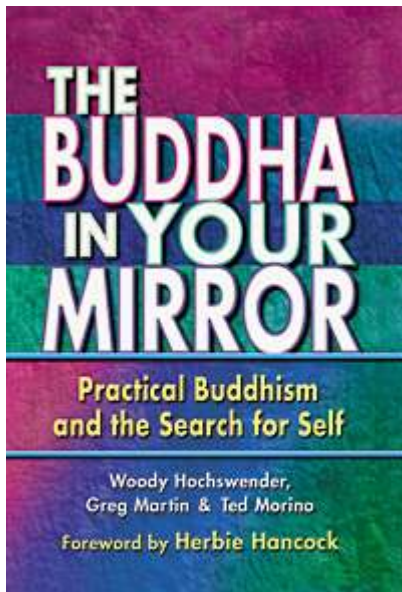


## ABOUT THE BOOK

While the modern notion that "happiness can be found within oneself" has recently become a broadly popular idea, Buddhism has taught this belief for thousands of years: that every person is a Buddha, or enlightened being, and has the potential for true and lasting happiness inherent within his or her life. All we have to do is tap into the source of that happiness and this dynamically powerful force will manifest itself in incredible ways throughout every aspect of our lives.



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## REVIEWS

This manual's authors heartily endorse the chant [of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] as completely accessible and effective at achieving desires for self and others. Noting that Nichiren Buddhism is "open equally to everyone... there are no priests or gurus," the authors promote

the Nichiren path as fitting neatly within the modern world of science, especially physics, where impermanence is now a given... This path obviously has bold appeal for a broad audience of people who are willing to give a chant a chance. —*Publisher's Weekly*

Like the Buddha, this book offers practical guidelines to overcome difficulties in everyday life and to be helpful to others. The authors have done a great service in bringing the profound practices of Asian Buddhism into American idioms. Readers will find these pages are like a helpful and supportive friend. I enthusiastically recommend it. — Dr. David Chappell, University of Hawaii, Department of Religion, editor of *Buddhist Peaceworks: Creating Cultures of Peace*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## Chapter I.

### The Buddha In Your Mirror

*If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism. —Albert Einstein*

Birds sing. The wind blows. The earth turns. Stars flare and die. Galaxies spin gracefully through space. Man is born, lives, grows old and dies. The patterns of existence are mysterious and immeasurable. Who can even begin to comprehend them? Our own mundane daily lives are, in a way, no less complex. Who can always fathom, for example, the needs of a three-year-old child, let alone the inexplicable demands of one's in-laws, or one's boss? During a single day, we rejoice at times while we despair at other times. Our feelings change from moment to moment. Trivial things can make us temporarily happy, while temporary setbacks can make us inexpressibly sad. Worries easily take the place of happiness. Life may be interpreted as a continual battle against problems large and small.

Never before in the history of the West have so many people turned to the timeless wisdom of Buddhism for answers to the great questions of life as well as to master the problems of daily existence. This is no coincidence, for we live in an age of experimentation and scientific inquiry, and Buddhism has no conflict with the world of science. Indeed, Buddhism has been called "the science of life."

Certainly the images and language of Buddhism have been surfacing with increasing regularity in contemporary culture, from movies and pop songs to

magazines and television shows. There is the Buddha of the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, or the dharma of the TV sitcom, *Dharma and Greg*. The word karma has entered the Western vernacular and is blithely applied to everything from health-food shakes to nagging relationship problems. Everyone we don't particularly like or understand these days seems to have "bad karma." And there seems to be a Zen to everything, from playing golf to vanquishing your foes at office politics to perhaps even folding your laundry. Obi Wan Kenobi may not be portrayed as a Buddhist, per se, but his acumen in wielding the metaphysical force of the epic *Star Wars* cycle, a mystic power that permeates the universe and ennobles its masters, resembles both the Buddhist concept of "life force" and the legendary powers attributed to the Buddhas in ancient scripture.

The actual meaning of these words, from the standpoint of Buddhist tradition, has become somewhat clouded. In the West, Buddhism has long been perceived as an elitist or beatnik religion, something to be discussed over espresso along with radical politics and difficult art. This lasting image perhaps stems from the Beat period of Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, the explanatory books of Alan Watts and countless literary scenes featuring bongos and satori (the Japanese term for enlightenment used particularly in Zen). One could easily gain the impression that Buddhism is primarily a system of intellectual abstraction or a means of escaping from material reality. For many the overriding popular image of Buddhism is that of an abstruse and impenetrable mystical teaching studied in monkish isolation, the goal of which is inner peace as an end in itself. There is a famous story about the historical Buddha that demonstrates why this view is incorrect.

While walking one day in Deer Park in Benares, India, the Buddha came across a deer lying on the ground. A hunter's arrow had pierced its side. As the deer slowly died, two Brahmans, or holy men, stood over the body arguing over the exact time life leaves the body. Seeing the Buddha and wishing to resolve their debate, they asked his opinion. Ignoring them, the Buddha immediately approached the deer and drew out the arrow, saving the animal's life.

Buddhism is a beautiful philosophy, but above all, it is about action. If the pop images and adaptations of Buddhism are sometimes offhand and imprecise, they nevertheless point to a surprising truth: The language and wisdom of Buddhism are increasingly being applied to the complexities of modern life because they actually seem to fit. Buddhist concepts and strategies, as applied to happiness, health, relationships, careers and even the process of aging and dying pertain to the truth of modern existence - the actual pulsing reality of life. Buddhist ideas are entering the mainstream

because they contain a descriptive power well adapted to the flux and flow of the modern world, without the weight of a dogmatic morality. Buddhism explains the profound truths of life. But it also provides an immensely practical method for overcoming obstacles and transforming oneself. What you learn in these pages can be applied to every area of your existence: family, work, relationships, health. And it can be applied by anyone.

This book has the power to change your life. Although it is not, strictly speaking, a self-help book, it includes the most time-honored and effective self-help secrets ever formulated - the all-embracing system of thought that is Buddhism. It is titled *The Buddha in Your Mirror* because of its most fundamental insight: the Buddha is you. That is, each and every human being contains the inherent capacity to be a Buddha, an ancient Indian word meaning "enlightened one," or one who is awakened to the eternal and unchanging truth of life.

By tapping into this vast inner potential, our Buddha nature, we find unlimited resources of wisdom, courage and compassion. Instead of avoiding or fearing our problems, we learn to confront them with joyful vigor, confident in our ability to surmount whatever life throws in our path. This latent potential could be likened to a rosebush in winter - the flowers are dormant even though we know that the bush contains the potential to bloom.

But on a day-to-day basis, this higher self, this enlightened state, is hidden from view; it is the proverbial "treasure too close to see." This fundamental aspect of the human predicament is illustrated in the Buddhist parable "The Gem in the Robe," as told in the *Lotus Sutra*. It is the story of a poor man who visits a wealthy friend:

The house was a very prosperous one  
and [the poor man] was served many trays of delicacies.  
The friend took a priceless jewel,  
sewed it in the lining of the poor man's robe,  
gave it without a word and then went away,  
and the man, being asleep, knew nothing of it.  
After the man had gotten up,  
he journeyed here and there to other countries,  
seeking food and clothing to keep himself alive,  
finding it very difficult to provide for his livelihood.  
He made do with what little he could get  
and never hoped for anything finer,  
unaware that in the lining of his robe  
he had a priceless jewel.  
Later the close friend who had given him the jewel

happened to meet the poor man  
and after sharply rebuking him,  
showed him the jewel sewed in the robe.  
When the poor man saw the jewel,  
his heart was filled with great joy,  
for he was rich, possessed of wealth and goods  
sufficient to satisfy the five desires.  
We are like that man.

This parable depicts the blindness of human beings to the preciousness of their lives and the fundamental life-condition of Buddhahood. The purpose of this book is to help you discover this stunning jewel within and polish it till it shines brightly, illuminating not just your life but the lives of those around you. For Buddhism teaches that one's own awakening (or transformation) also has an immediate and far-reaching effect on his or her family, friends and society. This is a key point. When we reflect on the lessons of the twentieth century, stained by bloodshed and suffering, we must acknowledge that efforts to reform and restructure the institutions of society, to truly deepen human happiness, have come up short. Buddhism stresses inner, personal transformation as the way to promote lasting, sustainable resolutions to world problems. So what does it mean to be a Buddha? The word Buddha was a common noun used in India during the lifetime of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. This is an important point in the sense that enlightenment is not regarded as the exclusive province of one individual. The Buddhist sutras talk of the existence of Buddhas other than Shakyamuni. In a sense, then, Buddhism comprises not only the teaching of the Buddha but also the teaching that enables all people to become Buddhas.

### **The Life of the Buddha**

Unlike the Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Buddhism makes no claim of divine revelation. Instead, it is the teaching of a single human being who, through his own efforts, awoke to the law of life within himself. He was a man who wrote nothing down and about whom we know very little - but what is known has become the catalyst for changing millions of lives.

The historical Buddha, whose given name was Siddhartha (One Who Has Achieved His Goal) and family name was Gautama (Best Cow), was born in Northern India approximately 2,500 to 3,000 years ago. Opinions differ as to the actual date, but modern research tends to place the Buddha's birth in either the sixth or fifth century B.C.E. The timing, while not exact, remains significant. As the German philosopher Karl Jaspers has noted, Siddhartha was born at approximately the same time as Socrates in Greece, Confucius

in China and Isaiah in the Judaic world. The simultaneous appearance of these great men, according to Jaspers, marked the dawn of spiritual civilization. Siddhartha's father was the ruler of the Shakya clan, a small tribe located near the border of Nepal, hence the Buddha came to be known as Shakyamuni (Sage of the Shakyas). Since the written record is scant, the details of his early life are sketchy. We know that Siddhartha was born a prince and lived in affluence. And we know that he was endowed with keen intelligence and an introspective nature. As a young man, he took a wife, Yashodhara, who bore him a son, Rahula. Eventually he forsook his wealthy, privileged existence to pursue a path of wisdom and self-knowledge. What drove him to leave the luxury of home and the security of family is expressed in the legend of the four meetings.

The young prince is said to have left his palace in Kapilavastu on four different occasions. Exiting from the eastern gate, he encountered a man bent and shriveled with age. Leaving through the southern gate, he saw a sick person. On a third outing, emerging from the western gate, he saw a corpse. Finally, going out through the northern gate, he came upon a religious ascetic. The old man, the sick person and the corpse represent the problems of old age, sickness and death. Together with birth (or living itself), these conditions are called the "four sufferings" - the fundamental problems of human existence. Shakyamuni's motive in abandoning his princely status for an ascetic life was nothing less than to discover how to overcome the four sufferings. In the manner of ancient Indian arhats, or holy men, who wandered the countryside in quest of ultimate truth, Siddhartha began his journey. We know that the path was arduous and filled with physical and mental challenges. He first traveled south and entered Rajagriha, capital of the kingdom of Magadha, where he practiced under the teacher Alara Kalama, who, through meditation, was said to have attained "the realm where nothing exists." Quickly attaining the same stage, Siddhartha found his questions unresolved. He turned to another sage, Uddaka Ramaputta, who had attained "the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought." Mastering this meditation as well, Siddhartha still had not found answers to his deepest questions.

As Daisaku Ikeda, one of the foremost modern interpreters of Buddhism, has written in his biography *The Living Buddha*: "For yoga masters like Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, yoga practice had become an end in itself. Both yoga and Zen meditation are excellent practices developed by Asian philosophy and religion, but, as Shakyamuni made clear, they should be employed as methods for attaining an understanding of the ultimate truth, not looked upon as ends in themselves." Siddhartha then embarked on a series of ascetic practices, including

temporary suspension of breathing, fasting and mind control. After several years of tormenting his body almost to the point of death, he finally abandoned the rigorous ascetic pursuits that had debilitated him and proceeded to meditate under a peepul, a type of fig tree (later named the Bodhi tree) near Gaya. Eventually, around the age of thirty, he attained enlightenment and became a Buddha.

### **The Buddha's Enlightenment**

It is impossible to know exactly what the Buddha realized beneath that tree. But based on his many teachings, which, like Homer's *Odyssey*, were first orally transmitted by his followers, we know that sitting under the peepul tree he attempted to reach beyond ordinary consciousness to a place where he perceived himself as one with the life of the universe.

It has been recorded that in the early stages of his meditation he was still bound by the distinction between subject (himself) and object (exterior world). He was aware of his own consciousness being surrounded by a wall - the boundary of his body as well as the environment outside of himself.

Finally, according to Daisaku Ikeda in *The Living Buddha*: Shakyamuni had a clear vision of his own life in all its manifestations in time. According to the doctrine of transmigration, which had from early times been expounded in Brahmanism, the life of a human being is by no means something limited to the present. Shakyamuni, meditating under the Bodhi tree, clearly recollected all his previous existences one by one, and perceived that his present existence was part of the unbroken chain of birth, death, and rebirth that had been continuing through incalculable eons in the past.

This was not something that came to him as a kind of intuition, nor did he perceive it as a concept or idea. It was a clear and real recollection - not unlike, though on a very different plane from, the events deeply buried within the recesses of our mind that we suddenly remember when we are in a state of extreme tension or concentration. He understood the true aspect of reality as "impermanence." So what does this mean?

All things, all phenomena are undergoing constant change. Life, nature and society never cease to change for even a single moment in time. It looks as if the desk you are sitting at or the book you hold in your hands or the building you live in are solidly constructed. But they will all crumble someday. Buddhism clearly explains that suffering emerges in our hearts because we forget the principle of impermanence and believe that what we possess will last forever.

Suppose you have a good-looking girlfriend or boyfriend. Do you spend a lot of time wondering what she or he will look like in thirty or forty years? Of course not. It is human nature to feel that health and youth will last forever. Similarly, there are few wealthy people who imagine that their money could someday be gone. There is nothing wrong with people thinking this way.

Nevertheless, we suffer because we have such notions. You may want to keep your sweetheart young and beautiful forever and may make intensive efforts toward making love last. Still, if and when the time comes to depart from your loved one, you will feel the deepest pain. Because people want to accumulate wealth, some will go so far as to struggle against others; and if they lose that wealth, they must taste the bitter fruit of suffering. Even the attachment to life itself entails suffering, because we fear death. Buddhism teaches us to recognize these cycles of impermanence and have the courage to accept them.

In addition to his understanding of impermanence, the interrelatedness of all things is said to have unfolded in Shakyamuni's awakened mind. The universe and everything in it are in flux, arising and ceasing, appearing and disappearing, in an unending cycle of change conditioned by the law of causation. All things are subject to the law of cause and effect, and consequently nothing can exist independently of other things. This Buddhist concept of causation is also known as "dependent origination." Shakyamuni awakened to the eternal law of life that permeates the universe, the mystic aspect of life in which all things in the universe interrelate and influence one another in an unending cycle of birth and death.

The substance of Shakyamuni's awakening is explained in the concept of the Four Noble Truths, which explains that (1) all existence is suffering; (2) suffering is caused by selfish craving; (3) the eradication of selfish craving brings about the cessation of suffering and enables one to attain nirvana; and (4) there is a path by which this eradication can be achieved, namely, the discipline of the eightfold path. Here we can see the earliest indications that the process of achieving absolute happiness emancipated from the sufferings of life is a path or journey. Dispelling ignorance and establishing a correct view are the centerpiece of Buddhist practice. They are also the motivation that initiated a three-thousand-year search - beginning with Shakyamuni himself - to elucidate the vehicle (or method) that would carry a Buddhist practitioner along the path to the cessation of suffering and the attainment of absolute happiness. All of the various Buddhist schools and practices have developed in an effort to create such a vehicle.

For some time following his awakening, Shakyamuni remained seated under

the Bodhi tree in a joyful state. When he re-entered the world, however, he soon began to be troubled by the thought that his enlightenment to the law of life might prove difficult to communicate. Since the depth of his understanding greatly surpassed that of the most advanced spiritual seekers of his day, he prepared his listeners by first instructing them with easy-to-understand parables and analogies. In this way, Shakyamuni gradually awakened those he taught, while adhering to his ultimate aim of showing all people that they possess Buddhahood.

As he states in a telling passage from the Lotus Sutra containing his teachings:

At all times I think to myself: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?

It was no easy task. Shakyamuni spent the remaining forty-some years of his life preaching to troubled people in ways best suited to their understanding. In this light, we see that the idea of Buddhism as the special preserve of holy men meditating on mountaintops is erroneous. Shakyamuni never meant for his teachings to apply only to a cloistered group of devotees. All the evidence suggests that he wished for his teachings to become widespread and to be adopted by the common man - and woman. His lessons were compiled as the so-called eighty-four thousand teachings, which, like the teachings of Jesus, have been interpreted and re-interpreted for centuries. Indeed, the principal problem for Buddhists throughout the millennia has been not so much what the Buddha said but how to put his teachings into practice. How, in essence, to experience the Buddha's enlightenment, his transcendent wisdom. How to become a Buddha oneself.

### **The Road to Enlightenment**

Today there are many schools of Buddhism, perhaps even thousands. The British scholar Christmas Humphreys once wrote: "To describe [Buddhism] is as difficult as describing London. Is it Mayfair, Bloomsbury, or the Old Kent Road? Or is it the lowest common multiple of all these parts, or all of them and something more?"

As the Buddhist philosophy gently flowed from India - north through China and Tibet, south into Thailand and Southeast Asia - it tended to absorb and be influenced by local religious customs and beliefs. The Buddhism that spread to Tibet and China and eventually to Korea and Japan was called Mahayana, meaning "greater vehicle." That which spread southward, to Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka was called Hinayana, for "lesser vehicle," a pejorative term applied to it by the Mahayanists. The Hinayana schools, based on the earlier teachings of Shakyamuni, typically emphasized a strict

and highly detailed code of personal conduct geared toward one's personal salvation. The Mahayana schools emphasized the need for Buddhism to be a compassionate means for common people to attain enlightenment - to search for a practical method that could serve as a vehicle for greater numbers (the greater vehicle) to make the journey to Buddhahood. The profusion of different Buddhist sutras and theories came to be a source of great confusion, particularly in China in the first and second centuries. At that time, Chinese scholars were confronted with the random introduction of the various sutras of the many Hinayana schools as well as the Mahayana scriptures. Perplexed by these diverse teachings, Chinese Buddhists attempted to compare and classify the sutras.

By the fifth century A.D., the systematizing of the Buddhist canon had become very advanced. In particular, a priest named Chih-i, later known as the Great Teacher T' iert' ai, developed the definitive standard knowras "the five periods and eight teachings." Based on his own enlightenment, which may have rivaled Shakyamuni's, T' iert' ai's system classified the sutras chronologically as well as from the standpoint of profundity. He determined that the Lotus Sutra, the penultimate teaching of Shakyamuni expounded toward the end of his life, contained the ultimate truth. T' iert' ai formulated this truth as the principle of "three thousand realms in a single moment of life." It employs a phenomenological approach, describing all the kaleidoscopic emotions and mental states that human beings are subject to at any given moment. The theory of three thousand realms in a single moment of life holds that all the innumerable phenomena of the universe are encompassed in a single moment of a common mortal's life. Thus the macrocosm is contained within the microcosm.

The vast dimension of life to which Shakyamuni awoke under the Bodhi tree was beyond the reach of ordinary human consciousness. T' iert' ai described this ultimate truth as three thousand realms in a single moment of life, recognizing that the Lotus Sutra was the only sutra to assert that all people - men and women, good and evil, intellectuals and common laborers - had the potential to attain Buddhahood within their lifetimes.

A crucial question remained: How could common people apply this to their lives? Toward that end, T' iert' ai advocated a rigorous practice of observing the mind through meditation, delving deeper and deeper until the ultimate truth of three thousand realms in a single moment of life was grasped. Unfortunately, this type of practice was feasible only for monks, who could spend indefinite periods of time contemplating the message implicit in the Lotus Sutra. It was almost impossible for people who worked for a living and had other things on their minds. The full flowering of Buddhism was not to be

accomplished until it migrated along trading routes to Japan. It would not be widely practiced and revered today without the incredible courage and insight of a thirteenth-century Japanese monk named Nichiren, who brought the Lotus Sutra into sharp focus in a way that had a direct impact on people and their daily lives.

### **Modern-Day Buddhism**

Nichiren, born in Japan in 1222, gave concrete and practical expression to the Buddhist philosophy of life that Shakyamuni taught and tirelessly illuminated. He expressed the heart of the Lotus Sutra, and therefore the Buddha's enlightenment, in a form that all people could practice. He defined this as the invocation Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, based on the characters of the title of the Lotus Sutra.

His achievement was akin to translating a complex scientific theory into a practical technique. Just as Benjamin Franklin's discovery of electricity was not harnessed for practical use until many years later when Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, Shakyamuni's enlightenment was inaccessible until Nichiren taught the fundamental practice by which all people could call forth the law of life from within themselves. His realization of this principle had the power to directly affect and move the people who encountered it, heralding a new epoch in the history of Buddhism.

He had revealed the ultimate Mahayana teaching - the greater vehicle - by which all people could journey to Buddhahood. In Nichiren's own words, "A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet." For the first time, ordinary people could take a journey previously possible only for saints and sages.

Nichiren's Buddhism has proved itself to be of profound value to millions of people. It was Nichiren who expressed the essence of the Lotus Sutra in a way that enables all people, regardless of their level of knowledge, to enter the gateway to enlightenment. This was a revolutionary development in the history of religion.

While Buddhism began with the teaching of one human being who awoke to the law of life within himself, it has come to include the interpretations of that teaching by subsequent scholars and prophets. As we have said, the word Buddha originally meant "enlightened one," one who is awakened to the eternal truth or law of life (dharma). This truth is eternal and boundless. It is present always and everywhere. In this sense, the law of life is not the exclusive property of Shakyamuni Buddha or of Buddhist monks.

The truth is open equally to everyone. In the Buddhism described on these pages, there are no priests or gurus, no ultimate authority that decides what is correct or incorrect, what is right or wrong. In this Buddhism, the wall between priesthood and laity has been torn down, leading to a complete democratization of the practice. Because it is essentially nondogmatic, it suits the skeptics among us. The ultimate and all-abiding law that the Buddha perceived may be another name for some people's concept of God. On the other hand, a person who cannot believe in an anthropomorphic God can see an underlying energy to the universe. The breadth of Buddhism encompasses both views and focuses on the individual.

There is no one to blame - and no one to implore for salvation. In Buddhism, no God or supernatural entity plans and shapes our fates. In Western religion, you can bring yourself closer to God through your faith, but you can never become God. In Buddhism, one could never be separate from the wisdom of God, because the ultimate wisdom already exists in the heart of every person. Through Buddhist practice, we seek to call forth that portion of the universal life force existing originally and eternally within - what we call Buddhahood - and manifest it by becoming a Buddha. Buddhists become aware of the existence, in their innermost depths, of the eternal law that permeates both the universe and the individual human being. They aim to live every day in accordance with that law. In so doing, they discover a way of living that redirects all things toward hope, value and harmony. It is the discovery of this objective law itself, as it manifests within the individual, that creates spiritual value, not some exterior power or being. As Nichiren stated in a famous letter titled "On Attaining Buddhahood In This Lifetime": Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least unless you perceive the true nature of your life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, then your performing even ten thousand practices and ten thousand good deeds will be in vain. It is like the case of a poor man who spends night and day counting his neighbor's wealth but gains not even half a coin.

This idea that the power to achieve happiness lies totally within can be disconcerting. It entails a radical sense of responsibility. As Daisaku Ikeda has written: "Society is complex and harsh, demanding that you struggle hard to survive. No one can make you happy. Everything depends on you as to whether or not you attain happiness. A human being is destined to a life of great suffering if he is weak and vulnerable to his external surroundings."

But far from being a bleak, nihilistic approach to life, the Buddhist practice and philosophy are filled with hope and practical solutions to the problems of everyday existence. The philosophy described in this book is so practical that

we generally do not refer to it as a "religion" (although it is one) but as a "practice," because most of the people who follow it have found it to be extremely useful. So throughout this book, although there will be numerous discussions of the theory and philosophy of modern Buddhism, the emphasis will be on how you, the individual, can use Buddhism as a powerful tool to solve the problems of daily life.

As Nichiren quoted from the Lotus Sutra, "No worldly affairs are ever contrary to the true reality," and furthermore, "all phenomena in the universe are manifestations of the Buddhist law." In other words, daily life is the dramatic stage in which the battle for enlightenment is won or lost. Nichiren taught that common mortals, without eradicating their desires or changing their identity, could attain Buddhahood right here in this world. In an age of skepticism and widespread distrust of traditional faiths and institutions, such a dynamic, self-directed religious practice becomes all the more valuable.

Buddhism is essentially nonauthoritarian, democratic, scientific and based on insights obtained primarily through individual efforts toward self-perfection. But Buddhism also has immediate and far-reaching effects on the society around us. Buddhism is a way of life that makes no distinction between the individual human being and the environment in which that person lives. In its conception of the interrelatedness of all life forms in a complex web beyond complete human understanding, Buddhism has provided a spiritual and intellectual framework for environmental awareness. The Western worldview, as expounded by Christianity and Judaism, tends to be anthropocentric, placing humanity at the apex of the natural order. Buddhism on the other hand views humankind as a part of nature, supporting and giving rise to the notion of bioethics. Since every individual is connected to everything on earth, the destiny of our planet is influenced by the individual's actions.

Modern Buddhism is also nonmoralistic. In a world characterized by a great diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, Buddhism does not prescribe one way of living. There are no "commandments." Buddhism accepts you exactly as you are, with all your foibles and misdemeanors, past and present. However, this does not mean you may lie, steal or murder. Buddhism depends for its moral force not on a list of rules for behavior but on an irresistible inner transformation. Buddhist practitioners find themselves acting more gently, compassionately and with absolute regard for the preciousness of other people's lives. This process becomes almost automatic.

### **Buddhism and the Cosmos**

Finally, nothing of what the historical Buddha taught contradicts in any serious way the discoveries of Galileo and Einstein, Darwin and Freud. Yet

his ideas were formed thousands of years before, without the aid of telescopes, high technology or even the written word. The Buddhist model of the universe strongly resembles the cosmology accepted today. While the Buddha never talked in terms of a "Big Bang," he nevertheless postulated a cosmos that is theoretically consistent with what many scientists now propose. In fundamental ways, Buddhist theory accepts the vast dimensions and space-time concepts of modern physics and is even congruent with the more abstruse realms of quantum theory. Articles on the latest breakthroughs in particle physics, for example, bear a remarkable resemblance to the doctrine of impermanence as expounded by the Buddha. In the Lotus Sutra, the central text of Mahayana Buddhism, a Promethean-scale view of the universe is articulated in the form of what is called a "major world system," a sweeping concept that implies both the existence of innumerable galaxies and the possibility of sentient life on planets outside our own. At the same time, it contains a detailed analysis of life that penetrates to the depths of the human psyche. Thus Mahayana Buddhism takes as a basic premise the existence of numerous life-bearing worlds throughout the universe, while at the same time describing Buddhism as the driving force that enables individual human beings to bring about their own spiritual reformation, thereby assuring eternal peace and the long-term survival of civilizations.

Throughout its twenty-five-hundred-year history, the spread of Buddhism has been characterized by tolerance, gentleness and love of nature. As the French scholar Sylvain Levi stated, "Buddhism is justified in laying claim to the honor of having conquered a portion of the world without ever having resorted to violence and without ever having resorted to force of arms." In fact, the goal of Buddhists, and an underlying aim of this book, is world peace. In Buddhism, we say, "world peace through individual enlightenment." A peaceful and secure society will result through a process of individual dialogue - person by person by person - until war and its underlying causes vanish from the earth. For all these reasons, Buddhism is set to play a dynamic role in the emerging scientific culture of the twenty-first century.

With that shimmering idea as a backdrop, we will now turn to the idea of individual practice, including the secret law Nichiren discovered hidden in the depths of the Lotus Sutra. Because, before we can change the destiny of the world, we must first change ourselves.