**Chapter 1**

The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao
The name that can be named is not the eternal name
The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth
The named is the mother of myriad things
Thus, constantly without desire, one observes its essence
Constantly with desire, one observes its manifestations
These two emerge together but differ in name
The unity is said to be the mystery
Mystery of mysteries, the door to all wonders

**Chapter 2**

When the world knows beauty as beauty, ugliness arises
When it knows good as good, evil arises

Thus:

being and non-being produce each other
Difficult and easy bring about each other
Long and short reveal each other
High and low support each other
Music and voice harmonize each other
Front and back follow each other

Therefore the sages:
Manage the work of detached actions
Conduct the teaching of no words
They work with myriad things but do not control
They create but do not possess
They act but do not presume
They succeed but do not dwell on success
It is because they do not dwell on success
That it never goes away

**Chapter 4**

The Tao is empty
When utilized, it is not filled up
So deep! It seems to be the source of all things

It blunts the sharpness
Unravels the knots
Dims the glare
Mixes the dusts

So indistinct! It seems to exist
I do not know whose offspring it is
Its image is the predecessor of the Emperor

**Chapter 8**

The highest goodness resembles water
Water greatly benefits myriad things without contention
It stays in places that people dislike
Therefore it is similar to the Tao

Dwelling with the right location
Feeling with great depth
Giving with great kindness
Speaking with great integrity
Governing with great administration
Handling with great capability
Moving with great timing

Because it does not contend
It is therefore beyond reproach

**Chapter 9**

Holding a cup and overfilling it
Cannot be as good as stopping short
Pounding a blade and sharpening it
Cannot be kept for long

Gold and jade fill up the room
No one is able to protect them
Wealth and position bring arrogance
And leave disasters upon oneself

When achievement is completed, fame is attained
Withdraw oneself
This is the Tao of Heaven

**Chapter 10**

In holding the soul and embracing oneness
Can one be steadfast, without straying?
In concentrating the energy and reaching relaxation
Can one be like an infant?
In cleaning away the worldly view
Can one be without imperfections?
In loving the people and ruling the nation
Can one be without manipulation?
In the heavenly gate's opening and closing
Can one hold to the feminine principle?
In understanding clearly all directions
Can one be without intellectuality?

Bearing it, rearing it
Bearing without possession
Achieving without arrogance
Raising without domination
This is called the Mystic Virtue

**Chapter 12**

The five colors make one blind in the eyes
The five sounds make one deaf in the ears
The five flavors make one tasteless in the mouth

Racing and hunting make one wild in the heart
Goods that are difficult to acquire make one cause damage

Therefore the sages care for the stomach and not the eyes
That is why they discard the other and take this

**Chapter 13**

Favor and disgrace make one fearful
The greatest misfortune is the self
What does "favor and disgrace make one fearful" mean?
Favor is high; disgrace is low
Having it makes one fearful
Losing it makes one fearful
This is "favor and disgrace make one fearful"

What does "the greatest misfortune is the self" mean?
The reason I have great misfortune
Is that I have the self
If I have no self
What misfortune do I have?

So one who values the self as the world
Can be given the world
One who loves the self as the world
Can be entrusted with the world

**Chapter 14**

Look at it, it cannot be seen
It is called colorless
Listen to it, it cannot be heard
It is called noiseless
Reach for it, it cannot be held
It is called formless
These three cannot be completely unraveled
So they are combined into one

Above it, not bright
Below it, not dark
Continuing endlessly, cannot be named
It returns back into nothingness
Thus it is called the form of the formless
The image of the imageless
This is called enigmatic
Confront it, its front cannot be seen
Follow it, its back cannot be seen

Wield the Tao of the ancients
To manage the existence of today
One can know the ancient beginning
It is called the Tao Axiom

**Chapter 16**

Attain the ultimate emptiness
Hold on to the truest tranquility
The myriad things are all active
I therefore watch their return

Everything flourishes; each returns to its root
Returning to the root is called tranquility
Tranquility is called returning to one's nature
Returning to one's nature is called constancy
Knowing constancy is called clarity

Not knowing constancy, one recklessly causes trouble
Knowing constancy is acceptance
Acceptance is impartiality
Impartiality is sovereign
Sovereign is Heaven
Heaven is Tao
Tao is eternal
The self is no more, without danger

**Chapter 20**

Cease learning, no more worries
Respectful response and scornful response
How much is the difference?
Goodness and evil
How much do they differ?
What the people fear, I cannot be unafraid

So desolate! How limitless it is!
The people are excited
As if enjoying a great feast
As if climbing up to the terrace in spring
I alone am quiet and uninvolved
Like an infant not yet smiling
So weary, like having no place to return
The people all have surplus
While I alone seem lacking
I have the heart of a fool indeed – so ignorant!
Ordinary people are bright
I alone am muddled
Ordinary people are scrutinizing
I alone am obtuse
Such tranquility, like the ocean
Such high wind, as if without limits

The people all have goals
And I alone am stubborn and lowly
I alone am different from them
And value the nourishing mother

**Chapter 26**

Heaviness is the root of lightness
Quietness is the master of restlessness

Therefore the sages travel an entire day
Without leaving the heavy supplies
Even though there are luxurious sights
They are composed and transcend beyond

How can the lords of ten thousand chariots
Apply themselves lightly to the world?
To be light is to lose one's root
To be restless is to lose one's mastery
In lightness the rule is lost
In haste the ruler is lost

**Chapter 37**

The Tao is constant in non-action
Yet there is nothing it does not do

If the sovereign can hold on to this
All things shall transform themselves
Transformed, yet wishing to achieve
I shall restrain them with the simplicity of the nameless
The simplicity of the nameless
They shall be without desire
Without desire, using stillness
The world shall steady itself

**Chapter 38**

High virtue is not virtuous
Therefore it has virtue
Low virtue never loses virtue
Therefore it has no virtue
High virtue takes no contrived action
And acts without agenda
Low virtue takes contrived action
And acts with agenda
High benevolence takes contrived action
And acts without agenda
High righteousness takes contrived action
And acts with agenda
High etiquette takes contrived action
And upon encountering no response
Uses arms to pull others

Therefore, the Tao is lost, and then virtue
Virtue is lost, and then benevolence
Benevolence is lost, and then righteousness
Righteousness is lost, and then etiquette
Those who have etiquette
are a thin shell of loyalty and sincerity
And the beginning of chaos
Those with foreknowledge
Are the flowers of the Tao
And the beginning of ignorance
Therefore the great person:
Abides in substance, and does not dwell on the thin shell
Abides in the real, and does not dwell on the flower
Thus they discard that and take this

**Chapter 41**

The superior student listens to the Way
And follows it closely.
The average student listens to the Way
And follows some and some not.
The lesser student listens to the Way
And laughs out loud.
If there were no laughter it would not be the Way.

So, it has been said:
The light of the Way seems dim.
The progress of the Way seems retreating.
The straightness of the Way seems curved.
The highest virtue seems as low as a valley.
The purest white seems stained.
The grandest virtue seems deficient.
The sturdiest virtue seems fragile.
The most fundamental seems fickle.
The perfect square lacks corners.
The greatest vessel takes long to complete.
The highest tone is hard to hear.
The great image lacks shape.

The Way is hidden and nameless.
Still only the Way nourishes and completes.

**Chapter 42**

The Way gave birth to one.

One gave birth to two.

Two gave birth to three.

Three gave birth to all things.

All things carry yin and embrace yang.

They reach harmony by blending with the vital breath.

What people loathe the most

Is to be orphaned, desolate, unworthy.

But this is what princes and kings call themselves.

Sometimes gain comes from losing,

And sometimes loss comes from gaining.

What others have taught, I also teach:

The forceful and violent will not die from natural causes.

This will be my chief doctrine.

**Chapter 44**

Fame or the self, which is dearer?
The self or wealth, which is greater?
Gain or loss, which is more painful?

Thus excessive love must lead to great spending
Excessive hoarding must lead to heavy loss

Knowing contentment avoids disgrace
Knowing when to stop avoids danger
Thus one can endure indefinitely

**Chapter 48**

Pursue knowledge, daily gain
Pursue Tao, daily loss

Loss and more loss
Until one reaches unattached action
With unattached action, there is nothing one cannot do

Take the world by constantly applying non-interference
The one who interferes is not qualified to take the world

**Chapter 57**

Use justice to rule a country
Use surprise to wage war.
Use non-action to govern the world.

How do I know it so?
As for the world,
The more restrictions there are,
The poorer the people will be.
The more sharp weapons people have in a country,
The bigger the disorder will be.
The more clever and cunning people are,
The stranger the events will be.
The more laws and commands there are,
The more thieves and robbers there will be.

Therefore the sages says:
I do not act,
And people become reformed by themselves.
I am at peace,
and people become fair by themselves.
I do not interfere,
And people become rich by themselves.
I have no desire to desire,
And people become like the uncarved wood by themselves.

**Chapter 68**

The great generals are not warlike
The great warriors do not get angry
Those who are good at defeating enemies do not engage them
Those who are good at managing people lower themselves
It is called the virtue of non-contention
It is called the power of managing people
It is called being harmonious with Heaven
The ultimate principle of the ancients

**Chapter 81**

True words are not pleasing.
Pleasing words are not true.
Those who are right do not argue.
Those who argue are not right.
Those who know are not learned.
Those who are learned do not know.

The sage does not hoard.
The more he does for others,
The more he has.
The more he thereby gives to others.
The ever more he gets.

Heaven's Way
Is to benefit and not to harm.
The sage's Way
Is to act and not to contend.