that the Lord Buddha has finished his tasks, that he has learned the only lesson the world can teach: the lesson of discernment, and having learned to choose wisely between the permanent and the impermanent, he unmasked the great illusion. Unmasking defects is the task of the soul; maintaining balance amidst all things is the path of the Buddha; contemplating life but not being ensnared by it is the law of the Buddha; leaving this life and entering into a new one is the desire of the Buddha. To reunite with the Infinite Cause, to know again the Radiant One from whom all things originate, to unite with the Eternal That which is the sum of all things—this is liberation, this is freedom. Reabsorbing into Reality is the goal of the Glorious Buddha.

PART THREE

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE BUDDHA

1. Thou shalt not kill. In Nature, life is sacred. To kill is to accept karma for having prevented a life from ascending to eternity. To kill is to obstruct an opportunity for growth, and he who prevents a soul from its journey to eternity is the greatest of sinners. The life of the Buddhist is harmless. Not only must he refrain from killing bodies, but he must also take great care not to kill the hopes of humankind, and even less so an ideal or a virtue, through carelessness or lack of consideration. To the lives of the lower kingdoms—animals, plants, and minerals—he shall also show love and affection. And as he progresses on the path, he shall not kill anything at all, but shall live off the fruits of things, and even those, from the moment of their maturity, the point from which they will fall by their own natural process.

2. You shall not steal. The Buddhist does not desire what belongs to others, and the crime lies not only in taking it but even in desiring it. The true Buddhist considers it a sin even to steal from someone who has much, for this reveals the presence of the demon of desire, which is the most terrible of all sins. And not only must the Buddhist respect the material possessions of their neighbor, but they must not diminish their honor, their hopes, or any other moral possession, nor covet the heart, mind, or soul of anything, nor seize any animal, plant, or other living being.

3. You shall not commit adultery. Here again, desire appears, included among the great sins. Here too, the Buddhist emphasizes that the sin already committed in the mind is more serious than the offense committed in the body, and the desire to sin is a verification of the Great Buddha's teachings that desire is the origin of sin.

4. Thou shalt not lie. For Buddhist secularism, there must be no falsehood. Buddhists are taught that lying appears in Nature as an evil spirit, in which it struggles with the reality of the incident or condition, and it is a sin that there is war everywhere, and that one who lies assaults reality and places obstacles in the path of other souls.

5. The Buddhist will not consume alcoholic beverages. It is said that alcohol defeats man and delivers him into the hands of his enemies: desires; therefore, he will not consume anything that could hinder his self-control in the face of them. His drink will be water and his food as simple as possible, because simplicity is a sign of wisdom, while complexity is a sign of ignorance.

6. The Buddhist will only eat at appointed times. He will control his life and choose specific periods for all aspects of his daily life. By setting these periods and obligations, he demonstrates his self-mastery by adhering to them without fail. When he deviates from them, it becomes evident that his enemy, desire, is attacking him again. The ordinary person, under normal circumstances, only commits to observing the first five precepts. The rest are followed by monks, aspirants, disciples, and all those who have taken responsibility for their development and are preparing for the sacred Middle Way.

7. The Buddhist shall not adorn himself, nor wear expensive clothes, perfumes, or embellish himself with flowers or similar things. This observance obliges him not to glorify his personality or seek any adornment other than his virtue, which is the perfect adornment and the perfect jewel, and he shall only seek to adorn and glorify his spirit. He shall preserve and care for his body, but he shall never exalt it beyond its human condition.

8. The Buddhist will never sit on a high throne. He will always be humble, understanding that only in humility is there security for spiritual matters.

He recognizes selfishness as the mortal enemy of spiritual growth and that pride precedes all downfall. Only the perfect Buddha deserves a throne; all others must prostrate themselves at his feet. Only perfect justice can be exalted in all directions.

9. The Buddhist will not participate in worldly amusements. He will not attend events that excite his senses or tend to surround him with a materialistic environment, because the allure of worldliness can make him forget its falsity and unreality. He should remain alone and serene, meditating on lofty matters, free from the entanglements of the senses.

10. The Buddhist will neither own nor accept possessions. The aspirant seeks liberation from possessions and values only the possession of wisdom; therefore, he struggles against the tendency to add to that from which he seeks to separate himself.

PART FOUR

THE TWO GREAT LAWS

Buddhists, in their philosophy, affirm that law and order are the supreme rulers of Nature. Law transcends human whims. It is fixed and eternal; therefore, wisdom consists of knowing those laws upon which the Eternal Plan is based and harmonizing with them to cooperate with it. For the Buddhist, there are two supreme laws. The first is the law of REINCARNATION. For mainstream Christianity, the cycle of rebirths is difficult to grasp, but every intelligent person must come to recognize that it is the only answer to the problem of human inequality. It is inconceivable that a merciful Father would punish an unformed life and organize the destiny of living beings based solely on whim. It is unjust to believe that inheritance makes a soul suffer the sins of its parents, and yet most people apparently prefer to trust in the whims of the Deity rather than accept the doctrine that places the burden of responsibility for the lives of men on their own shoulders.

The law of reincarnation is one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhist doctrine. Reincarnation is the only concept of life that is universal in its opportunity and personal in its responsibility. While accepting this law doesn't bring one closer to heaven, it at least dispels the idea of an eternal, hellish damnation, which is the specter of the Christian religion. If anyone deserves the punishment of an eternal hell of fire and brimstone, it is the one who created this idea. It is unreasonable and irrational to suppose that a life lived amidst the multitude of difficulties that beset humankind should be the only opportunity. To imagine that, as a result of a few decades lived here on earth, a person must go to heaven or hell for all eternity is the greatest injustice the human mind can conceive.

The doctrine of reincarnation teaches equal opportunity for all and that there are no special privileges for anyone, with success being the reward for good deeds and failure the punishment for indolence. It shifts the responsibility for human salvation from the shoulders of the Deity and places it where it belongs: on the shoulders of the individual. The Buddha taught his disciples to work diligently for their own salvation, and sensible people know that, in the final analysis, this is the only path to achieving peace.

The law of reincarnation justifies and preserves the dignity of the plan of creation; it explains human inequality, and for those who truly wish to find their intelligent place in Nature, it offers the incentive of its ultimate achievement to every living being; it teaches that every task left unfinished today will be demanded tomorrow until success crowns the struggle of every living being to know itself.

The law of reincarnation can be defined as the application of the law of evolution to the individual case of human consciousness. We know that forms evolve; we can study the gradual evolution of physical structure from its simple origin to its complex maturity and from there to its final disintegration. The doctrine of reincarnation teaches that humanity evolves through and with Nature, age after age, and that all the forms displayed around us in Nature are so many testimonies to centers of consciousness that we now understand are the invisible impulse behind every visible form. The law of reincarnation teaches that humanity periodically returns to this physical earth, resuming its duties here at the point where it left off last time, and that this process continues until it learns all the lessons that can be learned here. Eastern philosophies teach that approximately eight hundred incarnations occur in each life cycle, and that the spirit is reborn in the physical world nearly eight hundred times and as many times again.

It allows humanity to learn its lessons. Buddhism does not separate humankind from Nature but considers it a product of it, teaching that we are permanently governed by its laws until we learn to find the Middle Way, which will ultimately liberate us from Nature

only when we have transcended its domain. Buddhism makes humankind a student and life a school, calling the periods between birth and death, separated by nights of rest, "days of learning." With the law of reincarnation, humanity answers many questions. The Buddhist explains why some are born rich and others poor, some surrounded by opulence and others in the midst of the greatest scarcity; they are content with life, aware that they are the cause of life as they perceive it. We can summarize this philosophy with the following thoughts:

Each individual is exactly what he has earned the right to be. He is exactly where he has earned the right to be. He is surrounded by the happiness to which he has earned his rights in the past. He is currently confronted with the debts incurred in the past, debts that now come to meet him. Unhappiness in this life is the result of suffering inflicted on others in a previous life. If his body is weak today, it is because he neglected it in his last incarnation. If he has no friends today, it is because he did not make any in his last life. Man is the product of his past. Those gifts or abilities he enjoys today are the result of his sincere efforts yesterday, while his flaws and failures are the result of his lack of self-control in previous lives and his failure to cultivate his virtues.

From all of the above, it is easy to deduce the absolute honesty of such viewpoints, which leave no room for blind luck. Cause and effect govern this universe, in which there is no place for miracles, vicarious atonements, or religious pettiness. Everything is supreme justice, intelligence, and compassion.

The second of the great laws of Buddhism is a necessary consequence of the first: the Law of Karma, whose literal meaning is "compensation," or cause and effect applied to the actions of individuals. It is the same thought expressed by Jesus when he spoke of sowing and reaping, when he said, "You reap what you sow." The Buddhist says that each of us is paying off debts incurred in the past and that we are building our future destiny with our daily behavior here and now. We can summarize his thoughts concerning the Law of Karma as follows:

Every effect is in nature equal to its cause. In the spiritual world, action and reaction are equal. Every thought and ideal in life, as an activity, has a reaction in accordance with and measured by the action that produces it. Sickness, pain, and weakness are all results of our misuse and ignorance of the great forces of Nature. Each individual is personally responsible for every joy and every sorrow they encounter on life's path. Therefore, in the face of all suffering and sorrow, the Buddhist must be patient, aware that the causes of all pain and misfortune that befall them are none other than their lack of consideration for others, their failure to face life's responsibilities, and their lack of self-control. They recognize that the physical vehicle through which their misfortune manifests should not be particularly reviled, for this personal condition is merely the vehicle through which the Law of Karma operates. It also warns that one not only carries the unpaid debts of the past life into the next, but also all the good karma corresponding to the good done, and that when one learns to do things well, one is generating only good karma. The Law of Reincarnation gives one the opportunity to correct one's mistakes. Thus, whatever one's current physical or spiritual level, one will one day be perfect, just as the Father is perfect.

From the heavens. This is the Law of Karma.

These two laws are the backbone of the Buddhist system. An absolutely impersonal and just attitude toward life is one of the most significant glories of the ancient Buddhist faith. It considers virtue superior to wealth and places integrity above all treasures. Perfection is attained through actions, not prayer, and the Buddha's faith offers great hope even to stone and wood, for everything has its place in Nature, for everything is included in the Great Evolutionary Plan, in which perfection awaits all creatures.

FIFTH PART

THE TWO GREAT VIRTUES

Those who strive to understand the Middle Way of Lord Buddha will have to deduce two great virtues, for this Path is of a dual nature; and those who tread it will have to accomplish this task by developing, above all others, the virtues of COMPASSION and RENUNCIATION.

The Buddhist aspirant constantly seeks to transmute human passion into divine compassion. Understanding that all things, when used naturally, are good, and harmful when used unnaturally, the aspirant strives to transform unnatural personal desires and inclinations into the natural kindness and consideration that should always be the hallmarks of our interrelationship as living beings. The Buddhist is instructed to serve life, to cooperate with life, and to recognize divine life in everything. This life, which the aspirant serves, is the invisible spiritual seed of self-awareness hidden within the incomplete bodies of the things with which they come into contact.

The state of compassion gradually grows within the Buddhist's innermost being, until they live only to do good, serving the divine life they have learned to recognize in everything. They hold the conviction that the greatest wisdom is the ability to recognize the good existing in all things. This conviction is often destroyed or hindered by ignorance and suffering, but the Buddhist has resolved to serve that good, that hope existing in everything. We could define their compassion as impersonal love. Instead of focusing their affection on a single thing, the Buddhist directs it toward the service and protection of all things, and then they are said to be compassionate and wise. They regard blades of grass and stones as their younger siblings, knowing that in due time, through evolution, they will become human, just as they are now. Seeing in their silent and painful testimony the stages of growth through which their own soul will pass, they regard them with affection and assist them in their needs. Then he turns to the sun, the moon, the stars, and the invisible Devas, yearning for the day when he will be like them, a radiant light in the heavens. He learns that all life evolves and that he will best serve things when he cooperates with that evolution. Thus, without malice toward anyone and charitable to all, recognizing in every difference the presence of life at a particular stage of its journey, he also learns not to judge or criticize things but simply to love and serve them selflessly and without reservation. His faith allows him to see that when he loves all things as his own and his own things as his own, fragile human emotions give way to greater and divine feelings. The Buddhist knows that the more impersonal his feelings are, the more like God's they will be, because God loves all things equally, and that as long as he does not personify God, he will believe in His all-protective presence, which represents the culmination of wisdom and true feelings. Such were the teachings of His Lord of Compassion and Master, and to them He pays reverence.

The second great virtue that a Buddhist must acquire is renunciation. He must renounce the self; he must renounce the possession of a self; he must renounce the personality and the creations of the personality, because all these are causes of suffering; all these things blind the senses and bind the consciousness to the Wheel of Life. His ideal will be to withdraw completely from the material world and its laws until, living in it only as a physical creature, he exists solely for the good that is within his power to accomplish. He believes that he will be happy only if he forgets himself and that his soul will not attain peace otherwise.

until he is so busy helping others that he can no longer think of himself. He believes that all vices are born of idleness, all suffering from love and hate, and that all disasters result from the excessive accumulation of material goods. He renounces the world, striving to pierce the veil of human ignorance by rising above all things that bind the senses and desensitize the soul.

If one who has renounced all things has also renounced the power to lose them, how can we be happy with this feeling of loss? For by owning nothing, possessing nothing, desiring nothing, one is the master of all things, because by desiring nothing, one is the master of all that one could possibly desire. It must be borne in mind that these Buddhist concepts should not be accepted merely intellectually, because the mere intellectual acceptance of them is as useful as a book on nutrition to a starving person. Only when they become conscious realities do they truly fulfill their purpose. One cannot learn merely by accepting things, but only by being those things. As the Buddhist would say: I am not selfish and therefore cannot be offended; I do not resent because I am free from passions and desires; jealousy cannot take hold of me because I do not love some things more than others; since I am free from the craving for possession, the loss of anything does not grieve me. Neither criticism nor gratitude distresses me, for I serve all things for their own sake and not with the hope of any reward. Therefore, I neither suffer nor am I happy, for happiness cannot exist without suffering, nor suffering without happiness. I stand firm on the Middle Path, between these two extremes, and remain serene, dignified, and unshaken, filled with a peace that surpasses all understanding, calm and secure in the knowledge of immortality, free from the torment of appetites, the limitations of the senses, the bondage of the mind, and the uncertainty of ignorance. I possess that for which humankind strives: the cessation of suffering and the awakening of wholeness. Firm in my resolve, everything belongs to me because I never claim it, and by not claiming it, my possession is never disputed.

PART SIX

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

These are the holy perfections, or paths of enlightenment, as transmitted by the thrice-blessed Lord of the Lotus to his disciples gathered at his feet. They pertain to those things that lead to the cessation of suffering, the end of pain, the fullness of life, and liberation from the wheel. They are the petals of the sacred lotus, which, blooming one after another, reveal the golden heart, the perfect law.

The first virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT BELIEF. If someone has a sound view of life, they will be as relatively happy as a creature harboring the element of ignorance can be. On the other hand, it is essential for the progress of the human soul to have a normal view of life and a correct understanding of the relationship between our small life in the flesh and our great life in the universe. The world is full of morbid and neurotic people who see everything in a bleak light, full of broken hearts and disillusioned beings; of men and women dissatisfied with life, ready to abandon the struggle because they feel too weak in the face of the seemingly inevitable. In other words, the world is full of beings who do not face life in a sound way. Those who face their sorrows with patience and confront their problems with serenity, those who see in each disappointment an incentive for greater achievements—these possess the right view of life. Those who rise triumphant like the phoenix from the ruin of their own dreams, those are the ones who have understood the first golden precept of the noble eightfold path.

Right belief in oneself and others, a viewpoint that is neither censured nor harsh, neither critical nor impertinent, but always confident in the final triumph of good, always supporting the forces of good—such is right viewpoint and right belief.

The second virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT ASPIRATION. Right aspiration means that what we aspire to is valuable to us. Those who aspire to supreme wisdom, to the highest good, to the full development of their own nature, to a closer union of their parts with the whole within themselves, to a clear vision that must always discern truth from falsehood, permanence from transitoryity, and superiority from inferiority, have right aspiration. Those who seek self-control, to coordinate their individual faculties, to free themselves from attachments, to educate themselves, to develop themselves, and to become enlightened about them also aspire rightly.

Those who seek wealth, to be valued for what they value, to dominate others, to be revered by men—these are the ones who harbor misguided aspirations, for they pursue things that only bring pain to their possessor. The right aspiration is to seek truth and self-mastery, with virtue and compassion as its principal fruits. Such are the teachings of the glorious Buddha.

The third virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT SPEECH. Right speech means taking care that only words of encouragement, kindness, and service pass our lips. It is a sin to talk too much, as well as to utter hurtful or critical words. No argument will produce wisdom, nor will discussion yield any truth. Let our words be few and kind, well-chosen, and spoken in a low voice; let them be to glorify the Great One, like incense rising to the Most High. Let our tongue preach a gospel of kindness and compassion. To use our mouths for idle gossip, Slander and defamation are the worst of sins, for they are all offenses to the ears of God. He who uses his tongue as a sword will be cut down by his own weapon. Rather, let him strive to imitate the Lord Buddha, whose lotus lips, when opened, were like life to man, and whose words were like pearls to be treasured and revered every day by all generations. This is the right speech, words

that should be kept in the hearts of those who hear them and adored in the souls of those who uttered them, and that sound to the soul like the gentle murmur of calm, pure, and immaculate flowing waters.

The fourth virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT CONDUCT. The seeker of wisdom stands out among his peers by his conduct, by the simplicity of his manner, by the grace and dignity of his soul that radiates splendidly through his body, whatever its form; he is never loud or hurried, and for every word he speaks, he listens to twelve. He is never discourteous or offensive because he does not forget his relationship with those around him, nor the kindness due to them. When he is the host, he is considerate of his guests, and when he is the guest, he is considerate of his host. He does not wound anyone's feelings, but preaches the gospel of the Middle Way with the grace and beauty of his spirit. He does not participate in discord or conflict, nor does he take sides. Lacking prejudice, he has neither position nor selfishness to defend. Serene, simple, and peaceful among the combative, silent among the loquacious, balanced among the agitated, alive among the dead, he treads the Middle Path without deviating even for an instant. He who controls his tongue, his hand, his foot, his mind, and his heart, he cannot but act rightly.

The fifth virtue of the noble eightfold path is that EACH ONE SHOULD ADOPT A RIGHT WAY OF LIFE.

A disciple is forbidden to undertake any activity contrary to his principles, because these principles cannot be upheld when they are in conflict with one another. If lying is a painful experience for him, he will not undertake anything that requires lying. If finery means nothing to him, he must abstain from using it. If he values neither buying nor selling, he must not resort to means of livelihood that violate his conception of life. No sincere individual, regardless of his beliefs, will be capable of having two sets of morals: one for his business and another for his private life, one toward his neighbor and another toward himself. Having two standards of measurement is like having none at all. Therefore, a right way of life means that each person must adopt a profession in accordance with the principles he seeks to develop within himself.

The right way of life also implies a right way of living, right diet, right clothing, a right environment, and right harmony between private and public life. All of this is prior to and necessary for wisdom to spring forth in the soul, for wisdom is a priceless pearl, and no one can attain this incomparable treasure except after the greatest struggles. It is not easy to be steadfast, but only the steadfast can aspire to wisdom, because steadfastness and wisdom are synonymous.

The sixth virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT EFFORT. Everything is achieved as a result of effort. We should always strive, but we must strive intelligently; otherwise, our effort will produce no results. The disciple is taught that desiring something without being willing to strive to deserve it is a great sin. He is also taught that in the spiritual world, the candidate cannot aspire to anything he is not prepared to pay for in the currency of the plane in which the transaction takes place. Everything comes to those who strive, and those who do so sincerely will obtain that for which they strive. The word SINCERITY presides over the principle of right effort. If your motive is not sincere, what is achieved will not serve the purpose of the truth being pursued. The Buddhist disciple is instructed to be sincere and honest, and that any intention other than sincere and honest is fatal. If he desires power to impose himself on others, he is not sincere, and any form of power he acquires will only harm him; but if what he desires is intelligence to use in helping and enlightening others, then he is sincere and will obtain all the power he does not desire for himself.

The Middle Way is the path of sincerity, in which the mind and heart work together to build character. Right effort is doing what is right because it is right; it is having right intention, and everything is good or bad according to the intention that drives us.

The seventh virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT MIND. The disciple is taught

to always be mindful. The mind's task is to be ever alert, anticipating the needs of others and meditating on the needs of the Higher Self. It is the mind's task to discern between needs and desires, and whoever can do so will be truly wise.

When mastery of the mind has been achieved, all thoughts are good and life will be harmless.

More than one sin is first committed in the mind of someone strong enough not to act upon it, but whose thought, like a living thing, enters the mind of another who is weak. This one commits the crime, but who is truly guilty? The law cannot answer, but the mystic knows that the one who condemns is the one in whose mind the evil thought was born first. Courtesy, kindness, and consideration for the needs of others are virtues of right mindfulness, and they contribute greatly to making the world a more habitable place; for great is he who can put the house of his mind in order and drive the merchants and moneylenders from the temple of his thoughts, just as the Master Jesus did with those in the Temple of Jerusalem.

The mind is always critical; it destroys, dissects, and analyzes, constantly seeking differences, and this is not right. Right mindfulness is grounded in what we all have in common, building, through the power of its thoughts, the spiritual concept of brotherhood, which will one day prevail on Earth.

The eighth virtue of the Noble Eightfold Path is RIGHT MEDITATION. This truly belongs to the mystical and esoteric practices of the Buddhists, as well as to those periods in life when the soul withdraws to dwell in silence and in the depths of its own nature. In the Western world, few dare to enter the temple of solitude because their lives are such that thoughts are their enemies rather than their friends. The harm they have caused, the failures they have suffered, rush forward like a ghostly procession as soon as there is a moment of silence in their minds. Future fears are an obsession, and those of the past an overwhelming tide. Hence, they live in a deplorable whirlwind of falsehood to escape the thoughts that would assail them if they were alone. Buddhists teach that until a person can face their own life without fear, meditate on their own actions, and strive honestly to make them right, they are not ready for the Middle Way. By meditating on Reality to the exclusion of all else, with the eye of their soul open, revealing the spirit of all things, the glorious Buddha entered Nirvana. On a smaller scale, when the disciple sits for their daily self-reflection, so necessary for the true development of the soul, they separate themselves, for a moment, from their body and mind, and consider the totality of their actions, thus moving from the shadow of the temporal to the light of the eternal. These are those longed-for moments of the day when...Despite being surrounded by difficulties, he withdraws from the world in the monk's habitual state of inner equilibrium, dwelling in the spirit of the Buddha, the eternal light. This is the essence of right meditation: that the human spirit must place itself for a moment on the summit and contemplate its entire universe from there. Separated for a moment from its likes and dislikes, from all that is personal, it will see clearly the purpose of all things. Strengthened by this realization, deepened by its holy communion, expanded by the light revealed to it, the aspirant returns to his daily tasks inspired by the vision witnessed by his moments of right meditation.

PART SEVEN

NIRVANA: CULMINATION OF EXTINCTION

Most Westerners who study Eastern literature arrive at erroneous conclusions regarding the Eastern doctrine of Nirvana. It has been interpreted as meaning the end of all things, but this is not its intrinsic meaning.

The question of the ultimate destiny of the human soul is one of those problems about which little can be definitively stated. The human mind, as partially developed as it is today, is incapable of thinking or even intelligently speculating about ultimate ends. It is philosophically impossible for the mind to conjecture successfully or intelligently outside the realm of the known; this is why, when we create mental images of the future, we are forced to paint them in the colors of the present. When we speculate about the infinite, we must do so in terms of the finite, and thus, our speculations, instead of leading us to the realms of the infinite, merely bring the abstract into the limited existence that corresponds to our sphere of action.

Nirvana, the end of all beginnings, is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist. It implies much more than a heaven. It is a condition of absorption, a state of elimination of the personal in which the multiple is reabsorbed into the One. Many argue that this final absorption is contrary to the law of eternal progress and renders life pointless, asking: why were we given intelligence if we are ultimately to lose it? Why must we suffer experiences if memory, as the faculty of recalling them, is to be destroyed? Even many Buddhists do not fully understand the doctrine of Nirvana because it involves a four-dimensional state of consciousness that cannot be conceptualized because it lacks analogues or parallels. The doctrine can be expressed as follows:

After the turning of the Wheel of Births and Deaths ceases, and evolution leads the human spirit to the point where it absorbs into the Self all that the non-self can offer and extracts from the objective world all the lessons of existence, it is freed from the cycle of existence. This is because none of those specific faculties or functions that bind it to the planes of objective manifestation enter into the inherent nature of the spirit. Human beings are complex, and their principal parts are body and spirit. Gradually, the body is transmuted into soul qualities, which in turn are absorbed into the spiritual nature. When this process of transmutation is complete, the individual leaves those planes of Nature that exist for those still struggling within their material nature and enters the worlds of spiritual nature. The spirit is four-dimensional, interpenetrating, at the center of all things, and simultaneously the sum of them all; its center is nowhere, and its periphery is everywhere. The individual ceases to exist as a personality when their lower bodies, which give rise to the illusion of a separate personality, are transmuted into qualities of the soul; and they, in turn, cease to exist as an individuality when the mind is absorbed into the spiritual nature. Although those characteristics by which such individuality could be recognized have disappeared, their spiritual nature is neither interfered with nor harmed. Those who have entered Nirvana have not ceased to be units of consciousness, but like the universal spirit in which they dwell, they have expanded their consciousness to the entire spiritual realm, and as a result, they unify with the underlying spiritual core.

All creatures. The spirit that has attained such a degree of development will no longer appear in the world as a personality. It will have no disciples, it will not preach. Rather, we might say that it preaches through all beings, for it manifests from the core of spiritual substance residing in all things, becoming a beneficent power in the universe and an aspiration in the soul of every being. Therefore, it will continue as a principle,

and its realizations become the yearning for realization in the life of all things. Such a being has attained annihilation as a man or woman, but as a divine spirit has just found the opportunity for a great service. We often repeat the phrase, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is taught in the East that when one of our elder brothers attains Nirvana and ceases to exist as a personality, it becomes a great impetus for the life of all things, increasing in every creature the power to attain what they have attained and the capacity of every soul, giving it the fruit of its own spiritual growth. That is why it is said that the spirit dies to the world of effects upon reaching Buddhahood and is born into the world of causes, to become an integral part of that great ocean of immortality that we call spirit, or great crystal ocean before the throne of Divinity.

Life does not cease; the individual passes away. Just as evolution teaches that the individual will one day fragment into a solar system made of millions of parts, upon unifying with the life and spirit of each of those parts, so too is it taught that in the attainment of Nirvana, the personality is fragmented into millions of parts that will become parts of the personality of Nature, yet are still one consciousness, just as God is one despite the existence of millions of His Parts. Upon reaching Nirvana, the spirit arrives at a stage where it can be divided into millions of parts and yet remain one. Such is the Nirvana of the East: that the individual will participate in all things, that they will become an inner stimulus for the realization of the soul of all things, an impulse within the nature of things, a voice crying out in the wilderness of the world, interceding, from the depths of those who still act in their lower bodies, so that they may join that ascending current which, following the Middle Way, leads to the consciousness of unity upon losing their illusion of separateness.

Nirvana, the end of all that had a beginning, is that point where man is reunited with the Self, conscious with the consciousness of the Self, and conscious beyond the dominion of the Self.

OM MANI PADME HUM.