

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

The self-existent One bored the five senses to face outward:¹
 and so one sees outward, not the inner Self.²
 Certain wise ones, desiring immortality,
 turn the gaze around and see the indwelling Self.

Childish folks follow outward desires
 and get caught in the snares of death, who lies in wait.
 Therefore the wise, having known immortality,
 do not search for the constant in inconstant things.

By that by which one clearly knows form and taste,
 smell, sounds, touch and sexual pleasure,
 one knows it too.
This is that!

Knowing that by which one experiences
 both sleep and waking states
 as the great, all pervading Self,
 the wise do not grieve.

The one who knows this proximate self—
 the enjoyer of the fruits of action,
 the lord of past and future—
 does not shrink away from it.
*This is that!*³

(4:1-6)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

*You extol the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of action.
 Pray, tell me which of the two is most conducive to my good.*

Both the way of renunciation and the yoga of action⁴
 lead to Supreme Bliss.
 Of the two, however,
 the yoga of action, being easier to practice,
 is superior to the yoga of renunciation.

¹ Lit. holes or cavities, Skt. *khani*.

² Skt. *antaratman*.

³ Skt. *Etat vai tat!*

⁴ Skt. knowledge, renunciation and action are *sankhya*, *sannyasa* and *karma*. The text alternates between calling the one the way of knowledge—*sankhyayoga* and the way of renunciation—*sannyasah* as if they are equivalent.

The karma yogi who neither hates nor desires
should ever be considered a renouncer.
For those who are free from the pairs of opposites
are easily freed from bondage.

It is the ignorant, not the wise,
who say that the way of knowledge and the way of action
lead to different results.
One who is firmly established in either gets the fruit of both.
The state that is reached by sankhya yogis
is also attained by karma yogis.
Therefore, only those who see the way of knowledge and the
way of action as identical see truly.

Without the way of action, however,
the way of knowledge is difficult to accomplish,
whereas karma yogis who keep the mind fixed on God
reach Brahman quickly.
Karma yogis who have fully conquered the mind and
mastered the senses,
whose hearts are pure and who have identified themselves
with the Self of all beings,
remain untainted, even though performing action.
Sankhya yogis, however, who know the reality of things—
even though seeing, hearing,
touching, smelling, eating or drinking,
walking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, answering the
calls of nature,
grasping, and opening or closing the eyes—
must believe that they do nothing,
that it is the senses that are moving among their objects.

(5:1-9)

11.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Thirty spokes converge at the hub,
but emptiness makes the wheel work.
Clay is shaped to make a pot,
but it is its emptiness that makes it work.
Carve fine doors and windows,
but the room is useful in its emptiness.
Existence makes something useful
but non-existence makes it work.

(#11)

11.4

A READING FROM THE ANGUTTARA NIKAYA

Luminous is this mind, brightly shining, but it is colored by the attachments that visit it. This unlearned people do not really understand, and so do not cultivate the mind. Luminous is this mind, brightly shining, and it is free of the attachments that visit it. This the noble follower of the way really understands; so for them there is cultivation of the mind.⁵

11.5

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

As a solid rock stands firm in the wind,
even so are the wise unmoved by praise or blame.
As a deep lake remains still and clear,
so do the wise, listening to the teachings,
attain a serene mind.

The good certainly cling to nothing.
They do not talk aimlessly, concerned with personal gains.
The wise, the saintly,
whether experiencing comfort or discomfort,
show neither elation nor depression.
Not for one's own or another's gain
should one commit an evil deed.
Regardless of the desire for children, wealth, or kingdom,
or any kind of success,
one should remain virtuous, wise, and righteous.

(6:6-9)⁶

11.6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,
for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.

⁵ Trans. Gil Fronsdaal in *Teachings*, 2.

⁶ Trans. Ananda Maitreya, adapted for inclusive language.

She is a tree of life for those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called happy.

(3:13-18)

11.7

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE HASIDIM

The creation of heaven and earth is the unfolding of something out of nothing, the descent from above to below. But the masters who in their work disengage themselves from what is bodily and do nothing but meditate on God, actually see the universe as it was in the state of nothingness before creation. They change the something back into nothing. This is more miraculous: to begin from the lower state. As it is said in the Talmud: "Greater than the first miracle is the last."

(Dov Baer of Mezritch)⁷

11.8

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

And Jesus said, 'Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

(7:13-14)

11.9

FROM THE WRITINGS OF EVAGRIUS OF PONTUS

When mind flows back to God like torrents into the sea, God changes them all completely into his own nature, color, and taste. They will no longer be many but one in his unending and inseparable unity, because they are united and joined with him. And as in the fusion of rivers with the sea no addition in its nature or variation in its color or taste is to be found, so also in the fusion of minds with the Father no duality of natures or quarterity of persons comes about.

(Letter to Melania no. 6)⁸

⁷ Ukrainian rabbi, d. 1772. Trans. Olga Marx, *Enlightened Mind*, 155.

⁸ Trans. Bernard McGinn in *Early Christian Mystics: The Divine Vision of the Spiritual Masters* (New York: Crossroad, 2003), 54.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF IBN 'ARABI

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, whom we ask for aid: praise be to God before whose oneness here was not a before, unless the before were God, and after whose singleness there is not an after, except the after be God. God is, and there is with God no after nor before, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor when, nor times nor moment nor age, nor being nor place. And God is now as God was. God is the one without oneness, and the single without singleness. God is not composed of name and named, for God's name is God and God's named is God. So there is no name other than God, nor named. And so God is the name and the named. God is the first without firstness, and the last without lastness. God is the outward without outwardness, and the inward without inwardness. I mean that God is the very existence of the first and the very existence of the last, and the very existence of the outward and the very existence of the inward. So that there is no first nor last, nor outward nor inward, except God, without these becoming God and God becoming them.

(from "Whoso Knoweth Himself")⁹

FROM THE POEMS OF KABIR

Hermit, that yogi is my guru
 who can untie this song.
 A tree stands without root,
 without flowers bears fruit;
 No leaf, no branch and eight
 sky-mouths thundering.
 Dance done without feet,
 tune played without hands,
 praises sung without tongue,
 singer without shape or form—
 the true teacher reveals.
 Seek the birds, the fish's path.
 Kabir says, both are hard.
 I offer myself to an image:
 the great being beyond boundaries
 and beyond beyond.

(Bijak #24)¹⁰

⁹ Based on the translation of T. H. Weir, (Oxford: Beshara Publications, 1976).

¹⁰ Trans. Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh in *The Bijak of Kabir*. (San Francisco North Point Press, 1983), 49.

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

You have acquired this human frame.
This is your opportunity to be one with God.
All other labors are unprofitable.
Seek the company of the holy and glorify God's name.
Strenuously prepare to cross this terrible ocean.
Your life is being wasted
in love of the world's illusions.

I have not repeated his name,
nor made penance, practiced austerities, nor been pious.
I have not served my Lord's saints nor thought of him.
Nanak says: my acts have been low.
Preserve me from shame, O Lord,
since I take my shelter in you.

(Evening Prayer #9)