

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

Just as the one fire, entering the world,
takes on forms corresponding to every form,
so the one Self within all beings
takes on forms corresponding to every form,
and yet is outside them.

Just as the one wind, entering the world,
takes on forms corresponding to every form,
so the one Self within all beings
takes on forms corresponding to every form,
and yet is outside them.

Just as the one sun, the eye of the whole world,
is not contaminated by the external flaws of eyes,
so the one Self within all beings
is not contaminated by the sorrow of the world,
being outside of it.

(5:9-11)¹

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With the help of your Self, lift your self up!
Do not allow your self to fall.
For one's self can be one's friend
and one's own self can be one's enemy.

Self is the friend of the self
of those whose self is subdued by the Self.
Even so, the very self of the one who has not conquered the self
becomes like an enemy.²

When your soul is in peace, then you are in peace
and your soul is in God.
In cold or heat, in pleasure or pain, in glory or disgrace,
you are ever in God.

Yogis whose minds are sated with *jnana* and *vijnana*³

¹ Trans. Valerie J. Roebuck, *The Upanisads*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000). For the sake of consistency in this collection "Self" is capitalized, since it refers to the *Paratman*—Great Self, though Roebuck herself does not do so.

² The capitalization here follows Bede Griffiths interpretation of this passage, Self meaning our Great Self or spirit, small "s" self referring to "soul," following Paul distinction in 1 Cor. 2/3 between *pneuma* and *psyche*.

³ "Spiritual knowledge" and "knowledge of God."

who are unmoved under any circumstances,
whose senses are completely under control,
and to whom earth, stone and gold are all alike,
are said to be a God-realized souls.

Those who look with equanimity
upon those who support them and those who are hostile,
as well as family, enemies and friends,
the virtuous and the sinful,
stand supreme.

(6:5-9)

15.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

The ancient sages sought the mysterious,
penetrating the darkness.
They were unfathomable.

Because they were unfathomable
all we can do is describe them:

They were:

careful, as if fording a winter stream;
cautious, as if worried about their neighbors;
courteous like visiting guests;
yielding like melting ice;
as simple as uncarved wood;
as hollow as a valley,
as murky as muddy waters.

But the mud settles as it stills,
and stillness comes alive when it is roused.

Observers of the Tao do not seek fulfillment.
Not seeking fulfillment,
they can hide and stay hidden.

(#15)

15.4

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

A single wise word bringing peace to the listener
is worth more than a thousand speeches full of empty words.
A single verse full of meaning bringing peace to the listener
is worth more than a thousand verses full of empty words.
One may recite a hundred verses full of vain descriptions,
but a single verse bringing peace to the listener is worth far more.

One may conquer a million people in a single battle;
however the greatest and best warriors conquer themselves.
Conquest of one's self is the greatest victory of all.
Neither a god nor a heavenly musician
nor a mischievous angel of the highest heavenly abodes—
the *Paramita* heaven, where sensual pleasures prevail—
can deprive the self-vanquished, restrained person of victory.
The honor paid to one who has achieved self-mastery for one single
instant
is worth more than living in the forest,
tending the sacred fire for a hundred years.
Making offerings for glory and recognition
is not one quarter as worthy as honoring the upright.

(8:1-9)

15.5

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DOGEN-ZEJI

There is an easy way to become Buddha. Do not create evil, do not cling to life and death, have deep compassion for all sentient beings, respect those above you and have kindness for those under you, abandon hate and desire, worry and grief—this is what is called Buddha. Do not seek anything else.

(*Shobogenzo*)⁴

15.6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Listen, children, to a father's instruction,
and be attentive, that you may gain insight;
for I give you good precepts:
do not forsake my teaching.
When I was a son with my father,
tender, and my mother's favorite,
he taught me, and said to me,
'Let your heart hold fast my words;
keep my commandments, and live.
Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.

⁴ from *Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*, trans. Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens. (Sendai, Japan: Daihokkaikaku Pub. Co., 1975), 22.

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get insight.
Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honour you if you embrace her.
She will place on your head a fair garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.'

(4:1-9)

15.7

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE HASIDIM

We do not know how we are supposed to pray. All we do is call for help because of the need of the moment. But what the soul intends is spiritual need, only we are not able to express what the soul means. That is why we do not merely ask God to hear our call for help, but we also beg God, who knows what is hidden, to hear the silent cry of the soul.⁵

15.8

A READING FROM SAINT PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

We do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

(8:26-27)

15.9

FROM A TREATISE BY DIADOCHUS OF PHOTICE

The mind is capable of tasting and distinguishing accurately whatever is presented to it. Just as when our health is good we can tell the difference between good and bad food by our bodily sense of taste and reach for what is wholesome, so when our mind is strong and free from all anxiety, it is able to taste the riches of divine consolation, and to preserve, through love, the memory of this taste. This teaches us what is best with absolute certainty. As Saint Paul says, *My prayer is that your love may increase more and more in knowledge and insight, and so enable you to choose what is best.*

(*On Spiritual Perfection, Cap. 6*)⁶

⁵ Adapted from Buber *Rungs*, 27.

⁶ *Office of Readings*, 227-228.

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

O children of Adam!
 Indeed, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness,
 and as a thing of beauty;
 but the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all.
 This is one of God's messages—
 that human beings might take it to heart.

(7:26)

FROM THE POEMS OF RUMI

Does anyone write something on a place
 that has already been written over,
 or plant a sapling where one already grows?
 No; he seeks a blank piece of paper
 and sows the seed where none has yet been sown.
 Sister, be bare earth;
 be a clean piece of paper untouched by writing,
 that you may be ennobled by *the pen of revelation*,⁷
 so that the Gracious One may sow seed within you.

*(Mathnawi V, 1961-1964)*⁸

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

By hearkening to the Name
 we dive deep in an ocean of virtues;
 by hearkening to the Name
 the disciple becomes an apostle,
 a prelate, a sovereign of souls.
 By hearkening to the Name
 the blind see the way;
 by hearkening to the Name
 impassable streams are forded.

Nanak says,
 the saints are always happy.
 By hearkening to the Name
 sorrow and sin are destroyed.

⁷ Qur'an Surah Al-Qalam (The Pen), 68, 1: *Nun we'l Qalam* (opening words of this Surah).
 [Translators footnote.]

⁸ Trans. Kabir & Camille Helminski, *Collection*, 187.