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 the ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.
Ever desiring, one sees 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.

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 each other;
Voice and sound harmonize each other
Front and back follow one another.

Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing (wu-wei), 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 last forever.

3  
Not exalting the gifted prevents quarreling. 
Not collecting treasures 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 men lack knowledge and desire, then clever people will not try to interfere. 
If nothing is done (wu-wei), then all will be well.

4  
The Tao is an empty vessel; is its used, but never filled.  
Oh, unfathomable source of the 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 gods.

5  
Heaven and earth are impartial;  
They see the ten thousand things as straw dogs.  
The wise are impartial;  
They see the people as straw dogs. 

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.

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.

7  
Heaven and earth last forever.  
Why do heaven and earth last forever?  
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.

8  
The highest good is like water.  
Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.  
It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao. 
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 ruling, be just. 
In daily life, be competent. 
In action, be aware of the time and the season. 
No fight: No blame.

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.

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 (wu-wei)?

Giving birth and nourishing,
Bearing yet not possessing,
Working yet not taking credit,
Leading yet not dominating.
This is the Primal Virtue (Te).

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 hole which make it useful.

Therefore benefit comes from what is there; 
Usefulness from what is not there.

12
The five colors blind the eye.
The five tones deafen the ear.
The five flavors 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.

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 or 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.

14
Look, it cannot be seen—it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard—it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot he 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.
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 mind settles? Who can remain still until the moment of action?

Observers of the Tao do not seek fulfillment. Not seeking fulfillment, they are not swayed by desire for change.

Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind become still. 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.

The very highest is barely known. Then comes that which people know and love, then that which is feared, then that which is despised.

Who does not trust enough will not be trusted. When actions are performed without unnecessary speech, people say, “We did it!”

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.

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.

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 newborn babe before it learns to smile, I am alone, without a place to go. Others have more than they need, but I alone have nothing. I am a fool. Oh, yes! I am confused. Others are clear and bright, But I alone am dim and weak. Others 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.  

The greatest Virtue (Te) 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 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.

Yield and overcome; Have little and gain; Have much and be confused. Therefore the wise 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.

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 (Te) Experiences Virtue (Te). He who loses the way (Tao) Is lost. When you are one with the Tao. The Tao welcomes you. When you are not at one with Virtue (Te). 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.
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 the 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 (T’ien) 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.

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.

37
Tao abides in non-action (wu-wei),
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.

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 (wu-wei),
Yet leaves nothing 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 ritual.
Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the beginning of confusion.
Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of Tao.
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Daodejing—7

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.

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.

43
The softest thing in 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 (wu-wei).

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

51
All things arise from Tao.
They are nourished by Virtue (Te).
They are formed from matter.
They are shaped by environment.
Thus the ten thousand things all respect Tao and
honor Virtue (Te).
Respect of Tao and honor of Virtue (Te) are not
demanded,
But they are in the nature of things.

Therefore all things arise from Tao.
By Virtue (Te) 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 (Te).

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 (Te) in each one refreshes both.

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,
Laying 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 who would conquer must yield,
And those who conquer do so because they
yield.

A great nation need more people,
A small country needs to serve.
Each gets what it wants.
It is fitting for a great country to yield.

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 like trying to be a master carpenter and
cutting wood.
If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter,
you will only hurt your hand.

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.

Stephen Mitchell’s Translation of Verse 61:

61
When a country obtains great power,
it becomes like the sea:
all streams run downward into it.
The more powerful it grows,
the greater the need for humility.
Humility means trusting the Tao,
thus never needing to be defensive.

A great nation is like a great man:
When he makes a mistake, he realizes it.
Having realized it, he admits it.
Having admitted it, he corrects it.
He considers those who point out his faults
as his most benevolent teachers.
He thinks of his enemy as the shadow that he
himself casts.

If a nation is centered in the Tao,
if it nourishes its own people
and doesn't meddle in the affairs of others,
it will be a light to all nations in the world.