

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

The good is one thing, the pleasant another;
 both, serving different purposes, bind the soul.
 Those who follow the good attain sanctity;
 those who follow the pleasant do not reach the goal.

The good and the pleasurable approach everyone.
 The wise discriminate between the two.
 Indeed, they select the good over the pleasurable.
 The fool selects the pleasurable for the sake of acquiring and enjoying.

These two are widely contradictory, diverging roads,
 that which is learned and that which is ignorance.
 I consider you a seeker of wisdom:
 the multitude of enjoyable things did not tempt you.

Living in the midst of ignorance,
 considering themselves intelligent,
 thinking themselves learned,
 the senseless go round and round
 like the blind leading the blind.

What many will not get the chance even to hear of,
 what many though hearing do not understand—
 its expounder is wonderful,
 the receiver is wonderful,
 and wonderful are those who learn it under a learned teacher.

When spoken of by an inferior mind it is not understood,
 though explained in various ways.
 But when the uncommon speak, the dispute is over,
 for it is beyond argumentation, subtler than the subtlest.

You, beloved one, have grasped
 that which cannot be grasped by argumentation,
 yet is found when the wise show it.

(2:1-2, 4-5, 7-9)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Food nourishes all beings,
 rain produces food,
 sacrifice brings rain.
 The root of sacrifice is cultic work,

cultic work comes from the scriptures,¹
and the scriptures come from the indestructible.
Hence the Divine is always present in the sacrifice.

Those who do not turn this wheel thus set in motion
live in vain, sinful and sensual.

But those who take delight in the Self alone,
who are satisfied and wholly content in it,
have no real need of action.
For them there is nothing whatsoever to gain
by action or inaction,
They are not dependent on any created thing.

Therefore:
do your work well without attachment.
Acting in that freedom one reaches the *purusha*.²

(3:14-19)

6.3

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Heaven is eternal and earth is immortal.
The reason why they are eternal and immortal
is because they don't live for themselves,
and so live forever.
The wise stay back and so are ahead.
They are detached and so one with all.
Self is realized through selflessness.

(#7)

6.4

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Those whose minds are fickle
will never attain the true wisdom,
since they are ignorant of the *dhamma*³
and have wavering faith.

The heart of the fully conscious is fearless—
they have freed their minds of lust and anger,
they have transcended both good and evil.

Observe this body, as fragile as an earthen vessel.

¹ Skt. *Vedas*.

² Usually translated here as “the highest, the supreme.”

³ Fundamental doctrine or teaching; Skt. *dharma*.

Build the mind as solid as a fortified city,
and confront Mara⁴ with the weapon of insight
guarding what you have already conquered
without any attachment.

Before long this body will surely lie on the ground,
unconscious and cast aside
like a useless log.

A mind out of control will do more harm
than two angry foes engaged in combat.
A well-directed mind creates more well-being
than the wholesome actions of parents toward their children.

(3:6-11)

6.5

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DOGEN-ZENJI

When just one person does *zazen*⁵ even one time, they become, imperceptibly,
one with each and all of the myriad of things and permeate completely all time,
so that within the limitless universe, throughout past, future, and present, they
are performing the eternal and ceaseless work of guiding beings to
enlightenment. It is, for each and every thing, one and the same undifferentiated
practice, one and the same undifferentiated realization.

from *Bendowa*⁶

6.6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Wisdom cries out in the street:
 in the squares she raises her voice.
At the busiest corner she cries out;
 at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
 and fools hate knowledge?
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
 I will make my words known to you.
For waywardness kills the simple,
 and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but those who listen to me will be secure
 and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

(1:20-32, 32-33)

⁴ See footnote 42 above.

⁵ “Seated meditation”; Skt. *dhyana*; Ch. *ch’an*.

⁶ Trans. *Heart*, 13-14.

A READING FROM THE TALMUD

Humans were created alone for the sake of peace among them, that one might not say to another: My parents were greater than yours; . . . Therefore people were created unique, in order to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One. For if a person strikes many coins from one mold they are all exactly alike. But though the King of kings, the Holy one, has fashioned every person in the stamp of the first human, not a single one of them is exactly like another.

*(Sanhedrin 37a)*⁷

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

‘Pray then in this way:
 Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
 Your kingdom come.
 Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 And do not bring us to the time of trial,
 but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(6:9-15)

FROM A TREATISE BY SAINT CYPRIAN

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer.

Moreover in the course of his teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that he sees and hears all; that in the fullness of his majesty, he penetrates hidden and secret places.

*(On the Lord's Prayer)*⁸

⁷ Trans. Michael Strassfield in *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice* (Woodstock VT: Jewish Lights, 2002), 305.

⁸ *Office of Readings*, (Nn. 4-6: CSEL 3, 268-270), 787.

6.10

A READING FROM THE QUR'AN

O you who have faith!
Be patient, and persevere in patience,
and keep your connection,
and remain conscious of God,
so that you might attain felicity.

(3:200)

6.11

FROM THE POEMS OF KABIR

O friend! Hope for God while you live,
know while you live,
understand while you live!
For in life deliverance abides.

If your bonds be not broken while living,
what hope of deliverance in death?

It is but an empty dream that the soul shall have union with God
because it has passed from the body:
If God is found now God is found then.
If not, we do but go to dwell in the City of Death.
If you have union now, you shall have it hereafter.

Bathe in the truth,
know the true Guru,
have faith in the true name!

Kabir says:
It is the Spirit of the quest which helps;
I am the slave of this Spirit of the quest.⁹

⁹ Based on Tagore's translation #3.

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

The firmament is your salver,¹⁰
 your lamps are the sun and the moon.
 The galaxy of stars are like pearls scattered,
 your incense the woods of sandal.
 The breezes blow your royal fan,
 the flowers of the forest lie as offerings at your feet.

What wonderful *arathi*¹¹ is this,
 O destroyer of fear!
 Unstruck music is the sound of your temple drums.

Thousands are your eyes
 and yet you have no eyes.
 Thousands are your shapes
 and yet you have no shape.
 Thousands are your pure feet,
 and yet you have not one foot.
 Thousands are your noses
 and yet you have no nose.
 All this is your play
 and it bewitches me.

In every heart there is light:
 you are that light!
 Every soul is illumined
 by the light which is God's own self.
 But this divine light becomes manifest
 only by the Guru's teachings.
 The best *arathi* is what is pleasing to you, O Lord.

O Lord, my mind yearns for your lotus feet,
 as the honey-bee for the nectar of the flowers.
 Night and day, Lord, I am athirst for you.
 Give the water of your mercy to Nanak:
 he is like the *sarang*¹² that drinks only rain drops
 so that he may dwell forever in the peace of your Name.

(Bedtime Prayer #3)

¹⁰ A ceremonial tray.

¹¹ Worship with lamps.

¹² A hawk-cuckoo.