

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

'Not by the breath, not by the lower breath
does any mortal live.
They live by something else
on which these two depend.

'Look, Gautama, I will tell you
of the secret eternal Brahman
and what the self is like
after reaching death.

'Some go into a womb
so that the possessor of the body may find a body.
Others go into the motionless
according to their actions¹ and learning.

'The one who is awake in the sleeping,
the person shaping desire after desire,
is the bright, is Brahman.
It is called the immortal.
On it all the worlds depend.
No-one goes beyond it.

This indeed is that!

(5:5-8)²

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Those who do their duty without expecting the fruit of actions
are both sannyasis³ and yogis.
They are not sannyasis who have merely renounced the sacred fire;
they are not yogis who have merely given up all activity.
What they call sannyasa is no other than yoga,
for no one becomes a yogi who has not abandoned all thoughts of the
world.⁴
To the contemplative soul who desires to attain Karma yoga,
selfless action is the means.
For when one is established in yoga
the absence of thoughts of the world is the way to blessedness.

¹ Skt. *karman*.

² Trans. Valerie J. Roebuck, *The Upanisads* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000). Sense lines and capitalization altered to match style.

³ Skt. "renunciates."

⁴ Skt. *sankalpas*.

When one ceases to have any attachments for the objects of the senses and for actions,
and has renounced all thoughts of the world,
one is said to have achieved Yoga.

(6:1-4)

14.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Looking and not seeing it,
we call it invisible;
listening and not hearing it,
we call it inaudible;
reaching and not touching it,
we call it ethereal.

These three aspects of it cannot be grasped,
but contribute to the one.

Its rising brings no dawn,
its setting no darkness;
it goes on and on, unnameable,
returning into nothingness.

Its form is formless.
Its image is invisible.
Meeting it, you cannot see its face.
Following it, you cannot see its back.

Hold to the ancient Tao
to grasp the here-and-now.

Discovering how things have always been
brings one into harmony with the Way.

(#14)⁵

14.4

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Even the gods delight in the presence of those
who have freed themselves from pride and mental obsessions,
who have their senses under control,
like horses trained by an expert trainer.

Done with the rounds of rebirths,

⁵ Trans. Sam Hamill, *Tao Te Ching, A New Translation* (Boston: Shambala, 2007).

they are as accepting as earth,
as firm as a doorpost,
placid as a pond free of mud,
and dutiful.

Whoever has reached a state of freedom through perfect wisdom,
peaceful and unshakable,
is nonviolent in mind, in speech, in action.

Those who are in touch with the infinite,
free of attachment, desireless,
are the highest among human beings.

Delightful is the place where the saints dwell,
be it village or forest,
cavern or open field.

Delightful are forests,
where more worldly folks find no joy.
Being free of the pull of desire,
saints, who seek no worldly pleasure,
find delight in such places.

(7:5-10)

14.5

A READING FROM THE DIGHA NIKAYA

Put away all hinderances, let your mind full of love pervade one quarter of the world, and so too the second quarter, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere, altogether continue to pervade with love-filled thought, abounding, sublime, beyond measure, free from hatred and ill-will.⁶

14.6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to do it.
Do not say to your neighbor,
“Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—
when you have it with you.
Do not plan harm against your neighbor
who lives trustingly beside you.
Do not quarrel with anyone without cause,
when no harm has been done to you.

⁶ Trans. Maurice Walshe, in *Teachings*, 9.

Do not envy the violent
and do not choose any of their ways.

(3:27-31)

14.7

A READING FROM THE TANNA DEVE ELIYAHU ZUTA

Every day a person is formed by God, every day a person is born; every day a person lives, every day a person dies; every day a person's soul is taken from them during sleep and deposited with the souls' true One; every day a person is fed out of the fruit of their deeds, just as the infant is fed out of their mother's breast.

(#15)⁷

14.8

A READING FROM PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, we also boast of our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

(5:1-5)

14.9

FROM THE WRITINGS OF SAINT ISAAC OF SYRIA

Try to enter your inner treasure house and you will see the treasure-house of heaven. For both the one and the other are the same, and one and the same entrance reveals them both. The ladder leading to the kingdom is concealed within you, that is, in your soul. Wash yourself from sin and you will see the rungs of the ladder by which you can ascend thither.⁸

⁷ In *Book of Life*, 11.

⁸ *Writings from the Philokalia: On the Prayer of the Heart*, trans. from the Russian text by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer (London-Boston: Faber and Faber, 1951), 30.

14.10

FROM THE HADITH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Once the Prophet went into the mosque and saw a rope stretched between two pillars. He said, "What is this rope?"

They said, "This rope is Zainab's. When she weakens from fatigue, she hangs on it."

The Prophet said, "No! Untie it! Let each of you pray to the extent of your energy, then sit down when you are tired."⁹

14.11

FROM THE POEMS OF HAFIZ

We have not come here to take prisoners,
but to surrender ever more deeply
to freedom and joy.

We have not come into this exquisite world
to hold ourselves hostage from love.

Run, my dear,
from anything that may not strengthen
your precious budding wings.

Run, my dear,
from anyone likely to put a sharp knife
into the sacred, tender vision
of your beautiful heart.

We have a duty to befriend those aspects of obedience
that stand outside of our house
and shout to our reason
"O please, O please, come out and play!"

For we have not come here to take prisoners,
or to confine our wondrous spirits,
but to experience ever and ever more deeply
our divine courage, freedom, and light!

⁹ Trans. Thomas Cleary, in *The Wisdom of the Prophet*, 10.

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

Were one to live through the four ages,
or even ten times longer,
though one's reputation were to spread over the nine shores,
though the whole world were to follow in one's train,
though one were to be universally famous,
yet lacking God's grace, in God's presence
such a person would be disowned;
such a person would be merely a worm among vermin
and one's sins will be laid at the door.

On the imperfect who repent, O Nanak,
God bestows virtue;
on the striving virtuous God bestows increasing blessedness.
But I cannot think there is anyone so virtuous
who can bestow any goodness on God.

(Morning Prayer #7)