

The Book of Tao With Notes from the Editor

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PREFATORY NOTE

[Page iii] *The Book of Tao* is founded on the teaching of the esoteric schools of Chinese philosophy, both Buddhist and Taoist, and takes the form of a summary of their main principles. It is intended as a guide to those who aspire to Initiation into the Ancient Wisdom, and therefore deals rather with Mysticism than Occultism, for only by attaining a high degree of enlightenment can men prepare themselves for knowledge of the higher sciences, which would otherwise lead them into disaster. By following the precepts of *The Book of Tao* the aspirant can make himself fit for the study of practical Occultism — a dangerous weapon in the hands of those not properly trained — and can strengthen himself for the tests of courage and endurance through which it is necessary to pass before Initiation.

The work is divided into six sections, which treat of Non-attachment, Impersonality, Compassion, Renunciation, Self-reliance and Truth [Page iv] respectively, and to these I have added a number of footnotes to explain the Chinese words that are used in the text and to make the meaning of some obscure passages more intelligible. In most cases I have given the Sanskrit equivalents of the Chinese words, as students of Theosophy will be more familiar with them.

THE EDITOR

[Page 1] THERE are many things of which it is best not to speak, for Knowledge in the hands of those who do not know how to use it is a curse. But counselled by those who have greater wisdom than myself, it is right that I should set down certain things which they have told me so that those whom they concern may read them. Others also have received the Teaching of the Lords of Wisdom, so there is nothing new in what I shall write here; these truths are as old as the Universe, and there shall come a time when all must understand them, even though now they fill men with fear. Yet those who are unable to face Truth had better remain in ignorance; a brilliant light will blind eyes not strong enough to gaze upon it.

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Only those who are empty-handed shall find the Path. The Lords of Wisdom will accept only those who are the poorest of the poor, who are utterly free from possessions, for the entrance is so small that those who would enter must leave [Page 2] everything behind. For whether a man lives in a palace or a hut he will not be accepted if he is a slave to his possessions. True poverty is poverty in all places; absence of

wealth does not always mean poverty; the highest poverty is absence of selfish desire. One may be a pauper and yet be lord over many lands.

For those who prize possessions Truth is unwelcome; it proclaims the dissolution of all those things they value most — the death of self, the end of personality, and the decay of the body. Yet all this is no cause for despair. When the fool is faced by death he is afraid, being attached to the body, and thinketh, “I shall die”; when the fool falls on evil times he is unhappy and thinketh, “I am miserable”; in time of wealth he is intoxicated and cries, “I am well pleased!” Yet fear, misery and pleasure result from a desire to possess the body and the personality; only the poor man is happy, because he does not long to possess. And when the Lords of Wisdom proclaim that all things are subject to Change, that the body, the senses and the self are destined to pass away, the poor man is not afraid. The Truth does not blind him or make him grieve, for he knows that “I” is none of these things — it is not the body, nor the senses, nor the self; it is not affected by pleasure or pain — all these exist in “I” and the wise do not identify the part with the Whole. [Page 3]

It is an old truth that if a man act, the consequences of his action will return to him as inevitably as the night follows the day, and for many this is a terrible teaching. Unwilling to face it they call it “platitude” and pass on their way unheeding. Yet for all that they cannot escape the results of their deeds, and though they may ignore this law they are still slaves to it. There cannot be birth without death, action without reaction, rise without fall: this is called *Yin-Kwo*. [*Yin-Kwo* is the Chinese for *Karma*, a Sanskrit word meaning “action”. From this it has come to signify the Law of Kosmic Activity which is Causation, but this is not to be confused with the European conception of Fate. In the East Karma is not thought of as a blind and inexorable Power to which man is everlastingly a slave, but as a Law by which beings *bind themselves* in their ignorance of Truth. The evolution of man is an increasingly greater power over Karma, until he has it completely under his control when he is a fully enlightened one or Buddha]

All component things — men, mountains, rivers, trees and flowers — are the result of *Yin-Kwo*, the outcome of innumerable actions extending back into the Infinite Past. For *Yin-Kwo* is the Law of Change: nothing is in itself eternal, for it is in the nature of things that one event shall give birth to another, and so on in an unending chain, with the result that Existence is in a perpetual state of flux. Yet though the Universe is always changing the substance of it remains the same; forms may come and go, but the Law does not [Page 4] pass away. In a world of impermanent things there is always impermanence. The face of the sea is never still, for the waves and the tides move to and fro without pause, yet there is always water. Therefore be comforted, you that fear Change; the form will vanish, but Tao [Much dispute has raged round this word among scholars of Chinese, but it is now generally agreed that the meaning is similar to the Sanskrit Aum — the “sound-symbol” of the ultimate Reality which lies behind the Kosmos, the “Causeless Cause of all causes”. It has been usual to translate *Tao* by “the Way”, and though this is in a great measure correct, it is misleading to Westerners, who are inclined to think of the Way as a path of moral development, while in the esoteric schools of the East it is conceived of as a universal Law which works throughout nature from the highest to the lowest. The Way is not a particular ethical code; it is something infinitely wider and greater than a mere set of precepts in that it includes the whole of Life, both good and evil. Other translations have been ventured, among them being “God”, “Providence”, “Reason”, “Law”, “Life” and so forth; but all these seem to fall short of the ideal, and for that reason we have seen fit to leave it untranslated as no English word can fully convey the meaning of the Chinese. Sanskrit has several words which are closely akin to it in meaning, as Aum, Ātman, Dharma, Ālaya. etc.. But the actual word used is unimportant so long as we grasp the Truth behind it, especially when we

remember the words of Lao Tsz: “The *Tao* which could be expressed in words would not be the true *Tao*, and no name that could be given to It would be a lasting name”] shall endure.

These, then, are the first truths:

All things are subject to Change; that which is born must die, and that which dies must assume another form. [Page 5]

No single thing can stand by itself; it must be evolved from a cause and must give birth to an effect.

You are unhappy because you desire to possess things which are not enduring, and to keep them for ever.

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Life is a Path stretching from Infinity to Infinity of which there are three divisions: the Past, the Present and the Future, and the name of this Path is *Tao*. In the Present the whole of the Past is gathered together; it is the effect of which the Past was the cause. In the Present lies the seed of the Future, to which it is continually giving birth. Yet it has been said that the Present is not the child of the Past because it is continually becoming the Past, nor yet is it the parent of the Future because the Future is continually becoming the *Present*; for the present moment never gives birth to and is never born of anything but itself. For behold — the Past, the Present and the Future are summed up in one moment of Time — the eternal Now .

So is it with you. You are the result of all that has ever been; you are all that is; and out of you will be evolved all that is yet to be. [Page 6] [One should be careful to distinguish this teaching from that of Solipsism which holds that your *personal* self is the only reality and that all else is in your imagination. It is impossible logically to disprove this theory, but man's intuition will not tolerate it, and for this reason it is never taken very seriously. However, the “you” referred to here is the Higher Self which is not conditioned by personality, but which is the pure *Ātman* manifested for the time being in the form of a personal entity. The Higher Self is the real “you” while the Lower Self is the *persona* or mask through which it functions while on the material plane]

You are not your body, nor your senses, nor your personality; you are That in which all these things have their being.

It is said that the Master Hui Neng [Hui Neng was the sixth patriarch of the esoteric Zen or Chan School of Buddhism founded by Bodhidharma in China during the VIth century of the Christian Era. He was the author of the famous *Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, known as “the only sutra spoken by a native of China”, and it is from this work that the story quoted below is obviously taken. At the present time Zen flourishes chiefly in Japan, though it held great sway in China during the Tang and Sung dynasties, but with the

coming of more decadent forms of Buddhism its popularity in China gradually waned though it has had a lasting effect on Chinese art and literature] once came upon two men arguing about a flag which blew in the wind. And one said, “Lo, the wind moveth the flag”, and the other denied it saying, “Nay, it is the flag that moves”. Whereupon the Master declared that neither of the two was right, for it was the Mind [The Universal Mind or Ālaya-vijñāna which is reflected in the individual mind. The Ālaya-vijñāna is the conscious, discriminating aspect of Reality which achieves its highest manifestation in the human brain. It is in this Universal Mind that all phenomena exist in their capacity as separate objects, since in themselves they are one with Ātman, and it is this kosmic consciousness which is the source of the individual consciousness. The analogy of the sea is one that holds good up to a point. The waves are the separate phenomena and the sea is the Mind in which the phenomena exist, while water (the substance of the sea) is the ultimate Reality or Ātman. But analogies are unsafe guides to the understanding of these things, and though they are useful to the student at the beginning of his task, constant meditation is far more reliable. Only the intuition (Bodhi) can grasp the greatest truths] that moved. [Page 7]

All things exist in the Mind, and every single thing is a thought in the mind. But the Mind is not yours any more than the stars, the sea and the wind are yours. Self is but a thought in the Mind, and the mind cannot belong to the self. Does the Universe belong to the sun ?

Suffering arises when the personality takes possession of the Mind, and the Mind is identified with separate thoughts with fear, joy and pain. But the true Mind is impersonal, it is the Great Void [The term Void or No-thing (as distinct from Nothing) is a translation of Śūnyatā (Chinese: *Mu*) which does not signify complete and utter blankness and annihilation, as so many Western scholars have understood it. Śūnyatā is That which is no separate thing, in other words the All which transcends particularity and is not conditioned by the (apparent) individuality of phenomena] which contains heaven and earth.

For I have heard it said :

“This world is a Void,
 “There can be no possession; [Page 8]
 “All is but No-thing,
 “There is neither coming nor going;
 “Comprehending the truth of Emptiness
 “The wise are at peace,
 “For their mind is a Void, calm and silent.
 “The arrow passes but no trace remains;
 “The wind bloweth about
 “Yet lingereth nowhere.
 “Even so are the wise.”

For knowing all thoughts to be aspects of the same Mind they offer them no resistance and yet are not carried away by them. The thought arises and is not suppressed; the thought passes but they do not cling to it. In a word, it is because they do not assert the personality that thoughts flow past without upsetting the Mind. Neither seeking to give way to pain, nor to stamp out pain, the sage is unmoved by pain. His Mind is free from strain and does not identify itself with particular things, for he knows it to be one with *Tao*, which is the true Self. This is called *Wu Wei*. [Literally “non-assertion”, but often

mistranslated as “inaction”. Many have thought Taoist philosophy mere lazy quietism on account of this false rendering of the word, whereas *Wu Wei* is really the art of changing personal into cosmic action. That is to say, the individual ceases to act from his *lower* self and derives his energy from the Higher. This is what Ralph Waldo Trine describes as attaching one's belt to the power-house of the Universe — using one's individuality as a channel for the flow of *Tao* by allowing the thoughts to follow one another naturally instead of hindering their course by self-assertion. However, the author goes on to treat of this further] [Page 9]

All things in the Universe have their being in *Tao* — the Way leading out of the Past, through the Present and into the Future, the three aspects of the eternal Now. The whole of *Tao* is to be found in the present moment; the Past is summed up in it and it is unceasingly manifesting the Future, and so it is in the ever-present Now that you must live if you would be in harmony with Life. [The Master Hui Neng says: “To practise meditation is to make it a rule to have the mind in concentrated attention on all occasions, — no matter what we are doing, walking, standing, sitting or reclining. ...In the thinking faculty, let the past be dead. If we allow our thoughts, past, present and future to become linked up into a series, we put ourselves under restraint: The same thought is expressed by Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*: “If you keep your mind separate and distinguished from the objects of appetite and the events of time, both past and future, and make your-self like Empedocles' world,

‘Round as a ball in joyous rest reposing,’

and concern yourself to live no longer than your real life, that is the present moment; if you do this, you may move on till death stops you, with credit and in harmony with the deity within you”] For here there is only Reality, as the illusions of pleasure, pain, fear and personality are the result of clinging to what has gone by and grasping for that which is to come.

Only by practising *Wu Wei* is it possible to keep pace with *Tao*, for *Wu Wei* is the state of mind [Page 10] which reflects events like a mirror without retaining things that are no longer before it. [The same analogy is found in the writings of Chwang Tsz, the great disciple of Lao Tsz, who lived round about the IVth century B.C. “For the perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing: it refuses nothing. It receives but does not keep. And thus, he can triumph over matter without injury to himself.” It may be thought that *Wu Wei* can only lead to a completely negative state of mind that is purely receptive and is incapable of creative activity, but that it provides an opening for the revelation of *Tao* is clearly shown in this passage from *Light on the Path*: “Look for the flower (*of Tao*) to bloom in the silence that follows the storm: not till then. ...The silence may last a moment of time or it may last a thousand years. But it will end. Yet you will carry its strength with you”. The passive state of *Wu Wei* is the silence wherein the “still, small voice” of *Tao* is to be listened for] You cannot make a hole in the air with your hand, nor can a passing circumstance displace an even mind. All Existence is only Now, and so it is that by letting it take its course, by keeping the Mind evenly poised in the Present without letting it be dragged to the past or the future, you arrive at harmony with the movement of *Tao*. But be warned that if you let the boat go with the stream you must keep a good hold on the rudder; this is the difference between the sage and the idler: both let the boat go, but one forgets to steer.

Therefore the second truths are these:

The Past, the Present and the Future are the three aspects of the eternal Now, which is the focus-point of *Tao*. [Page 11]

The innumerable objects of heaven and earth exist only in the Mind, and are themselves but myriads of shifting thoughts.

It is by keeping the Mind calm and even that you are able to live in the eternal, by holding it free from attachment to thoughts that you learn harmony with *Tao*.

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Yet beware. There is a great and subtle danger that may drag you back into the mud just when you think you have attained the Goal. *Nie-p'an* [Nirvāna — signifying the extinction of a flame through lack of fuel — is the state of absolute unity and harmony of the individual with Ātman and not, as many would have it, complete annihilation and soul-death. Nirvāna is the death of self-assertion and egotism and the realization of a fuller and finer life in accord with the Reality that is beyond the sphere of the lower self. The flame which is extinguished is the flame of Trisnā or selfish craving — the desire of the personality or Lower Quaternary composed of the four aggregates, Rupa (the physical body), Prāna (the life-principle in its bio-chemical aspect), Liṅga S'arīra (the astral body) and Kāma Rūpa (the seat of the animal passions). (Vide H. P. B.'s *Secret Doctrine* and *Key to Theosophy*.) Nirvāna is realised when the individual “transfers his centre of gravity” from this lower self to the Higher, and is not necessarily dependent on the death of the physical body, for Nirvāna is totally foreign to the conception of Heaven held by orthodox Christianity and can be attained on this earth by anyone sufficiently strong to forego self and follow the teaching of the Masters] is not to be reached so easily. [Page 12]

Before venturing out upon the task, before you seek to tune yourself to the Rhythm of Life consider your motive for so doing.

Do you wish to free yourself from suffering? Is it your desire to become great and wise for your own glorification? Do you long for the peace of *Nie-p'an* ? If these are your motives you will most assuredly fail. Those who seek happiness for themselves never find it. If your only desire is to escape from pain, be content to remain in ignorance, for those who tread the Path for selfish motives court a terrible doom. Better to rest awhile on the well - known levels of ignorance than to inherit incalculable woe for aeons of time by soiling the Path with feet that are still foul with such desires.

Those who sin in ignorance are weak, with the result that Yi-Kwo reacts weakly. But those who have Knowledge, whose wills are strengthened by treading the Path, if they sin how much more violently will *Yin-Kwo* repay! [A remarkable passage in *The Voice of the Silence* bears out this teaching: “Woe then to thee, disciple, if there is one single vice thou hast not left behind; for then the ladder will give way and over-throw thee..... Beware lest thou should'st set a foot still soiled upon the ladder's lowest rung..... His vices will take shape and drag him down. His sins, will raise their voices, like as the jackal's laugh and sob after the sun goes down; his thoughts become an army, and bear him off a captive slave. Kill thy desires, Lanoo, make thy vices impotent ere the first step is taken on the solemn journey”. It should

never be forgotten that the aspirant to Wisdom has to encounter far more terrible dangers than the ordinary man, and the slightest false step or shadow of a selfish motive will send him to an unutterable doom. The greater the height the longer the fall and the narrower the path] [Page 13]

There is but one right motive for treading the Path: to bring all living things into harmony with *Tao*, even if that should force you to be the last to attain to peace.

You shall not become *Kakusha* [Buddha or Tathāgata, the rank of one who has attained the greatest Enlightenment. The word Buddha does not only refer to the historical personage Gautama, for it is derived from the Sanskrit root Bodhi (Wisdom) and means “an Enlightened One”. Frequently the word is used in an impersonal sense, to indicate the Buddha-nature of things, *i.e.*, the Reality which is the *raison d'être* of the phenomenal Universe] by fleeing from pain. The great Issa [Many things are told about Issa in Tibet, and there is reason to believe that he was the same person as Jesus of Nazareth. A legend still prevails among the people that Issa came from the West and dwelt with them for a while before returning to Palestine, for it is believed by many that Jesus went to the East for his initiation. Both in East and West he is looked upon as a Saviour, though in somewhat different senses. In the East his Sacrifice is regarded as symbolical of his being a Bodhisattva — that is to say, one who has dedicated himself eternally to the service of the world] endured suffering for countless *kie-po* [Kalpas. A kalpa is a period of 4320,000.000 years] for the salvation of man. Yea! aeon upon aeon shall you strive to bring Peace to the world, and aeon upon aeon shall the pitiless legions of Po-siün [Māra, the personification of Evil] repulse you. And there shall [Page 14] be suffering upon earth. For the *Mo - kwei* [The Māras or demons in league with Māra] shall enter into all lands, into cities, into villages, into the mountain solitudes and into the jungles; and they shall spread torment and misery and evil among man and beast, and you, out of your compassion, shall be seized with unutterable woe. Yet take heart, for it is written, “When every phase of our mind shall be in harmony with the Mind of *Kakusha*, there shall not be one atom of dust that does not enter into *Ni-p'an*”. [Quoted from the *Engaku Sho*, a scripture of Mahāyāna Buddhism].

You cannot seek freedom for yourself alone, for while the stain of a whole world's sin lies upon you there can be no lasting Peace. It has been said, “Regard great evils as though they were your own responsibility”. [A saying from the *Tao The King*, the famous book written by Lao Tsz, one of the greatest of Chinese mystics]

For when you see evil in others, think not, “This man is a sinner while I have escaped from wrong”; do not glory in the fact that you are enlightened while the rest of mankind struggles in pain and ignorance, for your true Self is the whole of Life, and the wrongs of others are your own guilt.

Do not blame men when they err, but purify your own heart. [Page 15]

Do not be angry when the world forgets the Law and ceases to abide by Tao, but look for the fault in yourself. The root of all evil is within you.

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Those who do evil for personal gain will inherit ill fortune; those who do good for personal gain will inherit good fortune. Yet neither of the two is able to be free, for by reason of their attachment to the results of their actions they are still the slaves of *Yin-Kwo*.

That which is set in motion by the self must return to the self; if you push a pendulum, it will swing back and strike your hand, and the harder you push the greater will be the force of its return, and it will swing back again and again until equilibrium is restored. So is it with *Yin-Kwo*: the effects of a deed ripple out into the Infinite like the waves caused by throwing a stone into water. And after awhile they return to the spot from which they were set in motion in a few moments or in hundreds of years.

And those who are slaves to self will be slaves to the effects of their deeds, which will come back to the self. They shall fear the consequences of ill deeds done in the past, and shall be anxious to lay up good store for themselves in the future. And *Yin-Kwo* shall be their master. [Page 16]

Now there was a man who possessed great riches and who was blessed with a multitude of good things, but of all his treasures there was none which he prized so much as his wife who was exceeding gracious and fair. And it befell that she was seized with a sickness and died, and her husband was like to waste a way from grief. But he said within himself, "Lo, this evil hath come upon me as a result of evil things done in the past; in former lives I have acted against the Law and this is my punishment. Truly, all pleasure is vain, for the Law shall demand retribution for a wasted life. Now if I continue in my evil ways I shall surely return to the earth after my death to expiate the crimes of the past, and shall continue to be born and reborn amid unending misery. Therefore I will seek deliverance in *Nie-p'an* and attain eternal Peace".

And he sold all his lands and distributed the money among the poor. Then, betaking himself to a solitary place in the mountains, he lived on wild fruits and leaves, and sought by earnest meditation to deliver himself from the Wheel of Birth and Death. [Samsāra, the Wheel of the Six realms of the worlds of Desire. which are: (i) Devachan, or the Heaven-world; (ii) the Human-world; (iii) the Animal-world; (iv) the hot and cold Hells; (v) the Realm of Tantalised Spirits; (vi) the Titan-world. The Wheel of life is also called Bhavaçakra, and is a favourite subject of Buddhist art. The finest pictures of the Wheel are probably the Tibetan, which are executed in great detail, the horrors of the various hells being drawn remarkably vividly !] And after many years he [Page 17] died, and came for before Yen - lo, [Yama, the Judge of the Dead, who is shown in the Wheel of Life as sitting between the hot and cold hells. He is, of course, symbolical of Karma] the King of the Dead.

And Yen - lo said, "Art thou the man who had great riches and who gave all to the poor ?" And the man replied, "Yea, Lord, seeking to be delivered from Rebirth and Suffering, I gave all to the poor and practised great austerities alone in the mountain-forests to attain *Nie-p'an* and to rest eternally on the bosom of *Tao*. I beseech thee, O King, to reward me for my labours".

But Yen-lo made answer, "Certainly thou shalt be rewarded for thy labours. Yet I would ask thee a question. How canst thou be rewarded with *Nie-p'an*, since in that state there is no one to be rewarded?"

Thou [Meaning the lower self] cans't not enter *Nie-p'an*, for *Nie-p'an*, is the dissolution of *thou*. Who is to inherit the reward thou seekest, what is to become of the merit thou hast built up for thyself, when thou art at-one with the Whole ? Can *Tao* be rewarded ? ” And the man knew not what to say. Yen-lo went on, “Those who store up merit for themselves must inherit it; those who store up ill for themselves must bear it, for the self must continue in order to receive the consequences [Page 18] of its deeds. But if thou wishest not to receive any benefits from thine actions, thou wilt be set free from their effects, and shalt become one with *Tao*”.

If you act with selfish motives your deeds will only strengthen the self, and when they return they can only create self again.

Beware, O climber of the Mountain, lest as you scale those soaring cliffs, as you scramble from ledge to ledge far above the mist-filled valley, beware lest the eagles of *Yin-Kwo* hovering around you beat you with their wings and drag you with their talons to hurl you down on to the pointed crags.

Be not concerned with the effects of your deeds, for they shall take care of themselves. If you act for your own advantage you will be fettered by your actions. But be like unto the sun which is content to pour forth its rays upon all the worlds without seeking anything in return. For it is written that Heaven and Earth endure long because they do not live for themselves; for this reason the highest form of man puts himself last, he looks upon his personality as outside of himself and yet his individuality is preserved. [*Tao The King*, I, vii. The difference between the personality and the individuality is the difference between the Lower Quaternary and the Upper Triad, the latter being composed of: Manas, the human soul, Buddhi, the spiritual soul or intuition, and Ātman, which is pure Spirit. These three together form the re-incarnating Ego which outlasts the personality at death, although it is only Manas that is affected by Karma, the other two — Buddhi and Ātman — being purely impersonal] [Page 19]

Even as a river flows on to the ocean without lingering by the pleasant banks, never pausing for a moment in its course, so does the highest form of man flow with Life. He does what is required of him and then passes on without looking back, neither fearing the future nor regretting the past abiding always in the eternal Now. A deed is done, and before there is time to be anxious for the effect it will have, it is a thing of the past and the Stream of Life has flowed on.

Tarry not to give or take for your own advantage; to float with the stream you must not grasp at overhanging branches. The Way lies straight ahead, but the *Mei-kwo* shall cry to you out of the forests and the marshes on either side and shall call you “fool”. “Behold”, they shall cry, “ you are lost, it is but a marsh-light that you follow. We show you a better way”. Pass on !

Do not stand by the wayside and gaze at the Road. Pass on ! Live in the eternal Now, without overstepping it or lagging behind; be not entangled with the Past or you shall lose the harmony of Tao. [Page 20]

For I cried unto the Lord of Wisdom, “What is the *Tao*?” And he made answer, “Pass on!”

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And there came unto me One out of the Sacred Land, [Shamballa or the Western Heaven, the home of the supreme Initiates, which is said to be situated in an almost inaccessible place in the Gobi Desert. Students are referred to Professor Nicholas Roerich's two books *Altai-Himālaya* and *Shamballa* which contain much interesting information on the subject] who stood in silence for a while and gazed upon me. His features were rugged with many sorrows, yet his eyes were compassionate and calm, and spoke of one who had found Peace after much tribulation.

Now in those days I had fallen on evil times and out of the depths of my grief had called on the Lord of Heaven to deliver me. But my prayers had ascended into the silence, which swallowed them up so that they were lost, and no echo returned.

And when he had pondered a while, he that was from the Sacred Land said unto me, "Why called you upon the Lord of Heaven ?" I answered, "Because I have been visited with adversity and my life has been a burden to me". And he asked me, saying, "Who hath brought these things to pass, the Lord of Heaven or thyself ? If the Lord, then surely He hath some good purpose therein and it were folly to wish it otherwise. If thyself, thou hast only thyself to blame". And I was at a loss what to answer, so he spake unto me again, [Page 21] saying, "My friend, surely thou must know that thou sufferest by reason of thyself alone ? The Lord of Heaven hath no hand in thy fate. Thou art the disposer of thine own doom or salvation and the absolute ruler of thine own destiny. For behold, the world is as thou makest it, and the Lord of Heaven is none other than thyself".

So saying, he departed whence he had come.

The prayers of a whole world could not stand between a deed and its consequences; however bitter your remorse you must inherit the destiny you have made for yourself, for no power in all the seven realms can undo what you have done, and not even the Lords of Wisdom can force you to take a single step forward or backward on the Path.

You may give a man food, but' you cannot make him eat; you can teach a man wisdom but you cannot make him learn. This is an old truth.

For as you are the disposer of your own destiny, you must tread the Path alone. Wisdom is not a gift but an achievement. Only through aeons of unaided struggle can the Goal be reached; and finally, after much wandering about the earth, after conversing with saints, philosophers, and priests, after reading innumerable scriptures, you shall find that all Knowledge is in your own Mind, and that your true Self is universal *Tao*. [Page 22]

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The Teaching has been likened to a finger pointing at the moon of Truth: you are a fool if you take the finger for the moon. Consider it thus: the word “tea” is not tea itself, and no more is a doctrine the actual Truth. The scriptures do but point the way, and those who rest content with them may be likened to men who think a finger-post as good as a journey.

Therefore beware of my words! He who puts but one sentence of this book into practice is far greater than he who has read it ten thousand times and remained satisfied with the mere words. What I have written here is not Truth; it is a finger pointing the Way. And now that you have read all, do not stop to gape at what I have written like a child at a display of fireworks, — pass on!