

This version of the Golden Verses of Pythagoras was translated from the original Greek into French by Fabre d'Olivet, and published in French in 1813, along with d'Olivet's commentary. The French verses were translated into English by Nayan Louise Redfield and published in 1917.

PREPARATION

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

PURIFICATION

*Be a good son, just brother, spouse tender, and good father.
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;
If thou canst at least: for a most rigid law
 Binds Power to Necessity.
Still it is given thee to fight and overcome
Thy foolish passions: learn thou to subdue them.
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.
Speak not nor act before thou hast reflected.
Be just. Remember that a power invincible
 Ordains to die; that riches and the honours
 Easily acquired, are easy thus to lose.
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.
Even as Truth, does Error have its lovers:
With prudence the Philosopher approves or blames;
 *If Error triumph, he departs and waits.
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:
 Consult, deliberate, and freely choose.
Let fools act aimlessly and without cause.
Thou shouldst, in the present, contemplate the future.
That which thou dost not know, pretend not that thou dost.
Instruct thyself: for time and patience favour all.
Neglect not thy health: dispense with moderation
 Food to the body, and to the mind, repose.
Too much attention or too little shun; for envy
 Thus, to either excess is alike attached.
Luxury and avarice have similar results.
One must choose in all things a mean just and good.***

PERFECTION

*Let not sleep e'er close thy eyes
Without thou ask thyself: What have I omitted and what done?
Abstain thou if 'tis evil; persevere if good.
Meditate upon my counsels; love them; follow them;
To the divine virtues will they know how to lead thee.
I swear it by the One who in our hearts engraved
The sacred Tetrads, symbol immense and pure,
Source of Nature and model of the Gods.*

*But before all, thy soul to its faithful duty,
Invoke these Gods with fervour, that whose aid,
Thy work begun, alone can terminate.
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.
If Heaven wills it, thou shalt know that Nature,
Alike in everything, is the same in every place:
So that, as to thy true rights enlightened,
Thine heart shall no more feed on vain desires.
Thou shalt see that the evils which devour men
Are of their choice and fruit; that these unfortunates
Seek afar the goodness whose source within they bear.
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.
God! Thou couldst save them by opening their eyes.
But no; 'tis for the humans of a race divine
To discern Error and to see the Truth.
Nature serves them. Thou who fathomed it,
O 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;
So that, ascending into radiant Ether,
Midst the Immortals, thou shalt be thyself a God.*

Free Paraphrase of the Golden Verses by Donald Tyson

Outwardly observe the rites and ceremonies of formal, established religions and lend them your support, but guard your true spiritual beliefs closely and refrain from speaking about them.

Honor the lives and the teachings of saints, prophets and all men and women of holy works.

Be a good son to your parents, a fair brother to your siblings, a loving spouse to your partner in life, and a good parent to your children.

Select as your friend one who loves honor and virtue, listen to his advice, profit from his example, and do not allow a minor dispute to destroy your friendship.

Follow this course if you are able, for we are not always able to freely choose the events of our lives.

In spite of the power that Necessity holds over humanity, you have the ability to fight against your own destructive passions -- therefore learn to subdue unreasonable impulses.

Avoid intoxication by alcohol and drugs, devote your main energies to your duties and obligations, and refrain from sexual excesses.

Cast out all traces of anger and violence from your heart.

Neither in public nor in private allow yourself to entertain evil desires or impulses.

Above all else, respect yourself.

Do not act or speak without first considering what you are about to do.

Show justice in your dealings with others, bearing in mind that everyone must eventually die and be judged.

Remember also that fame and fortune acquired without effort by dishonorable means have little value, and are just as easily cast away.

Assess without passion the impersonal evils that Fate causes in your life, do your best to live with those you cannot change, and always strive to make your life better.

The divine powers do not inflict the cruelest circumstances on true philosophers.

Just as some men and women love truth, so do others love lies; the philosopher uses discretion before he condemns or approves the opinions of others; if liars ascend to positions of power, he departs from their company and waits for their downfall.

Listen to these words and write them on your heart -- exclude from your eyes and ears all counsels of prejudice. Be afraid to follow the examples of others, and always think for yourself. Seek the best advice you can get, consider it, then make your own decision without being influenced by the opinions or actions of your peers.

Allow fools to wander without purpose or direction; you should consider in the present what your actions will be in the future.

Never pretend to know things when you do not know them; teach yourself -- with time and patience, even a poor scholar can learn.

Do not neglect the needs of your body, but meet those needs with moderation. Nourish your body with wholesome food, and your mind with silence and rest.

Avoid too much attention from others, and also too little attention. Your fame will give rise to envy in the hearts of other persons, but if you are neglected by the world, envy of others will arise in your own heart. The same result occurs if you have too many material possessions, or too few.

One must choose in all things a mean just and good.

Never go to sleep without first asking yourself, What did I accomplish during the day that has passed, and what needed to be done that I failed to accomplish? Resolve in the coming new day to avoid evil and to persevere in doing good.

Meditate on all these words of advice that I have given you; take them to your heart with love and follow them; they will lead your life to the highest virtues.

I swear this to be true by the Monad who engraved in the hearts of philosophers the sacred Tetrad, a symbol great and perfect, the source of earthly nature and the pattern of heavenly nature.

Before you attempt any labor, invoke the divine principles of the numbers from one to ten, who alone are able to bring to fulfilment the work you begin. Understanding their example, it will not be possible for you to be deceived. You will then perceive the essential natures of beings both high and low, and know the beginning and end of the universe.

If it is the will of the Highest, you will understand that the entire universe is composed of a single soul that is everywhere the same.

Once you have comprehended these sublime truths, and accepted them as your birthright, you will cease to waste your energies desiring things that are false and unimportant.

You will come to know that the evils plaguing men and women are the result of their own choices in life.

You will also see that these unfortunate men and women seek near and far to obtain a love that is already within them.

Few individuals are happy in life. They are toys to their own passions, tossed this way and that without even a glimpse of inner peace. They can neither accept their enslavement to their desires and impulses, nor resist those desires.

God! You could save these unfortunates by revealing to them their own nature. But no, it is only the sacred race of philosophers who possess the capacity to distinguish truth from error.

All the universe serves enlightened souls who have attained Truth, and these wise and happy persons enjoy the serenity of its refuge.

Obey these laws, use good judgment to know the things your soul must fear, and avoid them, letting reason rule over your physical passions.

In this way you will ascend into the radiant aether and dwell among immortal beings, yourself a god.