

A READING FROM THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

In a beautiful golden sheath is Brahman,
 stainless, indivisible, luminous.
 It is the pure light of lights
 which knowers of the Self realize.
 The sun does not shine there,
 nor the moon and stars.
 Lightening does not shine there,
 nor fire lit on earth.

Everything reflects its shining.
 Everything is lit by its light.

This immortal Brahman is before;
 this immortal Brahman is behind;
 this immortal Brahman extends to the right and the left,
 above and below.
 All is Brahman and Brahman is supreme.

(II.2.10-12)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Four types of devotees of noble deeds worship me:
 the seeker after life's purpose,
 the afflicted,
 the seeker for knowledge,
 and some come who are people of wisdom.
 Unwavering in devotion,
 always united with me,
 people of wisdom surpass all the others.
 To them I am the dearest beloved,
 and they are very dear to me.
 All those who follow the spiritual path are blessed.
 But the wise who are always established in union,
 for whom there is no higher goal than me,
 may be regarded as my very Self.¹

(7:16-18)

¹ I have leaned heavily on Easwaran's translation for this passage.

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Nature speaks but little.
Fierce winds do not blow all morning;
rainstorms do not last all day.

What causes all this?
Heaven and earth.
If heaven and earth do not last long,
how much less the human?

Therefore,
those following the way become the way;
those who follow virtue become virtue;
those who follow loss become loss.²

When you are one with the Tao, the Tao welcomes you.
When you are one with virtue, virtue is always there.
When you are one with loss, the loss is embraced.

When the people are not trusted enough,
then they are untrustworthy.

(#23)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF CHUANG-TZU

Things are produced around us, but no one knows the whence. They issue forth, but no one sees the portal. People one and all value that part of knowledge which is known. They do not know how to avail themselves of the Unknown in order to reach knowledge. Is not this misguided?³

FROM THE ANGUTTARA NIKAYA

*Tathagata*⁴ are seers of what is to be seen but they are not mindful of the seen, the unseen, the seeable, or the seer. So too with the heard, the sensed, and the known: they do not think of them in these categories.⁵

² Ch. way=*tao*, virtue (or nature)=*te*, loss (or failure)=*shih*.

³ *Chuang-Tzu*, trans. H. A. Giles, (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1926), 345

⁴ *Tathagata*s translated as "suchness," "thusness," or "thatness." Alan Watts explains, "Similarly, the Buddhas are called Tathagatas—they who go, or come, "thus." A *tathagata* "is awakened to [the] primary, nonconceptual world which no words can convey, and does not confuse it with such ideas as being or non-being, good or bad, past or future, here or there, moving or still, permanent or impermanent." (Watts, 68)

⁵ Quoted in Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 55.

A READING FROM THE SONG OF SONGS

What is that coming up from the wilderness,
 like a column of smoke,
 perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
 with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?
 Look, it is the litter of Solomon!
 Around it are sixty mighty men
 of the mighty men of Israel,
 all equipped with swords
 and expert in war,
 each with his sword at his thigh
 because of alarms by night.
 King Solomon made himself a palanquin
 from the wood of Lebanon.
 He made its posts of silver,
 its back of gold, its seat of purple;
 its interior was inlaid with love.
 Daughters of Jerusalem,
 come out.
 Look, O daughters of Zion,
 at King Solomon,
 at the crown with which his mother crowned him
 on the day of his wedding,
 on the day of the gladness of his heart.

(3:6-11)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RABBI EMANUEL FRANCES⁶

Poets often speak of themselves as if they were referring to other individuals...
 This is because of their deep meditation,⁷ where the mind elevates itself and the
 body remains as if it were devoid of the soul. It therefore appears to these
 individuals as if they themselves are another person...

Occasionally we find that when they author their songs, poets attain a
 state of ecstasy where they lose all sensation. This is all because of their deep
 meditation.⁸

⁶ 1610-1710, poet and philosopher.

⁷ Hb. *hitbodedut*

⁸ *Meditation and the Bible*, 14.

A READING FROM ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, through whom we gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

(Rom 5:1-5)

FROM THE PRAYERS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

We were enclosed, O eternal Father,
 within the garden of your breast.
 You drew us out of your holy mind like a flower
 petaled with our soul's three powers,
 and into each power you put the whole plant,
 so that they might bear fruit in your garden,
 and might come back to you with the fruit you gave them,
 and you would come back to the soul to fill her with blessedness.
 There the soul dwells—
 like the fish in the sea
 and the sea in the fish.⁹

FROM DELIVERANCE FROM ERROR BY ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI

The first thing created in the human person was the sense of touch, and by it we perceive certain classes of existents, such as heat and cold, moisture and dryness, smoothness and roughness. Next there is created in us the sense of sight, and by it we apprehend colors and shapes. Next hearing is implanted in us, so that we hear sounds of various kinds. After that taste is created in us, and so on until we have completed the world of sensibles.

Next, when we are about seven years old, there is created in us discernment or *tamyiz*—the power of distinguishing. This is a fresh stage in our development. We now apprehend more than the world of the sensibles. From this we ascend to another stage, and *'aql*—intellect or reason is created in us. We apprehend things necessary, possible, impossible, things which do not occur in the previous stages.

⁹ From *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, ed. Suzanne Noffke, OP.

Beyond intellect there is yet another stage. In this another eye is opened, by which we behold the unseen, what is to be in the future, and other things which are beyond the ken of intellect in the same way as the objects of intellect are beyond the ken of the faculty of discernment and the objects of discernment are beyond the ken of sense.

(Part 4)¹⁰

25.11

FROM THE POETRY OF RABIAH¹¹

Two ways I love Thee: selfishly,
And next, as worthy is of Thee.
'Tis love that I do naught
Save think on Thee with every thought.
'Tis purest love when Thou dost raise
The veil to my adoring gaze.
Not mine the praise in that or this:
Thine is the praise in both, I wish.¹²

25.12

FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

Without the Guru's help we cannot burn
to nothingness the ashes of self-love;
for the Guru kindles in the human hearts
the fire of the love of God.

Through the Guru's Word alone
there comes the moment of knowing:
'My Self is that Self.'
Through faith in the Guru the True Self is known.
What else do we need to know?

The self is ever one with the Self:
this certainty is obtained through the Guru's Word.
But those who are tied to their small selves shall not know this,
and separation and frustration is their lot.

Nanak, God is the one way.
God is the one goal.
There is no other refuge.

(Sri Rag)¹³

¹⁰ *Universal Wisdom*, p. 348, considerably adapted for modern and inclusive language.

¹¹ Hadrat Rabiah Basriyyah, 8th century Iraqi woman "devotee of Allah."

¹² Trans. R. A. Nicholson, quoted in A. J. Arberry, *Sufism, An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950), 43.

¹³ From "The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs," 73.