



Introduction by Terri Nicholson

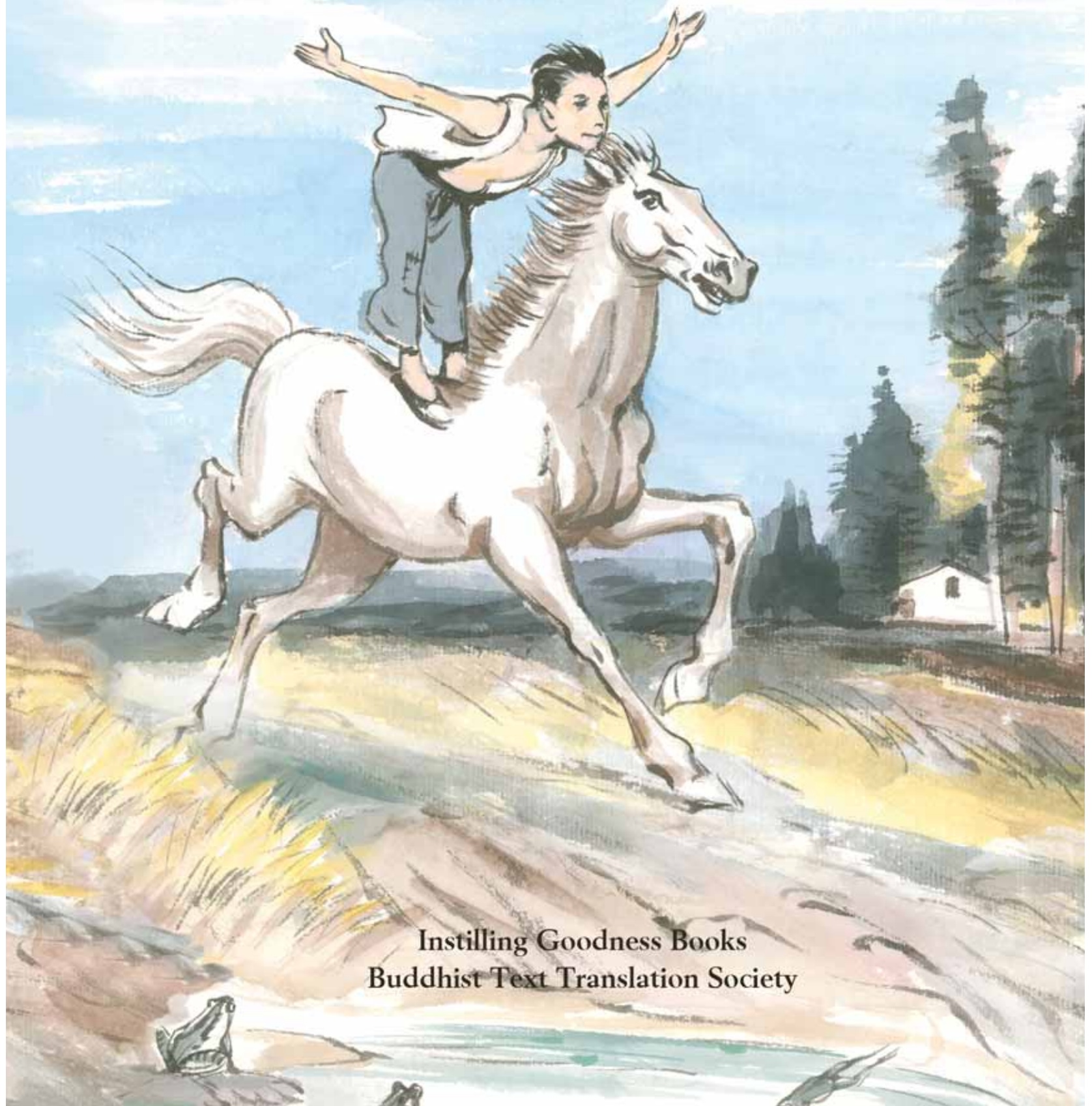
From my very first days studying with the Master I could clearly see his joy in working with children of every age. As soon as they could crawl they were drawn like iron filings to a magnet. When the Master lectured they would climb up to the high seat where he sat, and he, as often as not, would stop and take the time to teach even these little ones. Later he worked hard to establish schools for them and I had the privilege of learning to be a teacher, guided by his great wisdom. Still later I had my own children and delighted in the teachings both parents and children were given.

One of the most powerful teachings for me was that we all have the potential to attain great wisdom and become Buddhas. It is easy to feel that those with such wisdom are forever beyond us, somehow different in nature than we ordinary human beings. What better way to inspire children than to hear and read stories of the Master's own childhood. If even the Venerable Master was once a child who got into mischief and lost his temper, then maybe we also, naughty as we may be now, have the potential for greatness.

The simple, accessible manner in which the stories are told does not detract from their power to inspire, and the illustrations add to the richness of their telling. I believe this new volume of stories of the life of a "kind monk" will appeal to children, young and old, and to those of us grown-ups who love a good story, as well. I hope it is only the first of many volumes.

The Kind Monk

Biography of Venerable Master Hsuan Hua for Young Readers



Instilling Goodness Books
Buddhist Text Translation Society

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I White Mountains

- I Introduction
- 9 World of Wonders
- 10 A Fast Crawler
- 11 Planting Barley
- 12 King of the Village
- 13 The Wild Horse
- 15 What is Death?
- 16 Bowing to His Parents
- 18 A Mysterious Dream
- 19 Good Man Pan
- 21 Old Master
- 22 Who's Afraid of Demons?
- 24 School at Sixteen
- 26 Toad Hall
- 28 The Fox Spirit
- 31 Sitting by His Mother's Grave
- 33 Living up to His Vow
- 34 Eating the Bitter
- 35 The Hut's on Fire
- 36 One Meal a Day
- 39 Dragon Clouds
- 40 Barefoot in the Snow
- 42 Pan and the Sea Monsters
- 43 Will the Dragons Make It Rain?

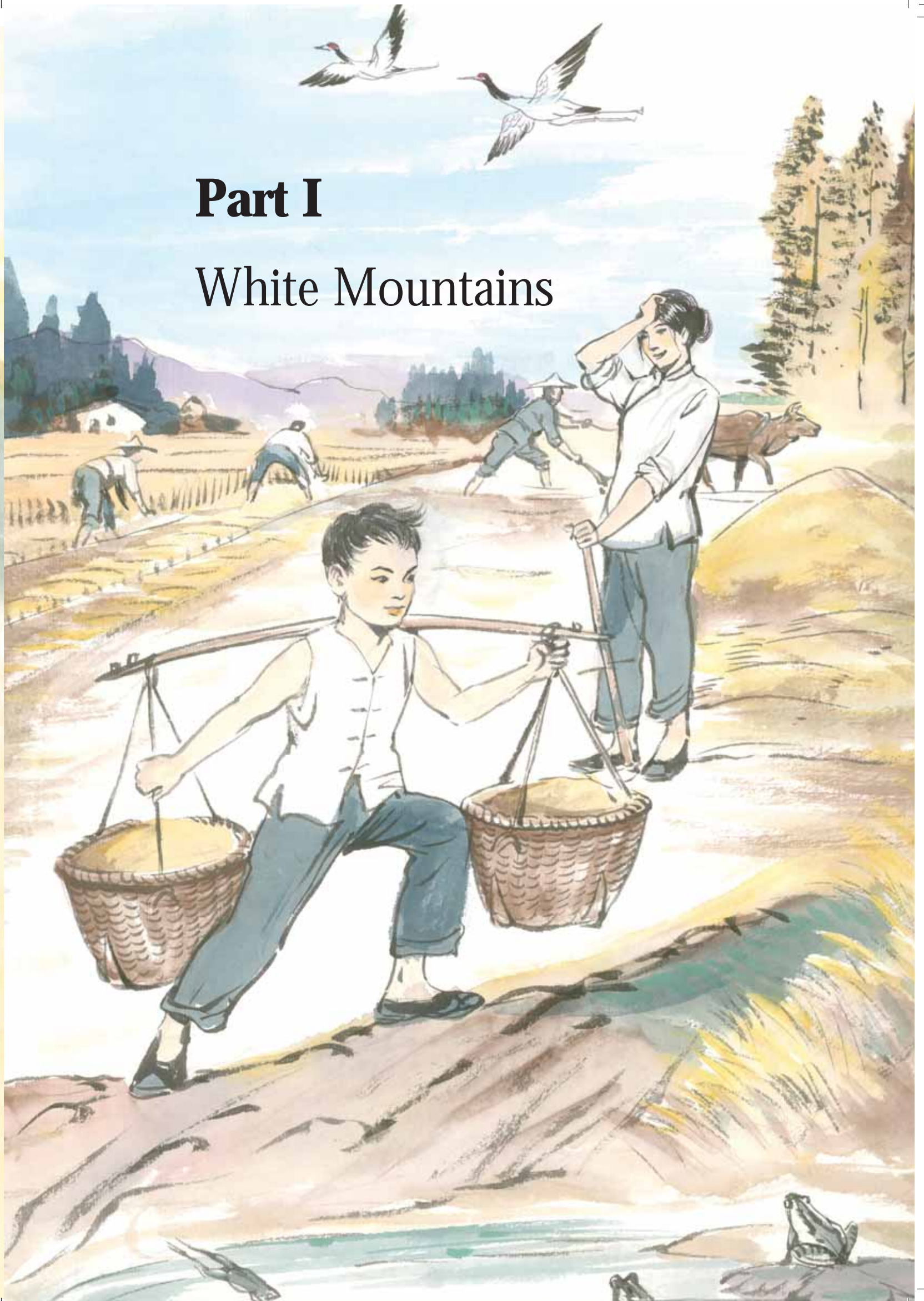
Part II A Long Journey

- 46 Little Ant
- 47 Hanging Cliff Monastery
- 48 Storm at Sea
- 48 The Old Man on the Boat
- 51 Noble Empty Cloud
- 52 Three Wishes
- 52 A Sad Farewell
- 54 Hong Kong
- 54 Moving a Boulder
- 57 Western Bliss Gardens
- 59 A Duck in the Temple
- 61 Subduing a Dragon!
- 62 Taming a Tiger!
- 65 America
- 66 The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas
- 68 Feeding the Ants

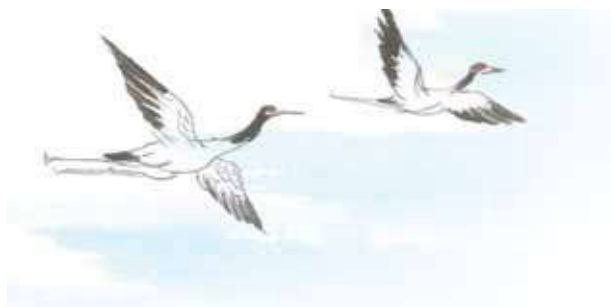


Part I

White Mountains







World Of Wonders

~March 16, 1918, the year of the horse~
Rain falls at the right time and the harvest is the best ever.

The winter wind blows cold and hard around the small hut. Inside a new baby lies safe and warm in his mother's arms. His body is the color of gold, and his eyes are as bright as the moon. The happy father says, "My wish for another son has come true."

"I had a strange dream last night," says the mother. "I saw Amitabha Buddha radiating rays of golden light into the world. When I awoke and the baby was born, a wonderful fragrance filled the air. Our son must be special."

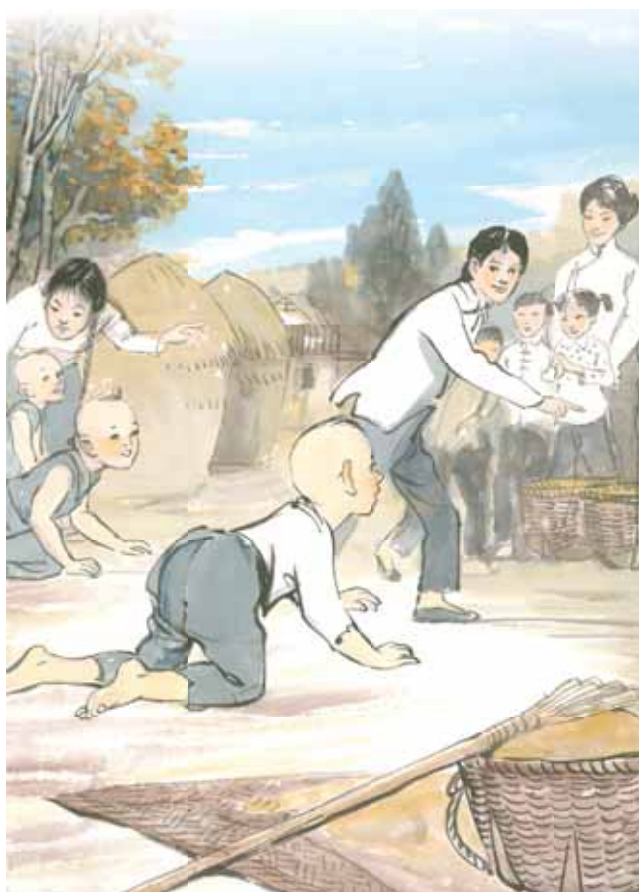
The baby does not stop crying. "Hush, my pearl, my jade," says the mother. But he cries on for three days and nights. When he finally stops, everyone is so tired that they sleep for a whole day and night. His grandmother names him Yu Shu, which means jade book.

Winter turns into spring. Yu Shu watches his father and brothers plow the fields. He hears his sisters sing at the well. He smells dumplings steaming in the kitchen and laughs at the sound of his mother chopping vegetables. Chop, chop, chop! Daisies pop up from the earth. Baby cranes hatch. His world is filled with wonders.

His father is a poor farmer named Bai, and his mother's name is Hu. He has five brothers and three sisters. Everyone for miles around knows his mother as a kind Buddhist. Even the animals benefit from her kindness, for she is a vegetarian and never harms them. Yu Shu follows in her footsteps and is vegetarian all his life.

The Bais live near a small village on Pine Flower River. In the winter the river freezes solid, but in the summer Yu Shu can see smooth multicolored stones at the bottom. On the sides of the river, fields of wheat, barley, and sorghum stretch out like great seas to the Chang Bai mountains, always white with snow.





A Fast Crawler

Nothing gives the Bais more pleasure than watching their bright-eyed little boy. They fuss over him until he is spoiled rotten. If he cannot get his way, he cries and won't eat until his parents' hearts soften and they give in. Gradually, he gets so he won't talk, and he won't play with the other kids either. He only glares at them.

"What a stubborn child!" the neighbors say. His mother smiles and continues to watch.

Yu Shu is a fast crawler, so his brothers set him up in a crawling race with other babies. The whistle blows and Yu Shu zips past the others. "Wait for me!" cries a baby and opens his mouth wide. "Chomp!" He bites Yu Shu on the heel.

"Wa-a-ah!" yells Yu Shu and just sits there on the ground.

"Bite him back!" says his second-born brother. "Fight for yourself."

"I don't know how to fight!" Yu Shu cries.

Tweaking him on the nose, his second-born brother replies, "Don't worry, I'll teach you gung fu when you get big enough." And to the dismay of his parents, he does.

In the spring, when Chinese New Year comes, the Bai family celebrates with the rest of the village. Hundreds of red lanterns are hung. Acrobats and opera singers put on shows in the streets. Fire-crackers pop! Yu Shu's head swivels from side to side. He doesn't know where to look first.

Beng-beng-beng! go the cymbals and gongs. It is time for the lion dance. Yu Shu jumps for joy. The lion cocks its ears and leaps high in the air, teasing the big-headed clowns. It twirls around and flips its tail. Yu Shu is sad when the day is over and can hardly wait until next year.

Planting Barley

“Wake up, my youngest son,” his mother calls. “Today is special.”

It isn’t quite dawn. Yu Shu stretches and rubs his eyes. He is tall for a boy of seven. “It’s not daylight,” he says, yawning.

“There are certain things a young boy must do,” says his mother. “Today you will learn to plant barley.”

“Hooray!” he cries and jumps out of bed.

Trotting behind his father, he scatters seeds along the rows. Insects buzz and fly, humming in the yellow sun. The sweet smell of the rich, brown earth makes him happy. Drinking in the fresh air, he says, “Honorable Father, when I grow up, I want to be a farmer like you.”

“*Hao ba!* Very well,” says his father. “But I warn you, your miserable old father is hard to please. A son of mine must work hard and not cry. And he should play with other kids, eh?” Yu Shu stops the crying and puts himself to work.

Work on the farm is hard. Up before dawn, he zigzags back and forth to the well, carrying buckets of water for his mother, as she lovingly waters the young cabbages.

In the autumn the dandelions turn to fluff and the yellow grain ripens. Yu Shu helps his brothers to harvest and hoist the grain up to the rooftops to dry. It glitters like gold coins in the sunlight. He also shoos the birds away—for this is the work of farm children in China.





Western Bliss Gardens

Life for the monks and nuns in Hong Kong becomes worse. Wishing to help them, the Master leaves the quiet cave. He begs and borrows enough money to give 4,000 monks and nuns each \$15.50 Hong Kong dollars, a bolt of cloth, and a box of medicine.

Some goodhearted people see what he is doing and want to help. One rich man offers him a piece of land on top of Horse Mountain. "There is no water up there," he says, "but you are welcome to it."

"It's a good place for a temple," says the Master. "I'll accept the offer."

The only way to the top is to climb 300 rickety steps that wind through the poorest slums of Hong Kong, with people chatting and quarreling, dogs barking, and vendors hawking. But once on top, the view sweeps down to the bright blue sea where *junks* with eyes painted on them so they can see, sail lazily out to sea.

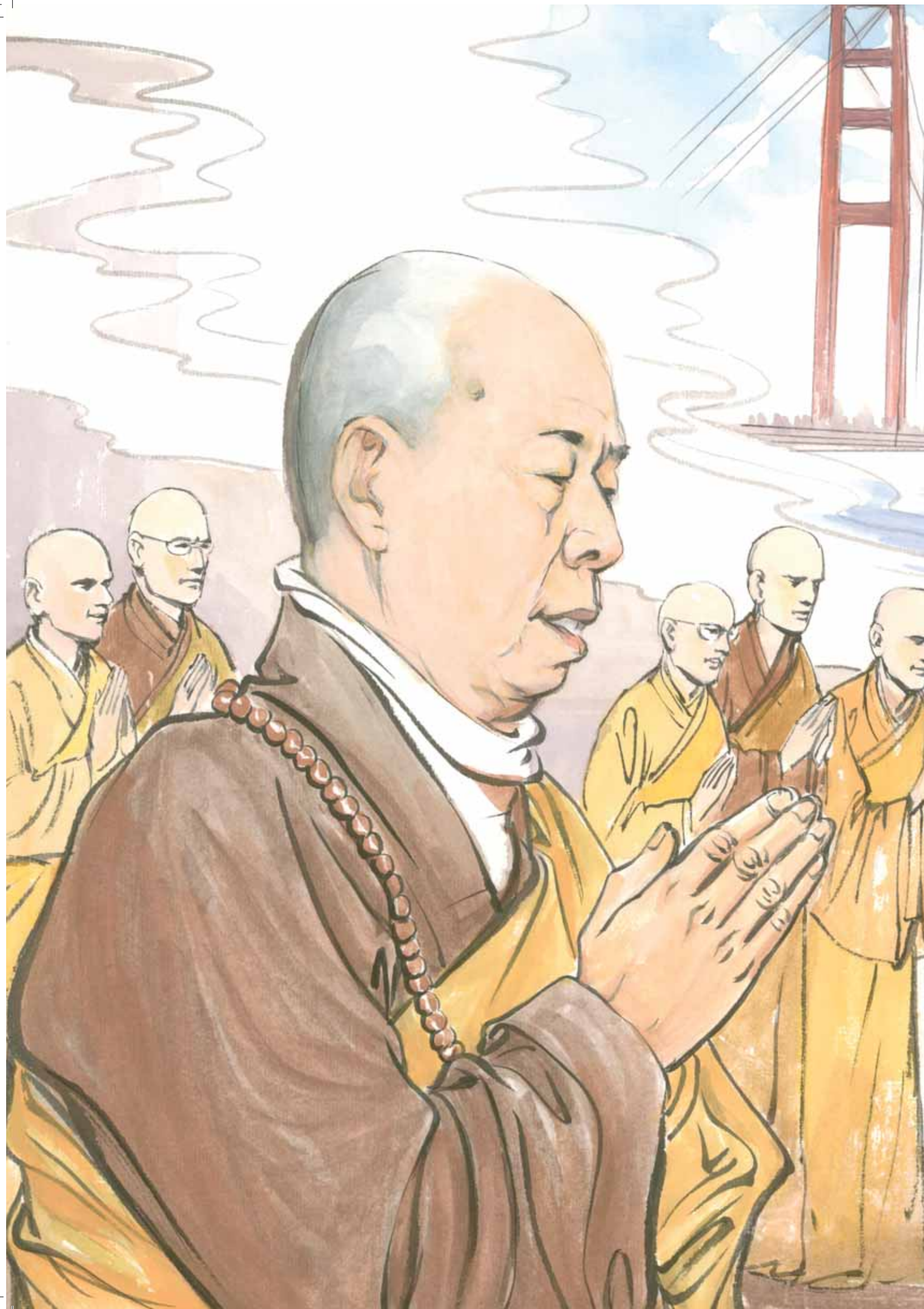
With his strong hands, the Master carries buckets of water and baskets of brick up the steps. Some people help, but most of the work he does himself.

The temple is finished in December 1951. The Master names it Western Bliss Gardens. It sparkles like a jewel in the mountain air, and lovely flowers with their magical fragrances fill the gardens. Hundreds of people visit and admire the temple and the view. But most of all, they are moved by the Master's kindness and wise words.

Placing his image of Amitabha Buddha on the altar, the Master says, "This is your new home." And he makes the same vow that he made many years ago. "I vow to become a Buddha and bring happiness into the world."

After he moves in, he finds a crack in a stone behind the temple. Every day he kneels beside it and asks Amitabha Buddha for water. Soon a trickle oozes from the crack. Gradually, water begins to flow.

The Master offers the workers a drink. "Ah, this water is sweet!" they exclaim. "Did you put sugar in it?" He smiles. The days of carrying water up the rickety steps are over.



America

In 1959, the Master visits Australia, the land of kangaroos and koalas. But no one is interested in Buddhism and he is ignored. The only food he can afford is white bread. A loaf lasts him a week. But he goes about cheerfully, planting seeds for the future of Buddhism. Then, good fortune comes his way, and he is given a job teaching Chinese at a university.

After one year, he returns to Hong Kong to find that some of his most trusted disciples have moved to San Francisco. In 1962, they send him an airline ticket with a message: We'll meet you at the airport. At this time the Master is forty-six years old.

The day he arrives in San Francisco, the hills are blazing with bright orange poppies. "So this is why the Chinese call this place Gold Mountain," he says.

He moves into his new home, a dark basement in the heart of Chinatown. The first night is one of the longest in his life. "I don't think the sun will ever rise," he says. He thinks the sun will never rise. When he opens the door, he sees why. There are no windows. No sunlight. No moonlight. But it's all his disciples can afford, so he happily makes himself at home.

Later he moves out of Chinatown into a flat on Waverly Street. It is full of light and fresh air. The first day of moving in, windows open and pale faces with blue eyes peer down at him. "Who are they?" The Master asks the owner.

"Students."

"I like students," the Master says and tacks a note on his door. *Meditation 7 p.m.*

That night at seven o'clock, he hears a rap on the door. "I'm interested in meditation," says a student, wearing a plaid shirt and blue jeans. "I'm studying Chinese," says another. She wears a flower in her hair.

"There's no heat, but you're welcome," says the Master. "I teach vegetarian cooking. You like, eh?"

"We sure would!" The Master's first American students have arrived.



The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

It would take a giant-sized book to tell the adventures of the Master with those first students, for you can be certain he had many. The difficulty is which ones to choose. I would certainly begin with the summer of 1968, when he first taught Buddhism to some American students. He knew a little English and they knew a little Chinese. With this, the translation of Buddhist sutras into English began.

Following this would be the story that came true about five lotus flowers blooming in San Francisco. This means that five Americans became ordained Buddhist monks and nuns. This was the beginning of the Sangha in the history of American Buddhism.

And I would tell the story of how the Master bought a big, old mattress factory and turned it into Gold Mountain Monastery. And how, when it became too small for all the new Buddhists, he bought an old hospital in Ukiah Valley, north of San Francisco. He called it the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Should you go there today, you would see children playing under redwood trees and peacocks strutting across the lawn. And if you look carefully, you might see dragons flying through the clouds.

Should you be a student at Instilling Goodness Elementary School or Developing Virtue High School, you would study the same *Standards for Students* that the Master studied as a student. And for the happiness of your parents, you would abide by them.

When your parents are calling,

Answer them right away.

When your parents tell you to do something,

Do not be lazy or sulky.

Perhaps we could ride the wind to the four corners of the earth where the Master has established Buddhist centers in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan. And in every place, we could read Buddhist books that have been translated so far into English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Polish. This is the Master's vow fulfilled. And we would abide by the Six Principles that the Master followed all his life:

No fighting

Be peaceful

No greed

Be generous

No selfishness

Be humble

No seeking

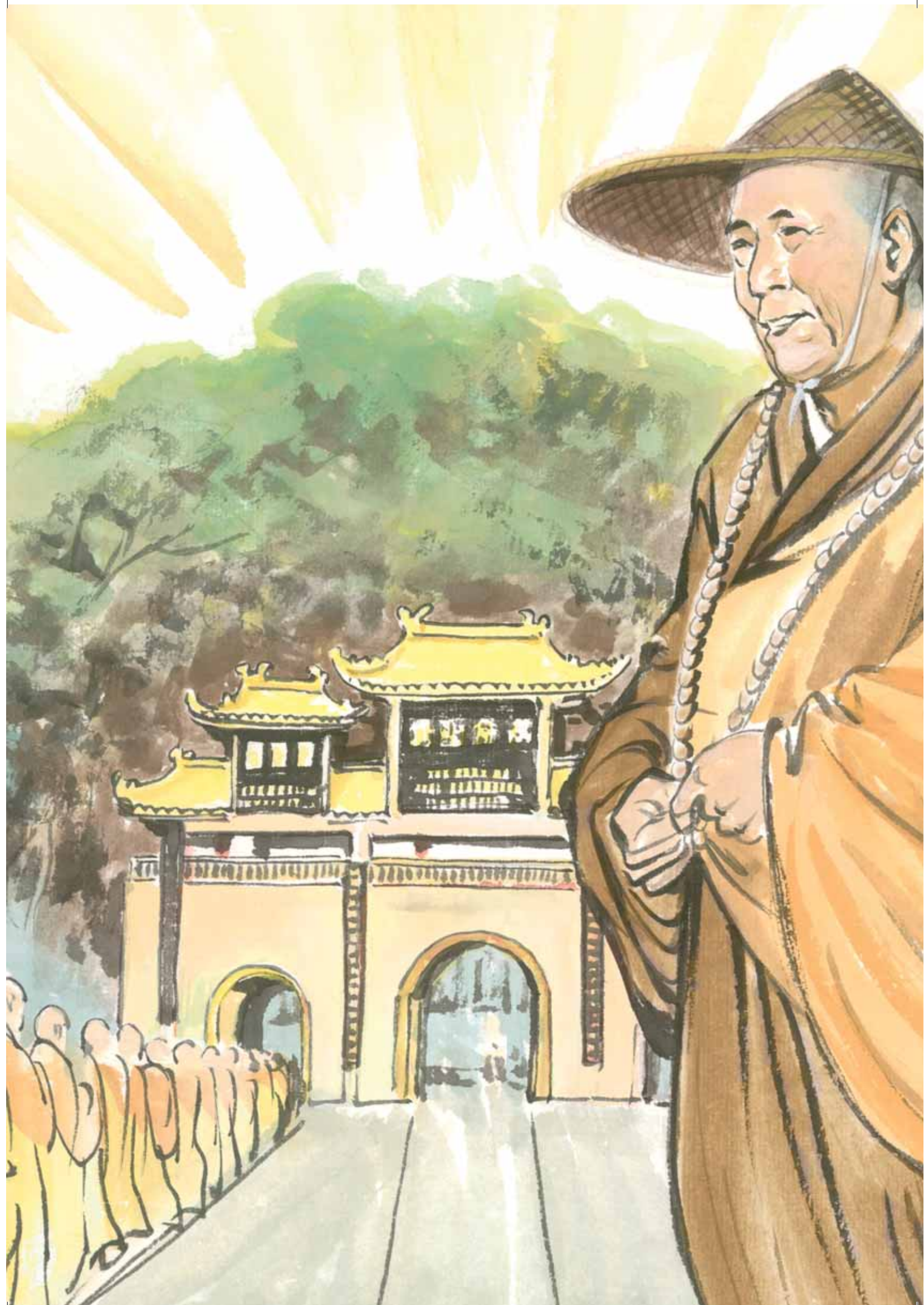
Be content

No self-benefit

Be a good team player

No lying

Be truthful



Feeding the Ants

We could write an ending to the adventures of the Master or write the beginning of new adventures for those who carry on his work. For on the afternoon of June 7, 1995, he died at the age of seventy-seven. Before he died, he asked that his ashes be scattered over the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to feed the ants.

The followers of the Master were greatly saddened by his death, but they were not discouraged. He left behind a line of monks and nuns and friends, in whose hearts his spirit lives on. Each has his or her own story of how he changed their lives for the better.

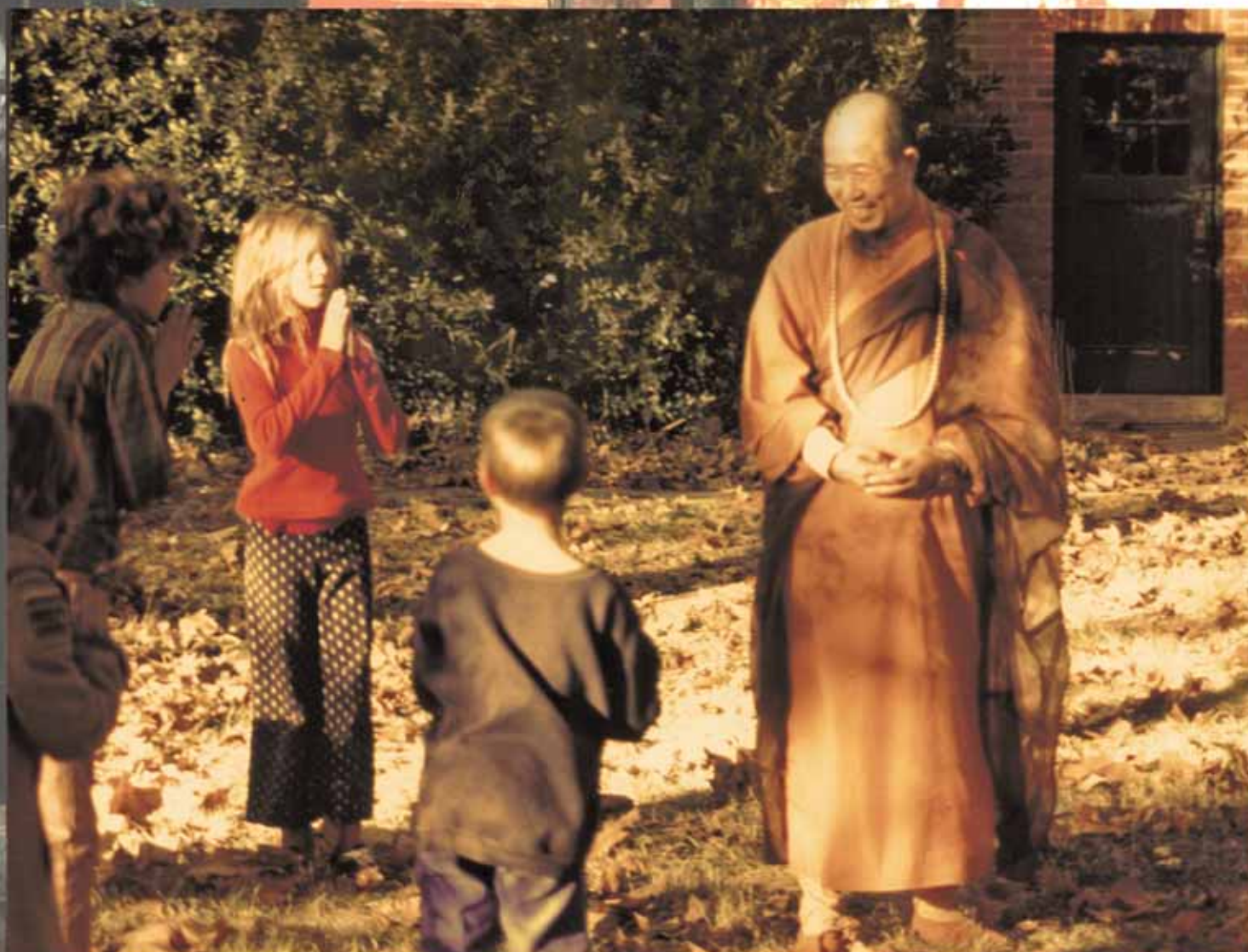
The Master traveled the world over, promoting peace and happiness. With simple words and a sense of humor, he shared the Buddha's teachings with all who wished to listen. He told stories, taught truths, and revealed the deep meanings of the Buddhas's teachings. He saw to the translation of the Buddhist sacred writings into English and other languages. His hope was that Buddhism would remain in the world forever. He devoted his life to others, offering them kindness, compassion, and joy. He called himself a monk in a ragged robe. His last words were, "I came with nothing and I will leave with nothing."

The Master made 18 great vows while sitting by his mother's grave. Some of the vows are listed below in simple language to inspire children.

1. I vow not to become a Buddha until every single being in the world is enlightened.
2. I vow to dedicate the blessings and happiness that I should receive to others.
3. I vow to take upon myself the hardships of others.
4. I vow to cause everyone to correct their faults and go toward the good.
5. I vow that all who see my face or even hear my name will soon become enlightened.
6. I vow to do what it takes to lead all beings to enlightenment, and I vow to fly.
7. I vow to fulfill all my vows.







Words by Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

"Children, if you want to help the world, first build up your character and develop your own virtue. This means that you must become a good and noble person and be well educated. You should not smoke and drink, or take drugs and gamble. You should not have any bad habits at all."





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Instilling Goodness Books, a branch of the Buddhist Text Translation Society, aims to bring an understanding of Buddhism to all children in their own languages. Ancient stories are retold and illustrated by modern Buddhist educators, artists, and children alike. Books and materials contain activities and lessons in spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

Headquarters is located at the City of Ten Thousand Buddha, a spiritual community founded by Venerable Master Xuan Hua. It is also the home of Dharma Realm Buddhist University, Instilling Goodness Elementary, and Developing Virtue Secondary Schools. For information about schools and summer camp, please visit our website at www.igdvs.org.

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