

Meeting the Divine Mother in Nature
The Body
Universal Worship, January 9, 2022

HINDUISM:

Earth, sky, worlds above, quarters and their halves;
Fire, air, sun, moon, and stars; water, herbs, trees,
Space, and entity are the elements.
Eye, ear, mind, tongue, and touch; skin, flesh, muscle,
Marrow, and skeleton; and the five
Vital forces constitute the body.
The sage, contemplating these sets of five,
Discovered that everything is holy.
Man can complete the inner with the outer.
-Upanishads, Taittiriya #7 (trans. Eknath Easwaran)

BUDDHISM:

All beings by nature are Buddha,
as ice by nature is water;
apart from water there is no ice,
apart from beings no Buddha.
How sad that people ignore the near
and search for truth afar,
like someone in the midst of water
crying out in thirst,
like a child of a wealthy home
wandering among the poor.
Lost on dark paths of ignorance
we wander through the six worlds,
from dark path to dark path we wander,
when shall we be freed from birth and death?
For this the meditation of the Great Vehicle
deserves the highest praise:
offerings, precepts, paramitas,
Nembutsu, atonement, practice—
the many other virtues—
all rise within sitting meditation.
Those who sit in meditation even once
wipe away immeasurable crimes—

where are all the dark paths then?
The Pure Land itself is near.
Those who hear this truth even once
and listen with a grateful heart,
treasuring it, revering it,
gain blessings without end.
Much more, if you turn yourself about
and confirm your own self-nature—
that self-nature is no nature—
you are far beyond mere argument.
The oneness of cause and effect is clear,
not two, not three, the path is put right;
with form that is no form
going and coming never astray,
with thought that is no thought
singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.
Boundless and free is the sky of samadhi!
Bright the full moon of wisdom!
Truly is anything missing now?
Nirvana is here, before your eyes,
this very place is the Lotus Land,
this very body the Buddha.

-Hakuin Ekaku [1685-1768] (trans. Adapted from Robert Aitken Roshi)

ZOROASTRIANISM:

Without doubt, such followers of the Lie mutilate my inner life, who, having conspired mightily together, deprive men and women from possessing their rightful spiritual inheritance. O Lord of Wisdom, they injure the followers of Righteousness who cling to the Sovereign Mind of God. By such deceitful teaching they divert people from the best course of action. Mazda has declared them to be evil, as they mutilate the life of Creation through the false glitter of widespread speech so that the greedy, the wilfully deaf, and the hegemony of the seekers after the Lie are preferred to Righteousness.

-Yasna 32:11-12 (trans. adapted from Bode)

TAOISM:

Master Chuang and Master Hui were strolling across the bridge over the Hao River. "The minnows have come out and are swimming so leisurely," said Master Chuang. "This is the joy of fishes."

"You're not a fish," said Master Hui. "How do you know what the joy of fishes is?"

"You're not me," said Master Chuang, "so how do you know that I don't know what the joy of fishes is?"

"I'm not you," said Master Hui, "so I certainly do not know what you do. But you're certainly not a fish, so it is irrefutable that you do not know what the joy of fishes is."

"Let's go back to where we started," said Master Chuang.

"When you said, 'How do you know what the joy of fishes is?' you asked me because you already knew that I knew. I know it by strolling over the Hao River."

-Chuang Tzu (trans. Mair)

INDIGENOUS:

"Someone has been tortured on my behalf. Someone has been tortured on your behalf. Someone in this world will always be suffering on your behalf. If it comes your time to suffer, just remember. Someone suffered for you. That is what taking on a cloak of human flesh is all about, the willingness to hurt for another human being."

-Louise Erdrich (Chippewa)

JUDAISM:

Twelve directors of the soul
male and female,
The two hands, the two feet,
The two kidneys,
The gallbladder, the intestines,
The liver, the korkeban (Gizzard),
the kivah (stomach), the spleen.

-Sefer Yetzirah-The Book of Creation

CHRISTIANITY:

If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. The Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen, through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.

-Pope Francis, on launching the World Day of the Poor.

ISLAM:

Adam is that single soul, that single spiritual essence from which humankind was created, as he says, *O Man, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate, so that from them both there issued forth many men and women, Qu'ran 4:1*. His saying *Fear your Lord* means "Make your outer [transient] selves a protection for your Lord [your inner essential reality], and make your inner [reality], which is your Lord, a protection for your outer selves."

-Ibn Arabi, *Bezels of Wisdom*

TRUTH:

When the soul comes into the physical world it receives an offering from the whole universe; and that offering is the body in which to function. It is not offered to the soul only by the parents, but by the ancestors, by the nation and race into which the soul is born, and by the whole human race. This body is not only an offering of the human race, but is an outcome of something that the whole world has produced for ages; a clay which has been kneaded a thousand times over; a clay which has been prepared so that in its very development it has become more intelligent, more radiant, and more living; a clay which appeared first in the mineral kingdom, which developed in the vegetable kingdom, which then appeared as the animal, and which was finished in the making of that body which is offered to the new-coming human soul.