

道

Tao Te Ching

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Chapter One

The Tao (The Way) that can be spoken of is not the constant Tao.

The name that can be named is not a constant name.

Nameless, is the origin of Heaven and Earth;

The named is the Mother of all things.

Thus, the perpetual void enables one to observe the true essence.

The constant existence enables one to see the outward manifestations.

These two emerge paired from the same origin.

But when the essence is manifested, it takes a different name.

This same origin is referred to as "The Profound Mystery."

As deep as the mystery may be, it serves as the gateway to the essence of all life.

Chapter Two

As soon as beauty is recognized by the world as beautiful, it becomes ugly.

As soon as virtue is acknowledged as something good, it becomes evil.

Therefore, existence and non-existence give birth to each other.

Difficult and easy complete each other.

Long and short shape each other.

High and low differentiate each other.

Sound and tone balance each other.

Before and after follow each other in sequence.

Recognizing this, the saint performs effortlessly according to the natural Way without personal desire, and practices the silent teaching through one's actions.

The saint stimulates the vitality of all life, without restraint.

He nurtures all beings without any desire to possess them.

He dedicates all his energy but has no intention to retain the merit.

When success is achieved, he seeks no recognition.

Because he does not claim the credit, he will not lose it.

Chapter Three

By not idolizing the worthy, people will not fall into disputes.

By not valuing objects that are hard to get, people will not turn into thieves.

By not succumbing to the desires of lust, one's heart will not be led astray.

Therefore, the governance of the saint involves emptying one's mind, reinforcing one's virtue, diminishing one's worldly ambitions, and strengthening one's essence.

He encourages the people to be devoid of worldly knowledge and desire, and prevents the clever ones from creating chaos with their intellect.

Act naturally without desire, then everything will be accomplished in its natural order.

Chapter Four

The Tao (The Way) can be infused into nature and utilized without being depleted.

It is so deep and subtle, like an abyss, that is the origin of all things.

It is complete and perfect in its entirety, capable of rounding off sharp edges;

Resolving confusion;

Harmonizing with the glory;

Acting in unity with the humble.

The Tao is so profound and yet invisible, it exists everywhere and anywhere.

I do not know whose son it is, it existed before heaven and earth.



Chapter Five

Nature nurtures all things with the completeness of total virtue.

It exhibits the utmost kindness by giving life to all things, enabling them to grow and flourish, and hastens their harvest.

Therefore, according to ancient customs, nature may seem indifferent, treating all beings as sacrificial straw dogs.

Similarly, a saint may appear indifferent, treating people as sacrificial straw dogs.

The space between heaven and earth is like a bellows, it appears empty, yet it provides a supply that never fails;

The more it moves, the more it produces.

Excessive words lead to exhaustion.

It is better to focus on the true essence within.

Chapter Six

The spirit of the valley is eternal.

It is referred to as the mystic nature.

The gateway of the mystic nature is considered the root of the universe.

It is perpetual and cannot be depleted.

Chapter Seven

Heaven is eternal and Earth is enduring.

The reason they are everlasting is because they do not exist for themselves.

Hence, they are long-lived.

Thus, although the saint puts himself last, he finds himself in the lead.

Although he is not self-centered, he finds himself fulfilled.

It is because he is not focused on self-interests and hence can fulfill his true nature.

Chapter Eight

A person of great virtue is like flowing water.

Water benefits all things and does not compete with them.

It positions itself in a place that no one wishes to be and is thus closest to Tao.

A virtuous person is like water, adapting itself to the perfect place.

His mind is like the deep water that is calm and peaceful.

His heart is kind like water that benefits all.

His words are sincere like the constant flow of water.

His governance is natural without desire, which is like the softness of water that penetrates through hard rocks.

His work is skilled like the free flow of water.

His movement is timely like water that flows smoothly.

A virtuous person never forces his way and hence will not make mistakes.

Chapter Nine

Those who take excessive pride in wealth are like overflowing water which can cause damage. It is better to exercise restraint early.

Those who are not content with fame are like sharpening the edge of a knife.

The sharper it becomes, the easier it is to break.

Wealth and treasures are mere illusions that one cannot possess.

Those who are arrogant due to their wealth and fame invite blame upon themselves.

The natural Tao teaches one to step back after achieving success and not to cling to the credit.



Chapter Ten

Can one unify the body and the spirit as one and embrace the "Oneness" without departing from the great Tao?

Can one achieve harmony with such gentleness by holding on to the true spirit within, as if possessing the innocence of an infant?

Can one free oneself from worldly knowledge and purify one's mind, so that no mistakes shall be made?

Can a ruler love his people by governing with the natural Way, devoid of personal intentions?

Can the mystic gate to all life essence be opened or closed without the virtue of the mysterious nature?

Can one gain the insight of nature and become a wise person without the effort of action?

The mysterious nature creates and nurtures all things without the desire to possess them.

It performs with all its might without seeking credit.

It flourishes all beings without the intention to take control.

Such is the "Mystic Te" or "Mystic Virtue."

Chapter Eleven

Thirty spokes unite around one hub to create a wheel.

It is the presence of the empty space that provides the function of a vehicle.

Clay is molded into a vessel. It is the empty space that gives the vessel its function.

Doors and windows are carved out to make a room.

It is the empty space in the room that provides its function.

Therefore, something substantial can be beneficial,

While the emptiness or void is what can be utilized.

Chapter Twelve

The five colors can blind one's eyes.

The five tones can deafen one's ears.

The five flavors can dull one's taste buds.

The pursuit of pleasures can derail one's mind.

The hard-to-get valuables can distort one's actions.

Therefore, a saint nurtures himself with virtues and does not indulge himself in sensory pleasures.

He rejects those external temptations and chooses his True Nature.

Chapter Thirteen

Honor and disgrace can astonish a person.

The greatest distress lies in one's physical body.

What does it mean by "Honor and disgrace can surprise someone?"

Honor is inferior, because one who wins favor is afraid of losing it.

And one who loses favor is frightened with distress.

This is the significance of "Honor and disgrace can surprise someone."

What does it mean by "The greatest distress lies in one's body?"

We have fear because we worry about our physical selves.

If one's body does not exist, how can one have fear?

Therefore, he who values the world as much as he values himself can be entrusted with the ruling of the world.

He who loves the world as much as he loves himself can be entrusted with the guidance of the world.

Chapter Fourteen

What cannot be seen is called the invisible.

What cannot be heard is called the inaudible.

What cannot be touched is called the intangible.

These three cannot be examined and comprehended, and hence are blended together as one.

This "Oneness" is not much brighter in the sky, nor is it dimmer on earth.

It is not more glorious in a saint, nor is it fainter in an ordinary person.

It is everlasting and cannot be named.

It is the original void of "non-being."

This "Oneness" is the Tao, which is invisible and formless.

It may be regarded as vague and intangible.

When the Oneness Tao comes forward, its front cannot be seen.

When one tries to follow it, one cannot see its rear.

By adhering to the original Tao, one can master the present.

He who knows this "Origin" shall understand the teachings and principles of the Great Tao.

Chapter Fifteen

The ancient Tao cultivators were subtle and mysterious.

They were of immeasurable depth.

Because they were too elusive to be known, so reluctantly they were described as follows:

Cautious, as if crossing an icy river.

Hesitant, as if fearful of their surroundings.

Reverent, like an honorable guest.

Dispersed, like winter ice beginning to melt in spring.

Simple and sincere, like a genuine virgin.

Open-minded, like an empty valley.

Harmonized, like the murky water.

How can one turn the murky water into clarity?

A person of Tao would maintain peace to achieve purity of the mind,
And therefore shall not be disturbed by worldly desires.

After achieving purity of the mind, how can one let it be everlasting?

A person of Tao would unify and harmonize himself with all beings, which shall lead to
eternity.

Those who abide by this Tao will not indulge themselves in greed.

It is because of this humbleness that enables one to embrace the original "Oneness," the
Great Tao.

Chapter Sixteen

Humans must achieve the ultimate void and maintain tranquility with sincerity in order
to observe

the growth and flourishing of all beings.

In this way, one can understand the law of nature.

All things and beings will eventually return to their original source.

This is called "peace."

"Peace" means returning to one's original nature.

This original nature is the eternal law. Knowing the nature's law is enlightenment.

He who is ignorant of the nature's law shall act recklessly, and thus invite misfortune.

Knowing the constant law of nature leads to generosity.

Being generous, one is impartial.

Being impartial, one is sovereign.

Sovereignty is nature itself.

Nature is Tao. Tao is everlasting.

When one's physical body passes away, Tao endures.

Chapter Seventeen

In early ancient mankind, Tao existed in one's true nature.

Men possessed It without knowing.

One then acted with virtue and honor, which is inferior to Tao.

Less superior is to act with fear.

And the least superior is to act with disgrace.

This occurs because one does not have enough faith, and hence lacks confidence.

The nature of Tao is characterized by wordless teaching and the natural act of virtue without action.

As such, people would act effortlessly and harmonize with the Tao of Nature.

Chapter Eighteen

When the Great Tao declines, the virtues of humanity and righteousness shall arise.

When knowledge and intelligence appear, great hypocrisy shall arise.

When the six various family relationships are not in harmony, filial piety and compassion shall arise.

When a country is in chaos, the loyal officials shall appear.

Chapter Nineteen

To transcend the saint's teaching and conceal one's wisdom for potential use, will benefit the people a hundredfold.

Extend kindness to its ultimate and then polish to refine one's righteousness will help the people to regain filial piety and compassion.

Employ one's subtle true nature with exquisiteness and extend one's personal benefit to share with others, will eliminate robbers and thieves.

These three statements are apparently superficial and not sufficient to express the natural "Way" of the great Tao.

Hence, this is what people should do:

Return to their original true self and embrace the pure "Oneness."

Refrain from selfishness and diminish worldly desires.

Chapter Twenty

Enlightenment of the absolute Tao can free a person from worries and sorrow.
 How much is the difference between a respectful response and an angry response?
 How great is the difference between good and evil?
 What people naturally fear, one should also fear.
 One's endless desire can result in negligence of the true nature of life.
 People like to pursue excitement as if they were ascending a terrace in spring and celebrating a sacrificial feast.
 But I alone remain quiet and calm like an infant who is pure and innocent.
 And I alone appear to be lost like one who has nowhere to go.
 All people have a surplus, but I alone seem simple and left out like a fool.
 People seem bright and shrewd, while I seem dull.
 People like to dispute, while I alone remain quiet.
 I am calm and peaceful like the boundless ocean.
 I am open-hearted and free like the wind blowing high above the sky without hindrance.
 Everyone thinks of themselves as capable and outstanding while I appear unlearned.
 I am the only one to be different from others for I value highly the Great Tao and joyfully act accordingly.

Chapter Twenty-one

A man of great virtue is one who follows the natural way of Tao.
 This Tao is vague and intangible.
 Yet, in the vague and void, there is image, there is substance.
 Within the profound intangible, there is essence;
 This essence is genuine.
 In it lies great faith.
 Since the beginning of the world, Tao has been in existence.
 It is only through It that one can understand the origin of all beings.
 How do I know that this is the true essence?
 It is through this natural Way.

Chapter Twenty-two

To yield is to preserve the whole.

To be misjudged is to become straightened.

To be hollow is to become filled.

To be battered is to be renewed.

To be in need is to possess.

To be abundant is to be confused.

Therefore, the saint embraces the “Oneness” as a standard for the world.

The wise one is not prejudiced, hence he is enlightened.

The wise one is not self-opinioned, hence he is outstanding.

The wise one does not boast of himself, hence he shall receive the credit.

The wise one does not praise his own deeds, hence he can endure.

Because the wise one does not conflict with others, the world cannot contend against him.

Isn't it true, as the ancients say, “To yield is to preserve the whole?”

Thus, the “Oneness” will be honored to him.

Chapter Twenty-three

Words that cannot be heard are natural.

A gale cannot blow for the whole morning.

A rainstorm cannot last for the whole day.

What causes these effects?

Heaven and Earth.

Even the actions of nature do not last long.

How much longer can human behavior last when it digresses from the natural Tao?

Thus, one who follows the Great Tao,

When Tao is present, will benefit the world with Tao.

When Te is present, will benefit the world with Te.

When Tao and Te are both lost, he identifies himself with the people and benefits them with the enlightenment of teaching.

One who identifies with Tao is glad to be with Tao.

One who identifies with Te is glad to be with Te.

One who identifies with the loss of Tao and Te is glad to be with the lost.

If one does not have enough faith in "Tao," how can he assist others to practice with faith?

Chapter Twenty-four

He who elevates himself on tiptoe cannot stand firm.

He who walks with long strides cannot travel far.

He who is self-opinionated shall not be enlightened.

He who is prejudiced shall not be recognized.

He who boasts about himself shall not receive credit.

He who is arrogant shall not make improvements.

In view of the Tao, people who are self-centered are like surplus food and redundant actions in everyday life.

All things disgust them.

Therefore, a person of Tao will not conduct themselves in such a manner.

Chapter Twenty-five

Something is formed in the chaos that existed before heaven and earth.

It is quiet and profound.

It stands alone and does not alter.

It revolves eternally without exhaustion.

It is regarded as the Mother of all beings.

I do not know its name, except to call it Tao.

When forced to give it a name, I would call it "the Great."

The Great is far-reaching.

Far-reaching is infinite.

Infinite is to return to the self-sufficient origin.

Therefore, Tao is great, heaven is great, earth is great, and so is the true self.

There are four greatneses in the universe, and the true self is one of them.

Man models the Way of earth;

Earth models the Way of heaven;

Heaven models the Way of Tao;

Tao models the Way of nature.

Chapter Twenty-six

The heavy is the foundation of the light. Tranquility is the master of agitation.

Therefore, the saint always conducts themselves with the essence of Tao and never departs from it.

Although they are surrounded by the splendor of wealth, they remain to live a simple and ordinary life.

How can a ruler govern a nation without recklessness if they indulge in power and desire?

He who acts recklessly shall lose the essence of Tao.

He who is agitated with lust and desires shall lose their true nature.

Chapter Twenty-seven

Good deeds leave no signs.

Good words leave no flaws.

A good scheme needs no deliberate plans.

A good lock uses no bolts, yet it cannot be opened.

A good knot uses no rope, yet it cannot be untied.

Hence, a saint is always kind, saving other people and rejecting no one.

They are always kind, saving all things, and therefore nothing is being rejected.

This is true enlightenment.

Thus, a kind person is the teacher of the unkind.

An unkind person is a lesson for the kind to learn.

He who does not value his teacher and dislikes the valuable lesson, although knowledgeable, is in fact greatly confused.

This is the fundamental essence.

Chapter Twenty-eight

To know the strong masculine principle, yet abide by the gentle female principle is like being the valley of the world where all rivers will flow into.

This is similar to all virtue which will merge into the subtle Tao.

Being a valley of the world and not departing from the true nature, one can return to the original pureness like an infant.

When one knows the white that is splendor, yet holds on to the black that is humble and lowly, they can be a standard of the world.

Being a standard of the world and not deviating from the true nature, one is able to return to the void of Tao.

To know what is honorable, yet abide by the dishonored, is like a valley of the world which is modest and humble.

Being the valley of the world makes it possible for true virtue to be complete and sufficient.

And hence, one can return to simplicity.

When the nature of simplicity is being manifested, it results in various vessels.

And by applying pure simplicity, a saint can master all things.

Hence, the Great Tao is a unified Oneness that cannot be separated apart.

Chapter Twenty-nine

He who wishes to take control of the world and acts upon it, I can see that he will not succeed.

For the world is a divine vessel, It cannot be acted upon as one wishes.

He who acts upon it fails.

He who holds on to it loses.

Therefore, some things move forward while some follow behind.

Some try to warm with exhaled air while some try to blow it cold.

Some are strong while some are weak.

Some are successfully accomplished while some are declined and failed.

Thus, the saint avoids all extremes, extravagance, and pride.

Chapter Thirty

One who assists the ruler with the principles of Tao will not use the force of arms to conquer the world.

For such affairs will result in cause and effect.

Wherever the armies touch the land, it is turned into a wasteland of thorns and brambles.

After a war is fought, bad years are sure to follow.

Therefore, one who follows the true nature will understand the principle of cause and effect and shall not rely on the strength of force.

By knowing the effect, thus one will not brag.

By knowing the effect, thus one will not boast.

By knowing the effect, thus one will not become arrogant.

By knowing the effect, although one has no choice, one still abides by the principle of cause and effect and does not resort to force.

When things reach their prime, they start to age and decline.

This is the life that is diminishing and shall not reach the ultimate essence.

Chapter Thirty-one

Weapons of war are instruments of disaster.

They are rejected by all beings.

Thus, a person of Tao will not dwell upon them.

According to the ancient custom of Yin and Yang, a man of virtue values the left, which is represented by Yang.

And a man of war values the right, which is represented by Yin.

Weapons are instruments of evil and are not valued by a man of virtue.

They are only used as a last resort to attain peace when all else has failed.

If their use is necessary, it is best to employ calmness and tranquility.

Even if it means victory, it is not something pleasant.

Those who rejoice over the victory enjoy killing.

He who delights in killing will not be favored by the people and shall not bring harmony to the world.

It is the ancient custom to favor happy events to the left, as represented by Yang.
 While on sad occasions, it is favored to the right, as represented by Yin.
 When this rite is applied in the army, the lieutenant general takes the place of the left,
 And the commander-in-chief takes the place of the right.
 This indicates that war is treated as if it is a funeral service;
 For many lives have been killed and hence should be mourned with sorrow.
 Therefore, although a victory was won, It is treated like a funeral rite.

Chapter Thirty-two

The universal Tao has no name.
 Although it appears in the plainest and may seem small, it is inferior to nothing.
 If the kings and marquises can abide by the Great Tao, all beings shall act as guests and
 submit to them.
 Heaven and earth will then be in harmony and shall descend sweet dew.
 People will not require command and orders, yet can treat each other equally with
 peace.
 When Tao is manifested, names were given for the purpose of distinction.
 But one must know how to attain the original pureness in order to avoid danger and
 disaster.
 Tao exists in the universe like the rivers and streams that lead to the ocean.

Chapter Thirty-three

One who knows other people is wise.
 One who knows themselves is enlightened.
 To overcome others is strong.
 To overcome oneself is the will of power.
 One who is contented is rich.
 One who is determined has the strength of will.
 Those who embrace their true nature shall live long.
 He who is enlightened with the original nature, although dies physically, is eternally
 united with the everlasting Tao.

Chapter Thirty-four

The great Tao is ever present.

It can adjust itself to everything.

All things live by it, and it does not deny them.

When its work is accomplished, it does not claim possession.

It gives great love to nurture all things and all lives but dominates not.

The true void of Tao has no desires and may seem small.

Yet all things entrust their lives to it, and it does not act as their master.

This may be recognized as "the Great."

Because a saint does not restrict themselves with greatness, hence their greatness is accomplished.

Chapter Thirty-five

He who embraces the Great Tao shall be the guidance of the world.

By following him, the world will not be harmed and will be rendered with peace and harmony.

Pleasures and delicacy can only attract passers-by to stay temporarily.

The teaching of Tao is plain without extraordinary appearances.

It cannot be seen, it cannot be heard, it cannot be depleted or exhausted.



Chapter Thirty-six

Desire shall conceal true self, true self will manifest itself even more.

If desire shall weaken true self, true self will strengthen itself even more.

If desire shall abandon true self, true self will prosper even more.

If desire shall deprive true self, true self will give even more.

This is known as the enlightened nature that is subtle yet profound.

Gentleness overcomes strength, and the meek overcome the strong.

Just as fish live in deep water and cannot survive after being taken out of the depths.

And the powerful weapons of a country should not be displayed, just like one's true nature cannot be revealed to be seen.

Chapter Thirty-seven

The everlasting Tao acts according to the natural Way.

Therefore, there is nothing that it will not accomplish.

If kings and the nobilities can abide by their true nature and follow the great Tao, all things shall be reformed naturally.

If during the process of reform, desires arise, I shall overcome them with the simplicity of the original nature.

With the simplicity of true nature, there shall be no desire.

Without desire, one's original nature will be at peace.

And the world will naturally be in accord with the right Way.

Chapter Thirty-eight

A man of superior virtue is not conscious of being virtuous; hence, he is truly virtuous.

A man of inferior virtue performs for the purpose of virtue; hence, he is not virtuous.

A man of superior virtue acts without action and performs with his true nature.

A man of inferior virtue acts with intentional effort.

A man of superior kindness acts naturally.

A man of superior justice acts with righteousness and feelings for others.

A man of superior etiquette acts according to his true self, hence no one responds to him by moving away.

Thus, when Tai is lost, there is Te (virtue).

When Te is lost, there is humanity.

When humanity is lost, there is justice.

When justice is lost, there is etiquette.

Etiquette becomes prevalent when people fail to be sincere and honest.

Hence, chaos begins.

A person of knowledge and self-opinion will be hindered from the enlightenment of Tao.

Thus, this is the beginning of ignorance!

Therefore, one who cultivates themselves with Tao, embraces the original nature and indulges not in sensual nature.

They abide by the fundamental Oneness and indulge not in sensory pleasures.

Thus, abandon those desires and abide by the true essence of Tao.

Chapter Thirty-nine

In the beginning, there were those who attained the Oneness;

Heaven, by attaining the Oneness, became clear;

Earth, by attaining the Oneness, became peaceful;

Spirit, by attaining the Oneness, became divine;

True nature is like an empty valley, and by attaining the Oneness, it became fully productive.

All things, by attaining the Oneness, became alive.

Emperors and nobilities, by attaining Oneness, can bring peace and prosperity to the world.

All these are the results of achieving Oneness.

Heaven, without clarity, would crack.

Earth, without peace, would quake.

Spirit, without divinity, would be powerless.

True nature, without productivity, would result in the exhaustion of life.

All things, without life essence, would perish.

Emperors, without Oneness to exalt them to nobility, would stumble and fall.

Thus, honor is based on humbleness.

The high builds its foundation upon the low.

Therefore, the kings and nobles call themselves "the solitude," "the unworthy," and "the virtueless."

Is this not the reason why they base their honor upon humbleness?

Hence, the highly honored do not regard themselves as nobles and have no wish to be self-centered to think nobly of themselves as a piece of jade nor to think lowly of others as a lump of stone.

Chapter Forty

When Tao is in action, one's worldly nature can be reversed to the true nature.

Gentleness is the way of applying Tao.

All things in the world originate from the manifestation of Tao, the manifestation of Tao is the form of being, which originates from the non-being of the void, the Great Tao.

Chapter Forty-one

When a superior man hears of Tao, he cultivates himself diligently.

When an average man hears of Tao, he is doubtful, vague, and may give up halfway.

When an inferior man hears of Tao, he laughs and thinks of it as foolish.

If Tao is not laughed at, it is not the Great Tao.

Thus, there is a traditional saying, one who is enlightened with Tao may appear foolish.

He who is advancing in Tao may appear to withdraw.

Great Tao is plain and simple, able to adapt to all circumstances, although it may seem uneven and rough.

A man of superior virtue is like an empty, receptive valley.

A man of innocence may appear disgraced.

A man of great virtue may appear deficient.

A man who practices Tao and achieves great merits may appear gentle and meek.

A man who follows his true self may appear changeable.

Generosity has no rough angles.

Great achievement takes time and is slow to complete.

Great tone has no sound.

Great Tao is formless, it is invisible and has no name.

It benefits all and fulfills all.

Chapter Forty-two

Tao gives birth to one.

One gives birth to two.

Two gives birth to three.

Three gives birth to all things and all beings.

All beings bear the negative physical form, which is represented by Yin, and embrace the positive true nature, which is represented by Yang.

With the union of these two, they arrive at a state of harmony.

Men dislike being "the solitude," "the unworthy," and "the virtueless," yet the Lords and nobles call themselves these names.

Hence, things are benefited by being humble and damaged by profiting.

What the ancients taught, I shall also teach as such:

A man of violence who is in disharmony between Yin and Yang, that is the physical body and true self, shall die an unnatural death.

This is the essence of my teaching.

Chapter Forty-three

The softest of all things can overcome the hardest of all things.

Regardless of being or non-being, they all have to return to the empty void to express their gentleness.

Thus, I have learned the benefits of natural actions without personal desires.

Very few can understand the value of wordless teaching and the due act of the natural Way.

Chapter Forty-four

Fame and life, which one is more intimate?

Life and wealth, which one is more important?

To gain one but lose the other, which is more harmful?

Therefore, if one's desires are great, one will result in exhaustion.

Overstocking shall result in heavy loss.

He who is contented will not suffer disgrace.

He who knows his true nature will not incur danger.

It is in this Way that one can long endure.

Chapter Forty-five

Great achievement appears to be inadequate, yet its use is never exhausted.

Great fullness appears to be void, yet its use is boundless.

Great honesty may seem to be accused of wrongdoing.

Great mastery appears to be clumsy.

Great eloquence may seem to be inarticulate.

Movement can overcome chill.

Tranquility can overcome heat.

Peace and calmness are the Way to guide the world.



Chapter Forty-six

When the world lives in accord with Tao, fine walking horses can be retired from plowing the fields.

When the world fails to live in accord with Tao, even pregnant mares are used as war horses,

And are forced to breed in the battlefield.

The greatest crime is to have too much desire.

The greatest disaster is not finding contentment.

The greatest mistake is desiring endless possessions.

Hence, when one is gratified with self-contentment, true contentment can then long endure.

Chapter Forty-seven

Tao exists in one's own true self.

It cannot be found outside of one's true nature.

Hence, there is no need to leave the house to take a journey in order to know the world.

There is no need to look outside of the window to see the nature of Tao.

The further one departs from Tao, the less one will be able to know.

Therefore, a saint is wise to know without seeking it.

He is wise to understand without seeing it.

He is wise to accomplish according to the Natural Way.



Chapter Forty-eight

In pursuing knowledge, one learns with intellect and desires.

Therefore, one's knowledge is accumulated day after day.

In pursuing Tao, one is enlightened with the true nature and thus diminishes one's worldly desires and knowledge.

The continuous depletion of one's desires persists until one acts according to the natural Way.

By acting without personal intention, one can accomplish all things.

Therefore, to rule over the world, one must act naturally without personal desires.

If one pursues with extreme effort, one shall fail to rule the world.

Chapter Forty-nine

The saint has no set mind, he regards the wish of the people as his own wish.

He is kind to the kind, and he is also kind to the unkind.

This is the true virtue of kindness.

The saint trusts those who are trustworthy.

He also trusts those who are not trustworthy.

This is the true virtue of trust.

The saint conducts himself in the world by harmonizing with all beings to be at one.

The worldly people thus look up to him attentively with their eyes and ears.

And the saint treats the people like a loving mother who unconditionally loves her children.



Chapter Fifty

Men enter this world with life and leave this world with death.

Those who work hard for living and longevity comprise one-third of the people.

Those who are leading their lives towards death comprise another one-third.

Those who live with indulgence in passion and desires shall harm their lives and invite death.

This comprises the final one-third of the people.

Why is this so?

It is because men are overly concerned with the pleasures of life and hence exhaust themselves with the hard work of greedy desires.

The wise one who knows how to nourish life with the Nature of Tao, when he travels, will not encounter fierce animals such as wild buffalos and tigers.

When he is engaged in the battlefield, will not be harmed by the weapons.

The horns of the wild buffalos are powerless against him.

The claws of the tigers are useless against him.

The weapons are of no avail to him.

Why is this so?

It is because the wise one follows the great Tao and cultivates himself accordingly.

Hence, a man of Tao will not perish.

Chapter Fifty-one

Tao gives birth to all things.

And Te (virtue) nurtures them.

Matter shapes them.

The natural environment matures them.

Therefore, all things abide by Tao and honor Te.

Although Tao deserves reverence and Te deserves honor, they are not demanded by decree, but are a result of the Natural Way.

Hence, Tao gives life to all beings and Te nurtures, grows, fosters, develops, matures, supports and protects them.

Tao gives birth to life and yet claims no possession.

It gives support without holding onto merit.

It matures them but does not take control.

This is called the Mystic Te.

Chapter Fifty-two

The beginning of the universe is Tao, it is the mother of all.

By knowing the Mother, we will know her creations.

By knowing the creation of all lives, one can then return to the origin and abide by the Mother.

It is in this way that although the body dies, the spiritual nature will not perish.

To abide by the Mother of Tao is to keep guard on one's sensory desires and shut the doors of temptation so as to prevent one from pursuing outwardly.

Thus, by doing so one's whole life may be preserved from exhaustion and pains.

However, if on the contrary, one indulges oneself in the pleasure of desire and opens the door of temptation to pursue outwardly, then one's true nature will be lost and hence is beyond rescuing.

Those who are aware of the essence of the original nature are said to be enlightened.

Those who abide by the gentleness of Tao are said to be strong.

Those who employ the glory of Tao, and were able to return to the true nature, are ensured of no distress and are said to embrace the Nature of Tao.

Chapter Fifty-three

If I were to have the very slight insight, I would live in accordance with the Great Tao.

My only fear is to go astray from Tao while spreading it.

Great Tao is smooth and plain, yet people prefer the devious bypaths.

Hence, the government is corrupted with luxury and splendor.

The people were exhausted with labor and left the fields to be wasted and the granaries depleted.

Under such practices, the officials would wear fine clothes, carry sharp swords, and indulge themselves in good food and drinks.

They crave with greed to possess great wealth.

Such is said to commit the crime of robbery and certainly is not the Way of Tao.

Chapter Fifty-four

One who cultivates himself with Tao, firmly establishes his virtue.

He holds on faithfully to the Great Oneness and is honored for generations ever after.

Cultivate oneself with the Oneness, Tao, and the virtue is genuine.

Cultivate a family with the Oneness, Tao, and the virtue is in surplus.

Cultivate an entire village with the Oneness, Tao, and the virtue is enduring.

Cultivate a whole nation with the Oneness, Tao, and the virtue is luxuriant.

Cultivate the whole world with the Oneness, Tao, and the virtue is universal.

Hence, by cultivating oneself, one gains insight into one's true virtue.

By cultivating a family, one gains insight into a loving family.

By cultivating a village, one gains insight into a harmonious village.

By cultivating a nation, one gains insight into the extensive benefits for the people.

By cultivating the whole world, one gains insight into the universal peace that embraces all beings.

How do I know that the world is so?

It is through this Way.

Chapter Fifty-five

One who preserves Te (virtue) in fullness, is to be compared to an innocent infant.

Hence, no poisonous insects will sting him.

No wild beasts will attack him.

No birds of prey will pounce upon him.

In governing one's life, learn from an infant as such:

Its bones are soft, its tendons are tender, yet its grip is firm.

Not knowing the unity of male and female, yet the infant's sexual organ is aroused.

This is because its life essence is pure and complete.

Crying all day, yet the infant's voice does not turn hoarse.

Such is the perfect harmony.

To know harmony is called "Everlasting."

To know everlasting is called "Enlightenment."

To overprotect one's life is called "Ill omen."

To let one's mind follow the emotional impulse is called "Compulsion."

When things reach their prime, they start to age and decline.

This is the life that is diminishing, which shall not reach the ultimate essence.

Chapter Fifty-six

The wise do not speak.

He who speaks is not wise.

Keep silent and close one's mouth.

Keep guard on one's sensory organs.

Round off one's edges.

Untie the entangled.

Harmonize with the glory.

Mix with the lowliness.

This is called the Mystic Unity.

Because the wise are unified with all and have no distinction, thus, one cannot get close to them, nor can one keep far away from them, one cannot benefit them, nor can one harm them, one cannot honor them, nor can one disgrace them.

Therefore, they are honored by the whole world.

Chapter Fifty-seven

Govern a nation with the right principle, fight a battle with the tactics of surprise, rule over the world with peace and natural effort.

How do I know that this is so?

By the following:

The more prohibitions that are imposed on people, the poorer the people become.

The more sharp weapons the people possess, the greater is the chaos in the country.

The more clever and crafty the people become, the more unusual affairs occur.

The more laws and regulations that exist, the more thieves and brigands appear.

Hence, the saint declares:

I act effortlessly with the Way of Tao, thus, people transform themselves naturally.

I love tranquility and peace, thus, people naturally follow the right Way.

I do not exhaust people with labor, thus, people naturally are wealthy.

I have no personal desires, thus, people naturally are innocent and simple.

Chapter Fifty-eight

When the government is dull, people are simple and sincere.

When the government is complex and stringent, people are cunning and shall cause trouble.

Calamity is what blessings depend upon.

In blessings, there hides the calamity.

Who knows the ultimate end of the cycle of calamity and blessings?

Is there no true principle that exists?

The normal may revert and become unusual.

The good may revert and turn into evil.

Long indeed, man has been under such delusion.

Therefore, the saint abides by firm principles and does not depart from them.

He is honest and not mean.

He is upright and not rude.

He is honored and not eminent.



Chapter Fifty-nine

In governing one's life and serving the nature, there is nothing better than to follow the Way of simplicity.

Simplicity is to restrain one's desires.

To restrain one's desires is to practice the virtue of the Nature Way.

By practicing the virtue of the Nature Way, one is capable of accomplishing anything.

With the ability to accomplish anything, one can achieve the infinite realm.

By achieving the infinite realm, one can then become a true leader of a nation.

To govern a nation with the Law of Nature is to be long enduring.

This is regarded as a profound and firm foundation of the everlasting Tao.

Chapter Sixty

Ruling a great nation is like frying small fish.

When they are over-stirred, they will break into pieces.

Guide the world with Tao, then the spiritual beings would lose their power.

It is not, in fact, that the spiritual beings have lost their power, but that their spiritual power cannot harm people, but that the true nature of the saint has harmonized with the spiritual power and hence will cause no harm.

Since they both do not harm each other, therefore they will harmonize with the true virtue to embrace the Oneness, Tao.

Chapter Sixty-one

A great nation rules by placing itself in a lowly position like the rivers that flow into the low regions of the ocean.

Hence, people will naturally be faithful to their country.

Mother nature always stays calm and quiet to overcome the unrest.

It takes the lowly position to be in peace.

Thus, if a great nation can lower itself to deal with a smaller nation, then it shall win the heart of the people.

And the smaller nation will willingly merge with the great nation.

And if the smaller nation can lower itself to deal with the great nation, then it shall win the trust and be accommodated as a part of the great nation.

Therefore, be it to take a lowly position to win over or to take a lowly position to be accommodated;

The great nation only wishes to unite and shelter all the people, while the small nation only wishes to be a part of the nation to serve it.

Now that both are granted with what they wish for, it is only natural for the "Great" to put itself in a lowly position.

Chapter Sixty-two

Tao is the wonder of all creations.

It is a treasure for those who are kind.

It can also protect those who are not kind.

Words of Tao can benefit all people.

Its action can guide people to follow the right Way.

Those who have gone astray, the all-forgiving Tao will not abandon them.

Therefore, it is better to embrace this precious Tao than to be crowned as kings or appointed as ministers or to possess wealth and fine horses.

So why did the ancients value and honor this Tao?

It is because "Those who seek will attain, those who offend will be forgiven."

Thus, It is the greatest honor in the world.

Chapter Sixty-three

Act without personal desire.

Manage without intentional concern.

Taste without desire for the flavor.

Hold the same regard for big or small, abundant or little, and reward the unkind with kindness.

Plan for the difficult while it is easy.

Act upon the great from the beginning of the minute.

All difficult affairs must be taken care of when they are easy.

All great accomplishments must be performed from the small tasks.

Hence, a saint does not strive to do something great.

And as a result, he is able to accomplish the great.

He who makes promises easily seldom keeps his words.

He who constantly regards things as easy shall result in difficulty.

Therefore, the saint is aware of the difficulties ahead and hence is cautious in managing affairs while they are still easy and small to prevent resulting in problems.

Chapter Sixty-four

It is easy to preserve when things are stable.

It is easy to plan ahead when things have not yet occurred.

If one waits until the affair has begun, then the situation is as brittle as ice that easily cracks and is fragile and easily shatters.

Take actions before things occur.

Manage before things get out of order.

A huge tree grows from a tiny sprout;

A nine-story high terrace is built from heaps of earth.

A journey of a thousand miles begins from the first step.

He who acts with desire shall fail.

He who tries to possess shall lose.

Therefore, the saint acts without effort and so he does not fail.

He is not eager to possess and so he does not lose.

Most people fail when they are near completion.

If one can be cautious from beginning to end, then he will not fail.

Thus a saint pursues what people do not pursue.

He does not value the hard-to-get objects.

He learns what people do not learn and avoids the faults in order to restore his true nature.

He follows the course of nature to benefit all things and dares not go astray from the right Way, Tao.

Chapter Sixty-five

The ancient Tao cultivators did not lead people to acquire knowledge to be tricky but to guide them to restore their simplicity and innocence.

The reason people are difficult to be governed is that they are clever and witty.

Therefore, he who rules a nation with tactics and wit shall do harm to the country.

He who does not rule with such is the nation's blessing.

To know these two principles is to know the rule of nature.

To know the rule of nature is called Mystic Te (Mystic Virtue).

Mystic Te is profound and far-reaching.

It can guide all things to return to their original nature, and thus great harmony can be achieved.

Chapter Sixty-six

The reason that rivers and oceans can be the Lords of all valleys is that they are located in the lowly position.

Therefore, the saint humbles himself to serve all people.

And he leads the people by putting himself last for the sake of the people's welfare.

Thus, although he rules above the people, the people do not feel him as a burden.

Although he leads in front of the people, the people do not feel him as a threat.

Hence, the world supports him with no objection.

This is because he does not contend, therefore, he is above all competition.

Chapter Sixty-seven

The whole world says the Tao that I have attained is so great that It seems unreal.

Because It is indeed so great, thus It seemed unreal.

If It were real, It would have been insignificantly small.

I have Three Treasures that I hold and guard.

The first is Kindness.

The second is Simplicity.

The third is Humbleness.

With Kindness, one can be courageous.

With Simplicity, one can be generous.

With Humbleness, one can be the lead to provide guidance.

Now, if one abandons kindness and yet tries to be courageous,

If one abandons simplicity and yet tries to be generous.

If one abandons humbleness and yet tries to lead as guidance, he is doomed to perish.

One who fights a battle with kindness shall win.

One who keeps guard with kindness shall secure.

Even the great nature shall save him and protect him with kindness.

Chapter Sixty-eight

A faithful Tao cultivator does not use force.

A good warrior does not lose his temper.

A great conqueror does not challenge others.

A good leader is humble.

This is called the virtue of peace with no contention.

This is also regarded as competence to make good use of the effort of people.

Such is regarded as achieving harmony with nature.

Such is the perfect Oneness of true nature.



Chapter Sixty-nine

In warfare, there is a saying of such strategy:

I would rather take a defensive position than to make an initial offensive move.

I would rather withdraw a foot than to march forward one inch.

Such is called to advance without advancement;

To defeat without armed force;

To fight as if there were no enemy;

To carry weapons as if there were no weapons and thus no need for the use of weapons.

There is no greater disaster than to underestimate the enemy.

To do so may cost one to lose his valuable life.

Therefore, when two armies engage in a battle, the party that feels the sorrow of killing shall win.

Chapter Seventy

My words of Tao are easy to understand and practice.

However, the world can neither understand nor practice them.

In my words of Tao, there is subtle truth.

In my deeds, there is the Way of Tao.

Because people do not understand these, therefore, they do not understand me.

Those who know me are few.

Hence, the essence of Tao appears to be more honorable and precious.

Thus, a saint may dress in ordinary coarse clothing, yet have a heart of a gem with the true essence within.



Chapter Seventy-one

One who knows what people do not know is a person of enlightenment.

One who pretends to know what he is ignorant of is at fault.

He who is aware of what he does not know shall not be at fault.

Therefore, a saint is flawless for he is aware of what he truly knows and what he knows not, hence he is flawless.

Chapter Seventy-two

When people do not respect the authority, there shall be great misfortune.

Do not interfere with the people's livelihood.

Do not despise their living.

Because there is no detest against the people, therefore the people do not detest against the authority.

The saint realizes his true nature and hence does not distinguish himself.

He has a sense of self-respect and thus does not exalt himself.

Therefore, he rejects those who are self-distinguished and self-exalted.

And abides by those who are self-awareness and self-respect.

Chapter Seventy-three

He who is brave in being daring acts recklessly and shall be killed.

He who is brave but acts cautiously and kindly shall live.

Of these two, one is beneficial while the other is harmful.

What nature wishes, who may know what the reasons are?

Thus, the saint is aware of the subtlety and profoundness of Nature's Way, so he takes great caution in practicing It.

The Tao of Nature does not contend, yet easily wins.

Does not speak, yet always responds.

Does not summon, yet all things gather.

Does not contemplate as if at ease yet all plans were devised perfectly.

The Law of Nature is like a giant web, although sparsely meshed, nothing can slip through.

Chapter Seventy-four

When people do not fear death, there is no use trying to threaten them with death.

If people value their lives, and those who break the law are being executed, then who would dare to commit a criminal act?

The life and death of all beings are handled by the executioner of Nature.

Those who substitute the nature executioner to kill are like replacing the master carpenter to chop the wood.

One who substitutes the master carpenter to chop the wood rarely does not hurt his hands.

Chapter Seventy-five

People starved because the ruler taxed too heavily.

People are difficult to be ruled because the ruler governs with personal desire and establishes too many laws to confuse the people.

Therefore the people are difficult to be ruled.

People take death lightly because the ruler pursues a luxurious life and depletes the people.

Therefore the people take death lightly.

One who does not value his life with self-desire truly cherishes his life.

Chapter Seventy-six

When a man is alive, he is soft and supple.

When he dies, the body becomes hard and stiff.

When a plant is alive, it is soft and flexible.

When it is dead, it becomes dry and brittle.

Therefore, hardness and rigidity shall lead to death.

Softness and gentleness shall lead to life.

Thus, a strong army with rigid force shall not win.

A thick and big tree will be cut down for its use.
The big and strong will take an inferior position.
The soft and gentle will take a superior position.

Chapter Seventy-seven

The Tao of Nature is like stretching a bow.
When the stretch is too high, it needs to be pressed down.
When the stretch is too low, it needs to be raised high.
The excess will be reduced.
The deficient will be replenished.
The Tao of Nature is to reduce the excessive and replenish the insufficient.
The Tao of man, however, is otherwise.
It takes from the needy to serve those who already have a surplus.
Who can spare one's surplus to serve the world?
A person of Tao.
Thus, a saint acts without holding on to achievements.
He accomplishes but does not claim credit.
He has no desire to distinguish himself.



Chapter Seventy-eight

There is nothing in this world that is softer and meeker than water.

Even those who can conquer the strong and hard are still not superior to water.

Nothing can substitute it.

Hence, what is soft can overcome the strong.

What is gentle can overcome strength.

This is known by the world.

However, people cannot put it into practice.

Therefore, the saint said as follows:

He who can take the disgrace of a nation is said to be the master of the nation.

He who can bear the misfortune of a nation is said to be the ruler of the world.

Truthful words may seem to be the reverse of worldly practices.

Chapter Seventy-nine

When a great resentment has resulted even if one tries to reconcile and make peace there is bound to leave some remaining resentment.

Thus, how can this be considered a good settlement?

Therefore, a saint cultivates himself with introspection and self-discipline without blaming others for faults.

This is like the ancient custom which acts by holding on to the left part of the tally as a debtor that demands nothing from others.

Hence, a person of virtue acts as if he were the debtor.

And a person without virtue acts as if he were the creditor that demands only from others.

The Tao of Nature is impersonal, which makes no exception to anyone.

It always assists those who are kind and virtuous.

Chapter Eighty

An ideal nation is small and with few people.

Although there are abundant weapons, there is no need for their use.

Let the people cherish their lives and not pursue fame and wealth so that they have no intention to move to faraway places.

Although there are boats and carriages, no one will ride them.

Although there are weapons and armors, there is no occasion to display them.

Let the people return to the ancient simple life where knotting ropes were used to record every event.

People would then enjoy simple food, simple clothing, and be contented with a simple life.

And they shall live happily with the traditional customs.

Neighbors of the nations overlook one another in the near distance.

The barks of dogs and crowing of cocks can be heard.

Yet people are so contented that they enjoy their lives without ever visiting each other.

Chapter Eighty-one

Words of truth are not pleasing.

Pleasing words are not truthful.

The wise one does not argue.

He who argues is not wise.

A wise man of Tao knows the subtle truth and may not be learned.

A learned person is knowledgeable but may not know the subtle truth of Tao.

A saint does not possess and accumulate surplus for personal desire.

The more he helps others, the richer his life becomes.

The more he gives to others, the more he gets in return.

The Tao of Nature benefits and does not harm.

The Way of a saint is to act naturally without contention.

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