

A READING FROM THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree.
 The one tastes of the various fruits;
 the other observes without eating.
 On the same tree, the individual soul sinks in dejection,
 and so it moans, being grieved by its impotence.
 When it sees and honours the omnipotence of the other and its majesty,
 then it becomes liberated from sorrow.

When the seer sees the Purusha—
 the golden-hued, creator, lord, and the cradle of Brahman—
 then the illumined one completely shakes off both merit and demerit,
 becomes taintless, and attains absolute unity.

It shines in all beings as their life.
 Knowing this, the wise are humble and do not assert themselves.
 They delight in the Atman, occupied with it;
 rejoicing in themselves thus,
 they are excellent among the knowers of Brahman.

The Atman is comprehended through truth and austerities,¹
 as also through perfect knowledge, and constant practice of studies.
 Ascetics whose sins or guilt is extinguished
 see it, consisting of light, in the body, shining with lustre.

(III.1.1-5)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Delusion arises from the duality of desire and hatred;
 all living creatures are deluded by these from birth.
 But those who have freed themselves from all wrongdoing,
 whose actions are pure,
 being freed of the delusion caused by the pairs of opposites,
 worship Me with a firm resolve in every way.

They who, having taken refuge in Me,
 striving for deliverance from old age and death
 know Brahman, the totality of embodied souls,²
 and the entire field of Karma.
 They see me ruling the cosmos,
 they see me in the field of matter,

¹ Skt. *tapas*.

² Skt. *Adhyatma*.

Brahma and the Unmanifest divinity.³
Those who steady their minds and know me,
truly know me even at the hour of death.

(7:27-30)

24.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

One who tiptoes cannot stand.
One who straddles cannot walk.

Watching oneself is not enlightened.
Justifying oneself is not outstanding.
Boasting achieves nothing.
Self-infatuation is no way to lead.

For those on the way⁴
gluttony and superfluous actions
do not bring happiness.
Therefore, the Taoist avoids them.

(#24)

24.4

FROM THE WRITINGS OF CHUANG-TZU

People of character⁵ live at home without exercising their mind and perform actions without worry. The notions of right and wrong and the praise and blame of others do not disturb them. When within the four seas all people can enjoy themselves, that is happiness for them. ... Sorrowful in countenance, they look like a baby who has lost his mother; appearing stupid, they go about like one who has lost his way. They have plenty of money to spend, but do not know where it comes from. They drink and eat just enough and do not know where the food comes from.⁶

³ Skt. *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidavia* and *Adhiyajna*. There are not simple translations of these what Kees W. Bolle simply calls "principles of existence."

⁴ Ch. *tao*

⁵ Ch. *te*.

⁶ *The Wisdom of Lao-Tse*, trans. Lin Yutang (New York: Modern Library, 1948), 129.

FROM THE SAPTASATIKA

Suchness⁷ neither becomes nor ceases to become; thus do I see the Tathagatha.
 Suchness does not stand at any point or place; thus do I see the Tathagata.
 Suchness is neither past, future, nor present; thus do I see the Tathagata.
 Suchness is neither impure nor pure; thus do I see the Tathagata.
 Suchness neither arises nor comes to an end; thus do I see the Tathagata.⁸

A READING FROM THE SONG OF SONGS

How beautiful you are, my love,
 how very beautiful!
 Your eyes are doves
 behind your veil.
 Your hair is like a flock of goats,
 moving down the slopes of Gilead.
 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
 that have come up from the washing,
 all of which bear twins,
 and not one among them is bereaved.
 Your lips are like a crimson thread,
 and your mouth is lovely.
 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
 behind your veil.
 Your neck is like the tower of David,
 built in courses;
 on it hang a thousand bucklers,
 all of them shields of warriors.
 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
 twins of a gazelle,
 that feed among the lilies.
 Until the day breathes
 and the shadows flee,
 I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh
 and the hill of frankincense.
 You are altogether beautiful, my love;
 there is no flaw in you.
 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
 come with me from Lebanon.
 Depart from the peak of Amana,
 from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
 from the dens of lions,
 from the mountains of leopards. (4:1-8)

⁷ Skt. *tathata*. (see footnote 3, section 23)

⁸ Quoted in Watts, *The Way of Zen*, 68.

FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE HASIDIM

The soul descended from the realm of heaven to earth, on a long ladder. Then it is taken away.

Now, up there, they are calling home the souls. Some do not budge from the spot, for how can one get to heaven without a ladder? Others leap and fall and leap again, and give up.

But there are those who know very well that they cannot achieve it, but try and try over and over again until God catches hold of them and pulls them up.⁹

A READING FROM SAINT PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

(2 Cor 4:7-11; 16-18)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

If we were to ask [God], this is how he would answer us: Dearest children, if you wish to discover and experience the effects of my will, dwell within the cell¹⁰ of your soul." This cell is a well in which there is earth as well as water. In the earth we recognize our own poverty: we see that we are not. For we *are* not. We see that our being is from God. Oh ineffable blazing charity! I see next that as we discover the earth we get to the living water, the very core of the knowledge of God's true and gentle will which desires nothing else but that we be made holy. So let us enter into the depths of this well.¹¹ For if we dwell there, we will necessarily come to know both ourselves and God's goodness. In recognizing that we are nothing we humble ourselves.¹²

⁹ From Buber, *Rungs*, 40.

¹⁰ It. *cella*, connotes a monastic cell.

¹¹ It. *pozzo*.

¹² *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Suzanna Noffke, OP Vol. 1, (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000-2001), 7-8.

24.10

FROM DELIVERANCE FROM ERROR BY ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI

There is knowledge of the world the attainment of which by reason is inconceivable; for example, in medical science and astronomy. Whoever researches in such matters knows of necessity that this knowledge is attained only by Divine inspiration and by assistance from God most high. It cannot be reached by observation. For instance, there are some astronomical laws based on phenomena which occur only once in a thousand years; how can these be arrived at by personal observation? ...

This argument shows that it is possible for there to be a way of apprehending these matters which are not apprehended by the intellect. This is the meaning of prophetic revelation. That is not to say that prophecy is merely an expression for such knowledge. Rather, the apprehending of this class of extra-intellectual objects is one of the properties of prophecy; but it has other properties as well. The said prophecy is but a drop in the ocean of prophecy. The other properties of prophetic revelation are apprehended only by *dhawq*—immediate experience from the practice of the mystic way.¹³

24.11

FROM THE POEMS OF HAFIZ

When the words stop
and you can endure the silence
that reveals your heart's pain of emptiness
or that great wrenching-sweet longing—
that is the time to try and listen
to what the Beloved's eyes most want to say.¹⁴

24.12

FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

My mind is pierced with the Name of God;
what else remains to hold my mind?
In the contemplation of God is joy.
The name of the Lord is as my pillar;
Lord, may your will prevail.

(*Sri Rag*)¹⁵

¹³ Quoted in *Universal Wisdom*, ed. Bede Griffiths, 348-349.

¹⁴ Based on Daniel Ladinsky's translation in *The Gift*, p. 143.

¹⁵ From "The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs," 74.