

## A READING FROM THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

It is great and self-effulgent, and its form is inconceivable.  
 It is subtler than the subtle, and it shines with splendor.  
 It is farther away than the far-off, yet here, near enough,  
 concealed here in the hearts of those who contemplate.

It is not comprehended through the eye,  
 nor through speech, nor through the other senses;  
 nor is It attained through austerity or karma.  
 When knowledge is serene, when the heart is pure,  
 then one sees It, meditating on It—the undivided one.

It is secret, It can only be known through the heart.  
 In it the fivefold *prana* has entered.  
 The mind of all beings is interwoven with the *pranas*.  
 When the mind is pure, then the Atman unfolds itself.

(III.1.7-9)

## A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Those who depart from the body  
 thinking of me alone at the time of death  
 attain to My state.  
 There is no doubt about it.  
 Thinking of whatever entity  
 when one leaves the body at the time of death,  
 that and that alone one attains,  
 being ever absorbed in its thought.

Therefore, think of Me at all times...  
 With mind and reason thus set on Me,  
 you will doubtless come to Me.

(8:5-7)

## A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

There was some nebulous something here  
 born before heaven and earth.  
 Silent, empty,  
 solitary, unwavering,  
 moving everywhere, yet inexhaustible.  
 It could be the mother of everything under heaven.

Not knowing its name  
 I call it the Tao.  
 Forced to name it,  
 I say it is great.  
 "Great" means it is ever-flowing,  
 "ever-flowing," means it is far-reaching,  
 "far-reaching" means it is constantly returning.

Therefore,  
 Tao is great,  
 heaven is great,  
 earth is great,  
 the king is also great.  
 In the realm there are four greats,  
 and the king is one of them.

Humans follow earth,  
 earth follows heaven,  
 heaven follows Tao,  
 Tao follows self-becoming.

(#25)

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF CHUANG-TZU

Lao-tzu said to Confucius, "There is the universe, its regularity is unceasing; there are the sun and moon, their brightness is unceasing; there are the stars, their groupings never change; there are the birds and beasts, they flock together without varying; there are trees and shrubs, they grow upwards without exception. Be like these: follow Tao and you will be perfect. Why then these vain struggles after charity and duty to one's neighbor, as though beating a drum in search of a fugitive?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Chuang-Tzu*, Giles, 167.

## A READING FROM THE UDANA SUTRA

There is, O disciples, an unborn, an unoriginated, uncreated, unformed. Were there not, O disciples, this unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed, there would be no possible exit from the world of the born, originated, created, formed.<sup>2</sup>

## A READING FROM THE SONG OF SONGS

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride,  
 you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes,  
 with one jewel of your necklace.  
 How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!  
 how much better is your love than wine,  
 and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!  
 Your lips distil nectar, my bride;  
 honey and milk are under your tongue;  
 the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.  
 A garden locked is my sister, my bride,  
 a garden locked, a fountain sealed.  
 Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates  
 with all choicest fruits,  
 henna with nard,  
 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
 with all trees of frankincense,  
 myrrh and aloes,  
 with all chief spices—  
 a garden fountain, a well of living water,  
 and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind,  
 and come, O south wind!  
 Blow upon my garden  
 that its fragrance may be wafted abroad.  
 Let my beloved come to his garden,  
 and eat its choicest fruits.

(4:9-16)

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 21.

## FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE HASIDIM

The human person is a ladder placed on the earth and the top of it touches heaven. And all our movements and doings and words leave traces in the upper world.

If a child of Israel has one's self firmly in hand, and stands solidly on the earth, then one's head reaches up to heaven.<sup>3</sup>

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

In this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—if indeed when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

(2 Cor 5:2-5)

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

This is the cell of true self-knowledge, and there you will find knowledge of God's goodness in you.<sup>4</sup> This cell is really two rooms in one<sup>5</sup>, and while you are in the one you must at the same time be in the other; otherwise your soul would end up either in confusion or presumption. For if you stayed in self-knowledge, spiritual confusion would be the result. And if you stayed only in knowledge of God, you would end in presumption. So the one has to be seasoned with the other, and the two made to be one. When this is accomplished you will arrive at perfection. Here is why. From knowledge of yourself you gain hatred for your selfish sensuality, and because of that hatred you will be a judge. You will mount the bench of your conscience and demand an account of yourself, letting no sin pass without doing it justice. From this knowledge issues the spring of humility. ... In the knowledge of God you will discover the fire of divine charity, where you will find your pleasure on the cross with the spotless Lamb, searching out God's honor and the salvation of souls in continual and humble prayer.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From Buber, *Rungs*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> It. "*cognoscimento della bontà di Dio in te.*"

<sup>5</sup> It. "*due cella in una.*"

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, Noffke, 601-602.

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI

Mystics are able to see that there is no being in the world other than God and that the face of everything is perishing save his Face (Q 28:88)... Indeed, everything other than God is pure non-being and, considered from the standpoint of the being which it receives from the First Intelligence, has being not in itself but in regard to the face of its Maker, so that the only thing that truly is is God's Face.<sup>7</sup>

## FROM THE POEMS OF HAFIZ

In this age, the only companions we have  
Who are free of faults are a glass  
Of clear wine and a book of love poems.

Go by yourself, for the gates of righteousness  
Are narrow; take hold of the wine cup,  
For nothing can equal the dearness of life.<sup>8</sup>

## FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

O my heart!  
The will of God is ever just and true.  
Give your love, O heart, to Him  
who has created the mind and the body,  
and who has adorned them.

Slice your body shred by shred,  
burn it as incense on the priestly altars,  
burn your bones and your brain as sticks in the fire.  
Such austerities, even though they are innumerable,  
are as nothing compared with the contemplation of God.  
Have your body sawn in two,  
have your head severed from your body,  
have your body rotting in perpetual snows.  
Even the acceptance of such penances are nothing  
compared with the contemplation of God.

This have I found by test and trial.

(Sri Rag)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Mishkat al-Anwar*, quoted in Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 178.

<sup>8</sup> From *The Angels Knocking*, trans. Bly and Lewisohn, #46, 63.

<sup>9</sup> From *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, 74, altered for modern idiom.