
Chapter 1

The Tao that can be told
is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be
named is not the eternal
name.

The nameless is the
beginning of heaven and
earth.

The named is the mother
of ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can
see the mystery.

Ever desiring, one can
see the manifestations.

These two spring from
the same source but
differ in name;

 this appears as
darkness.

Darkness within darkness.
The gate to all mystery.

Chapter 2

Under Heaven all can see
beauty as beauty only
because there is
ugliness.

All can know good as
good only because there
is evil.

Therefore having and not
having arise together.

Difficult and easy
complement each other.

Long and short contrast
with each other;

High and low rest upon
each other;

Voice and sound
harmonize each other;

Front and back follow
one another.

Therefore the sage goes
about doing nothing,
teaching no talking.

The ten thousand things
rise and fall without
cease,

Creating, yet not
possessing,

Working, yet not taking
credit,

Work is done, then
forgotten.

Therefore it lasts for
ever.

Chapter 3

Not exalting the gifted
prevents quarrelling.
Not collecting treasure
prevents stealing.
Not seeing desirable
things prevents confusion
of the heart.
The wise therefore rule
by emptying hearts and
stuffing bellies,
 by weakening
ambitions and
strengthening bones.
If people lack knowledge
and desire,
 then intellectuals
will not try to interfere.
If nothing is done, then
all will be well

Chapter 4

The Tao is an empty
vessel; it is used, but
never filled.
Oh, unfathomable source
of ten thousand things!
Blunt the sharpness,

Untangle the knot,
Soften the glare,
Merge with dust.
Oh, hidden deep but ever
present!
I do not know from
whence it comes.
It is the forefather of the
emperors.

Chapter 5

Heaven and earth are
ruthless;
They see the ten
thousand things as
dummies.
The wise are ruthless;
They see the people as
dummies.
The space between
heaven and earth is like
a bellows.
The shape changes but
not the form;
The more it moves, the
more it yields.
More words count less.
Hold fast to the center.

Chapter 6

The valley spirit never
dies;
It is the woman, primal
mother.
Her gateway is the root
of heaven and earth.
It is like a veil barely
seen.
Use it; it will never fail.

Chapter 7

Heaven and Earth last for
ever.
Why do Heaven and
Earth last for ever?
They are unborn,
So ever living.
The sage stays behind,
thus he is ahead.
He is detached, thus at
one with all.
Through selfless action,
he attains fulfillment.
Tao Te Ching (Lao Tzu) -
A Comparative Study
chapter 8

| 1. The highest good is
like water.

|

| 2. Water gives life to
the ten thousand things
and does not strive. |

| 3. It flows in places
men reject and so is like
the Tao. |

| 4. In dwelling, be
close to the land.

|

| 5. In meditation, go
deep in the heart.

|

| 6. In dealing with
others, be gentle and
kind.

|

| 7. In speech, be true.

|

| 8. In ruling, be just.

|

| 9. In business, be
competent.

|

| 10. In action, watch
the timing.

|

| 11. No fight: No
blame.

|

| reference text |

- |

GFJE |

| titles | -

| The Placid and |

Contented Nature (JL)

Easy by nature (UKLG)

rhyming lines

4-

10 (DCL)

general

the importance of not

striving to get on

top or to the fore,

water being the

Taoist symbol for the

unassertive (AW);

water commonly used

as an illustration of

the way (JL)

related chapters

66

(lines 1-3)

1.

The highest good is like water.

The highest excellence...
(JL)

True goodness... (UKLG)

2.

Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.

Water is good at benefitting... (RGH) (sim AW, DCL, JL)

...without contending (DCL)

...and yet it [does not] compete [with them]. (RGH)

...and does not scramble, (AW)

Water is a pattern and example to the ten thousand things. (AW)

3.

It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.

...settles where none would like to be (DCL)

It dwells in places the masses of people detest (RGH)

...and in its occupying the low place which all men dislike. (JL)

To the Confucians, the low ground (where water collects) is the collecting place of all the impurities under heaven, and therefore it is the symbol of iniquity. To the Taoists the low

ground is the dwelling
place of the Tao.

(see chapter 6: The valley
spirit) (AW)

4.

In dwelling, be close to
the land.

The excellence of a
residence is in (the
suitability) of the place;
(JL)

For a house, the good
thing is level ground.
(UKLG)

4-10.

In dwelling, be close to
the land.

In meditation, go deep in
the heart.

In dealing with others,
be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.

In ..., the good thing
is ... (RGH)

In ... it is ... that matters
(DCL)

In ..., know how to ...
(JCHW)

The excellence of...is in...
(JL)

5.

In meditation, go deep in
the heart.

In the mind, the good
thing is depth. (RGH,
UKLG)

...that of the mind is in

abysmal stillness; (JL)

6.

In dealing with others,
be gentle and kind.

In an ally it is
benevolence that matters.

(DCL)

In giving the good thing
is being like Heaven.

(RGH)

...that of associations is
in their being with the
virtuous; (JL)

8.

In ruling, be just.

...in government, good
order (AW) (sim DCL,
JCHW, RGH, JL, UKLG)

9.

In business, be
competent.

In affairs... ability (DCL,
RGH, JL)

In transacting business,
know how to be efficient.

(JCHW)

10.

In action, watch the
timing.

In activity... timeliness
(DCL, RGH)

11.

No fight: No blame.

It is only because it does
not compete, that
therefore it is without
fault. (RGH)

If you do not strive with others... (JCHW)

And when (one with the highest excellence) does not wrangle (about his low position), no one finds fault with him (JL)

(line 4: And if men think...) ...In each case it is because they prefer what does not lead to strife, And therefore does not go amiss. (AW)

to weed's home page comments to

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<http://www.wussu.com/laotzu/laotzu08.html>

Chapter 9

Better stop short than fill to the brim.

Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt.

Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it.

Claim wealth and titles,
and disaster will follow.
Retire when the work is
done.

This is the way of
heaven.

Chapter 10

Carrying body and soul
and embracing the one,
Can you avoid
separation?

Attending fully and
becoming supple,
Can you be as a newborn
babe?

Washing and cleansing
the primal vision,
Can you be without
stain?

Loving all men and
ruling the country,
Can you be without
cleverness?

Opening and closing the
gates of heaven,
Can you play the role of
woman?

Understanding and being
open to all things,
Are you able to do

nothing?
Giving birth and
nourishing,
Bearing but not
possessing,
Working yet not taking
credit,
Leading yet not
dominating,
This is the Primal Virtue.

Chapter 11

Thirty spokes share the
wheel's hub;
It is the center hole that
makes it useful.
Shape clay into a vessel;
It is the space within
that makes it useful.
Cut doors and windows
for a room;
It is the holes which
make it useful.
Therefore profit comes
from what is there;
Usefulness from what is
not there.

Chapter 12

The five colours blind the eye.

The five tones deafen the ear.

The five flavours dull the taste.

Racing and hunting madden the mind.

Precious things lead one astray.

Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels and not by what he sees. He lets go of that and chooses this.

Chapter 13

Accept disgrace willingly. Accept misfortune as the human condition.

What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?

Accept being unimportant.

Do not be concerned with loss and gain.

This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."

What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the human condition"?

Misfortune comes from having a body.

Without a body, how could there be misfortune?

Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be trusted to care for all things.

Love the world as your own self; then you can truly care for all things.

Chapter 14

Look, it cannot be seen - it is beyond form.

Listen, it cannot be heard - it is beyond sound.

Grasp, it cannot be held - it is intangible.

These three are indefinable;

Therefore they are joined in one.

From above it is not bright;

From below it is not
dark:

An unbroken thread
beyond description.

It returns to nothingness.
The form of the formless,
The image of the
imageless,

It is called indefinable
and beyond imagination.
Stand before it and there
is no beginning.

Follow it and there is no
end.

Stay with the ancient
Tao,

Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient
beginning is the essence
of Tao.

Chapter 15

The ancient masters were
subtle, mysterious,
profound, responsive.

The depth of their
knowledge is
unfathomable.

Because it is
unfathomable,

All we can do is describe

their appearance.
Watchful, like men
crossing a winter stream.
Alert, like men aware of
danger.
Courteous, like visiting
guests.
Yielding, like ice about
to melt.
Simple, like uncarved
blocks of wood.
Hollow, like caves.
Opaque, like muddy
pools.
Who can wait quietly
while the mud settles?
Who can remain still
until the moment of
action?
Observers of the Tao do
not seek fulfilment.
Not seeking fulfillment,
they are not swayed by
desire for change.

Chapter 16

Empty yourself of
everything.
Let the mind rest at
peace.
The ten thousand things

rise and fall while the
Self watches their
return.

They grow and flourish
and then return to the
source.

Returning to the source
is stillness, which is the
way of nature.

The way of nature is
unchanging.

Knowing constancy is
insight.

Not knowing constancy
leads to disaster.

Knowing constancy, the
mind is open.

With an open mind, you
will be openhearted.

Being openhearted, you
will act royally.

Being royal, you will
attain the divine.

Being divine, you will be
at one with the Tao.

Being at one with the
Tao is eternal.

And though the body
dies, the Tao will never
pass away.

Chapter 17

The very highest is
barely known by men.
Then comes that which
they know and love,
Then that which is
feared,
Then that which is
despised.
He who does not trust
enough will not be
trusted.
When actions are
performed
Without unnecessary
speech,
People say, "We did it!"

Chapter 18

When the great Tao is
forgotten,
Kindness and morality
arise.
When wisdom and
intelligence are born,
The great pretence
begins.
When there is no peace
within the family,
Filial piety and devotion
arise.

When the country is
confused and in chaos,
Loyal ministers appear.

Chapter 19

Give up sainthood,
renounce wisdom,
And it will be a hundred
times better for everyone.
Give up kindness,
renounce morality,
And men will rediscover
filial piety and love.
Give up ingenuity,
renounce profit,
And bandits and thieves
will disappear.
These three are outward
forms alone; they are not
sufficient in
themselves.
It is more important
To see the simplicity,
To realize one's true
nature,
To cast off selfishness
And temper desire

Chapter 20

Give up learning, and put
an end to your troubles.

Is there a difference
between yes and no?

Is there a difference
between good and evil?

Must I fear what others
fear? What nonsense!

Other people are
contented, enjoying the
sacrificial feast of the ox.
In spring some go to the
park, and climb the
terrace,

But I alone am drifting
not knowing where I am.

Like a new-born babe
before it learns to smile,
I am alone, without a
place to go.

Other have more than
they need, but I alone
have nothing.

I am a fool. Oh, yes! I
am confused.

Other men are clear and
bright,

But I alone am dim and
weak.

Other men are sharp and
clever,

But I alone am dull and
stupid.

Oh, I drift like the waves
of the sea.
Without direction, like
the restless wind.
Everyone else is busy,
But I alone am aimless
and depressed.
I am different.
I am nourished by the
great mother.

Chapter 21

The greatest Virtue is to
follow Tao and Tao
alone.
The Tao is elusive and
intangible.
Oh it is intangible and
elusive, and yet within is
image.
Oh it is elusive and
intangible, and yet within
is form.
Oh it is dim and dark,
and yet within is essence.
This essence is very real,
and therein lies faith.
From the very beginning
until now its name has
never been forgotten.
Thus I perceive the

creation.

How do I know the ways
of creation?

Because of this.

Chapter 22

Yield and overcome;
Bend and be straight;
Empty and be full;
Wear out and be new;
Have little and gain;
Have much and be
confused.

Therefore wise men
embrace the one
And set an example to
all.

Not putting on a display,
They shine forth.

Not justifying themselves,
They are distinguished.

Not boasting,
They receive recognition.

Not bragging,
They never falter.

They do not quarrel,
So no one quarrels with
them.

Therefore the ancients
say, 'Yield and overcome.'
Is that an empty saying?

Be really whole,
And all things will come
to you.

Chapter 23

To talk little is natural.
High winds do not last
all morning.
Heavy rain does not last
all day.
Why is this? Heaven and
earth!
If heaven and earth
cannot make things
eternal,
How is it possible for
man?
He who follows the Tao
is at one with the Tao.
He who is virtuous
Experiences Virtue.
He who loses the way
Feels lost.
When you are at one
with the Tao,
The Tao welcomes you.
When you are one with
Virtue,
The Virtue is always
there.
When you are at one

with loss,
The loss is experienced
willingly.
He who does not trust
enough
Will not be trusted.

Chapter 24

He who stands on tiptoe
is not steady.
He who strides cannot
maintain the pace.
He who makes a show is
not enlightened.
He who is self-righteous
is not respected.
He who boasts achieves
nothing.
He who brags will not
endure.
According to followers of
the Tao,
 "These are extra
food and unnecessary
luggage."
They do not bring
happiness.
Therefore followers of the
Tao avoid them.

Chapter 25

Something mysteriously
formed,
Born before heaven and
earth.

In the silence and the
void,

Standing alone and
unchanging,

Ever present and in
motion.

Perhaps it is the mother
of ten thousand things.

I do not know its name.
Call it Tao.

For lack of a better
word, I call it great.

Being great, it flows.

It flows far away.

Having gone far, it
returns.

Therefore, "Tao is great;
Heaven is great;

Earth is great;

The king is also great."

These are the four great
powers of the universe,

And the king is one of
them.

Man follows the earth.

Earth follows heaven.

Heaven follows the Tao.

Tao follows what is
natural.

Chapter 26

The heavy is the root of
the light;
The still is the master of
unrest.
Therefore the sage,
travelling all day,
Does not lose sight of his
baggage.
Though there are
beautiful things to be
seen,
He remains unattached
and calm.
Why should the lord of
ten thousand chariots act
lightly in public?
To be light is to lose
one's root.
To be restless is to lose
one's control.

Chapter 27

A good walker leaves no tracks;

A good speaker makes no slips;

A good reckoner needs no tally.

A good door need no lock,

Yet no one can open it.

Good binding requires no knots, Yet no one can loosen it.

Therefore the sage takes care of all men

And abandons no one.

He takes care of all things

And abandons nothing.

This is called "following the light."

What is a good man?

A teacher of a bad man.

What is a bad man?

A good man's charge.

If the teacher is not respected,

And the pupil not cared for,

Confusion will arise, however clever one is.

This is the crux of mystery.

Chapter 28

Know the strength of
man,

But keep a woman's
care!

Be the stream of the
universe!

Being the stream of the
universe,

Ever true and
unswerving,

Become as a little child
once more.

Know the white,

But keep the black!

Be an example to the
world!

Being an example to the
world,

Ever true and
unwavering,

Return to the infinite.

Know honour,

Yet keep humility!

Be the valley of the
universe!

Being the valley of the
universe,

Ever true and resourceful,
Return to the state of the
uncarved block.

When the block is
carved, it becomes useful.
When the sage uses it, he

becomes the ruler.

Thus, "A great tailor cuts little."

Chapter 29

Do you think you can
take over the universe
and improve it?

I do not believe it can be
done.

The universe is sacred.

You cannot improve it.

If you try to change it,
you will ruin it.

If you try to hold it, you
will lose it.

So sometimes things are
ahead and sometimes
they are behind;

Sometimes breathing is
hard, sometimes it comes
easily;

Sometimes there is
strength and sometimes
weakness;

Sometimes one is up and
sometimes down.

Therefore the sage avoids
extremes, excesses, and
complacency.

Chapter 30

Whenever you advise a ruler in the way of Tao, Counsel him not to use force to conquer the universe.

For this would only cause resistance.

Thorn bushes spring up wherever the army has passed.

Lean years follow in the wake of a great war.

Just do what needs to be done.

Never take advantage of power.

Achieve results,

But never glory in them.

Achieve results,

But never boast.

Achieve results,

But never be proud.

Achieve results,

Because this is the natural way.

Achieve results,

But not through violence.

Force is followed by loss of strength.

This is not the way of

Tao.

That which goes against
the Tao

comes to an early
end.

Chapter 31

Good weapons are
instruments of fear; all
creatures hate them.

Therefore followers of the
Tao never used them.

The wise man prefers the
left.

The man of war prefers
the right.

Weapons are instruments
of fear; they are not a
wise man's tools.

He uses them only when
he has no choice.

Peace and quiet are dear
to his heart.

And victory no cause for
rejoicing.

If you rejoice in victory,
then you delight in
killing;

If you delight in killing,
you cannot fulfill
yourself.

On happy occasions
precedence is given to
the left,
On sad occasions to the
right.
In the army the general
stands on the left,
The commander-in-chief
on the right.
This means that war is
conducted like a funeral.
When many people are
being killed,
They should be mourned
in heartfelt sorrow.
That is why a victory
must be observed like a
funeral.

Chapter 32

The Tao is forever
undefined.
Small though it is in the
unformed state, it cannot
be grasped.
If kings and lords could
harness it,
The ten thousand things
would naturally obey.
Heaven and earth would
come together

And gentle rain fall.
Men would need no more
instruction
 and all things would
take their course.
Once the whole is
divided, the parts need
names.
There are already enough
names.
One must know when to
stop.
Knowing when to stop
averts trouble.
Tao in the world is like a
river flowing home to the
sea.

Chapter 33

Knowing others is
wisdom;
Knowing the self is
enlightenment.
Mastering others requires
force;
Mastering the self needs
strength.
He who knows he has
enough is rich.
Perseverance is a sign of
will power.

He who stays where he
is endures.

To die but not to perish
is to be eternally present.

Chapter 34

The great Tao flows
everywhere, both to the
right and to the left.

The ten thousand things
depend upon it; it holds
nothing back.

It fulfills its purpose
silently and makes no
claim.

It nourishes the ten
thousand things,
And yet is not their lord.
It has no aim; it is very
small.

The ten thousand things
return to it,

Yet it is not their lord.
It is very great.

It does not show
greatness,

And is therefore really
great.

Chapter 35

All men will come to
him who keeps to the
one,
For there lie rest and
happiness and peace.
Passers by may stop for
music and good food,
But a description of the
Tao seems without
substance or flavor.
It cannot be seen, it
cannot be heard,
And yet it cannot be
exhausted.

Chapter 36

That which shrinks
Must first expand.
That which fails
Must first be strong.
That which is cast down
Must first be raised.
Before receiving
There must be giving.
This is called perception
of the nature of things.

Soft and weak overcome
hard and strong.
Fish cannot leave deep
waters,
And a country's weapons
should not be displayed.

Chapter 37

Tao abides in non-action,
Yet nothing is left
undone.
If kings and lords
observed this,
The ten thousand things
would develop naturally.
If they still desired to
act,
They would return to the
simplicity of formless
substance.
Without form there is no
desire.
Without desire there is
tranquility.
And in this way all
things would be at peace

Chapter 38

A truly good man is not
aware of his goodness,
And is therefore good.

A foolish man tries to be
good,
And is therefore not
good.

A truly good man does
nothing,
Yet nothing is left
undone.

A foolish man is always
doing,
Yet much remains to be
done

When a truly kind man
does something, he
leaves nothing undone.

When a just man does
something, he leaves a
great deal to be done.

When a disciplinarian
does something and no
one responds,

He rolls up his sleeves in
an attempt to enforce
order

Therefore when Tao is
lost, there is goodness.

When goodness is lost,
there is kindness.

When kindness is lost,
there is justice.

When justice is lost,

there is ritual.

Now ritual is the husk of
faith and loyalty, the
beginning of confusion.

Knowledge of the future
is only a flowery
trapping of the Tao.

It is the beginning of
folly.

Therefore the truly great
man dwells on what is
real

and not what is on
the surface,

On the fruit and not the
flower,

Therefore accept the one
and reject the other.

Chapter 39

These things from ancient
times arise from one:

The sky is whole and
clear.

The earth is whole and
firm.

The spirit is whole and
strong.

The valley is whole and
full.

The ten thousand things

are whole and alive.

Kings and lords are
whole and the country is
upright.

All these are in virtue of
wholeness.

The clarity of the sky
prevents it falling.

The firmness of the earth
prevents it splitting.

The strength of the spirit
prevents it being used
up.

The fullness of the valley
prevents it running dry.

The growth of the ten
thousand things prevents
them dying out.

The leadership of kings
and lords prevents the
downfall

of the country.

Therefore the humble is
the root of the noble.

The low is the foundation
of the high.

Princes and lords
consider themselves

"orphaned,"

"widowed," and

"worthless."

Do they not depend on
being humble?

Too much success is not
an advantage.

Do not tinkle like jade
Or clatter like stone

chimes.

Chapter 40

Returning is the motion
of the Tao.

Yielding is the way of
the Tao.

The ten thousand things
are born of being.

Being is born of not
being.

Chapter 41

The wise student hears of
the Tao and practises it
diligently.

The average student
hears of the Tao and
gives it thought now and
again.

The foolish student hears
of the Tao and laughs
aloud.

If there were no laughter,
the Tao would not be

what it is.
Hence it is said:
The bright path seems
dim;
Going forward seems like
retreat;
The easy way seems
hard;
The highest Virtue seems
empty;
Great purity seems
sullied;
A wealth of Virtue seems
inadequate;
The strength of Virtue
seems frail;
Real Virtue seems unreal;
The perfect square has no
corners;
Great talents ripen late;
The highest notes are
hard to hear;
The greatest form has no
shape.
The Tao is hidden and
without name.
The Tao alone nourishes
and brings everything to
fulfillment.

Chapter 42

The Tao begot one.
One begot two.
Two begot three.
And three begot the ten
thousand things.
The ten thousand things
carry yin and embrace
yang.
They achieve harmony by
combining these forces.
Men hate to be
"orphaned," "widowed,"
or "worthless,"
But this is how kings and
lords describe themselves.
For one gains by losing
And loses by gaining.
What others teach, I also
teach; that is:
"A violent man will die a
violent death!"
This will be the essence
of my teaching.

Chapter 43

The softest thing on the
universe
Overcomes the hardest
thing in the universe.
That without substance
can enter where there is

no room.

Hence I know the value
of non-action.

Teaching without words
and work without doing
Are understood by very
few.

Chapter 44

Fame or self: Which
matters more?

Self or wealth: Which is
more precious?

Gain is loss; Which is
more painful?

He who is attached to
things will suffer much.

He who saves will suffer
heavy loss.

A contented man is never
disappointed.

He who knows when to
stop does not find
himself in trouble.

He will stay for ever
safe.

Chapter 45

Great accomplishment
seems imperfect,
Yet it does not outlive its
usefulness.

Great fullness seems
empty,

Yet it cannot be
exhausted.

Great straightness seems
twisted.

Great intelligence seems
stupid.

Great eloquence seems
awkward.

Movement overcomes
cold.

Stillness overcomes heat.

Stillness and tranquility
set things in order in the
universe.

Chapter 46

When the Tao is present
in the universe,

The horses haul manure.

When the Tao is absent
from the universe,

War horses are bred

outside the city.
There is no greater sin
than desire,
No greater curse than
discontent,
No greater misfortune
than wanting something
for oneself.
Therefore he who knows
that enough is enough
will always have enough.

Chapter 47

Without going outside,
you may know the whole
world.
Without looking through
the window, you may see
the ways of heaven.
The farther you go, the
less you know.
Thus the sage knows
without travelling;
He sees without looking;
He works without doing.

Chapter 48

In the pursuit of
learning, every day
something is acquired.
In the pursuit of Tao,
every day something is
dropped.
Less and less is done
Until non-action is
achieved.
When nothing is done,
nothing is left undone.
The world is ruled by
letting things take their
course.
It cannot be ruled by
interfering.

Chapter 49

The sage has no mind of
his own.
He is aware of the need
of others.
I am good to people who
are good.
I am also good to people
who are not good.
Because Virtue is
goodness.
I have faith in people

who are faithful.

I also have faith in
people who are not
faithful.

Because Virtue is
faithfulness.

The sage is shy and
humble - to the world he
seems confusing.

Men look to him and
listen.

He behaves like a little
child.

Chapter 50

Between birth and death,
Three in ten are
following life,

Three in ten are
following death,

And men just passing
from birth to death also
number three in ten.

Why is this so?

Because they live their
lives on the gross level.

He who knows how to
live can walk abroad

Without fear of
rhinoceros or tiger.

He will not be wounded

in battle.

For in him rhinoceroses
can find no place to
thrust their horn,
Tigers can find no place
to use their claws,
And weapons no place to
pierce.

Why is this so? Because
he has no place for death
to enter.

Chapter 51

All things arise from Tao.
They are nourished by
Virtue.

They are formed by
matter.

They are shaped by
environment.

Thus the ten thousand
things all respect Tao and
honour Virtue.

Respect of Tao and
honour of Virtue are not
demanded,

But they are in the
nature of things.

Therefore all things arise
from Tao.

By Virtue they are

nourished,
Developed, cared for,
Sheltered, comforted,
Grown, and protected.
Creating without
claiming,
Doing without taking
credit,
Guiding without
interfering,
This is Primal Virtue.

Chapter 52

The beginning of the
universe
Is the mother of all
things.
Knowing the mother, one
also knows the sons.
Knowing the sons, yet
remaining in touch with
the mother,
Brings freedom from the
fear of death.
Keep your mouth shut,
Guard your senses,
And life is ever full.
Open your mouth,
Always be busy,
And life is beyond hope.
Seeing the small is

insight;
Yielding to force is
strength.
Using the outer light,
return to insight,
And in this way be saved
from harm.
This is learning
constancy.

Chapter 53

If I have even just a little
sense,
I will walk on the main
road and my only fear
will be of straying from
it.
Keeping to the main road
is easy,
But people love to be
sidetracked.
When the court is
arrayed in splendor,
The fields are full of
weeds,
And the granaries are
bare.
Some wear are gorgeous
clothes,
Carry sharp swords,
And indulge themselves

with food and drink;
They have more
possessions than they can
use.

They are robber barons.
This is certainly not the
way of Tao.

Chapter 54

What is firmly established
cannot be uprooted.

What is firmly grasped
cannot slip away.

It will be honoured from
generation to generation.

Cultivate Virtue in
yourself,

And Virtue will be real.

Cultivate it in the family,
And Virtue will abound.

Cultivate it in the village,
And Virtue will grow.

Cultivate it in the nation,
And Virtue will be
abundant.

Cultivate it in the
universe,

And Virtue will be
everywhere.

Therefore look at the
body as body;

Look at the family as
family;
Look at the village as
village;
Look at the nation as
nation;
Look at the universe as
universe.
How do I know the
universe is like this?
By looking!

Chapter 55

He who is filled with
Virtue is like a newborn
child.
Wasps and serpents will
not sting him;
Wild beasts will not
pounce upon him;
He will not be attacked
by birds of prey.
His bones are soft, his
muscles weak,
But his grip is firm.
He has not experienced
the union of man and
woman, but is whole.
His manhood is strong.
He screams all day
without becoming hoarse.

This is perfect harmony.
Knowing harmony is
constancy.

Knowing constancy is
enlightenment.

It is not wise to rush
about.

Controlling the breath
causes strain.

If too much energy is
used, exhaustion follows.

This is not the way of
Tao.

Whatever is contrary to
Tao will not last long.

Chapter 56

Those who know do not
talk.

Those who talk do not
know.

Keep your mouth closed.
Guard your senses.

Temper your sharpness.

Simplify your problems.

Mask your brightness.

Be at one with the dust
of the earth.

This is primal union.

He who has achieved this
state

Is unconcerned with
friends and enemies,
With good and harm,
with honour and
disgrace.

This therefore is the
highest state of man.

Chapter 57

Rule a nation with
justice.

Wage war with surprise
moves.

Become master of the
universe without striving.
How do I know that this
is so?

Because of this!

The more laws and
restrictions there are,
The poorer people
become.

The sharper men's
weapons,

The more trouble in the
land.

The more ingenious and
clever men are,

The more strange things
happen.

The more rules and

regulations,

The more thieves and
robbers.

Therefore the sage says:

I take no action and
people are reformed.

I enjoy peace and
people become honest.

I do nothing and
people become rich.

I have no desires
and people return to the
good and simple life.

Chapter 58

When the country is
ruled with a light hand
The people are simple.

When the country is
ruled with severity,
The people are cunning.
Happiness is rooted in
misery.

Misery lurks beneath
happiness.

Who knows what the
future holds?

There is no honesty.
Honesty becomes
dishonest.

Goodness becomes

witchcraft.

Man's bewitchment lasts
for a long time.

Therefore the sage is
sharp but not cutting,
Pointed but not piercing,
Straightforward but not
unrestrained,
Brilliant but not blinding.

Chapter 59

In caring for others and
serving heaven,
There is nothing like
using restraint.

Restraint depends on
giving up one's own
ideas.

This depends on Virtue
gathered in the past.

If there is a good store
of Virtue, then nothing is
impossible.

If nothing is impossible,
then there are no limits.

If a man knows no
limits, then he is fit to
be a ruler.

The mother principle of
ruling holds good for a
long time.

This is called having
deep roots and a firm
foundation,
The Tao of long life and
eternal vision.

Chapter 60

Ruling the country is like
cooking a small fish.
Approach the universe
with Tao,
And evil will have no
power.
Not that evil is not
powerful,
But its power will not be
used to harm others.
Not only will it do no
harm to others,
But the sage himself will
also be protected.
They do not hurt each
other,
And the Virtue in each
one refreshes both.

Chapter 61

A great country is like
low land.

It is the meeting ground
of the universe,
The mother of the
universe.

The female overcomes
the male with stillness,
Lying low in stillness.

Therefore if a great
country gives way to a
smaller country,
It will conquer the
smaller country.

And if a small country
submits to a great
country,

It can conquer the great
country.

Therefore those that
would conquer must
yield,

And those that conquer
do so because they yield.

A great nation needs
more people;

A small country needs to
serve.

Each gets what it wants.
It is fitting for a great
nation to yield.

Chapter 62

Tao is the source of the
ten thousand things.

It is the treasure of the
good man, and the
refuge of the bad.

Sweet words can buy
honour;

Good deeds can gain
respect.

If a man is bad, do not
abandon him.

Therefore on the day the
emperor is crowned,

Or the three officers of
state installed,

Do not send a gift of
jade and a team of four
horses,

But remain still and
offered the Tao.

Why does everyone like
the Tao so much at first?

Isn't it because you find
what you seek and are
forgiven when you sin?

Therefore this is the
greatest treasure of the
universe.

Chapter 63

Practice non-action.

Work without doing.

Taste the tasteless.

Magnify the small,

increase the few.

Reward the bitterness
with care.

See simplicity in the
complicated.

Achieve greatness in little
things.

In the universe the
difficult things are done
as if they are easy.

In the universe great acts
are made up of small
deeds.

The sage does not
attempt anything very
big,

And thus achieves
greatness.

Easy promises make for
little trust.

Taking things lightly
results in great difficulty.

Because the sage always
confronts difficulties,
He never experiences
them.

Chapter 64

Peace is easily
maintained;
Trouble is easily
overcome before it starts.

The brittle is easily
shattered;

The small is easily
scattered.

Deal with it before it
happens.

Set things in order before
there is confusion.

A tree as great as a
man's embrace springs
from a small shoot;

A terrace nine stories
high begins with a pile
of earth;

A journey of a thousand
miles starts under one's
feet.

He who acts defeats his
own purpose;

He who grasps loses.

The sage does no act,
and so is not defeated.

He does not grasp and
therefore does not lose.

People usually fail when
they are on the verge of
success.

So give as much care to
the end as to the

beginning;
Then there will be no
failure.
Therefore the sage seeks
freedom from desire.
He does not collect
precious things.
He learns not to hold on
to ideas.
He brings men back to
what they have lost.
He helps the ten
thousand things find their
own nature,
But refrains from action.

Chapter 65

In the beginning those
who knew the Tao did
not try to enlighten
others,
But kept them in the
dark.
Why is it so hard to
rule?
Because people are so
clever.
Rulers who try to use
cleverness
Cheat the country.
Those who rule without

cleverness

Are a blessing to the
land.

These are the two
alternatives.

Understanding these is
Primal Virtue.

Primal Virtue is deep and
far.

It leads all things back
Toward the great
oneness.

Chapter 66

Why is the sea king of a
hundred streams?

Because it lies below
them.

Therefore it is the king
of a hundred streams.

If the sage would guide
the people, he must serve
with humility.

If he would lead them,
he must follow behind.

In this way when the
sage rules, the people
will not feel oppressed;
When he stands before
them, they will not be
harmed.

The whole world will
support him and will not
tire of him.

Because he does not
compete,
He does not meet
competition.

Chapter 67

Everyone under heaven
says that my Tao is great
and beyond compare.
Because it is great, it
seems different.

If it were not different, it
would have vanished
long ago.

I have three treasures
which I hold and keep.
The first is mercy; the
second is economy;
The third is daring not to
be ahead of others.
From mercy comes
courage; from economy
comes generosity;
From humility comes
leadership.

Nowadays men shun
mercy, but try to be
brave;

They abandon economy,
but try to be generous;
They do not believe in
humility, but always try
to be first.

This is certain death.

Mercy brings victory in
battle and strength in
defense.

It is the means by which
heaven saves and guards.

Chapter 68

A good soldier is not
violent.

A good fighter is not
angry.

A good winner is not
vengeful.

A good employer is
humble.

This is known as the
Virtue of not striving.

This is known as ability
to deal with others.

This since ancient times
has been known

as the ultimate unity
with heaven.

Chapter 69

There is a saying
amongst soldiers:

I dare not make the
first move but would
rather play the guest;

I dare not advance
an inch but would rather
withdraw a foot.

This is called marching
without appearing to
move,

Rolling up your sleeves
without showing your
arm,

Capturing the enemy
without attacking,
Being armed without
weapons.

There is no greater
catastrophe than
underestimating the
enemy.

By underestimating the
enemy, I almost lose
what I value.

Therefore when the battle
is joined,

The underdog will win.

Chapter 70

My words are easy to
understand and easy to
perform,
Yet no one under heaven
knows them or practices
them.

My words have ancient
beginnings.

My actions are
disciplined.

Because men do not
understand, they have no
knowledge of me.

Those that know me are
few;

Those that abuse me are
honoured.

Therefore the sage wears
rough clothing and holds
the jewel in his
heart.

Chapter 71

Knowing ignorance is
strength.

Ignoring knowledge is

sickness.

If one is sick of sickness,
then one is not sick.

The sage is not sick
because he is sick of
sickness.

Therefore he is not sick.

Chapter 72

When men lack a sense
of awe, there will be
disaster.

Do not intrude in their
homes.

Do not harass them at
work.

If you do not interfere,
they will not weary of
you.

Therefore the sage knows
himself but makes no
show,

Has self-respect but is
not arrogant.

He lets go of that and
chooses this.

Chapter 73

A brave and passionate man will kill or be killed.

A brave and calm man will always preserve life. Of these two, which is good and which is harmful?

Some things are not favoured by heaven. Who knows why?

Even the sage is unsure of this.

The Tao of heaven does not strive, and yet it overcomes.

It does not speak, and yet is answered.

It does not ask, yet is supplied with all its needs.

It seems at ease, and yet it follows a plan.

Heaven's net casts wide.

Though its meshes are coarse, nothing slips through.

Chapter 74

If men are not afraid to die,

It is of no avail to threaten them with death.

If men live in constant fear of dying,

And if breaking the law means that a man will be killed,

Who will dare to break the law?

There is always an official executioner.

If you try to take his place,

It is trying to be like a master carpenter and cutting wood.

If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter,

you will only hurt your hand.

Chapter 75

Why are the people starving?

Because the rulers use up the money in taxes.

Therefore the people are

starving.

Why are the people rebellious?

Because the rulers interfere too much.

Therefore they are rebellious.

Why do the people think so little of death?

Because the rulers demand too much of life.

Therefore the people take death lightly.

Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.

Chapter 76

A man is born gentle and weak.

At his death he is hard and stiff.

Green plants are tender and filled with sap.

At their death they are withered and dry.

Therefore the stiff and unbending is the disciple of death.

The gentle and yielding is the disciple of life.

Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.

A tree that is unbending is easily broken.

The hard and strong will fall.

The soft and weak will overcome.

Chapter 77

The Tao of heaven is like the bending of a bow.

The high is lowered, and the low is raised.

If the string is too long, it is shortened;

If there is not enough, it is made longer.

The Tao of heaven is to take from those who have too much

and give to those who do not have enough. Man's way is different.

He takes from those who do not have enough

to give to those who already have too much.

What man has more than enough and gives it to

the world?

Only the man of Tao.

Therefore the sage works
without recognition.

He achieves what has to
be done without dwelling
on it.

He does not try to show
his knowledge.

Chapter 78

Under heaven nothing is
more soft and yielding
than water.

Yet for attacking the
solid and strong, nothing
is better;

It has no equal.

The weak can overcome
the strong;

The supple can overcome
the stiff.

Under heaven everyone
knows this,

Yet no one puts it into
practice.

Therefore the sage says:

He who takes upon
himself the humiliation of
the people

is fit to rule

them.

He who takes upon
himself the country's
disasters deserves

to be king of
the universe.

The truth often seems
paradoxical.

Chapter 79

After a bitter quarrel,
some resentment must
remain.

What can one do about
it?

Therefore the sage keeps
his half of the bargain
But does not exact his
due.

A man of Virtue performs
his part,

But a man without Virtue
requires others to fulfil
their obligations.

The Tao of heaven is
impartial.

It stays with good men
all the time.

Chapter 80

A small country has
fewer people.

Though there are
machines that can work
ten to a hundred times
faster

than man, they are
not needed.

The people take death
seriously and do not
travel far.

Though they have boats
and carriages, no one uses
them.

Though they have armor
and weapons, no one
displays them.

Men return to the
knotting of rope in place
of writing.

Their food is plain and
good, their clothes fine
but simple,

their homes secure;
They are happy in their
ways.

Though they live within
sight of their neighbors,
And crowing cocks and
barking dogs are heard
across the way,

Yet they leave each other

in peace while they grow old and die.

Chapter 81

Truthful words are not beautiful.

Beautiful words are not truthful.

Good men do not argue.

Those who argue are not good.

Those who know are not learned.

The learned do not know.

The sage never tries to store things up.

The more he does for others, the more he has.

The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance.

The Tao of heaven is pointed but does no harm.

The Tao of the sage is work without effort.