

A READING FROM THE SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

Those who have followed the method of meditation
have seen God's own power hidden in their own strands—
who, one, rules over all the sources of the universe,
from time to the human soul.

As a wheel with one rim, three tires, and sixteen ends, half a hundred
spokes, twenty counter-spokes, six eights, one rope that takes every shape,
three different roads, and one illusion with two causes:
as a river with five streams, wild and winding,
with five sources, five breaths¹ as waves,
five perceptions as its wellspring,
five whirlpools whirling with the power of the five sufferings,
fifty divisions, with five sections each, we know it.

In this mighty wheel of brahman,
life-giver to all, rest to all,
roves a goose.²

Once it knows itself³ and the impeller to be different,
then, finding favor with him, it attains immortality.

This is the eternal reality, sing the scriptures,
and the ground of existence.
Those who perceive him in every creature
merge in that one and are released from the wheel of birth and death.
(1:3-7)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

At the coming of the cosmic day
all things arise from the Unmanifest,⁴
and at cosmic nightfall
they dissolve into the very same Unmanifest.
Again and again, all creatures, according to their nature,
dissolve when cosmic night falls,
and at cosmic daybreak are born again.

¹ Skt. *prana*

² Skt. *hamsa*, the symbol of the self. In *Bridharanyaka Up.* it is referred to as "the golden person, the goose who flies alone" (IV.3.11, 12), "whose symbolism comes from both its beauty and its long migratory flights." (Roebuck, 79).

³ Skt. *atman*

⁴ Skt. *avyakta*

Beyond the Unmanifest is another, everlasting Unmanifest
that is eternal, even though every other creature perishes.
This imperishable Unmanifest is the highest goal.
It is also my supreme abode.
Those who reach it do not return.
That Person,⁵ in whom all creatures have their being
and by whom the world was made,
is accessible through unswerving devotion.

There is merit in the study of scripture,
sacrifices, asceticism, and almsgiving,
but the Yogi who realizes this truth
goes beyond all of it
and reaches the supreme and primal place.

(8:18-22,28)

28.5

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Know the masculine
but abide by the feminine,
and be the servant⁶ of the world.
Being a servant of the world,
not straying from ancient virtue,
be a newborn child again.

Know the white
but abide by the black,
and be the world's guide.
Being the world's guide,
not straying from ancient virtue,
be without limits once again.

Know the illustrious
but abide by the obscure,
and be the valley of the world.
Being the valley of the world,
not straying from ancient virtue,
return to the state of the uncarved block.

The uncarved block is made into tools.
The wise make it the ruler.
The skillful carver never mutilates.

(#28)

⁵ *purusha*

⁶ Lit. "valley," Ch. *ch'i*

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Look at the body as a royal chariot
to which the ignorant cling,
while the wise let go.

Whoever moves from carelessness to vigilance,
lights up the world
like the moon that emerges from a cloud.

Whoever overcomes unwholesome deeds
with wholesome actions
illuminates the world
like the moon emerging from a cloud.

(13:5-7)⁷

FROM THE FIVE GATES OF TAO-HSIN

Let it be known: Buddha is the mind. Outside of the mind there is no Buddha. In short, this includes the following five things:

First: The ground of the mind is essentially one with the Buddha.

Second: The movement of the mind brings forth the treasure of the Dharma. The mind moves yet is ever quiet; it becomes turbid and yet remains such as it is.

Third: The mind is awake and never ceasing; the awakened mind is always present; the Dharma of the awakened mind is without specific form.

Fourth: The body is always empty and quiet; both within and without, it is one and the same; the body is located in the Dharma world, yet it is unfettered.

Fifth: Maintaining unity without going astray—dwelling at once in movement and rest, one can see the Buddha nature clearly and enter the gates of *samadhi*.⁸

A READING FROM THE SONG OF SONGS

How graceful are your feet in sandals,
O queenly maiden!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of a master hand.
Your navel is a rounded bowl
that never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat,

⁷ Ananda Maitreya trans.

⁸ Quoted in Dumoulin, 100

encircled with lilies.
Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are pools in Heshbon,
by the gate of Bath-rabbim.
Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon,
overlooking Damascus.
Your head crowns you like Carmel,
and your flowing locks are like purple;
a king is held captive in the tresses.

How fair and pleasant you are,
O loved one, delectable maiden!
You are stately as a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its clusters.
I say I will climb the palm tree
and lay hold of its branches.
O may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
and the scent of your breath like apples,
and your kisses like the best wine
that goes down smoothly,
gliding over lips and teeth.

(7:1-9)

28.8

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RABBI NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV

You have to judge every person generously. Even if you have reason to think that person is completely wicked, it's your job to look hard and seek out some bit of goodness, some place in that person where he is not evil. When you find that bit of goodness and judge the person *that way*, you really may raise her up to goodness. Treating people this way allows them to be restored, to come to *teshuvah*.⁹

This is why the Psalmist said, "Just a little more and there will be no wicked on; you will look at his place and he will not be there."¹⁰ He tells us to judge one and all so generously, so much on the good side, even if we think they are as sinful as can be. By looking for that "little bit," the place within them where there is not sin (and everyone, after all, has such a place), and by telling them, showing them, that that's who they are, we can help them change their lives.

*Liqqutey MoHaRaN 282*¹¹

⁹ Hb., "the process of turning or returning."

¹⁰ Ps. 36

¹¹ Trans. Arthur Green in *A Book of Life*, 271.

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, the forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(6:19-20)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF ORIGEN

“If you do not know yourself, O fairest of women” (Cant 1:8), and acknowledge that the causes of your beauty stem from the fact that “you have been made in the image of God” (cf. Gen 1:27) by which you possess a wealth of natural comeliness, and acknowledge how beautiful you were from the beginning (even if you now still excel of the rest of the “women and you alone are called “beautiful” among them), nevertheless, “if you do not know yourself,” what you are... if you do not know this, I order you “to go out” and take your place in the worst “tracks of the flock” (Cant 1:8)—until you understand from the experience of these things how great an evil it is for the soul not to know itself and its beauty.”

(*Commentary on the Song of Songs 2*)¹²

FROM THE WRITINGS OF IBN 'ARABI

Praise be to God before whose oneness there was not a before, unless the Before were God, and after whose singleness there is not an after, except the After be God. God is, and there is with God no after nor before, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor when, nor times nor moment nor age, nor being nor place. And God is now as God was. God is the One without Oneness, and the Single without singleness. God is not composed of name and named, for God's name is God and God's named in God. And so God is the Name and the Named. God is the First without firstness, and the Last without Lastness. God is the Outward without outwardness, and the Inward without inwardness. I mean that God is the very existence of the First and the very existence of the Last, and the very existence of the Outward and the very existence of the Inward. So that there is not first nor last, nor outward nor inward, except God, without these becoming God or God's becoming them.

(*from Treatise on Being*)¹³

¹² *Origin, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar, trans. Robert J. Daly, SJ. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press: 1984), 40.

¹³ Trans. T H Weir BD, Oxon: Beshara Publications, 1976.

FROM THE POEMS OF HAFIZ

Joy is the royal garment
 and now everyday I could wear that regal coat.
 But I so love common folk
 and feel for all their labor
 I often paint a vast drop
 of compassion in my eye.¹⁴

FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE SIKHS

Let compassion be your mosque,
 let faith be your prayer mat,
 let honest living be your Koran,
 let modesty be the rules of observance,
 let piety be the fasts you keep.

In such way strive to be come a Muslim:
 right conduct the Ka'ba;
 Truth the Prophet,
 good deeds your prayer;
 submission to the Lord's will your rosary.

Nanak, if you do this, the Lord will be your protector.

(*Rag Majh ki Var*)¹⁵

¹⁴ Based on Daniel Ladinsky's translation in *The Gift*, 118.

¹⁵ Adapted from *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* for modern idiom, 77.