

A READING FROM THE ISHA UPANISHAD

Those who worship ignorance go to pitch darkness,
 but to a greater darkness than this
 go those who are devoted to knowledge.
 The result attained by knowledge, they say, is one thing, indeed;
 the result attained by ignorance, they say, is another.
 Thus have we heard from the wise who have explained it to us.
 Those who know both knowledge and ignorance together,
 transcend mortality through ignorance
 and reach immortality through knowledge.

Those who worship the unmanifested go to pitch darkness,
 but to a greater darkness than this
 go those who are devoted to the manifested.
 The result attained by the worship of the manifested, they say, is one thing,
 indeed.
 the result attained by the worship of the unmanifested, they say, is another.
 Thus have we heard from the wise who have explained it to us.
 Those who know both the unmanifested and the destructible together,
 transcend mortality through the destructible,
 and reach immortality through the unmanifested.

The face of the Truth is concealed in a golden vessel.
 May it be seen, O Sun, by me whose dharma is true.
 O nourisher, pilgrim of solitude,
 controller, acquirer, offspring of Prajapati,¹
 cast away your rays, gather them up.
 May I see the light that is your most graceful form.
 That one—the *Purusha*²—I am.

Let my vital air now attain the immortal Air;
 then let this body be reduced to ashes.

OM! O mind, remember—remember all that has been done!
 O mind, remember—remember all that has been done!

(9-14)

¹ "The Lord of Creation."

² "The Great Person."

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

When one thoroughly casts off all cravings of the mind,
and is satisfied with the Self through the joy of the Self,
that one is then called stable of mind.

The wise, whose minds remain unperturbed amid sorrows,
whose thirst for pleasures has disappeared altogether,
and who are free from passion, fear and anger,
are called even-minded.

Those who are not attached to anything,
and neither rejoice nor recoil when meeting with good and evil,
their minds are stable.

When they withdraw all their senses from the sense-objects,
like a tortoise that draws in its limbs from all directions,
their mind becomes steady.

The realm of Sense objects recedes for those who do not enjoy them,
though a taste for them persists.

But this also disappears when they realize the Supreme.
Even the wise who exert themselves to attain perfection
have senses that harass them and carry away their minds.

(2:55-59)

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Under heaven all can see beauty
only because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good
only because there is evil.

Thus the co-arising of having and not having,
the complementarity of difficult and easy,
the contrast of long and short,
the codependence of high and low,
the harmony of note and noise,
the dance of front and back.

Therefore,
the wise go about doing nothing,
and teach without talking.
The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease,
creating yet not possessing,
working yet not taking credit.
Work is done, then forgotten,
lasting forever.

(#2)

A READING FROM THE SAMYUTTA NIKAYA

What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering?

It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation and detachment from it. The extinction of greed, the extinction of hate, the extinction of delusion: this, indeed, is called Nirvana.

And for a disciple thus freed, in whose heart dwells peace, there is nothing to be added to what has been done, and naught more remains to do. Just as a rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so neither forms, nor sounds, nor odors, nor taste, nor contacts of any kind, neither the desired nor the undesired can cause such a one to waver; one is steadfast in mind, gained is deliverance.³

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Those who fail to distinguish
the nonessential from the essential
and the essential from the nonessential,
will, in feeding wrong thoughts,
fail to attain the essential.

On the other hand,
those who correctly perceive the essential as essential
and the nonessential as nonessential
will, in feeding on right thoughts,
attain the essential.

As rain pours on badly thatched houses,
so does desire penetrate the undeveloped mind.
As rain fails to pour through a well-thatched house,
so does desire fail to penetrate the well-developed mind.

(1:11-14)⁴

³ Trans. Nyanatiloka, in *Teachings*, 40.

⁴ Trans. Ananda Maitreya.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Jacob took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the (river) Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place *Peniel* (that is, "the face of God"), saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

(32:22-30)

FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE HASIDIM

It is written: "The tree of life is also in the midst of the garden." Whenever we study or pray, we should think that we are in the garden of paradise, where there is no envy and no lust or pride, and we will surely be safe from distraction. But how can we think in this way, since we know that we are in this world and among people we are acquainted with? This is how: when we study or pray with reverence and devoutness begotten of love, and fasten and bind our spirit to God and remember that nothing is void of God and without God, but that everything is filled with life granted by the Creator, then, in all we see, we see the living power of the Creator and hear God's living voice. That is the meaning of the words: "The tree of life in the midst of the garden." Those who cling to the life of God are in the midst of the garden.⁵

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus taught them saying, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but it is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

(5:13-16)

⁵ Adapted from Buber *Rungs*, 39.

FROM THE PROSLOGION OF SAINT ANSELM

Lord, my God, teach my heart where and how to seek you, where and how to find you. Lord, if you are not here, where shall I look for you in your absence? Yet if you are everywhere, why do I not see you when you are present? But surely you dwell in "light inaccessible." And where is light inaccessible? How shall I approach light inaccessible? Or who will lead me and bring me into it that I may see you there? And then, by what signs and under what forms shall I seek you? I have never seen you, Lord my God; I do not know your face.

What shall this exile do, so far from you? What shall your servant do, tormented by love of you and cast so far from your face? I yearn to see you, and your face is too far from me. I desire to approach you, and your dwelling is unapproachable. I long to find you, and do not know your dwelling place. I strive to look for you, and do not know your face.

Look upon us, Lord, hear us and enlighten us, show us your very self!
(*Cap. 1: Opera omnia*)⁶

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

To God belong the east and the west.
Wherever you turn, there is the face of God.
Witness, God is infinite, all-knowing.

(2:115)

FROM THE POEMS OF KABIR

O servant, where do you seek me?
Lo! I am beside you.
I am neither in temple nor in mosque:
I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:
neither am I in rites and ceremonies,
nor in Yoga and renunciation.
If you are a true seeker,
you shall see Me at once:
you shall meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, "O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath!"

(I.13)⁷

⁶ *Office of Readings*, 1387.

⁷ Based on Tagore's translation.

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

O Great Lord, of depth infathomable,
ocean of virtues!
Who knows the bounds of your shores?
All the contemplatives have met
and sought to contemplate you;
all the weighers of worth have met
and sought to weigh your worth;
all the theologians and mystics,
all the preachers and their teachers
have not been able to grasp one jot of your greatness.
All truths, all fervent austerities, every excellent act,
every sublime achievement of the adepts,
are your gifts, O Lord:
without you, no one could achieve perfection;
but where you have granted your grace to someone,
nothing can stand in their way.

How vain are the words of those that seek to praise you,
your treasures are already filled with your praises.
Those to whom you give freely,
what should they do but praise you?

Nanak says:

The True One is the one from whom all perfection springs.

(Evening Prayer #2)