



ΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΥΘΑΓΟΡΕΪΩΝ Ἐπι τὰ Χρυσά

The Golden Verses of Pythagoras

Translated by Nayán Louise Redfield, 1917

(from the French of Fabre d'Olivet, 1706)

Preparation

Render to the Immortal Gods the consecrated cult;
Guard then thy faith (2): Revere the memory
Of the Illustrious Heroes, of Spirits demi-Gods (3).

Purification

Be a good son, just brother, spouse tender and good father (4)
Choose for thy friend, the friend of virtue;
Yield to his gentle counsels, profit by his life,

And for a trifling grievance never leave him (5);
If thou canst at least: for a most rigid law
Binds Power to Necessity (6).

Still it is given thee to fight and overcome
Thy foolish passions; learn thou to subdue them (7).
Be sober, diligent, and chaste; avoid all wrath.
In public or in secret ne'er permit thou
Any evil; and above all else respect thyself (8).

Speak not nor act before thou hast reflected.
Be just (9). Remember that a power invincible
Ordains to die (10); that riches and the honours
Easily acquired, are easy thus to lose (n).
As to the evils which Destiny involves,

Judge them what they are: endure them all and strive,
As much as thou art able, to modify the traits:
The Gods, to the most cruel, have not exposed the Sage (12),

Even as Truth, does Error have its lovers:
With prudence the Philosopher approves or blames;
If Error triumph, he departs and waits (13).
Listen and in thine heart engrave my words;
Keep closed thine eye and ear 'gainst prejudice;
Of others the example fear; think always for thyself (14):
Consult, deliberate, and freely choose (15).
Let fools act aimlessly and without cause.
Thou shouldst, in the present, contemplate the future (16).

That which thou dost not know, pretend not that thou dost.
Instruct thyself: for time and patience favour all (17)*
Neglect not thy health (18): dispense with moderation,
Food to the body and to the mind repose (19),
Too much attention or too little shun; for envy
Thus, to either excess is alike attached (20).
Luxury and avarice have similar results.
One must choose in all things a mean just and good (21).

Perfection

Let not sleep e'er close thy tired eyes

Without thou ask thyself: What have I omitted and what done ? (22).

Abstain thou if 'tis evil; persevere if good (23).

Meditate upon my counsels; love them; follow them;

To the divine virtues will they know how to lead thee (24).

I swear it by the one who in our hearts engraved

The sacred Tetrad, symbol immense and pure,

Source of Nature and model of the Gods (25).

But before all, thy soul to its faithful duty,

Invoke these Gods with fervour, they whose aid,

Thy work begun, alone can terminate (26).

Instructed by them, naught shall then deceive thee:

Of diverse beings thou shalt sound the essence;

And thou shalt know the principle and end of All (27),

If Heaven wills it, thou shalt know that Nature,

Alike in everything, is the same in every place (28);

So that, as to thy true rights enlightened,

Thine heart shall no more feed on vain desires (29).

Thou shalt see that the evils which devour men

Are of their choice the fruit (30); that these unfortunates

Seek afar the goodness whose source within they bear (31).

For few know happiness; playthings of the passions,

Hither, thither tossed by adverse waves,
Upon a shoreless sea, they blinded roll,
Unable to resist or to the tempest yield (32).

God! Thou couldst save them by opening their eyes (33).

But no: 'tis for the humans of a race divine
To discern Error and to see the Truth (34).

Nature serves them (35). Thou who fathomed it,
wise and happy man, rest in its haven.

But observe my laws, abstaining from the things
Which thy soul must fear, distinguishing them well;

Letting intelligence o'er thy body reign (36);

So that, ascending into radiant Ether,

Midst the Immortals, thou shalt be thyself a God.