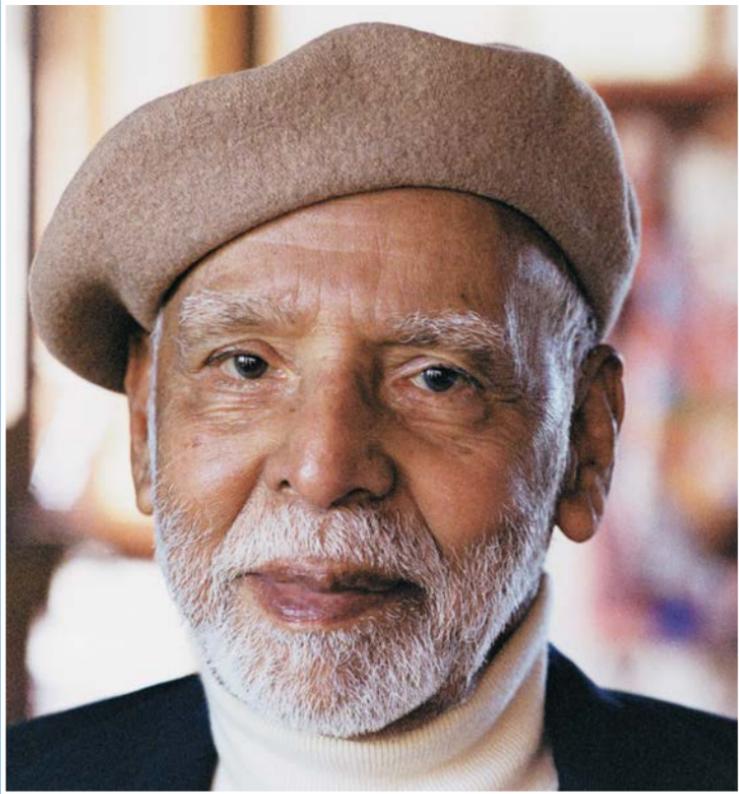


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

Blue Mountain Journal

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Peacemaking

In This Issue

“If there is no peace in the world, in our communities, or in our homes,” Easwaran writes, “it is not because war is built into our genes; it is because we have no idea of the requisite mental skills of peacemaking.” In this journal, Easwaran tells us what those skills are, why they are so vital for our world and for our children, and how we can go about acquiring them.

This issue includes two main articles on peacemaking, instructions from Easwaran for meditating for peace, passages from all traditions, and a prayer from Christine Easwaran. You’ll also find stories from Easwaran of his own efforts at peacemaking in times of considerable political tension, and stories from our readers of peacemaking at home and at work.

“We may not have found a world at peace ourselves, but it is quite within our power to create one for the next generation,” Easwaran promises, “if we will only make peace the first priority in our lives.”

– The BMCM Editorial Team

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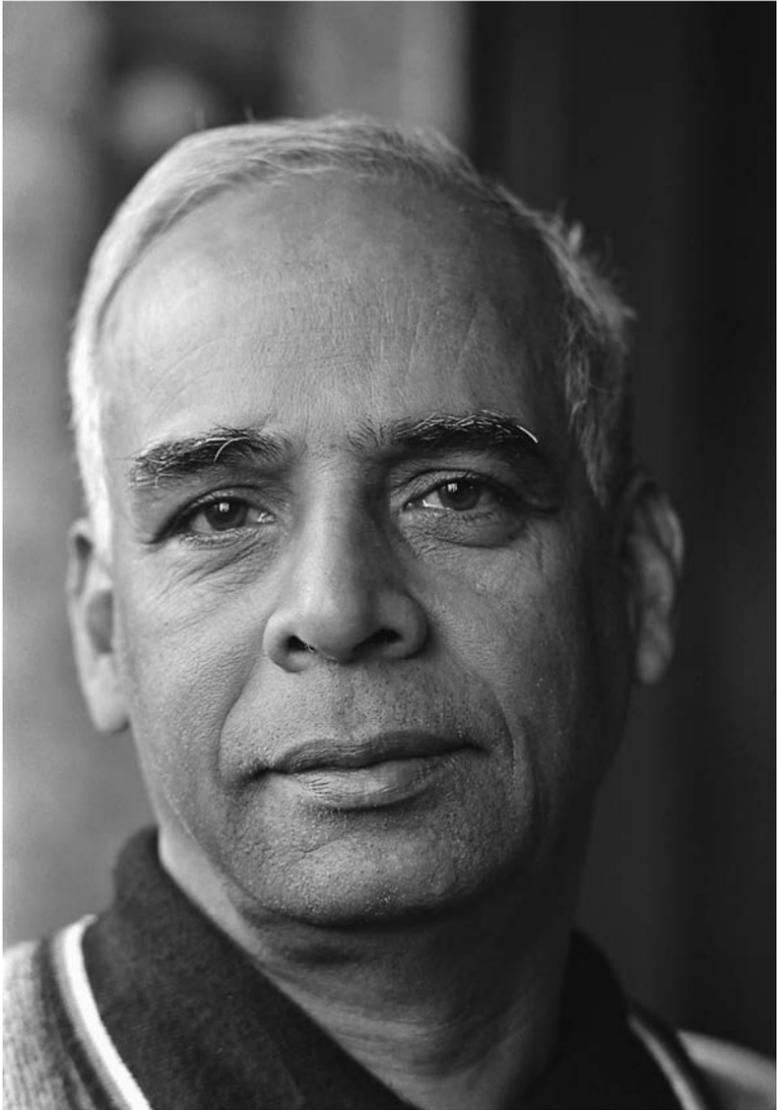
Empathy and Spiritual Growth

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

Initiation into universal consciousness, it has been said, is initiation into universal empathy . . . and therefore into universal sorrow. As love deepens, unseen walls that isolate us from others begin to melt away. No longer can we pick up a newspaper and read about the hungry and homeless without feeling ourselves intimately involved. No longer can we watch passively as violence rages.

That suffering will be our suffering, and it will change our lives: we will take time and resources from other activities and find ways to help. Spiritual growth means a heightened sense of sorrow, but it also brings the inner resources we need to help assuage that sorrow: strength, insight, compassion, creative action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ekknath Easwaran', written in a cursive style.



Easwaran, early 1970s

Cultivating Peace

Eknath Easwaran, excerpts from *Original Goodness*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

“Peace,” according to Spinoza, “is not an absence of war. It is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, trust, and justice.”

From this one quotation, you can see how far beyond politics the mystics’ definition of peace goes. If peace would only be approached as “a virtue, a disposition,” the balance of terror in which most nations on earth hang would soon vanish. Arms limitation treaties are a necessary first step; but even if all weapons were to disappear from the earth, Spinoza might tell us today, that would not guarantee peace. We must actively cultivate peace as a virtue, trying to make it a permanent state of mind.

Good people around the globe today are concerned about taking the external steps necessary to promote peace, but if we want a lasting solution we must search deeper, into this largely ignored dimension within ourselves. If we acknowledge the relevance of this dimension, we can hope to do away with war; if we continue to ignore it, no external measure can be of lasting help.

Conditioned to get angry

There is a vital connection, the mystics assure us, between the peace or violence in our minds and the conditions that exist

outside. When our mind is hostile, it sees hostility everywhere, and we act on what we see. If we could somehow attach a monitor to the mind, we would see the indicator swing into a red danger zone whenever consciousness is agitated by forces like anger and self-will. Acting in anger is not just the result of an agitated mind; it is also a cause, provoking retaliation from others and further agitation in our own mind. If negative behavior becomes habitual, we find ourselves chronically in a negative frame of mind and continually entangled in pointless conflicts – just the opposite of peaceful and pacifying.

“A disposition for benevolence.” What a remarkable psychologist is this Spinoza! Millions of people get angry every day over trifles; when this goes on and on, the mind develops a disposition for anger. It doesn’t really need a reason to lose its temper; anger is its chronic state. But we should never look on angry people as inherently angry. They are simply people whose minds have been conditioned to get angry, usually because they cannot get their own way. Instead of benevolence, they have developed a habit of hostility. For peace, Spinoza tells us, we need only turn that habit around.

Peace in our minds

In order to do effective peace work, to reconcile individuals, communities, or countries, we have to have peace in our minds. If we pursue peace with anger and animosity, nothing can be stirred up but conflict. In the end, the tide of violence we see rising day by day can be traced not to missiles or tanks but to what builds and uses those missiles and tanks: the minds of individual men and women. This is where the battle for peace

has to be won. As the UNESCO constitution puts it, “Since war is born in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that we have to erect the ramparts of peace.” A familiar truth, but one we still have not learned.

How can peace ever emerge from actions prompted by suspicion, anger, and fear? By their very nature, such actions provoke retaliation in kind. If Mahatma Gandhi were here to look behind the scenes at our international summit meetings and accords, he would say compassionately, “Yes, these are a good beginning, but you need to follow them up. You’re sitting at a peace table, but there is no peace in your hearts.”

Your entire will should be peaceful

I knew hundreds of students in India during Gandhi’s long struggle for independence from the British Empire. I met hundreds more in Berkeley during the turbulent sixties, when students all over the country were honestly trying to work for peace. I watched their relationships with one another, especially with those who differed with them, and I saw that these relationships often were not harmonious. If your mind is not trained to make peace at home, Gandhi would ask, how can you hope to promote peace on a larger scale? Until we develop enough mastery over our thinking process to maintain a peaceful attitude in all circumstances – a “disposition for benevolence” – we are likely to vacillate when the going gets tough, without even realizing what has happened.

After some of those demonstrations that were capturing headlines, I used to remind my friends that agitating for peace and actually bringing it about are not necessarily the same.

Stirring up passions, provoking animosity, and polarizing opposition may sometimes produce short-term gains, but it cannot produce long-term beneficial results because it only clouds minds on both sides. Progress comes only from opening others' eyes and hearts, and that can happen only when people's minds are calmed and their fears allayed. It is not enough if your political will is peaceful; your entire will should be peaceful. It is not enough if one part of your personality says "No more war"; the whole of your personality should be nonviolent.

One of these students told me with chagrin that he once found himself using his fists to promote peace. Things just got out of control. "How did that happen?" he asked incredulously. "I never would have dreamed of doing such a thing!"

I told him not to judge himself too harshly: after all, the will to strike back is part of our biological heritage. When push comes to shove, unless we have trained ourselves to harness our anger – to put it to work to heal the situation instead of aggravating it – it is monumentally difficult for most of us to resist the impulse to retaliate.

Repetition of the mantram

In situations like these, one first aid measure is to leave the scene and take a mantram walk. The force of your anger will drive the mantram deeper, bringing you closer to the day when you can rise above those fierce negative forces. Each repetition of the mantram, especially in trying moments, is like money put into a trust account in the Bank of Saint Francis. One day that account will mature, and you will become an instrument of peace.



Easwaran, 1980s

You may have no idea of what capacity you will serve in: after all, Francis himself hadn't a clue to the direction his life would take when he began placing stone upon stone to restore the chapel at San Damiano. But you can be sure that the banker within will provide you with enough compassion, security, and wisdom to make a creative contribution to solving the problems of our times.

The mystics are tremendous psychologists. It has taken more than two thousand years for secular civilization to begin to accept that penetrating aphorism of Ruysbroeck, which



Easwaran, 1980s

expresses a central tenet of spiritual psychology: “We behold that which we are, and we are that which we behold.” If we have an angry mind, we will see life as full of anger; if we have a suspicious mind, we will see causes for suspicion all around: precisely because we and the world are not separate.

Carrying a shield

When suspicion lurks in our hearts, we can never quite trust others. Most of us go about like medieval knights, carrying a

shield wherever we go in case we have to ward off a blow. After a day of carrying a shield around at the office, who wouldn't be exhausted? We take the shield to bed with us for seven or eight hours and wake up wondering why we still feel worn out. And of course, with a big piece of iron on one arm, we find it hard to embrace a friend or offer a hand in help. What began as a simple defense mechanism becomes a permanent, crippling appendage.

Statesmen are no different: they too are human beings, albeit with a most important job. When they go to the conference table, they too carry their shields. Worse, their suspicions may prompt them to carry a sword in the other hand, or to sit down with a clenched fist – which, as Indira Gandhi once said, makes it impossible to shake hands. Yet that is just how most nations today come to the peace table, desiring a meeting of minds but prepared to fight to get their own way. They don't expect peace, they expect trouble: and expecting trouble, I sometimes think, is the best way of inviting it.

The laws of life

When we change our way of seeing, we begin to live in a different world. If we approach others with respect and trust, with a great deal of patience and internal toughness, we will slowly begin to find ourselves in a compassionate universe where change for the better is always possible, because of the core of goodness we see in the hearts of others. That is how I see the world today. It is not that I fail to see suffering and sorrow. But I understand the laws of life and see its unity everywhere, so I feel at home wherever I go.



Easwaran, 1980s

Wernher von Braun, the pioneer of astronautics, once said that for those who know its laws, outer space is not the hostile environment it seems but very friendly. Traveling in space is as safe as sitting in our living rooms – so long as we understand the rules of space and abide by them.

Similarly, those who know the laws of the mind live in peace and security even in the midst of storms. They choose not to hate because they know that hatred only breeds hatred, and they work for peace because they know that preparation for war can only lead to war. When people wonder if programs like “Star Wars” will work, I reply, “That is the last question we

should ask. The first question is, Can wrong means ever lead to right ends?” Can we ever prepare for war and get peace?

Peaceful ends, peaceful means

“One day,” said Martin Luther King, Jr., “we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant good but a means by which we arrive at that good. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.” In his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, King said:

Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

It is a living law, a law governing all of life, that ends and means are indivisible. Right means cannot help but lead to right ends; and wrong means – waging war, for example, to ensure peace – cannot help but result in wrong ends. Gandhi went to the extent of telling us to use right means and not worry about the outcome at all; the very laws of our existence will ensure that the outcome of our efforts will be beneficial in the long run. The only question we have to ask ourselves is, Am I doing everything I can to bring about peace – at home, on the streets, in my own country, around the world? If enough of us start acting on this question, peace is very near.

What we do with our hands, the mystics say, is a direct expression of the forces in our minds. Even our technology is

an expression of our deepest desires. The crisis of industrial civilization, which could create the conditions of paradise on this earth and yet threatens to destroy it, only reflects the deeper division in our hearts. Instead of blaming our problems on some intrinsic flaw in human nature, we must squarely take responsibility for our actions as human beings capable of rational thought – and then change our ways of thinking. It is not so difficult, after all; it has happened many, many times in the past as humanity has evolved.

In other words, this responsibility has a heartening side: if it is we who got ourselves into these habits of hostility, fear, and suspicion, we have the capacity to get ourselves out too. Simply to understand this is a great step in the right direction, where we do not sit back and bemoan our irrational “animal” behavior but accept that our violence-torn world is an expression of our way of thinking and feeling.

Building trust

In this presumably sophisticated world, it is considered naive to be trusting. In that case I am proud to say that I must be one of the naivest people on earth. If someone has let me down a dozen times, I will still trust that person for the thirteenth time. Trust is a measure of your depth of faith in the nobility of human nature, of your depth of love for all. If you expect the worst from someone, the worst is what you will usually get. Expect the best and people will respond: sometimes swiftly, sometimes not so swiftly, but there is no other way.

When statesmen and politicians view other nations through the distorting lens of hatred and suspicion, the policies they

come up with only keep the fires of hostility smoldering. “If you want peace, prepare for war.” “My enemy’s enemy is my friend.” “Hate those who hate us – and, if possible, threaten them as well.” Maxims like these scarcely constitute a path to peace; this is only the path of stimulus and response. Jesus gave us a path that matches means to ends: “Do good to them that hate you.” This should be the basis even of foreign policy. There is no surer route to building trust and dispelling fear, the prime mover behind all arms races.

The claim to civilization

Because we see as we are, not only are our policies backward but our priorities are upside down. We long for peace but work for war, often under the label of “defense.” . . . Some of our best scientific thinking and technological talent continues to contribute, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, to war. No one has appraised the result better than General Omar Bradley back in 1948:

We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. . . . The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we do about peace, more about killing than we know about living.

I believe it was Prince Edward, the Duke of Windsor, who went on a shooting expedition when visiting India many years ago and managed to get separated from the rest of his party. Finally the others started firing into the air to make their

position known. “Ah!” Edward exclaimed when he heard the shots. “The sound of civilization!”

Today, instruments of destruction have become so deadly that however sophisticated the technology, nations that concentrate on developing, selling, and stockpiling weapons might be said to be losing their claim to civilization. We can make a rough map of the truly civilized world: the bigger the arsenal of nuclear weapons, the weaker the claim to being a civilized power. To be truly civilized, a government must subscribe to the highest law: respect for life, to the point of being unwilling to kill or to cause others to kill.

Common ground

I am a very hard-nosed person. I do not get impressed by speeches and rallies and media coverage about arms control. How much are we willing to give, and give up, to make peace a reality? That is the question. It is not just what we say and write but how we order our lives – how we apportion our time, distribute our resources, and behave in everyday relationships – that counts for peace.

To have peace we must learn to see where we stand on common ground, beginning with certain basic truths: that people in all countries are essentially the same, whatever governments happen to be in power, and that neither side threatens the other as much as this kind of conflict threatens them both.

To change course like this, we human beings have to learn to talk to each other even when our opinions differ. And that requires respect. Nothing closes communication more swiftly



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and effectively than this business of painting the other side with an all-black brush. If it were not so tragic, it would be amusing to compare how often the same comments are hurled like missiles by both sides. Each claims to be innocent of all wrong and views the other as the epitome of evil.

Citizen exchanges can do wonders to dissolve such barriers on the personal level before tensions flare into all-out war. It pleases me very much to see high school and university

exchange programs include teachers and students from countries whose governments disagree with ours.

Educating children for peace

Rich or poor, powerful or not so powerful, ally or antagonist or nonaligned, the peoples of every nation need help and understanding if the world is to escape from the complex web of violence and environmental destruction that threatens us all. This is not rhetoric. We are already seeing how problems on the other side of the globe a few years ago have thrown up unexpected ramifications in our own backyard.

This is an opportunity for every one of us. Our children face right now the dreadful realities of terrorism, senseless violence, and poisoned water and air. If we remember this always, it will bring the motivation to work hard for our children, for their lives, for their world.

Our children deserve to grow up in a peaceful world, and it is our responsibility to do everything we can to see that they get the chance. This is why our schools are so important – and let me repeat, the home is the most important school of all. Teachers should not have to declare themselves “educators for social responsibility”; that is their role. I want to see that hundreds of millions of children understand this basic choice and have the opportunity to make it. When they reach voting age they should be able to tell anyone running for office, “If you support war, you are not going to get my vote. You must stand squarely and unequivocally for peace; then I’ll see that you get in.” If enough of us say that and mean it, the struggle is as good as won.

But the surest way to educate children for peace is through our personal example. This is the responsibility of every one of us – not just parents, but everyone who has contact with young people. Children quietly absorb what we teach through our actions and attitudes, so there is no more powerful way to show them what the silent power of a peaceful mind and a loving heart can do.

Calm in our homes

One of the things that impressed me deeply about Gandhi, for example, was his ability to calm a violent crowd. I don't think anywhere in this country are you likely to see crowds like those in India. You got an idea of them in the film *Gandhi*: tens of thousands of people gathered in one place; and in those days they were sometimes in no mood to be nonviolent. Often Gandhi stood before an angry crowd clamoring for retaliation, "an eye for an eye." I have seen him quiet them just by raising his hand, and with one reminder make them stop to think: "An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind."

After a few minutes we would all go away calmer and braver, having tasted a little of the peace that was in the heart of this spiritual giant. The eyes, the voice, and the gestures of such a person communicate with people even from a distance and bring them peace.

We may not be called on to face multitudes or to calm the storms of nations, but we can all begin by calming storms in the teacup of our homes. This is the only way we can help our children to grow up in peace and security. We may not have found a world at peace ourselves, but it is quite within our power to



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create one for the next generation – if we will only make peace, rather than personal profit or pleasure, the first priority in our lives.

Family relationships are so important that we cannot afford to relegate them to secondary status, putting children or partner after our job and income and status. Nothing is more important than the children of our nation, our only essential resource; and each of us, remember, is their teacher by our example. Every morning after meditation I ask myself what I would be without my grandmother, my spiritual teacher.

I might have acquired a well-trained intellect, but I would never have learned how to train my mind, the most precious skill on earth.

Peacemaking as a skill

No one can be blamed for thinking, “This is out of my reach! Human nature is, after all, only human. Isn’t survival of the fittest a biological imperative? Isn’t violence part of our very nature?” Most scientists would agree. “What I think I know of the history of our species,” says a distinguished professor of animal behavior and Nobel laureate from Oxford, Niko Tinbergen, “makes me afraid that in the struggle between rational, long-term insight and nonrational, short-term motivation, it will be the latter that will win.”

No one would argue that this fear is groundless. At the same time, biologists sometimes need to be reminded that human beings are not the same as animals. My body is that of an animal, but I am not my body. The spark that burns in me, in you, is lit from the fire of heaven.

In fact, this “disposition for benevolence, trust, and justice” which Spinoza defines as peacemaking flows from that very aspect of our nature which is not part of an animal heritage, but distinctly human. It is a skill, a skill in thinking, and like any physical skill – swimming, skiing, gymnastics, tennis – it can be learned by anyone who is willing to practice.

This approach should have immense appeal today. We know how to teach computer programming and coronary care nursing. The mystics tell us simply to do the same with peace: to approach it as a skill which can be systematically learned if we

apply ourselves to the task. If there is no peace in the world, in our communities, or in our homes, it is not because war is built into our genes; it is because we have no idea of the requisite mental skills of peacemaking. With no way to learn these skills, we move farther from peace every day.

Educating our minds and hearts

When we first set out to learn this “disposition for benevolence,” of course, the going will be rough. The conditioning of stimulus and response, “an eye for an eye,” is strong. But as meditation deepens, you find there is a fierce satisfaction in letting go of your own way so that things can go someone else’s way instead. Gradually you develop a habit of goodness, a hang-up for kindness, a positive passion for the welfare of others. In terms of emotional engineering, you are using the mind’s enormous capacity for passion to develop the power to put other people first: and not just verbally, but in your thoughts and actions as well. Eventually kindness becomes spontaneous, second nature; it no longer requires effort. There is nothing sentimental about this quality, either; kindness can be as tough as nails.

We can see in the life of Gandhi how he developed this disposition for kindness. Even as a young man in South Africa, he wrote that he was unable to understand how a person could get satisfaction out of treating others with cruelty. Yet this attitude was not enough in itself to prevent him from reacting with anger when provoked. It took years of practice to drive this conviction so deep that it became an integral part of his character, consciousness, and conduct.

Why do we feel we have to lash out against others? The mystics

give a very compassionate explanation: because we have uneducated minds. If the mind acts unruly, that is simply because we have not put it through school.

This kind of education is scarcely available anywhere in the world today. I have had the privilege of being associated with great universities both in this country and in India, and I deeply wish that in addition to educating the heads of their students, they could teach the skills that enable us to educate our minds and hearts. It is what we know in the heart, not in the head, that matters most; for what we believe, we become. “As a man thinketh in his heart,” the Bible says, “so is he.”

Meditation and the will

For most of us, intellectual knowledge has very little say in the choices that shape our lives. . . . You may know from bitter experience how destructive anger can be, but that makes it no easier to keep your temper the next time something provokes you. The reason is simple: there is very little connection between the intellect and the will. Intellectual knowledge is on the surface of consciousness; addictions, urges, and conditioned cravings arise deep in the unconscious mind. And the vast majority of us cannot bring our will to bear in the unconscious; even in waking life, the will may have little to do.

When you reach a certain depth in meditation, however, all this changes. You gain access to the will even below the surface of awareness, which means you can actually get underneath a craving or negative emotion and pull it out. This is the most challenging adventure life offers: to tunnel slowly under a craving for tobacco or alcohol, overeating or drugs, and remove it

like a weed. After decades of sustained effort, you finally get to the roots of the primordial drives that take their toll on the lives of every one of us: self-will, anger, fear, and greed.

Let me change metaphors to make a practical illustration. All these forces – anger, for example – can be thought of as powerful physical forces like electricity. Electricity can destroy us, but when harnessed, it can also bring us light and warmth. In the same way, we can learn to use anger as a positive force, devoid of any ill feeling, to heal divisions between persons and nations and to find creative solutions to conflicts. When we have gained mastery over our responses, when deepening meditation brings insight and creativity, when will and desire have fused into a passionate determination to act only for the good of all, we have simply to flip a switch to redirect the current into its new channel.

To do this takes a great deal of preparation, of course. The mind has to be trained to listen to you when all it wants to do is turn tail and run, or lash out in retaliation. The muscles of the will have to be made strong enough to reach for that switch when everything in you is screaming, “You’re wrong!” This takes a lot of work, but the day will come when, in the heat of a conflict, you will be able to say quietly, “Let’s look at this problem together and see what we can do to solve it.”

A new disposition of mind

In presenting the connection between meditation and peace, then, I am not advancing moral or ethical arguments. I am presenting the dynamics of acquiring a new disposition of mind. Through the practice of meditation and its allied disciplines,



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every one of us can become a peacemaker by making “a disposition for benevolence” our natural state: that is, by teaching the mind to be calm and kind.

The purpose of meditation is to bring lasting peace to the mind. This is not a superficial suppression of hostility, but a profound, joyful, enduring peace of mind. It can pervade our

consciousness to such an extent, Gandhi says, that even in our dreams we will not feel animosity toward anyone. Imagine! Most of us find it difficult in our waking moments to have love in our hearts always, but such is the power of these tremendous spiritual disciplines that once they are mastered, even in the unconscious no wave of anger will be able to rise.

In fact, this is how your meditation will be tested. You will have been meditating regularly for years, perhaps decades, when someone dear to you bursts out against you in cruel words. It would be only natural for your mind to be so agitated that anger, anguish, vengeful feelings, perhaps nightmares, follow you into your sleep.

But Jesus says no. Natural it may be, but not necessary. Hatred does not have to be the human response to hatred. We have the capacity to love and forgive; and if your meditation is really good, these are the forces that will sweep up from the depths of your consciousness in your sleep, healing your heart and releasing new resources for reaching out to the person who has wronged you.

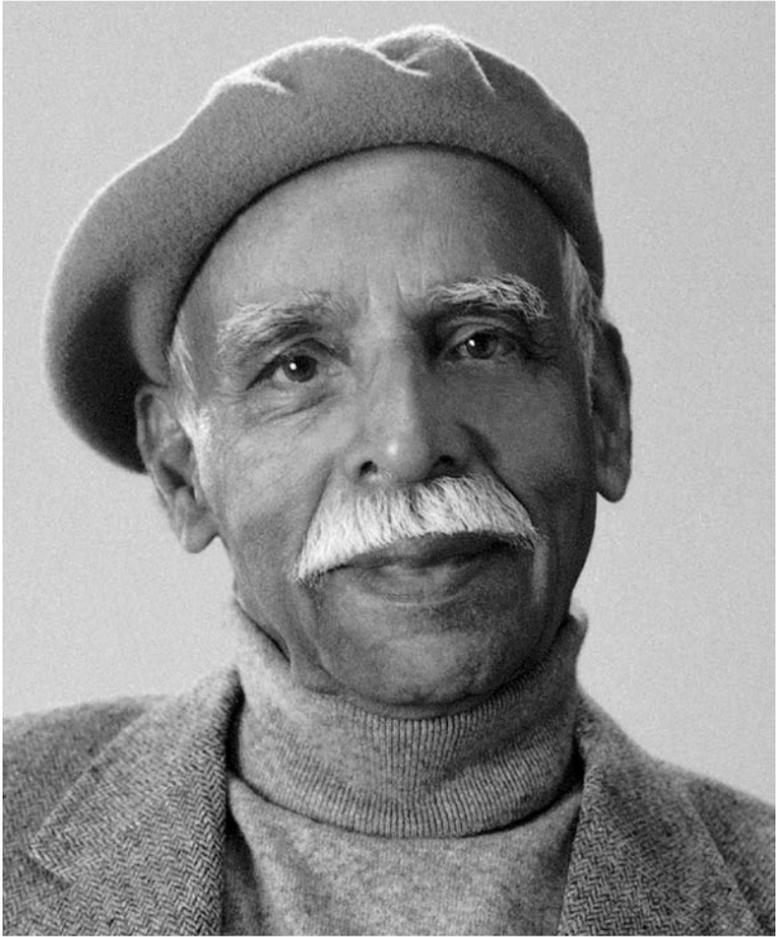
To do this, as Spinoza says, requires a deep trust – trust in the native goodness within others and in ourselves. I was not born with this kind of trust – neither, in fact, was Gandhi – but today, after many years of training my mind, if somebody says something unkind to me it doesn't bother me very much. What does bother me is the other person's state of mind, because I know what sorrow the habit of unkindness brings. It's a wonderful reversal of sensitiveness.

A kind, good person

No philosophical conviction can confer this depth of security. It requires some glimpse of the Self, the Lord within, who is one and the same in all. Spinoza uses a medieval phrase for this that appeals to me very much: *sub specie aeternitatis*. Seen from the aspect of eternity, each of us is but a mode of one infinite reality that dwells in the heart of every finite creature. When you are always aware of this deep, underlying unity, how can you be upset by apparent differences? Who can make you feel threatened or insecure? The message of all great religions is the same: Regard everybody as yourself, because everybody is you. Whatever others may say or do, you will know that the Lord lives in them, and you will always treat them accordingly.

Yet it is not enough that this core of love is always present. We have to learn to express it, which requires gaining the capacity to say no to the conditioned demands of physical nature. That is why I teach meditation, to bring about this gradual but fundamental change in consciousness. I wait for those moments when somebody tells me, “I don’t know how to be kind.” I say, “I can teach you – or rather you can teach yourself, through the practice of meditation.”

Memorize a passage on kindness, on goodness, and then drive it inward every day, deeper and deeper into consciousness. If you persist, you will become that kind, good person on which you meditate; it cannot fail. 🌸



Easwaran, 1980s

The Healing Process of Peace

Ekknath Easwaran, from our journal archive

Anyone can begin the healing process of peace within by following these simple instructions, which I myself have followed for forty years:

- Select inspirational passages on forgiveness, hope, and love from your own religion and memorize them word for word. Sit quietly with back erect, close your eyes, and go through the words of the passage as slowly as possible in your mind.
- Do not think about the meaning, but give each word or phrase your full attention. When you do this, the meaning cannot help but sink in.
- When distractions come, instead of resisting them, give more attention to the passage. When your mind wanders, bring it back to the passage and start again.
- Practice this for thirty minutes every day. If you finish one passage before the time is up, you may repeat it, until you have memorized others. Each time the words will go a little deeper, gradually becoming part of your character, conduct, and consciousness.

I appeal to all my readers to participate in this healing process of reconciliation by meditating along these lines for thirty minutes every day, and showing these suggestions to any friend or relative who may be interested. They will be helping to strengthen faith in peace everywhere, even in those dark corners where violence threatens to cause good people to lose hope. 🌸

Sabbath Prayer

Jewish Liturgy

Only for God doth my soul wait in stillness;

from Him cometh my hope.

He alone is my rock and my salvation, I shall not be moved.

Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths,

guide me in Thy truth.

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And having Thee

I desire none else upon earth.

My flesh and my heart fail, but God is my strength

and my portion forever.

Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let thy heart take courage.

Create in me a clean heart, O God;

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

When many cares perplex me, Thy comfort delights my soul.

My times are in Thy hand, and Thou wilt guide and

sustain me even unto the end.

With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light.

I Come to Him Running

The Mishkat Al-Masabih

The Prophet said,
God Most High has said:
When my worshipper's thoughts turn to Me,
 there am I with him.
And when he makes mention of Me within himself,
 I make mention of him within Myself:
and when he makes mention of Me in company,
 I make mention of him in a better company.
If he draw near to Me a hand's breadth,
 I draw near to him an arm's length;
and if he draw near to Me an arm's length,
 I draw near to him the length of both arms
 wide outstretched;
and if he come to Me walking, I come to him running.
And if he meet Me with sins equivalent to the whole world,
 I will greet him with forgiveness equal to it.

Sermon on the Mount

The Gospel of Saint Matthew

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:

for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the

children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

*



Ramagiri Ashram

Ye have heard that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.
But I say unto you,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.



Ramagiri Ashram

Twin Verses

The Dhammapada

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: we are formed and molded by our thoughts. Those whose minds are shaped by selfish thoughts cause misery when they speak or act. Sorrows roll over them as the wheels of a cart roll over the tracks of the bullock that draws it.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: we are formed and molded by our thoughts. Those whose minds are shaped by selfless thoughts give joy whenever they speak or act. Joy follows them like a shadow that never leaves them.

“He insulted me, he struck me, he cheated me, he robbed me”: those caught in resentful thoughts never find peace.

“He insulted me, he struck me, he cheated me, he robbed me”: those who give up resentful thoughts surely find peace.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love. This is an unalterable law.

There are those who forget that death will come to all. For those who remember, quarrels come to an end.

For the full versions of these passages, see bmcm.org/passages.



Easwaran, 1980s

The Real Peace Workers

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

The other day I went with a friend to take his car in for minor repairs. The mechanic lay down on his back on his little moving dolly and vanished under the engine, where he could look around and see just what needed to be done: a screw that needed tightening, I suppose, or maybe loosening. This is what we do in meditation. It takes a long, long time to get under the engine that is the mind – and hard work, daring, and a great reservoir of devotion to the task. But no skill is more worth learning. When you get deep in consciousness, you can actually look up at the workings of the mind with wrench in hand. Then transforming anger becomes a mechanical problem; overcoming fears becomes a matter of tightening or loosening a screw.

The only reason we are not able to do this kind of fix-it work is that we have not learned how. There is no school where this skill is taught. Powerful disciplines for training the mind do exist, handed down to us from the great traditions of every religion. Yet they are largely ignored in today's world; in West and East alike, we are in danger of losing this precious legacy.

Augustine, who had a very modern perspective on the workings of the mind, asks pointedly, “I can tell my hand what to do and it will obey me. Why can I not do the same with my mind?” If the mind gets angry and you tell it to calm down, it is likely to retort, “Who do you think you are to talk to me like that? Why should I listen to you?” It’s like a gawky teenager protesting, “Dad, you never sent me to school! How can you complain because I can’t read?”

The only approach that works

I have real sympathy for the untrained mind, so uneducated and illiterate. It is big and powerful but all thumbs, all turmoil and tempestuousness, stumbling through life like a Saint Bernard puppy and knocking everything over. Yet this clumsy creature can be taught anything we care to teach it, if we only have patience and persevere – and once it has learned how to behave, this embarrassing and unpredictable liability becomes our greatest ally.

“Neither your father nor your mother,” the Buddha says, “neither husband nor wife nor child, can be such a loyal friend as your mind when it has been trained.” It will stand by you in all circumstances. When you go among unkind people, your peaceable mind will enable you to be kind to them and quiet their hearts, which is the only peacemaking approach that really works.

All the mind’s habits of unkindness can be unlearned. If the mind is coaxed further and further into positive words and actions, the unkind person will gradually think, feel, and act kindly; the unloving person will think, feel, and act out of love. To all who are agitated, insecure, unhappy, there quickly follows peace of mind.

Faith in others

When the mind is trained over a long, long period, you will not need effort to meet hatred with goodness. Goodness will be your mind’s spontaneous response. An educated mind has a very casual style. It has its diploma, so it knows it can stay cool under provocation – which means we lose all fear of anger; we know we will not lose control.

Patanjali, one of the finest teachers of meditation in ancient India, implies that when you live in the presence of someone who will trust you over and over again, you cannot help rising to be worthy of that trust. Gradually you become so tired of letting him down that you become trustworthy.

This does not mean that we should look the other way when someone does something unworthy of him. It means that we must have the inner toughness to hold fast to our faith that there is in that person a core of goodness that does respond to trust and love. Whether between individuals or between nations, without this faith, peace is not possible.

Active on the path of peace

If we want to be real peace workers, then, we have to work on removing anger from our personality: not suppressing it, but harnessing it into love poured into concerted action. If we can do this, opportunities for peace work will open up everywhere in our lives.

I appreciate the yearning for peace that is expressed in truly nonviolent demonstrations and vigils, but as the Buddha said, those who help the world most are those who help to banish anger, greed, and fear. No one is more active on the path of peace than those who try every day to reduce their own selfish passions and self-will. They may not be participating in demonstrations, but they deserve to be called children of God, for they are true peace-makers, spreading peace everywhere through their daily lives.

Conversely, when someone is being selfish, he or she is actually contributing in a small measure to war. You may refuse

to be in the fighting forces, you may be a peace advocate of the most vocal kind, but these things are not enough to make you a peacemaker. I never lay the blame for war at the door of the military. Wherever there is anger, selfishness, greed, or self-will, a foundation for war is being laid, and all of us must accept a share of the blame.

We must take the lead

It is this gradual raising of popular consciousness that will bring about peace. We should demand of our politicians that they stand for peace, but we should never look to them to guarantee it; they have vested interests. The military cannot ensure peace because it is conditioned for war. It is ordinary citizens, you and I, who make the final difference. Lisa Peattie, professor of urban anthropology at MIT, puts it persuasively: “The power to move the system must come, I think, from a sort of great popular uprising, a refusal, a mass defense of human life.” The former prime minister of Sweden, Olof Palme, agreed:

It is very unlikely that disarmament will ever take place if it must wait for the initiatives of governments and experts. It will only come about as the expression of the political will of people, in many parts of the world.

I am respectful of governments, but I have no illusion that peace will come through their efforts. It is governments that have got us into this dilemma, with our support; now it is we, the people, who must take the lead in insisting on a wholly different approach. It is not first-strike capacity but first-trust capacity that we should be pursuing with all our might. It would

cost a good deal less, and it would release economic and human resources into the bargain. Isn't this the message that Jesus' life conveys? Each one of us, by establishing peace in our minds and practicing it in all our relationships, can hasten the day when peace will reign on earth.

It all depends on us

"Some day," said Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was president when I first came to this country,

the demand for disarmament by hundreds of millions will, I hope, become so universal and so insistent that no man, no men, can withstand it. We have to mobilize the hundreds of millions; we have to make them understand the choice is theirs. We have to make the young people see to it that they need not be the victims of the Third World War.

Again, these are the words not of a peacenik but of a great general. Eisenhower knew, as every insightful general knows, that if we want peace we cannot count on whoever is sitting in the White House or Number 10 Downing Street.

If each of us, through the example of our own lives, can inspire two more people every year to meditate and to live at peace with those around them, it will have an incalculably great effect in creating a climate of peace. That is my ambition, and that is why I say I am a terribly ambitious man. You and I make peace. You and I make war. It all depends on us. 🌸



Ramagiri Ashram



Ramagiri Ashram

A River of Love

Eknath Easwaran, from *Seeing With the Eyes of Love*

When I was coming to this country from India, I traveled by ship with many other Fulbright scholars – including some from a country whose relations with India were strained to the brink of war. At the dining table, these fellows would try to take it out on me as if I were the prime minister. “Why does your country do this?” they would ask in angry tones. I said, “I’m a plain professor; what do I have to do with setting foreign policy?” But they kept making unpleasant cracks, meal after meal, until the other Indian scholars finally just went to another table.

Now, before I had taken to meditation, I confess I would have done the same. I have never cared for controversy, and there seemed to be nothing gained by staying and arguing. But now I was secure. It was not that I didn’t understand their cracks or that their open animosity wasn’t painful, but I refused to give them the satisfaction of driving me out. I was convinced that differences in our political opinions need not stand between us as human beings. They kept on baiting me, but I never replied – and I never lost my courtesy, either.

This went on almost until we reached Marseilles. There we parted company: they were going on to Gibraltar; I disembarked to take the train for Paris. And the interesting thing was that just as I was leaving, they gave me a party. It was a deeply human response. They were really embarrassed, and with simple courtesy they asked, “Please forgive us for what we have said.”



Ramagiri Ashram

The lovers of God don't play Pollyanna. They don't bury their heads in the sand and say, "Oh, everybody is good; everybody is loving" – not at all. They know the world is a harsh place, and the times we live in are difficult and dangerous. But they have enough security, endurance, and love to remember that all these upsets are on the surface. Beneath the anger and agitation, through every human being a river of love still runs. 🌸



Ramagiri Ashram

The Whole World Is Your Own

Sri Sarada Devi

I tell you one thing – if you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others.

Rather learn to see your own faults.

Learn to make the whole world your own.

No one is a stranger, my child; this whole world is your own.

This Morning I Pray

The Ortha Nan Gaidheal

This morning, as I kindle the fire on my hearth,
I pray that the flame of God's love may burn in
my heart and in the hearts of all I meet today.

I pray that no envy or malice,
no hatred or fear, may smother the flame.

I pray that indifference and apathy, contempt and pride,
may not pour like cold water on the fire.

Instead, may the spark of God's love
light the love in my heart,
that it may burn brightly through the day.

And may I warm those who are lonely,
whose hearts are cold and lifeless,
so that all may know the comfort of God's love.

An Island of Trust

Eknath Easwaran, from *The Mantle of the Mystic*

When I was starting my academic career in the late forties on a beautiful campus in Central India, the subcontinent had just been divided into India and Pakistan. The terrible violence that broke out in North India between Hindus and Muslims cast its dark shadow even as far as the town in Central India where I had been posted as a lecturer, the lowest rung on the ladder. I arrived knowing no one in town, not acquainted with the regional language, with no idea where I was going to stay, and with considerable misgivings about classroom tensions as a result of religious and political unrest.

After meeting with the president, who welcomed me officially as a member of the faculty, I was going back to my tonga when a smiling figure from my student days blocked my way and gave me an Islamic hug. It was Naimuddin, my best friend in graduate school. We had first met in the university hostel, where our rooms were close together. Our friendship began with a shared interest in literature – his in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic and mine in English and Sanskrit. He introduced me to his friends and the gracious ways of Muslim culture. But after graduating we lost touch with one another for a few years.

Now here he was teaching at the same college where I had just taken up duties and offering me a place to stay – in a medieval castle, no less, owned by a nawab who had gone to Mecca on a long pilgrimage. I was so surprised and delighted that I could find no words for his hospitality.

This was my introduction to a Muslim household, and everything was new to me. We occupied only one wing, but for entertaining we had the use of the durbar, a large hall on the walls of which hung swords and shields used by the nawab's ancestors, who had participated in the campaigns of the Mogul emperors.

Friends warned us that because of the Hindu-Muslim tension, we were putting ourselves at risk by living under the same roof. Neither Naimuddin nor I were brave fellows, but we began to see that our friendship could influence our students.

Gradually the Hindu students coming to visit me at the old castle and the Muslim students visiting Naimuddin began to cooperate in our literary activities, forgetting their boundaries. On some occasions, gathered in that great hall, my students would recite Shakespeare and Naimuddin's, the Persian love lyrics.

Every morning Naimuddin and I rode our bicycles to campus. Soon we found ourselves heading a procession of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian cyclists. In class, instead of students sitting separately, the unfriendly lines had dissolved; at breaks we saw Hindus and Muslims sharing the traditional sweet and savory snacks they had brought from home. As their example spread, tensions began to dissolve all over campus. Our university became an island of trust in an explosive world. 🌸

Community Story

Peacemaking at Work

The world of construction, which has been my professional field for many, many years, has the reputation of being a hard-edged industry, peopled with willful individuals. Although it has changed, there remains significant reality to that image.

After struggling over the years to balance that reality with my desire to grow spiritually, I eventually understood that I had to embrace it and see it as an environment that yielded endless opportunities to put Easwaran's eight points into practice under challenging circumstances. To say I frequently failed to act in difficult situations in a way that met my highest expectations would be an understatement, but I kept trying to apply Easwaran's many lessons about being patient, remembering the best in others, and trying to disagree without being disagreeable — to be an instrument of peace.

One of those instances in which I felt reasonably successful in that practice stands out to me, and continues to give me confidence that the daily practice of Easwaran's eight points transforms consciousness in ways of which we are usually not even aware.

In this instance — like many others — I was in a disagreement with a contractor over how they had performed some of the work. Correcting the work was going to require significant time and cost to the contractor, and he disagreed strongly. We had a lengthy professional relationship and mutual respect, so I worked hard to slow myself down, squeeze in a few mantrams and understand his point of view.

All the world's a stage

As he grew more heated in making his case, I remembered Easwaran describing how he would at times play his professional role as an actor, which gave him detachment from his own pride and prejudice, able to present his thoughts clearly and persuasively without taking contrary opinions personally. I decided to see if I might give that a try.

The effect on me was remarkable, and enabled me to remain more calm and detached, aware of my professional respect for this person. I felt able to present my position in a way that I thought least added to the tension. And I was able to see clearly that the contractor had gotten himself into an agitated state that was out of character for him, that he really was not himself — and that we had an audience of several others from both teams who were obviously growing uncomfortable with the confrontation.

Finally, he made some concluding remarks and threw down his hard hat to add emphasis to his argument. Able to think of us both as “players on a stage,” I paused and then began to softly applaud and said “bravo, bravo.” He looked at me askance for a long moment, finally cracked a smile, and then we both started to laugh. We ultimately settled on a mutually acceptable resolution to the situation and remain friends to this day. It is in these small victories that the power of Easwaran’s eight points releases the deeper resources that allow us to hold a place for peace in our daily lives.

— A passage meditator, Hawaii



Christine Easwaran

Pray for Peace: Your Voice Counts

Christine Easwaran, from our journal archive

Both science and religion work on the principle that intangible, unseen forces permeate and unite all things in the universe.

All religions proclaim that there is a divine spark in everyone without which civilization would not have survived. When we pray from the depths of our heart, we tap forces greater than ourselves, a realm of experience in which all of us are one.

Whether you believe in prayer or not, I urge everyone who reads this to give it a try.

- Pray for yourself, your family, your community, your country, your planet.
- Pray for the earth and all creatures that live.
- Pray for food, shelter, clothing, and the simple amenities of life for all people.
- Pray for freedom from fear, anger, and greed for everyone everywhere.
- Pray for leaders of all countries and faiths.
- Pray for your enemies – as did Jesus, Muhammad, and all great spiritual leaders.
- Pray for all men, women, and children everywhere to lay down their defenses and to look to one another with trust.
- Pray for loving kindness, good will, respect, generosity, and hope to prevail.
- Pray for peace on earth. 🌸

Community Story

Patience and Compassion

I have been consciously working towards being more calm, detached, and loving when my spouse gets in an irritable mood. He has borne patiently with me many times when I have been in a bad mood, and I would like to do the same thing more consistently for him. When he gets irritable, I have often reacted negatively before I even realized what happened. I have acted like the proverbial rubber ball that Easwaran's granny warned him about – if you throw it up against a wall, it HAS to come back.

Slowing Down and Repetition of the Mantram have been my primary eight-point program tools. I try to slow down enough to realize that I have a choice in how I respond, and then get the mantram going in my mind.

I was working on the Reflection Questions for Easwaran's Life Celebration that the BMCM published in the eSatsang last fall. In answer to the prompt: "Think of one small way you could decrease a sense of separateness and increase harmony in the upcoming year," I wrote, "If I notice ___ in a grouchy mood, consciously increase mantram use to open up the well of compassion in my heart, and think of the healing, invigorating water of compassion flowing over him (and over me)."

I have had some failures and some successes in the past several months. One small sign of progress was when my husband (who usually tells me that I am not very patient), commented that I was acting patiently in a certain situation. Recently I read a quote in the *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*,

Volume 3, that really has inspired me to continue with renewed effort with this practice. Easwaran writes on pages 44–45:

If someone gets angry with us and we respond with patience and compassion and the “soft reply that turneth away wrath,” that too is karma, good karma. Everybody benefits. The karma of the person who got angry is mitigated, even physiologically: his nervous system is calmed, so his anger subsides; he will not go on to spread it to other people and create still more bad karma. And our own mind and body benefit too. Even if we had to grit our teeth for a while to keep back angry words, afterwards we will feel good inside. All our vital organs can relax, put their feet up on the desk, and say, “Good job!” We know we have helped the other person, and we have the quiet thrill of self-mastery too. In St. Francis’s words, which appeal to me very deeply, we know we have been an instrument of peace.

Easwaran has helped me realize how much it can benefit both my spouse and myself and contribute a small bit of peace to the world when I am successful in responding to irritability with patience and compassion.

– A passage meditator, Colorado

Prayer for Peace

Swami Omkar

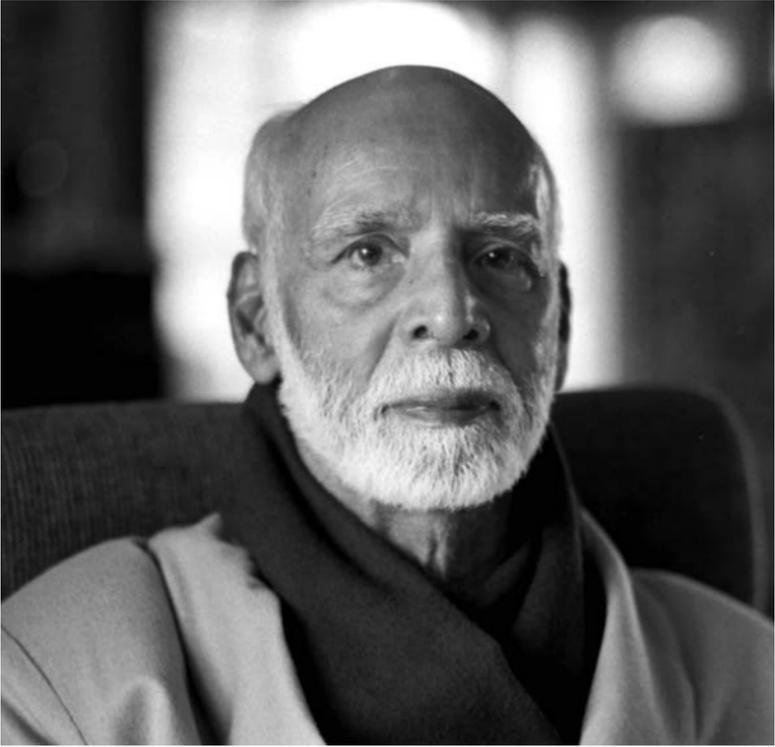
Adorable presence,
Thou who art within and without,
above and below and all around,
Thou who art interpenetrating
every cell of my being,
Thou who art the eye of my eyes,
the ear of my ears,
the heart of my heart,
the mind of my mind,
the breath of my breath,
the life of my life,
the soul of my soul,
Bless us, dear God, to be aware of thy presence
now and here.

May we all be aware of thy presence
in the East and the West,
in the North and the South.
May peace and goodwill abide among individuals,
communities, and nations.
This is my earnest prayer.

May peace be unto all!



Christine and Easwaran, 1990s



Easwaran, 1990s

Let's Start With Ourselves

Eknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

The solution to rampant violence, to international suspicion and the specter of a nuclear nightmare, begins with a challenge to each of us: Change yourself. If you can change yourself, you can reach anybody. We should always remember that there is great hope for the world, because one person changing himself has effects that reach much farther than we see.

As Gandhi said, if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him. Wherever there have been beneficial changes in history, that is how they have come about. And we don't have to wait until the other person, the other nation, decides to change. Why don't we change first? Through the practice of meditation, it all lies within our reach. 🌸

Easwaran's Eight-Point Program of Passage Meditation

- 1. Meditation on a Passage** Silent repetition in the mind of memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions. Practiced for half an hour each morning.
- 2. Repetition of a Mantram** Silent repetition in the mind of a holy name or a hallowed phrase from one of the world's great religions. Practiced whenever possible throughout the day or night.
- 3. Slowing Down** Setting priorities and reducing the stress and friction caused by hurry.
- 4. One-Pointed Attention** Giving full concentration to the matter at hand.
- 5. Training the Senses** Overcoming conditioned habits and learning to enjoy what is beneficial.
- 6. Putting Others First** Gaining freedom from selfishness and separateness; finding joy in helping others.
- 7. Spiritual Fellowship** Spending time regularly with others who are practicing passage meditation for mutual inspiration and support.
- 8. Spiritual Reading** Drawing inspiration from writings by and about the world's great spiritual figures and from the scriptures of all religions.

About Eknath Easwaran

Eknath Easwaran (1910–1999) is the originator of passage meditation and the author of more than 30 books on spiritual living.

Easwaran was a professor of English literature at a leading Indian university when he came to the United States in 1959 on the Fulbright exchange program. A gifted teacher, he moved from education for degrees to education for living, and gave talks on meditation and spiritual living for 40 years.

In 1961 he founded the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, a nonprofit organization that publishes his books and the video and audio recordings of his talks, and offers online retreats and programs.

Easwaran lived what he taught, giving him lasting appeal as a spiritual teacher and author of deep insight and warmth.



Further Resources for Learning to Meditate and Deepening Your Practice

From the BCCM Programs team

Introductory Webinars

A chance to try out passage meditation.

www.bmcm.org/programs/introductory-webinar/

Introductory Weekend Retreats

Everything you need to get your passage meditation practice started.

www.bmcm.org/programs/introductory-weekend-online/

Passage Meditation – A Complete Spiritual Practice

Easwaran's classic manual, available in print and as an ebook and audiobook.



An Online Retreat

BCCM Satsang Live

Our twice-weekly online satsang takes place on Tuesdays from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Pacific Time and is repeated on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Pacific Time.

Find more at www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/.

Online Retreats, Webinars, & Workshops

Our online retreats and programs have become the training ground for those of us who yearn to join Easwaran in making the spiritual renaissance a reality. In the retreats, you will experience turning to your practice, to Easwaran and his teachings, and to a strong spiritual schedule. The retreats combine contemplative activities with practicum times in which you apply your practice directly to your own unique home environment.

Introductory Webinars:

May 11, August 17

Returnee Workshops:

June 1, October 5

Weeklong Retreats:

June 21–25, October 18–22

Introductory Weekend Retreats:

July 26–28, September 27–29

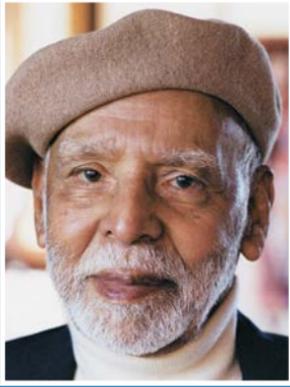
Returnee Weekend Retreats:

April 12–14, August 9–11, November 8–10

Setu (Senior) Retreats:

May 3–7, September 13–17

For more information about upcoming events, including fees and financial aid, visit our website at www.bmcm.org/programs. We'd love to have you join us!



When you practice meditation, you are working hard for the welfare of the world, for the regeneration of society, for the establishment of peace on earth and good will among mankind – which, as we all know to our cost, cannot be done by governments or by corporations, but only by millions of people in small groups, working in all countries, by their example.

— Eknath Easwaran

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