

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring



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Duration: 103 min

A Buddhist monk lives with his young disciple in a floating wooden house-temple in the middle of a lake. As the seasons change and succeed one another, the young student passes the corresponding stages of life to reach maturity.

The movie is a hymn to nature. A poem to the power of life that flows like water, sometimes impetuous, breaking on rocks and falling into waterfalls and at other times peacefully and calmly, forming lakes and small streams. The certain thing is that life is motion; it is rhythm.

This motion is enclosed in the timeless Chinese symbol of Yin-Yang. It is the circle with its two halves, one white half containing within it a seed of black; and one black half containing a seed of white. The two sides embrace within a vortex. It is the symbol of balance, the internal conquest of opposites. These opposites exist in man and his quest to know and control them.

In Eastern philosophy there is no good or evil with the moral connotation that the West attributes to them. Good is alignment, knowledge, balance, enlightenment; while Evil is a lack or moving away from them. The meaning of life is the perpetual attempt to balance the reign of these two forces of creation and destruction, birth and death, action and inaction, masculine and feminine principles, and lunar and solar forces. Through this struggle, the world and its nuances are created.

Man is involved in a game of Maya, as Hindus call it, in order to harmonize the negative and positive forces within him.

For the East, an important road of apprenticeship is through traditional martial arts. They have the same principles as those in the physical and mental preparation of the warrior-student. They are based on the Chi energy, which contains the Yin-Yang symbolism. Because the path of the warrior is the battle between Yin (the infernal, selfishness, passions, disorder, hate) and Yang (the higher, courage, beauty, order) leading to self realization.

On this path, there is always a teacher who guides the apprentice but cannot walk the road in



his place. The Disciple obeys his Karma which always brings different battles, but he has the free Will to obey or not to; to be seduced by the powers of Yin and identify with them or to resist by invoking the forces of Yang. Every life is a test and tests are hidden in everything.

Spring... Child. The sweetness of nature enclosed in a child's smile. But spring can be harsh, because innocence is ostensible, not based on knowledge but on ignorance of the laws of nature. To learn, one needs to see the consequences of his actions, and this causes pain. Lesson One!

Summer... Teen. Love confounds everything. It swells and overflows. "Nature is to blame. The passions awaken the desire for power. Power awakens the intent of crime". Lesson Two! But nothing is menacing the horizon yet, knowledge must be experienced and thus we proceed to the next season.

Autumn... Man. The teenager seeks his destiny. The forces of Yin win and he returns to the temple. The return is not repentance but one based on trickery and avoiding responsibility. Fury prevails. Passion still governs him and balance is lost. The mind is enslaved by thoughts of madness. His self-knowledge is still far away until... "You take another life easily, you take yours hard". His teacher's voice finds a way to harness the mind again. To work and meditate without being influenced by external circumstances. Lesson Three!

Winter... Maturity now. This return is a true return to the temple, to his roots. Knowledge has now become experience; his repentance a virtue. Obedience to law yields liberty. Man takes his position in the cycle of evolution. The Student is now a Teacher. He has become a link in the chain of giving. Lesson Four!

But this circle is part of a cycle, which is evolution. In this cycle, each form is lost and returns again. Each year, Winter freezes everything, and the sun disappears, leaving shadows to dominate; but Spring will spurt every year with her buds, through the snow; just as the first rays of the morning sun will break out from the darkest part of the night. The spirit is strong and immortal, it uses matter; and when matter is used, it is replaced by other matter. Lesson Five!