

Purifying the Body.

Universal Worship, January 8, 2023

HINDUISM:

One should bathe the body with running water; then apply perfumes and ointments. This type of bathing should be combined with breath control. The effect is to destroy both inner and outer dirt and make a person fit for spirituality.

-Lakshmi Tantra (trans. S. Gupta)

BUDDHISM:

It says the following in the Great Scripture on the Three Thousand Forms of Everyday Behavior for Monks, "Purifying the body refers to cleansing yourself of its excretions and keeping your nails clipped." Therefore, even though our bodies and minds are unstained, there is a method for cleansing the body, which is also a method for cleansing the mind. Not only will it purify body and mind, it will also purify those in our nation and those who train 'under a tree'. Even though no one in our nation has ever yet been sullied by the dust of existence, purifying is what all Buddhas keep in mind. Upon reaching the fruits of Buddhahood, They do not neglect or discontinue Their cleansing. The meaning of this is impossible to fully fathom. Proper decorum is one thing that is meant by it, and realizing the Way through ordination is one form of proper decorum.

A verse in the "Pure Deeds" chapter of the Avatamsaka Scripture says:

Whilst relieving nature, By all means pray that all sentient beings Will eliminate their impurities By completely ridding themselves of lust, anger, and delusion. Whilst washing up afterwards, By all means pray that all sentient beings May turn towards the Peerless Way And leave worldly things behind them. Whilst cleaning off the soil with water, By all means pray that all sentient beings Will avail themselves of purifying patience, That they may, after all, be free from any defilement.

-Dogen Zenji, Shobogenzo (trans. H. Nearman)

ZOROASTRIANISM:

And thus, when these two Mainyu [twin spirits] first came together, they generated life and the absence of life, and so shall human existence continue till the end of time: the worst life for the Followers of the Lie, but the supreme beatific vision for the Followers of Truth.

-Yasna 30:4 (trans. FA Bode)

TAOISM:

Skilled warriors of old were subtle, mysteriously powerful, so deep they were unknowable.

Just because they are unknowable, I will try to describe them. Their wariness was as that of one crossing a river in winter, their caution was as that of one in fear of all around; their gravity was as that of a guest, their relaxation was as that of ice at the melting point. Simple as uncarved wood, open as valleys, they were as inscrutable as murky water. Who can, in turbidity, use the gradual clarification of stillness? Who can, long at rest, use the gradual enlivening of movement?

Those who preserve this Way do not want fullness. Just because of not wanting fullness, it is possible to use to the full and not make anew.

-Tao Te Ching 15 (trans. Cleary)

INDIGENOUS:

In making the central altar within the sweat lodge, where later the heated rocks will be placed, we first push a stick into the earth at the center of the lodge, and then around this point we draw a circle with a cord of rawhide. While fixing this holy center, we should pray.

“O Grandfather and Father *Wakan-Tanka*, maker of all that is, who always has been, behold me! And You, Grandmother and Mother Earth, You are *wakan* and have holy ears; hear me! We have come from You, we are a part of You, and we know that our bodies will return to You at that time when our

spirits travel along the great path. By fixing this center in the earth, I remember You to whom my body will return, but above all I think of *Wakan-Tanka*, with whom our spirits become as one. By purifying myself in this way, I wish to make myself worthy of You, O *Wakan-Tanka*, that my people may live!"

-Instructions for Inipi (sweat lodge) rite, Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man

JUDAISM:

It is a clear and apparent matter that the concepts of purity and impurity are Scriptural decrees and they are not matters determined by a person's understanding and they are included in the category of *chukim* [commandments beyond reason]. Similarly, immersion in a *mikveh* [ritual bath] to ascend from impurity is included in the category of *chukim*, because impurity is not mud or filth that can be washed away with water. Instead, the immersion is a Scriptural decree and requires focusing the intent of one's heart. Therefore our Sages said: "When one immersed, but did not intend to purify himself," it is as if he did not immerse. Although it is a Scriptural decree, there is an allusion involved: One who focuses his heart on purifying himself becomes purified once he immerses, even though there was no change in his body. Similarly, one who focuses his heart on purifying his soul from the impurities of the soul, which are wicked thoughts and bad character traits, becomes purified when he resolves within his heart to distance himself from such counsel and immerse his soul in the waters of knowledge. And Ezekiel 36:25 states: "I will pour over you pure water and you will be purified from all your impurities and from all your false deities, I will purify you."

-Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Immersion Pools 11 (trans. Eliyahu Touger)

CHRISTIANITY:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

-Matthew 3:13–17 (trans. RSV)

ISLAM:

Surely Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

-Quran 2:222 (trans. z)

Abu Malik at-Ash'ari reported: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Cleanliness is half of faith..

-Sahih Muslim Book 2, Number 0432

TRUTH:

The body is an instrument for experiencing life; both the worlds, that within and without, are reflected in this instrument. Therefore purity of the body is the first essential thing, and the most essential, in the path of spiritual attainment.