

A READING FROM THE KATHA UPANISHAD

By study of the yoga of the self,
 the wise know that which is hard to see,
 that which is deeply hidden,
 which lies in a cave of the heart
 and rests in the depths,
 the ancient deity—
 and pass beyond joy and sorrow.

They who hear and understand this,
 and discern this righteous thing,
 reach the subtle one.
 They rejoice for they have attained the cause of joy.

*What lies beyond right and wrong,
 beyond cause and effect,
 beyond past and future?*

That which the scriptures extol,
 austerities proclaim and sanctities approach¹—
 I tell you in brief: it is OM.
 This syllable is Brahman,
 this syllable is indeed the supreme Brahman.
 They who know it attain to their desire.
 That word is the foundation, the ultimate foundation.
 They who know this foundation are honored in the godly realm.

(2:12-17)

A READING FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense-objects.
 We should never allow ourselves to be swayed by them
 because they are the two enemies standing in the way of redemption.

*What impels us to do wrong
 even without wanting to,
 as if driven by force?*

It is desire and anger begotten of passion.²
 It is insatiable and horribly evil.
 Know this to be the enemy here.

¹ Skt. scriptures—*Vedas (vedah)*; austerities—*tapas (tapmsi)*; sanctities— *brahmacarya(m)*

² Lit. the *guna* of *rajas*—passion, anxiety, ambition.

As fire is covered by smoke,
as a mirror is covered by dust,
as an embryo is covered by the amnion,
so is knowledge covered by desire,
the insatiable fire, eternal enemy of the wise.
It rests in the senses, the mind and the intellect,³
screening the light of Truth,
deluding the embodied soul.

You must first control your senses,
and then kill this evil thing which obstructs
knowledge and discrimination.⁴

The senses are said to be greater than the body,
but greater than the senses is the mind.
Greater than the mind is the intellect,
and what is greater than the intellect is the Self.⁵
Thus, knowing that which is beyond the intellect,
subdue the mind by reason
and use your strength to slay this enemy in the form of desire.

(3:34, 36-43)

73

A READING FROM THE TAO TE CHING

Heaven is eternal
and the earth is immortal.

The reason why heaven is eternal and earth is immortal
is that they do not live only for themselves,
and so they live forever.

The sage steps back but ends up in front,
an outsider who ends up within.

Self is realized through selflessness.

(#7)

³ Skt. senses-*indriyas* (*indriyani*); mind-*manas* (*manah*); intellect-*buddhi* (*buddhiryo*).

⁴ Skt. *jnana* and *vijnana*.

⁵ Skt. *atman*.

A READING FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

See this body, as fragile and transient as foam.
 Know that it is as insubstantial as foam,
 and thereby destroy the tempter's flowery arrows,
 and put yourself beyond death's grasp.

Just as a raging flood sweeps away a sleeping village,
 so does death claim those of distracted mind,
 as they continually seek more and more
 of life's fleeting pleasures.

Death drowns the unsatisfied,
 whose restless minds clutch
 for greater and greater pleasures.

A monk should dwell and act in the village
 like a bee extracting honey from the flower
 but leaving the color and fragrance intact.

(4:3-6)⁶

A READING FROM ASHVAGHOSA'S AWAKENING OF FAITH

The mind has two doors from which issue its activities. One leads to a realization of the mind's Pure Essence, the other leads to the differentiation of appearing and disappearing, of life and death. Through each door pass all the mind's conceptions so interrelated that they never have been separated and never will be.

What is meant by the Pure Essence of Mind? It is the ultimate purity and unity, the all-embracing wholeness, the quintessence of Truth. Essence of Mind belongs to neither death nor rebirth; it is uncreated and eternal. The concepts of the conscious mind are being individualised and discriminated by false imaginations. If the mind could be kept free from discriminative thinking there would be no more arbitrary thoughts to give rise to appearances of form, existences and conditions. Therefore from the beginning, all concepts have been independent of individuation, of names and mental moods and conditions. They are in their essential nature of an equal sameness, neither variable nor breakable nor destructible. As they are of one suchness, of one purity, it is spoken of as Mind-essence.

(3:1)⁷

⁶ Trans. Ananda Maitreya, altered for inclusive language.

⁷ Trans. Dwight Goddard from *A Buddhist Bible*.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Surely this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

(30:11-14)

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE HASIDIM

I will teach you the best way to say Torah. You must be nothing but an ear that hears what the universe of the word is constantly saying within you. The moment you begin to hear what you yourself are saying, you must stop.

*(Dov Baer of Mezritch)*⁸

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said, 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.'

'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

(6:16-21)

⁸ From *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, by Martin Buber, Trans. Olga Marx. (Schocken Books, 1947), in Stephen Mitchell, *The Enlightened Mind*, 155.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MEISTER ECKHART

When I stood in my first cause, I then had no “God,” and then I was my own first cause. I wanted nothing, I longed for nothing, for I was an empty being, and the only truth in which I rejoiced was in the knowledge of myself. Then it was myself I wanted and nothing else. What I wanted I was, and what I was I wanted; and so I stood empty of God and everything.

I am unborn, and in the manner in which I am unborn I can never die. In my unborn manner I have been eternally, and am now, and shall eternally remain.

(*Predigt 52*)⁹

FROM THE HADITH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Messenger of God said, “The state of believers is wonderful; everything in it is good for them, and for no one else but the believer. If happiness comes their way, they are grateful and so it is good for them; and if adversity strikes them, they are patient and it is good for them.”¹⁰

FROM THE POEMS OF RUMI

People are distracted by objects of desire,
and afterwards repent of the lust they’ve indulged,
because they have indulged with a phantom
and are left even farther from Reality than before.
Your desire for the illusory could be a wing,
by means of which a seeker might ascend to Reality.
When you have indulged a lust, your wing drops off;
you become lame, abandoned by a fantasy.
Preserve the wing and don’t indulge such lust,
so that the wing of desire may bear you to Paradise.
People fancy they are enjoying themselves,
but they are actually tearing out their wings
for the sake of an illusion.

(*Mathnawi III, 2133-2138*)¹¹

⁹ Trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, and Defense*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1981) 200-203.

¹⁰ Trans. Thomas Cleary, in *The Wisdom of the Prophet: Saying of Muhammad, Selections from the Hadith* (Boston: Shambhala Classics, 2001) 87, adapted for inclusive language.

¹¹ Trans. Kabir and Camille Helminski in *The Rumi Collection: An Anthology of Translations of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi*; selected and edited by Kabir Helminski (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999), 17.

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THE SIKHS

Sing, O Nanak, the psalms of God
as the treasury of sublime virtues.
If one were to sing of God and hear of God
and let the love of God sprout within,
all sorrow shall depart.
In the soul, God will create abiding peace.

(Morning Prayer #5)