

A READING FROM THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

Those who have definitely grasped the doctrine of the Vedanta,
—the recluses, completely devoted to renunciation and of pure character
—all these get into the world of Brahman at the end of their life
becoming perfectly immortal and released.

Just as the rivers flow and disappear in the sea,
giving up name and form,
so also the wise, released from name and form,
enter into the divine highest spirit.

Those who know that supreme Brahman become Brahman indeed.
In their family no one is born who does not know Brahman.
They go beyond sorrow, go beyond evil,
and, freed from the knots of the heart,
they attain immortality.

(III.2.6, 8-9)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Remembering me at the time of death,
close the door of the senses
and hold the mind in of the cave of the heart.
Then, while absorbed in meditation,
fix the life-breath in the head.
Repeating the Divine name in this state—
the syllable *OM* that represents the changeless Brahman,
you will achieve the supreme goal when you leave the body.

I am easily attained by that Yogi ever absorbed in me,
who constantly thinks of me with undivided mind.
Great souls make their lives perfect and discover me;
they are freed from mortality and the suffering of this transient abode.

(8:12-15)

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Good walking leave no tracks.
 Good talking reveals no flaws.
 Good counting uses no beads.
 A good door needs no locks
 and yet cannot be opened.
 Good binding ties no knots
 and yet cannot be undone.

Thus the sage cares for all people
 and abandons no one,
 cares for all things,
 and abandons nothing.
 This is called "following the light."

Therefore the good instruct the bad,
 and the bad are the capital of the good.
 Not honoring their teachers,
 not cherishing their students,
 even the wise will be perfectly blind.
 This is called peering into the mystery.

(#27)

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Do not follow low practices.
 Do not live carelessly.
 Do not hold wrong views.
 Do not prolong the suffering of the world.

Lift yourself up. Be attentive.
 Act virtuously.
 One who does good deeds lives happily,
 both in this life and the life to come.

Act righteously.
 Refuse to do otherwise.
 One who follows this path lives happily,
 both in this life and the life to come.

Perceive the world as a bubble.
 Perceive the world as a mirage.
 If you see the world in this way,
 you render the Lord of Death powerless.

(13:1-4)¹

¹ Trans. Ananda Maitreya.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF HUI-K'Ō

The deepest truth lies in the principle of identity. It is due to one's ignorance that the *mani*-jewel is taken for a piece of brick, but lo! when one is suddenly awakened to self-enlightenment it is realized that one is in possession of the real jewel. The ignorant and the enlightened are of one essence, they are not really to be separated. We should know that all things are such as they are. When we know that between this body and the one Buddha there is nothing to separate one from the other, what is the use of seeking after nirvana as something external to ourselves?²

A READING FROM THE SONG OF SONGS

What is your beloved more than another beloved,
 O fairest among women?
 What is your beloved more than another beloved,
 that you thus adjure us?

My beloved is all radiant and ruddy,
 distinguished among ten thousand.
 His head is the finest gold;
 his locks are wavy,
 black as a raven.
 His eyes are like doves
 beside springs of water,
 bathed in milk,
 fitly set.
 His cheeks are like beds of spices,
 yielding fragrance.
 His lips are lilies,
 distilling liquid myrrh.
 His arms are rounded gold,
 set with jewels.
 His body is ivory work,
 encrusted with sapphires.
 His legs are alabaster columns,
 set upon bases of gold.
 His appearance is like Lebanon,
 choice as the cedars.
 His speech is most sweet,
 and he is altogether desirable.
 This is my beloved and this is my friend,
 O daughters of Jerusalem.

(6:9-16)

² D. T. Suzuki's free translation in *Essays*, quoted in Dumoulin, 96.

27.7

A READING FROM JEWISH MIDRASH

*As for God, God's word is purifying.*³ Rav said: Precepts were given only so that mortals might be purified by them. For of what concern can it be to the Holy One whether, a person slaughters an animal at the windpipe or at the gullet? Or of what concern is it to God whether a person eats animals that are unclean or animals that are clean? Hence, precepts are given only so that mortals might be purified by them.

(*Genesis Rabbah* 44:1; *Tanhuma, Shemini*, 8)⁴

27.8

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Indeed the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints and marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

(4:12-13)

27.9

FROM THE WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

This water is a mirror in which you, eternal Trinity, grant me knowledge; for when I look into this mirror, holding it in the hand of love, it shows me myself, as your creation, in you, and you in me through the union you have brought about of the godhead in your humanity.

As the soul comes to know herself she also knows God better, for she sees how good God has been to her. In the gentle mirror of God she sees her own dignity: that through no merit of hers but by God's creation she is the image of God.⁵

³ Ps. 18:31

⁴ In *A Book of Life*, 154

⁵ *Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue*, trans. and intro. Suzanna Noffke, OP. *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), #167 and 13, (pp.) 365-366, 48.

27.10

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF SHAMS OF TABRIZ

This heart of mine has never told a lie. I don't have to verify my heart—it has never proved me false. The heart is a beautiful indicator. Even a little beauty of heart manifests as trustworthiness. People don't refer to a trustworthy man as "one who has spirit" or "one who is wise"—they say, "He has a heart."

27.11

FROM THE POEMS OF KABIR

Tell me, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?
When I gave up tying ribbons, still I tied my garment about me:
When I gave up tying my garment, still I covered my body in its folds.
So, when I gave up passion, I see that anger remains;
And when I renounce anger, greed is with me still;
And when greed is vanquished, pride and vain-glory remain;
When the mind is detached and casts Maya away,
still it clings to the letter.
Kabir says: 'Listen to me , dear Sadhu! The true path is rarely found.'⁶
(I. 63. *avadhû mâyâ tajî na jây*)

27.12

FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

Noble birth and great fame
are as worthless as dust:
God is the only protecting shade.
We may boast to others of our own goodness,
but the truth about us will be known in God's presence.
Those whom the Lord exalts are exalted indeed!

(*Sri Rag ki Var*)

⁶ Rabindranath Tagore's translation, *Poems of Kabir* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2002), 3-4.