

A READING FROM THE KENA UPANISHAD

Its instruction is like this:
 It is like a flash of lightning
 or like the winking of the eye.
 This is it in the divine aspect.

Then regarding the individual self:
 the mind seems to attain to it,
 and by it the imagination at once remembers.
 It is called the Beloved;
 it is to be worshipped as the Beloved.
 All beings love those who know it thus.

Revered sir, speak upanishad¹ to me.

I have spoken *upanishad* to you!
 Of Brahman truly is the *upanishad* that I have spoken.
 Austerity,² self-restraint and action³ are the feet of this knowledge,
 the scriptures⁴ are its limbs,
 and truth is its dwelling.

(4:4-8)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

At the beginning of time
 I declared two paths of spiritual discipline:
jnana yoga, the path of spiritual wisdom,
 and *karma yoga*, the path of action.

Those who shirk action do not attain freedom;
 nor can gain one perfection by abstaining from work.
 Indeed, no one is inactive even for an instant;
 all creatures are driven to action by their own nature.

Those who abstain from action
 while allowing the mind to dwell on sensual pleasure
 are deluded; their conduct is pointless.
 But they who control their senses through the mind
 and follow the path of action unattached, excel.

Fulfill your duties;

¹ Spiritual teaching at the foot of a teacher.

² Skt. *tapas*.

³ Skt. *karma*.

⁴ Lit. "the Vedas."

action is better than inaction.
You are obliged to act
even to maintain your body.
The world is enslaved by action
except when it is performed as a sacrifice.
Therefore, perform your duty,
free from attachment, for the sake of sacrifice.

(3:3-9)

5.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

The valley spirit never dies;
it is the primordial mother.⁵
Her gateway is the root of all creation.
It is like a veil barely seen,
and yet it will never fail.

(#6)

5.4

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

The flickering, fickle mind,
difficult to guard, difficult to control,
the wise straighten, as a fletcher an arrow.

Like a fish that is drawn from its watery home
and thrown upon dry land,
even so does the mind flutter,
due to the lure of the tempter.
Hence should the realm of Mara⁶ be shunned.

It is good to control the mind,
which is hard to check and capricious,
rushing wherever it wants.
A controlled mind leads to happiness.

Straying far and wandering wide,
alone and bodiless is the mind.
Those who subdue it are freed from the tyranny of Mara.

(3:1-5)

⁵ Or "the dark womb."

⁶ *Mara*=the Hindu god of pestilence and disease; in Buddhism the terrifying, seductive opponent of the Buddha.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DOGEN-ZENJI

In the Buddha Dharma, practice and realization are one and the same. As your present practice is practice within realization, your initial negotiation of the Way is in itself the whole of original realization. That is why from the time you are instructed in the way of practice, you are told not to anticipate realization apart from practice. It is because practice points to original realization.

from *Bedowa*⁷

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heavens for clearness.

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses from out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. (24:9-10; 15-18)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE HASIDIM

Everyone should pity their body and allow it to share in all that illumines the soul. We must purify the body very greatly so that it may share in everything the soul receives, so that there may be a change in the present state where the soul attains to lofty matters and the body knows nothing about them. But if the body is given a share, it can also be of use to the soul. For, at times, the soul falls from its rung, and then the purified body can help it up again through the power of the light it has absorbed. That is why Job says: "From my flesh shall I see God."⁸

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

And Jesus said:

'Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

⁷ Trans. Normal Waddell and Masao Abe in *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 8.

⁸ Job 19:25. In Buber *Rungs*, 71-72.

'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

6:1-8

5.9

FROM THE WRITINGS OF EVAGRIUS OF PONTUS

When the mind—having stripped off the old person—has been re-clothed in the new one who comes from grace, then it will see its state, at the time of prayer, similar to sapphire or the color of the sky. This is what Scripture describes as the 'place of God,' what ancients saw on Mount Sinai.

Peri logimon 39⁹

5.10

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

O you who have faith!
Be conscious of God with all the consciousness that is due Him,
and do not allow death to overtake you
before you have surrendered yourselves to Him.
And hold fast, all together, to the rope of God,
and do not draw apart from one another.
And remember with gratitude the blessings
which God has bestowed on you...

(3:102)

5.11

FROM THE POEMS OF RUMI

Deafened by the voice of desire
you are unaware the Beloved
lives in the core of your heart.
Stop the noise,

⁹ Trans. William Harmless, S.J., in *Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 152.

and you will hear His voice
in the silence.

Imitating others,
I failed to find myself.
I looked inside and discovered
I only knew my name.
When I stepped outside
I found my real Self.¹⁰

(Rubaiyat #181, 77)

5.12

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

That Being is Pure, without stain,
infinite and beyond comprehension.
All worship you, all bow to you,
you who are Truth and the Creator!
All creatures are yours, you provide for all of them.
O saint, meditate on the Lord who makes sorrow be forgotten.
That One alone is the Lord,
that One alone is the worshipper.
O Nanak, how insignificant are we mortals!

You, O Lord, O One Supreme Being!
You are in every heart and soul,
you pervade all things.
Some beg for alms, some bestow them:
all this is the great game you play.
It is you who give and enjoy the gift;
I know of none other than You.
You are the utterly transcendent:
Infinite are You! Infinite are You!

How can I describe your attributes?
Unto those who truly serve and worship you
Nanak is a humble sacrifice.
They who think on You,
they who meditate on You,
have their peace in this dark place.
They who think on you,
they are saved, they are liberated;
for them death's noose is broken.

(Evening Prayer #6a)

¹⁰ Trans. Azima Melita Kolin and Maryam Mafi, *Whispers*.