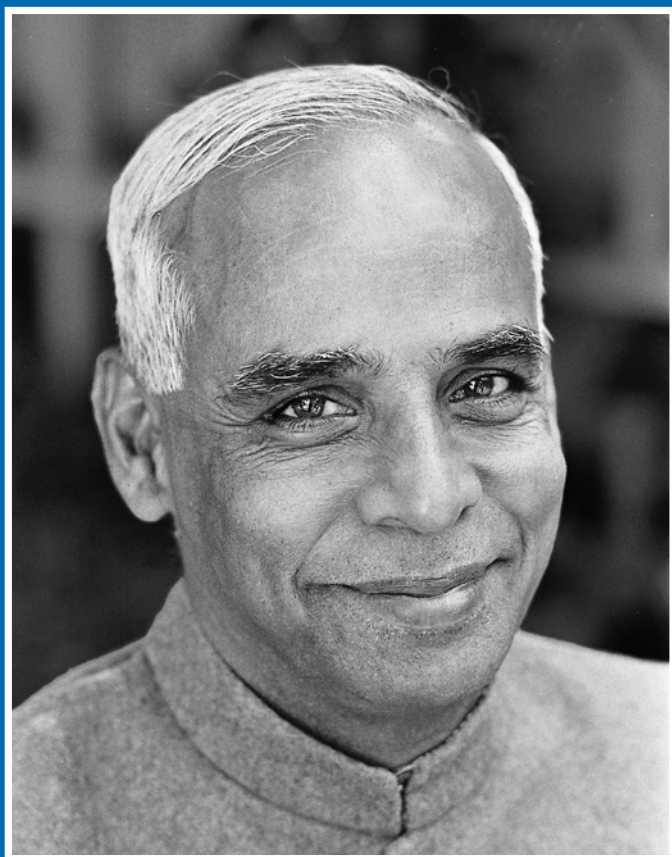


Eknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

Summer 2024



## Discovering the Unity of Life

Overcoming Separateness

## In This Issue

“Because all of life is a seamless whole,” Easwaran writes, “our only real suffering comes when we try to separate ourselves from it, imagining that a line can be drawn to divide your sadness from my happiness, your poverty from my wealth, your country’s war from my nation’s peace, nature’s destruction from my health.” Yet, Easwaran assures us, such self-will and separateness are not our native state. Through meditation, we can recall the principle of unity, “buried fathoms deep and forgotten” in our consciousness. This realization, Easwaran notes, enables us “to conduct ourselves with respect to everyone around us, even if they provoke us or dislike us or say unkind things about us.” This increasing respect will make us, and those around us, more and more secure.

In this journal, Easwaran explores these important themes in four articles. This issue also includes practical suggestions from Easwaran and community stories on overcoming separateness.

“When we base our relationships on this unity,” Easwaran observes, we can “make our latent divinity a reality in daily life.”

– The BMCM Editorial Team

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# The Closely Guarded Secret of Life

Eknath Easwaran, from *Words to Live By*

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You and I appear to be separate. We differ in color, size, and shape. Differences in ideas, tastes, and prejudices mark us as individuals to be reckoned with.

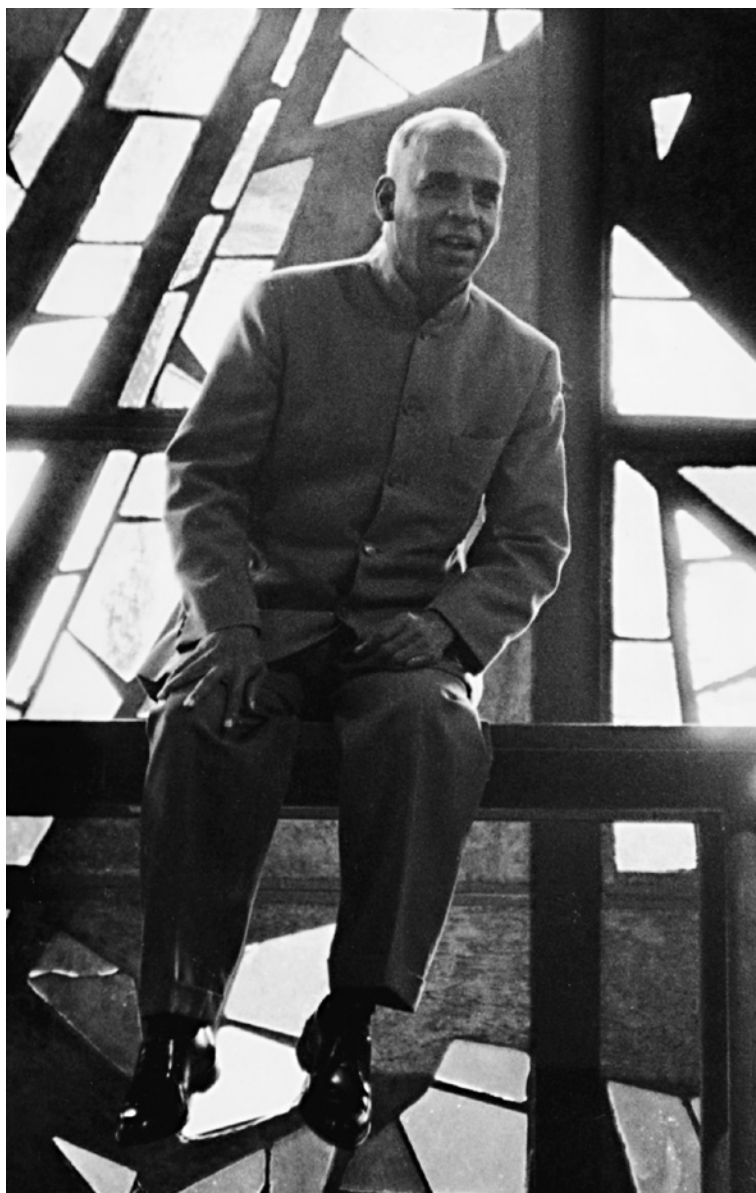
Beneath this apparent division, however, hidden deep within each of us is the one Self—eternal, infinite, ever-perfect. This is the closely guarded secret of life: that we are all caught up in a divine masquerade, and all we are trying to do is take off our masks to reveal the pure, perfect Self within.

In our present condition, we have forgotten we are wearing masks. Fortunately, the Self will not allow us to forget him, but keeps on calling to us.

In order to find the Self, we must look deep within ourselves. When we succeed, our purpose in life will be fulfilled, and all our anger against others will melt into unfathomable love, all our fear of others into unshakable security.

The unity underlying life is so complete and pervasive that when we inflict suffering on the smallest creature, we injure the whole. When we refrain from habits that harm others, when we take up jobs that relieve suffering, when we work to put an end to anger and separateness, we strengthen the whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eknath Easwaran', with a large, sweeping initial 'E'.



Easwaran, 1960s

# The Principle of Unity

Eknath Easwaran, from *Climbing the Blue Mountain*

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The word *dharma*, law, comes from the Sanskrit root *dhri*, to support. What supports life, according to the mystics, is the principle of unity; what destroys life is separateness, the negation of this principle.

In compassionate language, the mystics tell us that we have simply forgotten this unity. It is not that we deny it, we have just forgotten. There is a beautiful story narrated in the Hindu tradition which illustrates this point. A young prince is kidnapped by bandits, taken to the forest, and raised there, learning the bandits' life of looting and murder. He completely forgets his princely heritage and all the royal virtues and lives like one of the beasts of the forest, attacking and killing without any feeling of conflict.

One day the spiritual teacher from the royal family passes through the forest and recognizes the young man. He has the same features as the king, the same nose, and the same style of walking, but his manner is terribly menacing. So the spiritual teacher, with great love flowing from his heart, approaches the young man and says, "Your royal highness."

The young man doesn't understand. He says, "Where is this 'royal highness'?" He expects to be called "you tiger," "you leopard." He has completely forgotten. The spiritual teacher repeats, "I am talking to you, your royal highness." The young man says, "I am not your 'royal highness'; I'm a bandit. Ask me to loot, ask me to kill, I can do it. I'm the Bonnie and Clyde of ancient India."

Not repulsed by this picture, and unshaken in his faith in human nature, the spiritual teacher goes up to the young man, puts his arm around him, and begins to tell him stories about his childhood – how his father used to carry him on his shoulders, how his mother used to sing him to sleep, how his life was in the palace. Gradually the prince begins to remember. He says, “Go on, go on!” The spiritual teacher goes on relating anecdotes of his royal childhood. Finally the young man says, “Now I recall. I’m not bad or violent. I simply forgot. You have helped me remember; you are my greatest friend.” And the young prince goes home to his father, the king.

## Unity is our nature

This is your story and mine. With great simplicity, yet great sophistication, the mystics tell us that we have just forgotten. They say, “You have no love for personal profit.” We just smile. They say, “You are not really devoted to personal pleasure.” We smile and say, “He doesn’t know us.” The great mystics say, “You really are not resentful or hostile. You really are not self-willed.” And we say, “If it pleases you to say so, we have no objection, but don’t say we didn’t warn you!” The mystics continue to assure us that one day our eyes are going to be opened, and we will know that we have been dreaming.

If you go to Sproul Plaza tomorrow and tell people that unity is our nature, that love is our nature, that we are hypocrites pretending to be separate, impostors pretending to be selfish, the sophisticated campus crowd will say, “You’d better go home and sleep it off. We know ourselves; we are honest. We know that we are no good and are just wasting our time.” The mystics

say that this is an illusion, a morbid spell under which we have fallen. This is the meaning of the Sanskrit word *maya*.

\*

Now according to the Hindu tradition, this is what has happened to us. Some magician standing on the cosmic platform says, “Let these people come to believe that they are all separate. Let them come to believe that they are their bodies. Let them come to believe that the voice of the ego is the voice of God.” The spell is cast over us, and we all believe that this is our nature. “Honest,” we say, “this is how we are.”

The great mystics in every tradition tell us that we have just forgotten. They repeat stories to wake us up, but most people just do not hear. There is a saying in this country, “It goes in one ear and right out the other.” Many people come to my talks, put a couple of dollars in the bowl, sit there for an hour, but do not hear a thing about this. Jesus used to say marvelously that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. Those who cannot hear can be helped, but there is very little that can be done for those who will not hear, who will not open up their hearts, who will not try to practice spiritual disciplines.

## Recalling what has been forgotten

For all of us, however, it still takes many years of listening to the Gita, to the Bible, to the Koran or the Dhammapada before we begin to understand. Finally, somewhere there rings a little bell, just a little tinkle, and we say, “Tell me more.” Gradually there is a slight response. We begin to remember our heritage. *Samadhi* according to this interpretation is not union with God but reunion. It is the story of the Prodigal Son replayed in our own

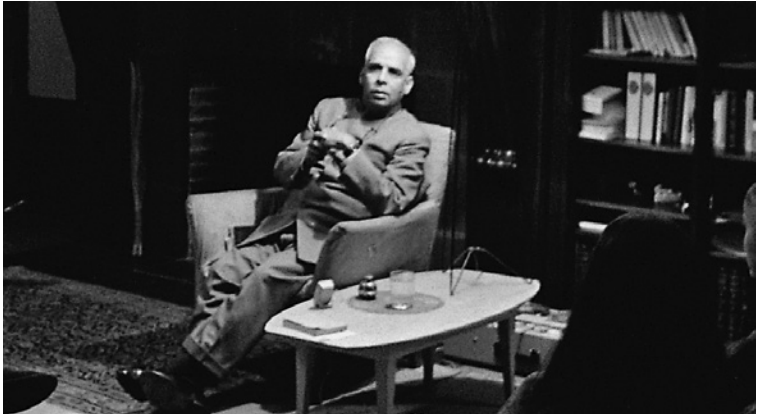
consciousness. Remember? The son didn't go to someone else's home. He went to his own father's. And the father didn't say, "Who are you?" He welcomed his son and feasted him. In the same way, the principle of unity is not something new that someone plants in our consciousness. It has always been there, buried fathoms deep and forgotten. The purpose of meditation, then, is to dig down to this unity and recall what has been forgotten.

Because this truth is inscribed in the depths of our consciousness, leading a separate life is impossible. Living in harmony with all – our family, our society, all forms of life – is the truth of life, and this truth alone can support us. There are many people who will say that it is human nature to hate, to fight, and to kill, but the mystics say this is the law of beasts. Having become human beings, we have risen above this law. Any human being who hates, who uses violence, who kills, according to the mystics, has gone back to the level of an animal.

## Going east to go west

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha uses a terrible phrase about people who have reversed their evolution in this way. Those who have forgotten the unity of life and who believe they are separate, who are self-willed and live for their own satisfaction, *natthi papam akariyam*, will not stop at any evil deed. People who are fond of money, for example, begin in a very ordinary way. They don't want to exploit, they don't want to bring about the ruin of other people, they don't want to despoil the land. They simply want to make a certain amount of money, and so they start their business, whatever it may be, in a very quiet way, not too much at the expense of others. But as they get





Easwaran, 1960s

more money their love for money grows. Now, instead of being content with doing a little harm to others, they say, “Why not exploit people? Why not go into massive production of cigarettes, liquor, drugs, or armaments? That will bring us a lot of money.” Little by little by little this inordinate love of profit destroys all humanity.

Take, for example, the armament industry. I have been reading recently about Sir Basil Zaharoff, the father of this enterprise. He would go to one country and sell them a particular gun, then go to another country and tell them, “I can sell you a gun which can outshoot that gun.” The terrible part of this story is that it is still going on today. With food getting scarcer, and famine stalking across the world, billions of dollars are being spent on armaments. Unfortunately, the highly advanced technological countries are also selling to poor countries, for whom these weapons not only are unnecessary but even displace resources which are needed for providing food.

Such is our confusion that we think, in the language of Sri Ramakrishna, we have to go east in order to go west. The production and sale of armaments leads to warfare, not to peace. When underdeveloped countries ask for planes and missiles, let us send them wheat and soybeans. This is truly promoting peace. The point here is that those who have engaged in this business of armaments did not start out with hatred; they just wanted to make money. The love of money can gradually make people forget their sense of decency, their sense of kindness, their sense of unity.

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A number of years ago I went to a flea market just to see what a flea market was. There was a huge crowd milling around all day. Then about five o'clock, someone in one of the stalls called out over the public address system, "Come to Stall 14. We are giving everything away free." I have never seen a stampede like that. People who were buying things they needed at other stalls dropped everything and rushed to Stall 14 to get something free. They didn't have any idea what it might be, but if it was free, they wanted it.

## Enveloped in what we like

Every one of us, even if we are not greedy for money, is greedy for pleasure. As long as we are talking about greed for money, there will be a lot of people who will say, "It doesn't apply to me." But who can say that about greed for pleasure? There is even a larger number of people who will line up at a stall if you say: "This is pleasant; you will enjoy this." We will go even if we don't know what it is.

Every one of us has to remember, therefore, that as long as we are driven compulsively by the desire for personal profit and personal pleasure our nature can be vitiated. We will start out, just as everyone starts out, rather nice, maybe sometimes even noble, and on a few rare occasions even selfless. Gradually all these finer qualities wither away and the desire for pleasure and profit changes the look in our eyes and our very life. After a number of years we do not care about other people's needs because we are completely enveloped in what we like, what we enjoy, what appeals to us. It is good to remember that this can happen to anyone.

### A deeper appeal

It is a sad slander on human nature to believe that our very best work can be done only under the compulsion of money or pleasure, but this is what most people believe today. There is a certain amount of work that can be gotten out of people by offering them good wages and overtime, but if you want the best out of people, you have to make a deeper appeal—to their sense of unity. Tell a person that there is no money or pleasure in this, but that he will be contributing toward making his city and his world a better place in which to live, and gradually he will respond. When this appeal gets into a person's consciousness, she gives her very best, joyfully and continuously.

When Mahatma Gandhi wanted people to help in his work, he would give his angelic, toothless smile and say, "I can offer you magnificent rewards: two years in prison, confiscation of all your property, work without respite every day of the week, and the increasing joy of knowing that your life really counts." This

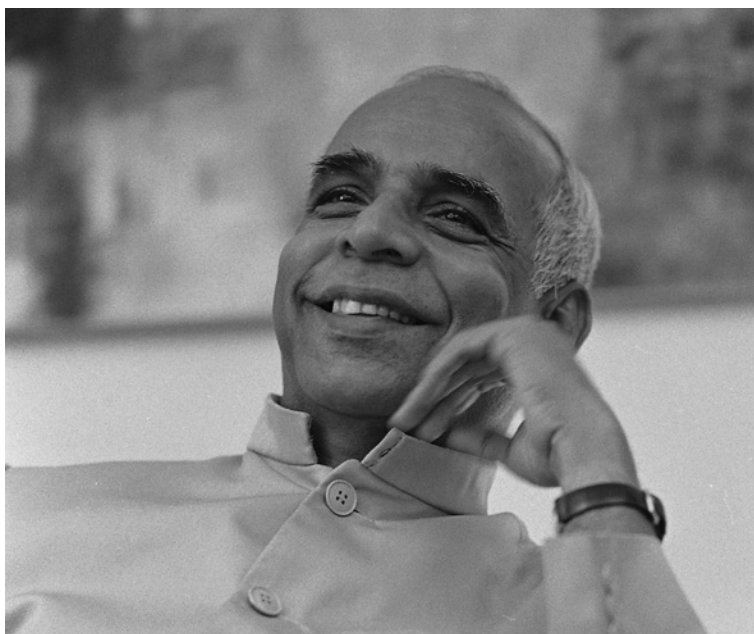
is the glory of human nature; the most daring and resourceful people would respond.

It is a basic spiritual law that the person who lives for himself or herself lives in sorrow, while the person who gives freely to all lives in abiding joy. Take the person who lives only for money. I have known a few such people. There was one chap I used to know whose concentration was complete when it came to financial matters: he would see everything in terms of profit or loss. When I would be reading my paper in the morning, he would come and ask me for just one page, the page giving the stock exchange quotations. The rest of the paper did not exist for him – neither news, nor drama, nor sports, nor entertainment. For him the paper meant the stock exchange quotations.

And this is the way his memory worked, too. We would say to him, “Do you remember the day Gandhiji passed through town and spoke on the Fort Maidan?” He would say, “Yes, that’s the day that Nilgiris Tea went over two hundred rupees.” He could tell you the history of the dividend sheets of a particular company for ten years. I had never seen such prodigious recall. But he was completely insecure. He lived in fear that some share would come down, that some company would go broke, or some debtor would leave town. He wasn’t a bad fellow, but he was caught in love of money.

## Live for the good of all

There are other people who are misers with time. They say, “I have to go bowling, then I have to do candlemaking, then I have to do some repair work on my motorcycle, then I have to practice my ukelele, and then I have to write some poetry



Easwaran, 1970s

for fortune cookies.” These people, too, are misers. Just as the money miser grabs a penny here or there and puts it in his piggy bank, whatever time these people have they must spend in some pleasure. These, too, will never find joy, because they are living for themselves—in violation of the unity of life. In the compassionate language of the mystic, these people are not bad, they are simply immature. They must always play with their toys. Now it is all right for babies to play with their toys, to bite their stuffed reindeer and pull off the ears, but imagine their fathers doing this. Here the mystic would say, “Don’t you want to grow up?” He calls us children when we concentrate only on ourselves and completely neglect the welfare of others.

On the other hand, when we live for the welfare of our community, we become healthy and secure. One of the simple secrets the great scriptures give us about avoiding emotional problems is not to think about ourselves, not to dwell upon ourselves, not to brood upon ourselves, but to live for the good of all. It is a simple recipe which we can all practice. Emotional problems like depression, frustration, insecurity, and boredom need come to none of us. If we ask the great mystics why we have these deplorable problems, they will say that we are still children, playing with our toys, lying in our cradles, screaming, “I want this, give me this. I want that, give me that.”

## Swimming against the current

Now we have all juggled in good measure with our senses and passions, and have found that these things do not bring security or lasting happiness. That being the case, the mystics will ask, “Why don’t you try swimming against the current in life?” In my village in Kerala, one of the great pastimes of the boys was swimming in the river, especially when the monsoon flood brought the water over the banks. After an hour of swimming against the current, most of us would end up just a little downstream from where we started. It was considered a mark of great strength for any fellow to make it straight across to the other bank. All the boys built up their muscles in this exercise. The smaller children, on the other hand, would just float with the current, which required little effort or exertion. Similarly, in life most people just float with the current. They don’t know anything about the fierce joy of self-conquest.

The Buddha uses a tremendous term to describe this

accomplishment, *patisotagami*; those who lead the spiritual life, he says, are “going against the current.” It’s a phrase which should appeal to the young especially because it is full of challenge. The Buddha tells us: if you want a smooth life, don’t follow me, if you want a pleasant life, don’t follow me; but if you want thunder, if you want storms, if you want danger and continuing challenges, go against the current.

There is a school of thought prevalent today which says that successful living means to flow with life. The Buddha says that successful living is the other way. Flowing with life may bring you money, it may bring a little pleasure, but joy, security, love, wisdom, and unity all lie the other way.

## Finding our true nature

I am not too familiar with the ways of fish, but I understand that the salmon has the rare capacity to swim upstream. It even leaps up waterfalls, I am told. This is exactly what we do in leading the spiritual life. Just imagine leaping over our anger. There it is, coming down like Niagara, and instead of going down in a barrel, we get in a barrel and go up. Even Indiana Jones would be astounded!

But this gives us some sense of the scope of the achievement. When we live this way, every night we will go to bed sore with selfless effort but secure in the knowledge that we have not wasted the day, that we have made some contribution to all those around us. It is this kind of strength that the mystics say is better than pleasure and profit and power, and it can come to all of us when we turn against the current to find our true nature, which is oneness with all life. 🌸



Easwaran, 1970s



# Forgetting Ourselves

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

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When I first came to this country, I was invited to give a series of talks on meditation and mysticism in San Francisco. I was interested to find several confirmed beatniks in my audience. They didn't think much of traditional religious language, and they didn't like mincing words; when they disagreed with me, they said so straight. One evening, without intending to, I shocked them by quoting a passage referring to heaven and hell.

"You're such an educated, cultured person," a friend objected afterward in dismay. "How can you believe in these medieval ideas?"

"To tell the truth," I answered, "I don't really think they're medieval. I have seen quite a few people actually living in hell – and one or two in heaven." Whenever we get swept away by a selfish urge or a wave of anger, we are in hell; we can almost feel the sulfurous fumes of insecurity and fear. If we get so angry that we can't sleep, we are overnight guests in hell's hotel.

"Well, that's different," my friend replied in relief. "Now you're just being metaphorical. I thought you really believed it."

"Hell is no metaphor," I said, "and neither is heaven. Hell and heaven are states of consciousness. Doesn't Jesus say the kingdom of heaven is within? And mental states are real – in fact, in some ways they are even more 'thingy' than things. If I were to throw this pen at you, you might get a little bruise. But

if I said something unkind and you couldn't stop thinking about it, your resentment might burn for years. It might even aggravate your ulcer."

"I thought you were talking about sin," he said a little grumpily. "I just don't hold with those old ideas about sin and punishment."

### **I'm a saint — potentially**

"I don't usually talk about sin," I admitted: "not because it's not real, but because when you go on saying 'I'm a sinner, I'm a sinner,' you're actually thinking of yourself as a sinner. You expect yourself to do wrong things, so you're that much more likely to go on doing them. I like to emphasize original goodness: 'I'm a saint, I'm a saint — potentially.'"

"But," I added, "my real objection to those 'old ideas' is that they make it sound as if punishment is heaped on our heads by some wrathful God outside us. Heaven and hell are inside. We don't have to have somebody punish us for doing wrong; we punish ourselves. Sin is its own punishment."

This approach appeals to me deeply, and since those early days I have found that it makes good sense to a modern audience too. It is not really a new idea — Christian writers since the Desert Fathers have spoken clearly of these things, and no one is more precise on the subject than the Buddha. But today it appeals to our scientific temper. We do not have to be punished for getting angry, for example; anger is its own punishment. The next time someone flies into a rage before you, watch objectively and you will see what it does to the body, pumping up blood pressure, flooding vital organs and tissues with

adrenaline, and subjecting the body to all kinds of physiologic stress. When I see someone getting angry, I think to myself, “That’s a thousandth of a heart attack!” These things add up, and people have actually died of a cardiovascular accident brought on by the thousandth burst of rage.

## A wall that keeps everyone else outside

More subtly, dwelling on yourself is its own punishment. All of us find ourselves a fascinating, satisfying subject to contemplate . . . until the results begin to accumulate. The effects are easier to see with someone else: the person who thinks about himself all the time, who can scarcely think about anything except in connection with his own needs, becomes the most wretched creature on earth. Nothing really goes the way he wants, and that preoccupation with himself that seemed so pleasant and natural becomes a wall that keeps everyone else outside. It’s a lonely, tormented life. Perhaps the most painful irony is that this wretchedness too is just dwelling on oneself. Once the habit is formed, the mind cannot stop, even when it makes us miserable.

Here spiritual psychology cuts to the heart of the matter in one incisive stroke. All these habits of mind that can make life hell, the mystics say, can be traced to one central flaw of attention. To call it self-preoccupation comes close: the habit of dwelling on my needs, my desires, my plans, my fears. The more deeply ingrained this pattern of thinking is, the mystics say, the more we make ourselves a little island isolated from the rest of life, with all the unhappiness that has to follow. This is not a moral judgment; it is simply the way happiness works.

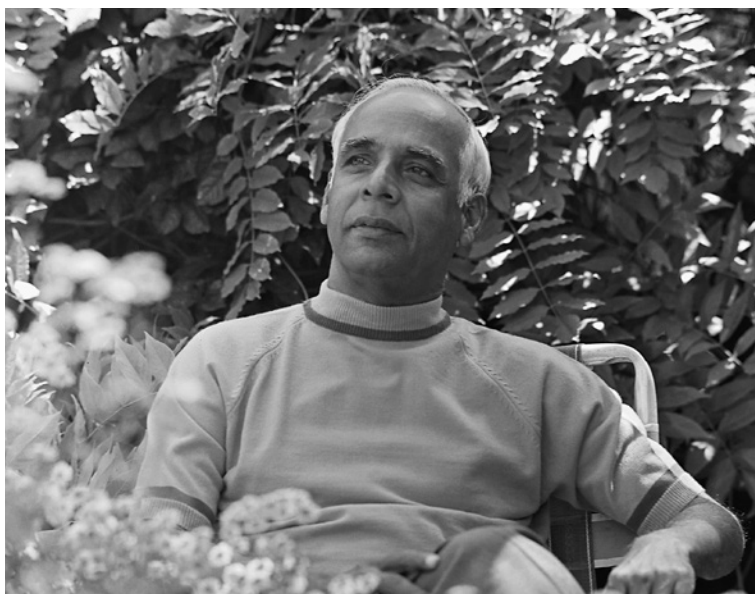
Asking life to make a selfish person happy, my grandmother used to say, is like asking a banana tree to give you mangoes.

But there is a better word for this habit of mind: self-will, the insistent drive to have our own way, to get what we want, whatever it may cost. Self-will has a million forms, but every one of them is a kind of torment. Whenever we feel life is being unfair to us, whenever we hurt because people are not treating us right or paying us attention or giving us our due respect, nine times out of ten what is hurting is our self-will. An anonymous mystical document known as the *Theologica Germanica* says succinctly, “Nothing burns in hell except self-will.” No God has to punish us for being self-willed; self-will is its own punishment, its own hell.

## Our native state

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The meaning of the Biblical phrase here is not “poor-spirited.” It is just the opposite of being full of ourselves – that is, just the opposite of being full of self-will. When we are in the grip of self-will, life cannot help stepping on our toes, and we cannot help being thrown into turmoil when things do not go our way. On the other hand, in those moments when we forget ourselves – not thinking “Am I happy? Am I having fun yet?” but completely oblivious to our little ego – we spend a brief but beautiful holiday in heaven.

The mystics tell us that the joy we experience in these moments of self-forgetting is our true nature, our native state. To regain it, we have simply to empty ourselves of what hides this joy: that is, to stop dwelling on ourselves. To the extent that



Easwaran, 1960s

we are not full of ourselves, God can fill us – in fact, the mystics say daringly, he has to. “When we thus clear the ground and make our soul ready,” says John Tauler, a pupil of Eckhart’s and a brilliant mystic in his own right,

without doubt God must fill up the void. . . . If you go out of yourself, without doubt he shall go in, and there will be much or little of his entering in according to how much or little you go out.

And Eckhart adds, in his wonderfully pungent way: “God expects but one thing of you, and that is that you should come out of yourself in so far as you are a created being and let God be God in you.”

How far modern civilization has gone to the other extreme! Self-will has always been human nature, but today it is almost worshipped in some circles. Unselfishness is considered old-fashioned and unnatural, and to be happy, some professional psychologists say, we have to learn to assert ourselves, attend to our personal needs first, “look out for number one.”

To be sure, there are reasons for these extreme positions. People think that being unselfish is boring, that a selfless person cannot possibly enjoy life because he is constantly making himself a doormat, that to have a high sense of worth you have to have a big ego. These are just misunderstandings, but the observation remains true: our age sets a premium on self-will in aggressiveness, competitiveness, and self-aggrandizement; that, we are told, is the route to joy.

## Love turned around

Yet to live as a separate creature, cut off from the rest of life, is just the opposite of joy. The Persian mystic Jalaluddin Rumi summed up the spiritual quest in one quiet sentence: “Pilgrimage to the place of the wise is to find escape from the flame of separateness.” Ultimately, self-will becomes a solid wall that keeps others out and ourselves walled in. Imagine trying to walk around the Great Wall of China, fourteen hundred miles of meandering masonry clinging to every hill and valley as far as the eye can see. That is what trying to get around self-will is like. When we feel intense anguish in a personal relationship, more often than not what pains us is not differences of politics or taste; it is just self-will in another of its disguises, hurting because it cannot have its way.

I like to think of self-will as love turned around. Love is energy, and self-will is that energy focused on oneself. We can learn to free that energy, and when we do, our lives will fill with love – which is what living in heaven means.

In today's competitive climate, often those who are aggressive about imposing their will on others are labeled “successful.” But the accomplishments of such people are often sadly short-lived, while the damage they do themselves and others can be far-reaching. When self-will is excessive, we end up offending others, feeling offended, and lashing back, and that undoes everything worthwhile we might achieve.

People with little self-will, on the other hand, seldom get upset when life goes against them. They do not try to impose their way on others, or get agitated or depressed or defensive when people hold different views. Being intolerant of other views, Mahatma Gandhi used to say, is a sign that we don't have enough faith in our own. To get agitated and angry when opposed shows a certain insecurity. If we really believe what we believe, we will not be shaken when someone challenges it.

## Give full attention to opposite opinions

Gandhi was an excellent example of this. It is said that he was at his best when he was criticized; it made him even more respectful and compassionate, and made him reach deeper into himself to find new ways of answering. I try to practice that in all kinds of little ways. Every day, for example, I look at a very influential newspaper whose editorial viewpoint contradicts everything I stand for. And I enjoy it: the writing is often excellent, and the differences in perspective help me to understand



Easwaran, 1960s

opinions I would otherwise never hear. I can give full attention to opposite opinions, and learn from them, because my faith in spiritual values is unshakable.

The reason for this, of course, is that these are not just my values. They are timeless, and my faith in them comes from many centuries of experience. If somebody challenges what I say about heaven being within, I don't get upset. It is Jesus who said it, and he is quite capable of defending his words himself.

Many years ago, I had a friend from Chicago who came to hear my talks in Berkeley every week. When he was about to return to Chicago he came up to say good-bye. "I've really enjoyed your talks," he told me. "And I like your sense of humor. But you know, I still don't believe a word of what you say."

I laughed and wished him well. Nobody likes to hear about self-will.



About twelve years later that fellow showed up again, looking much more than twelve years older. There were tears in his eyes when he came up to me and said, “Every word you say is true.”

I comforted him by saying, “They are not really my words. They are the words of the great spiritual teachers in all religions, who have verified them over and over in their own lives. It takes most of us a certain amount of suffering to learn that they are true.”

## The very basis of love

Even those who profess no religion can come to these same conclusions. Here is an outburst from one of my favorites in my college days, George Bernard Shaw:

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

But security means much, much more than confidence in one's views. It pays richly in personal relationships. People with little self-will are so tremendously secure that they do not rely on other people to satisfy their needs. They will never try to manipulate you, and they are free to be loyal always. They will stand by you through thick and thin; you know you can count on them, no matter what the situation. This kind of confidence is the very basis of love. 🌸

# The Real Lovers of God

*Narsinha Mehta*

They are the real lovers of God  
Who feel others' sorrow as their own.  
When they perform selfless service,  
They are humble servants of the Lord.  
Respecting all, despising none,  
They are pure in thought, word, and deed.  
Blessed is the mother of such a child,  
And in their eyes the Divine Mother  
Shines in every woman they see.  
They are always truthful, even-minded,  
Never coveting others' wealth,  
Free from all selfish attachments,  
Ever in tune with the Holy Name.  
Their bodies are like sacred shrines  
In which the Lord of Love is seen.  
Free from greed, anger, and fear,  
These are the real lovers of God.



Ramagiri Ashram

# Community Stories

## Deeper Resources

There have been a number of instances over the years where my practice of Easwaran's eight points had taken hold at a deeper level than I had realized. Most of these are small but welcome events, but the most profound occurred some years ago.

I was driving home after a small after-work gathering of co-workers, following directly behind one of them in my car on a familiar road. Suddenly, at a major intersection, an oncoming driver turned their car into our lane without slowing and slammed into my colleague's car, sending it off the shoulder of the road from the impact.

### Calm and focused

I quickly pulled over, somehow mindful of where I would be out of the way. Fortunately, by the time I reached my co-worker, she was emerging from her car. I was aware that I was oddly calm and focused, and that my mantram was turning in the background. She had powder from the air bags on her, a cut on her forehead, and was limping. I was also aware that others had approached the driver of the other car. I guided her gently out of traffic and held her while she shook and cried, drawing deeply on my mantram without effort. I assessed that she was not in need of emergency care and stayed with her to give our reports to the police. Other co-workers who live near her joined us, helped her gather her things, and took her home.

After a while, I realized that the driver of the other car, a young woman, was sitting alone on the median island of the

intersection, having just finished her interview with the police. I watched for a while and saw that she remained seated alone on the curb. It occurred to me that it was none of my business, but she seemed so alone. In what felt more than a little out of character for me, I walked over, silently repeating my mantram, and sat down next to her in the middle of the chaos of traffic, tow trucks, and the flashing lights of police and fire vehicles.

She had just left the airport after arriving on a flight from the mainland for a vacation in Hawaii now gone horribly wrong — she hadn't driven five miles. She was crying uncontrollably, but fortunately was not injured beyond some bruises. She was, however, despondent over how she would explain the accident to her parents, who would bear a financial burden that apparently would be difficult for them. She was paralyzed with shock and fear not knowing where she was going or how to get there. We sat there silent for long periods; I noticed I was unhurried with the mantram rolling silently in the background. I finally convinced her to call the rental car company, and waited with her until they arrived and took her back to the rental center at the airport.

### Access to resources needed

As I walked back to my car, the mantram still flowing, I was aware that I had acted in a way that was beyond what I would have thought I was capable of. I had remained calm and present, focused on those most in need around me for almost an hour under stressful conditions. And I knew that it was only the years of practice of Easwaran's teaching that made that possible, that gave me access to the resources needed in such a distressing situation.

— A member of our Affiliate Program

## Teaching me how to love

Throughout my childhood I shared a room with my older sister, who was born just fourteen months before me. We got along quite well all those years, thanks in large part to her even temper. She tolerated my ups and downs and demands regarding our shared space with little drama.

In spite of our practically identical nurturing, after each of us left home our views diverged in ways that challenged our relationship. Our political views settled into opposite camps — and stayed there. Then she became a Christian, while I, following our upbringing, was not at all religious.

For decades these differences kept us from being close. Sadly, through our 30s, 40s, and 50s, as we worked and raised children, we shared little of our lives. My disdain for her views kept me at a distance.

Recently, though, the ice seems to be thawing. Easwaran's teachings about the spark of divinity within everyone must be sinking in, because I now seem to be more aware of the things we have in common — family, a common childhood, sense of humor, and now, aging. We deftly avoid talking about politics, but there are lots of other things to talk about. I'm able to put aside my thoughts about her politics and enjoy sharing reflections about our lives. Sometimes I even try to understand the viewpoints of the "other side."

Since Easwaran has opened me up to the spiritual side of life, her faith doesn't seem as alien as it used to. I've also learned through Easwaran to appreciate Jesus, and now I actually feel



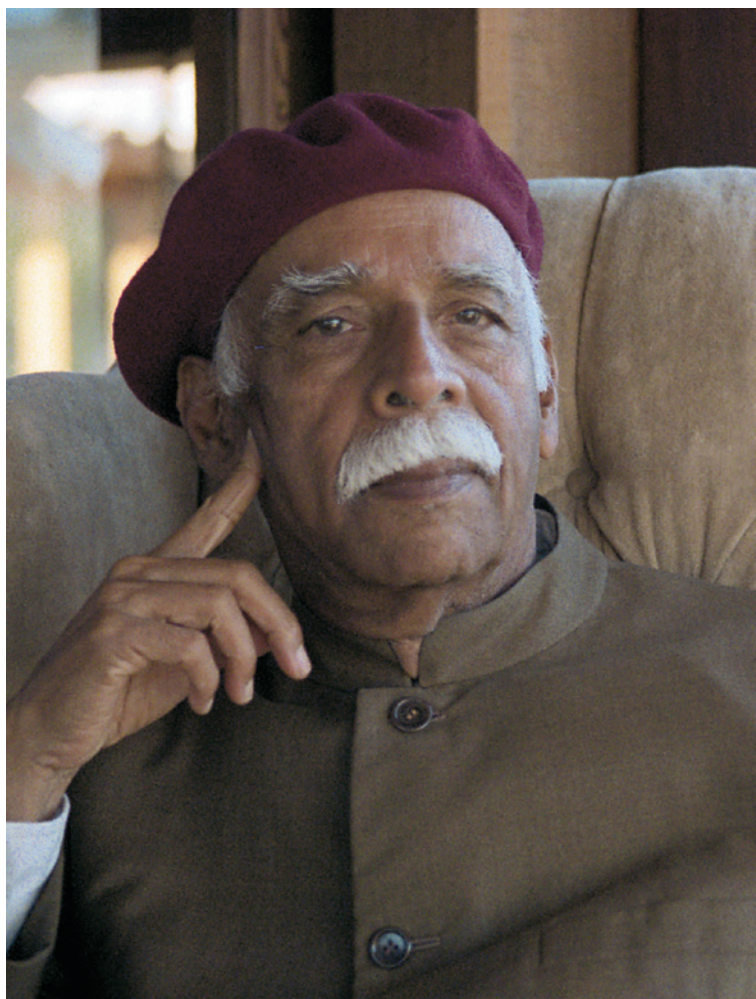
Ramagiri Ashram

like devotion to a spiritual teacher and sacred teachings is something we have in common.

Easwaran has taught me how to let go of the separateness I've felt toward my sister for so long. Through his books, talks, and eight-point program, he's been teaching me how to love.

— A passage meditator, California





Easwaran, 1980s



# Overcoming Separateness

Eknath Easwaran, from *The Compassionate Universe*

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Our age has been called the age of anger, and it is true that we are living in one of the most violent periods in history. But there is no reason for anybody to be left to the mercy of these storms, whether they be physical or verbal, whether they happen on the streets, on the battlefield, or in the home. Meditation and the allied disciplines enable you to take your convictions deeper and deeper into consciousness, so that they become a constant source of strength and security – even when you are severely challenged or threatened.

Whatever your field of activity, this is a most valuable asset. Life does not always throw roses; sometimes it throws tomatoes, or even hefty bricks. Today someone praises you, tomorrow they will blame you. Today your friends appreciate you, tomorrow the same friends will deprecate you – that is the nature of the world.

## Life as a trust

But if your convictions and your desire to love are established deep in your consciousness, your conduct will not be influenced by anger or the desire to retaliate. At the depths, you will be unaffected when others are hostile to you, so you will be free to respond in a way that helps both them and yourself. It is not that you will not suffer or be hurt, but you will no longer get afraid and try to run away. You will feel the grief of others deeply, but you will also have the resources to help them.

The more you look upon your life as a trust for the benefit of others, the less complicated – and the more effective and satisfying – your work and relationships will become. For most of us, dealing with other people is a very laborious process. “If I do this, is he going to like me?” “If I don’t do this, how is she going to react?”

Dwelling on ourselves like this exhausts us and undermines our security. Those who keep on thinking about *their* own needs, *their* wants, *their* plans, *their* ideas cannot help becoming lonely and insecure. The simple but effective technique I recommend is to learn to put other people first – beginning within the circle of your family and friends, where there is already a basis of love to build on. When husband and wife try to put each other first, for example, they are not only moving closer to each other; they are also removing the boundaries that separate them from the rest of life, which deepens their relationships with everyone else as well.

### How much can I give?

By putting the welfare of those around you first, you will gradually find it natural to focus your energy and creativity into a single sharp beam: how much can I give to those around me? Instead of asking “How much will I get?” or “What will they think of me?” your only question will be, “How much can I contribute to this situation?” The trustee’s motto is “I give, therefore I am.”

Sometimes I picture the mind as a freeway with many wide lanes leading to loneliness and despair – lanes like anger, greed,

and fear. On the other side of the freeway, there is just one narrow lane that heads toward peace and a healthy earth: the lane of love.

When you meditate on the prayer of St. Francis, going through the verses as slowly as possible, bringing your attention back every time it wanders – even if you have to bring it back twenty times in the space of a half hour – you are learning to drive your mind in one and the same lane: the lane of love, patience, and forgiveness.

And during the day, by trying not to dwell on your personal interests but focusing instead on the needs of others, you can deepen the effectiveness of your meditation.

## Becoming free

Once you have learned this marvelous skill of staying in the same lane, always putting the welfare of others first, you become free to respond with skill and judgment, even under fierce attack.

In order to get angry or greedy or afraid, the mind has to change lanes. When you have learned to drive in only one lane, no attack or misfortune can make you unloving or unwise. When you love like this, you begin to know what real freedom is. Nothing can keep you from loving. You live in a world that is whole, no longer divided between allies and enemies, exploiter and exploited. You swim free in a sea of love, at home with all people, all nature, and all creatures.

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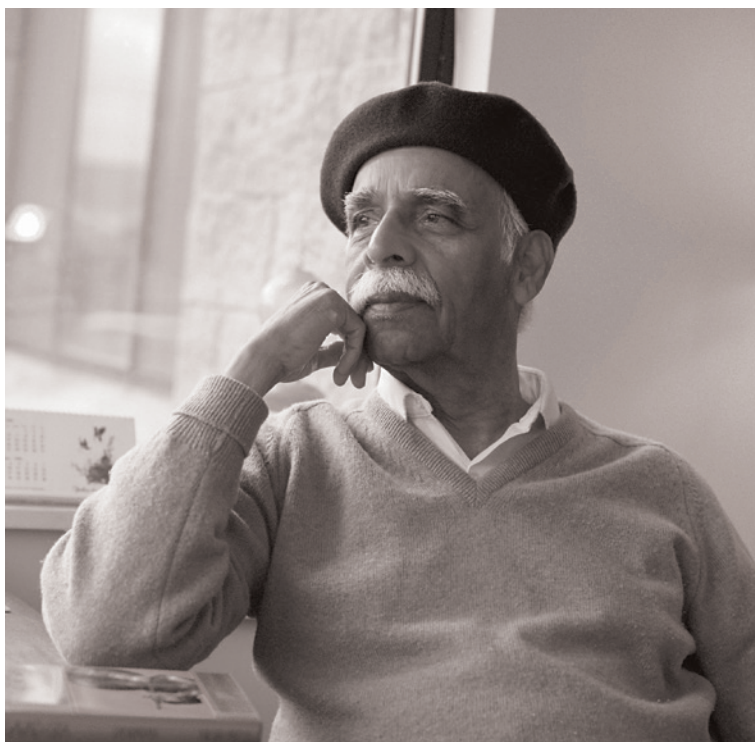
## Blaze a trail

In all our relationships – with our parents, our partner, our children, our friends, even our enemies – we can humbly but irresistibly blaze a trail for the world to follow. With every detail of our lives we can make a statement: In the battle to save the earth, the people of the world are all on the same side; on the other side are war, violence, greed, self-interest, and fear.

We need that inspiration more than ever. “If, as it sometimes seems, nations require an adversary to maintain their cohesiveness,” writes James R. Udall, “let global warming be the foil – it’s the common enemy. Though ancient antagonisms won’t vanish overnight, armies are vestigial from an ecological perspective: The globe needs tree-planters more than soldiers.” Let us take up these ancient tools for training the mind, which are the equal property of all the great spiritual traditions, and free ourselves from the confinement of those “ancient antagonisms” – the centuries of enmity separating country from country, race from race, individual from individual.

As I grew more and more dedicated to the practice of meditation, I found the boundaries by which I had separated myself from others slowly disappearing. It surprised me to realize that I was beginning to feel always at home, no matter where I was or with whom. I noticed this especially on my first trip to the United States.

I was traveling by steamship, stopping at ports of call to visit some of the great cities of the Middle East and Europe, and I remember sitting one beautiful afternoon on a park bench in Paris, watching school children at play. Later, when I dined with a friend, he asked me how I found the Parisians.



Easwaran, 1980s

I answered, “They’re no different from Indians.” Seated there in a place I had never seen, surrounded by a language I did not know, I felt completely at home.

Well, perhaps everyone feels at home in Paris. But in my case, that comment signified a momentous change taking place at the deepest level of my consciousness. Where I used to identify people on the basis of how they differed from me in language, politics, or personality, now those differences seemed superficial.

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## Change in perspective

Occasionally we do catch a glimpse of how much we all have in common, as when we behold great beauty, or when we are united by a powerful desire for peace or justice. But such moments come rarely, and are swallowed up all too quickly by a flood of conditioned thinking that once again rivets our attention on how this person insulted us or that country offended us, how life would be perfect if only we had just a bit more money or our opinions were shared by those in power.

It is a fine thing to be able to see and enjoy the little differences between people—the color of their skin, the language they speak, the name of their God. Those details are a precious and expressive part of who we are. But they are only a tiny part. Such a minuscule fraction is nothing to build a life on, or a political theory or economic policy.

When I experienced this change in perspective, it was as if all the boundary lines had been erased between myself and other people, between my country and other countries, between myself and the rest of life. Human beings of all races, even animals, birds, fish, all had become like family to me; I could no longer say where their happiness left off and mine began.

By the alchemy of self-transformation—which would have been beyond my reach without the tremendous inspiration and guidance of my grandmother—my vision had cleared and I could see that those Parisian children, and all the other children of the world, were not just children: they were my children, as dear to me as life itself.

## Vanishing boundaries

All of us have moments when we sense how much we have in common with the rest of life. The recognition may come in a small way, as when we see a whale struggling for its life and suddenly realize how dear life is to it; or it may come at times of historic importance, as when we listen to a leader like Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. Something makes us realize that the life we know and love is not different from the life others know and love, and that the powerful current flowing through us also flows through the hearts of those around us.

Glimpses of this truth are enshrined in our works of art, our literature, our religion, our philosophy. When we hear Yevgeny Yevtushenko saying, “Every bullet is aimed at the heart of a mother,” we can feel national boundaries vanish. When we are deeply moved by a piece of music or a play or a dance, a tiny window opens onto the vast sea of our common experience, the unity of all life. For a moment we are not alone but together, humbled by beauty and the truth.

## An artistic, simple life

Yet even for the great artist these are only isolated moments, islands of peace in a world that knows far more about separateness than unity. It is all the more heartbreaking when we know that in a moment the boundaries will be redrawn, the window will slam shut, and the world will go back to hating and killing. It is heartbreaking, until we realize that it is unnecessary – utterly unnecessary.

When I realized this – when I saw that the boundaries could be erased forever from my heart never to be redrawn, that I need never return to the insignificance of a life based on separateness – I knew I had discovered the key to living in a compassionate universe. Because all of life is a seamless whole, our only real suffering comes when we try to separate ourselves from it, imagining that a line can be drawn to divide your sadness from my happiness, your poverty from my wealth, your country's war from my nation's peace, nature's destruction from my health. Every moment of every day we have the opportunity to erase a boundary – with a smile or kind word, with the details of an artistic, simple life, with a loving thought for Mother Earth.

The moment a human being erases these boundaries and ceases to live as a separate fragment concerned only with petty, individual interests, he or she releases an irresistible force for health and harmony into the world. Even a small group of such people, living a simple, self-reliant, loving life, will be enough to bring about far-reaching changes in our society. 🌸



# Khatum

*Hazrat Inayat Khan*

O Thou,  
Who art the Perfection of  
Love, Harmony, and Beauty,  
The Lord of heaven and earth,  
  
Open our hearts,  
That we may hear Thy Voice,  
Which constantly cometh from within.

Disclose to us Thy Divine Light,  
Which is hidden in our souls,  
That we may know and understand life better.

Most Merciful and Compassionate God,  
Give us Thy great Goodness;  
Teach us Thy loving Forgiveness;  
Raise us above the distinctions and  
differences which divide us;

Send us the Peace of Thy Divine Spirit,  
And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being.

# Nine Insights into Overcoming Separateness

Ekknath Easwaran, from a selection of his books

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## 1. No shortcut to unity

Spiritual awareness is not something that just strikes us one day, like the apple falling on Sir Isaac Newton's head, and there is no shortcut to it such as taking drugs or using alpha-wave gadgets. It must be cultivated by the hard work of eliminating all that is selfish and separate in us, following a body of disciplines that is based on our teacher's own personal experience in realizing the unity of life.

## 2. The power of meditation

We talk about the power of the sun, so immense that we can grasp it only when someone says that the sun converts billions of tons of hydrogen into helium every second and still has enough to go on burning for billions of years; then something sinks in, and still we have only a clue. It is the same with meditation. The Gita tells us that all our anger, all our fear, all our greed can be transformed into pure love, a force that will go on working even after we shed this physical body: we can't grasp it, but we know the power of these negative forces, which make us act in ways we do not choose; we know the terrible power such forces can have over whole societies; and we have the example of Gandhi, a little man of our own times, who managed to transform these awesome forces into a love that has altered

history. Just as hydrogen can be transformed into helium, self-will can be transformed into love. The most angry person on earth can become the most loving; the most fearful can become the most fearless; the weakest can become the strongest. All this is the power of meditation.

### 3. Unity in our relationships

It is most of all in our human relationships that we realize the unity of life. Trees don't talk back. Animals don't say, "Now you listen to me." This give-and-take is the joy of the human situation. Wherever we go and say, "Now you listen to me," the other person will say, "You first listen to me." Where we find the you-first-listen-to-me attitude, there is the opportunity for patience. If there weren't impatient people around us, how would we learn patience? I once asked my grandmother, my spiritual teacher, why there should be people to scold me, criticize me, attack me. Her reply was, "How else can you learn patience?" Left to ourselves we find it quite pleasant to say "Quiet!" and prevent others from talking. People who are not used to hearing no can become insufferable. When we purify ourselves by learning to be patient, by learning to forbear, we come at last to see the Lord hidden in our own and everyone's heart.

### 4. The Lord in all forms of life

Those who are illumined see the Lord in every creature and are incapable of exploiting any other being for their own profit or pleasure. When we were on the Blue Mountain, we once saw a little black calf only a few months old, being led to slaughter.



Easwaran, 1980s

I looked at the calf, and it was as if tears were flowing from his eyes; he was trying to tell me in his dumb language, “See what your brother is going to do to me?” Right then I decided that at every opportunity I would put in a good word on behalf of all animals.

It is not easy to understand, when we are caught in cultural habits, that eating meat violates the indivisible unity of life. It used to be very difficult to find a restaurant that served vegetarian food. Now, however, there are good vegetarian restaurants springing up in many cities, and at every chance we get, we can recommend these restaurants to our friends. This is a simple way of showing our love and respect for the Lord, who lives in the lamb, the deer, the cow, and all other forms of life.

## 5. Work for the welfare of our family

The spiritual life, the mystics say, is not to be lived in a cave. Wherever we are, we should remember that the Lord is within us and act accordingly. It is not enough to bask in the idea that there is a harmony to all things. We must express this harmony in our lives by working for the welfare of our family and community. If we allow violent talk or behavior in our homes, for example, we are turning our backs on unity – and adding our own small bundle of fuel to the flames of violence that threaten the world. If we move away from others because they have problems or because they are unpleasant, we are turning our backs on unity. To discover the unity of life, we have to remain loyal even when others try to move away from us. It will help us, and it will help them too.

## 6. Distinguishing between people and their opinions

There is no more basis for identifying people with their opinions than for identifying them with the colors they wear. When we are able to distinguish between a person and his opinions, we begin to see the unity of life: not only with individuals, but with countries, cultures, and races as well.

## 7. Freeing ourselves

In order to grow up to our full beauty and maturity, we have to learn very often to go near what we have turned away from, to go with appreciation to the person we have always avoided. There is joy in this, and there is fulfillment in this, because we can do it for the sake of others—the parent for the child, the husband for the wife, the wife for the husband, and the friend for the friend. When the nervous system has been reconditioned for serving others, we will find ourselves free to enjoy what we do not like just as much as what we like. In the monastic order, I am told, they apply this kind of discipline with artistic perfection. If there is someone who has always been fond of books, out he goes into the garden, and if there is someone who is always after the potato bugs, in he goes to the library. The principle is to free ourselves.

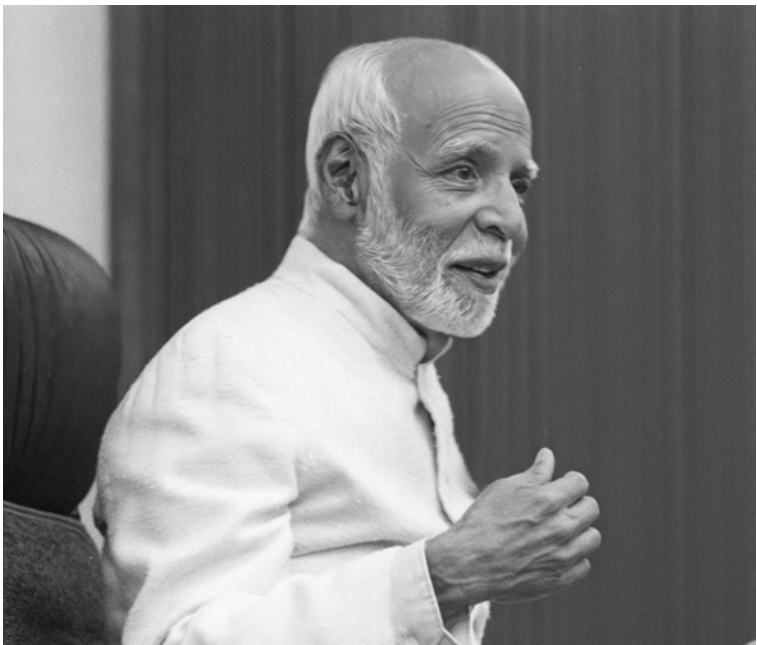
## 8. The holy name in everything

The holy name reverberating in the depths of consciousness transfigures our entire vision of life. Just as the mantram transforms negative forces in consciousness into constructive power, so it now transforms all our perceptions of the everyday

world into unbroken awareness of the unity of life. When I go for a walk on the beach my ear hears the waves crashing and booming against the shore, but my mind hears them as *Rama, Rama, Rama*. This is not something I try to do; it's simply how I hear it now. And when I hear the birds singing, their song too becomes *Rama, Rama, Rama* – with different accents, with different harmonies, but the final perception is the holy name. It is the same with the breeze, with music, with everything. As Swami Ramdas says, the name is God, not a symbol but reality; and when we are established in the mantram, established in awareness of God, everything is full of Rama – full of joy.

## 9. Little people working together

I am a believer in ordinary people and do not look to governments and corporations to set the world right. In India, the tropical sun dries up almost all vegetation during the hot season, and a shade tree is a precious shelter from the deadening heat. The leaves of the tamarind tree are very small, but they are packed so closely together that they give better shade than the large leaves of the banana tree. My grandmother, my spiritual teacher, used to point to the tamarind tree and remind me that a large number of little people, working together closely, can accomplish much more than a few big people. The Lord within, whether we call him Krishna, Christ, the Buddha, or Allah, is the source of all power, and when we live for others in accordance with the unity of all life this power flows into our hands, enabling us to take on the biggest problems facing the modern world. 🌸



Easwaran, 1990s



# All of Us Are One

Eknath Easwaran, from our Journal archive

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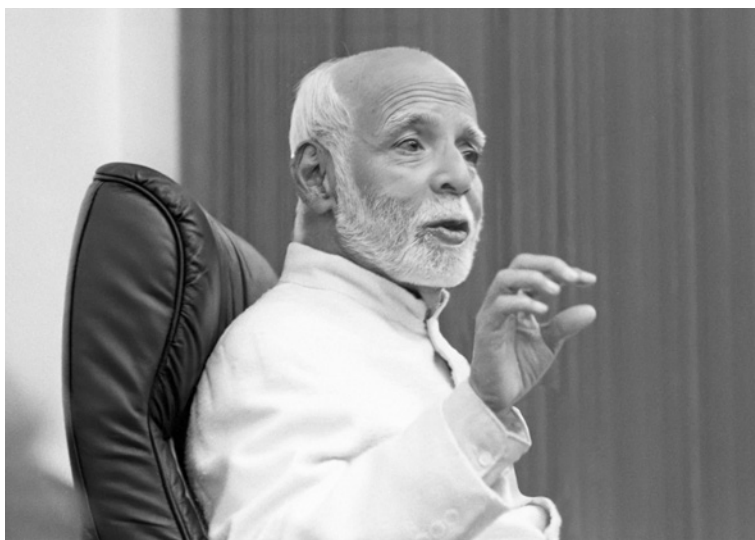
One of the surest proofs of spiritual awareness is that you will have respect and concern for all people, whatever country they come from, whatever the color of their skin, whatever religion they profess.

When I was working as a professor in India, one of the responsibilities I enjoyed was attending graduations. Located near the geographic center of the country, my university drew students from all over India – Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, and Christians, dark-skinned Tamils from the far south, fair-skinned Pathans, Ladhakis with Oriental features, and every shade of difference in between. Graduation was a colorful affair, as much a celebration for me as for any of my students – a crowning achievement we had worked for together.

Invariably, that unity in diversity would remind me of another graduation perhaps five thousand years earlier. The Chandogya Upanishad, one of the most ancient of India's scriptures, tells the story of a young man named Shvetaketu who has just graduated from one of ancient India's "forest academies" and returns home to tell his father what he has learned.

## Spiritual wisdom

"You seem to be proud of all this learning," the father tells his son. "But did you ask your teachers for that spiritual wisdom which enables you to hear the unheard, think the unthought, and know the unknown?"



Easwaran, 1990s

“Well, no, Father,” Shvetaketu confesses. “They never mentioned such a thing. What is that wisdom?” And his father proceeds to tell him, in one of the most luminous and lyrical passages in the annals of mysticism anywhere:

“As by knowing one gold nugget, dear one, we come to know all things made out of gold – that they differ only in name and form, while the stuff of which all are made is gold – so through this spiritual wisdom, we come to know that all of life is one.”

Look around at the gold ornaments people wear. They appear different – necklaces, earrings, bracelets, pendants – but all of them are made of the same gold; it is only the shapes and sizes that differ. Similarly, Shvetaketu’s father is telling him, though people may be white or black, golden or red or brown, tall or short, Western or Eastern, all of us are one.

It is so simple to understand: what hurts you hurts others. You wouldn't like anybody to tell tales about you. You wouldn't like anybody to speak unkindly to you. You wouldn't like anybody to provoke you. That is all we have to remember – yet it is something we always forget.

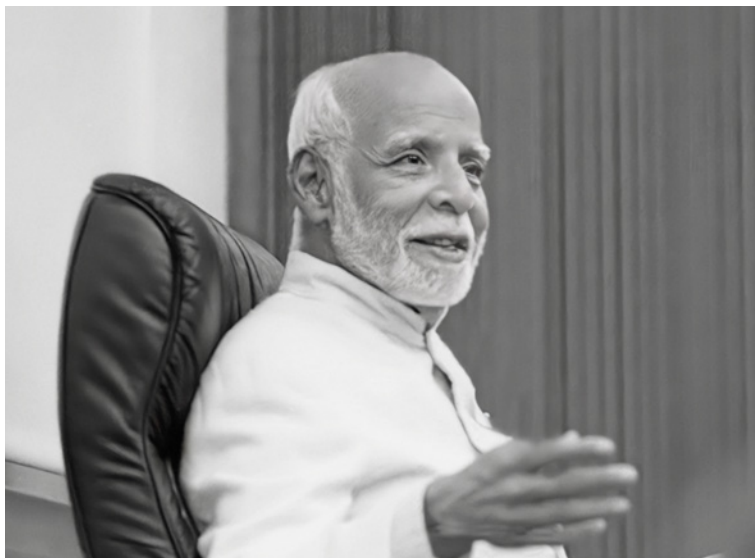
### “You are that”

“My teachers must not have known this wisdom,” Shvetaketu says, “for if they had known, how could they have failed to teach it to me?” He is being very nice about his teachers. “Father, please instruct me in this wisdom.”

“Yes, dear one, I will,” his father replies. “In the beginning was only Being, one without a second. Out of himself he brought forth the cosmos and entered into everything in it” – into everybody, father and mother, son and daughter, friend and enemy, you and me. “There is nothing that does not come from him. Of everything he is the inmost Self. He is the truth; he is the Self supreme. You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that.”

This is the refrain of the story, repeated over and over to drive it home: “*Tat tvam asi*, You are that” – that divine essence from which all creation came. Not only are all of us one, but each has the same spark of divinity at the core of our being. The Sanskrit scriptures call it simply Atman: the Self.

This is not just an Indian idea; it is the essence of mysticism everywhere. In each of us there is an essential core that cannot be shaken by any circumstance, that time cannot change, that death itself cannot reach. If we could only be aware of that in every moment, what a difference that would make in our daily lives!



Easwaran, 1990s

## A defect in our vision

“As bees suck nectar from many a flower,” the father continues, “and make their honey one, so that no drop can say ‘I am from this flower or that,’ all creatures, though one, know not they are that One.”

In other words, separating people on the basis of superficial differences – race, religion, gender, age – is a kind of optical delusion. Discriminating against others on any pretense whatever shows a defect in our vision. It is because our vision is false that there is racial discrimination, exploitation, and war. That is why the Buddha says the greatest service any of us can render is to correct people’s vision – not by preaching, but by personal example.

There is a good deal of compassion in this approach. People who are unkind simply don't see others, don't see the rights of others. People who are selfish are blind to the needs of others. People who think only about themselves are suffering from myopia.

We don't blame people for being short-sighted; we encourage them to correct their vision. In fact, we are all half blind because we behave towards other people not as they are, but as we think they are – what the Upanishads call “name and form.” We respond to them according to how they appear to us. We like people because of their form; we dislike people because of their form; we cling to people because of their form; we move away from people because of their form. It's a simple but far-reaching way of accounting for why we lack in kindness or respect to those around us: we are really not seeing them; we are seeing our own images of them, projections we make of them in our own minds.

## Unshakably secure

The same spark of divinity – this same Self – is enshrined in every creature. My real Self is not different from yours nor anyone else's. The mystics are telling us that if we want to live in the joy that increases with time, if we want to live in true freedom independent of circumstances, then we must strive to realize that even if there are four people in our family or forty at our place of work, there is only one Self.

This realization enables us to learn to conduct ourselves with respect to everyone around us, even if they provoke us or dislike us or say unkind things about us. And that increasing respect will make us more and more secure. It will enable us gradually to win

everybody's respect, even those who disagree with us or seem disagreeable.

When the sages talk about “realization,” what they mean is making this Self a reality in our daily living. We have to practice it in our behavior. Never talk ill of others, they are saying, even if they have faults; it doesn't help them and it doesn't help you. Always focus on the bright side of the other person: it helps them and it helps you. Work together in harmony even if you have serious differences; it will rub the angles and corners off your own personality. Then you will never feel lonely, you will never feel deserted, you will never feel inadequate; you will be unshakably secure. Interestingly enough, this gradually makes those around us more secure too.

## Work in harmony

The Upanishads tell us these words should “enter the ear.” They shouldn't just beat about the lobes; they should go in – and not just in through one ear and come out the other; we should let their wisdom sink into the mind. Then, the Upanishads say, “Reflect on them”: learn to practice these teachings in your daily life. When we see people who are difficult to work with, for example, that's the time to practice. Instead of avoiding such people or quarreling with them, why not try to work with them? Why not work in harmony and try to support them? This doesn't mean conniving at weaknesses, and it doesn't mean we have to say yes to everything they do or say; that's a wrong conception. To connive at somebody who is not living up to his responsibilities not only doesn't help the situation; it doesn't help that person either. Seeing the Self in those around us

means supporting them to do better – again, not through words, but through unvarying respect and personal example. It is this unwavering focus on the Self in others that helps them realize its presence in themselves – and in us and others as well.

## Make divinity a reality

It is relatively easy to see the Self in others when they agree with us. It becomes difficult when they criticize us or do the opposite of what we want. But contrariness is part of life. We come from different homes, went to different schools, have been exposed to different influences, hold different views; it is only natural that we differ in all kinds of ways.

Yet these differences amount to no more than one percent of who we are. Ninety-nine percent is what we have in common. When we see only that one percent of difference, life can be terribly difficult. When we put our attention on the Self in others, however, we cease dwelling on ourselves, and that opens our awareness to the much larger whole in which all of us are the same, with the same fears, the same desires, the same hopes, the same human foibles. Then, instead of separating us, the one percent of superficial differences that remains makes up the drama of life.

We can try to remember this always: the same Self that makes us worthy of respect and love is present equally in everyone around us. When we base our relationships on this unity, showing unwavering respect and unconditional love to all, we give them – and ourselves – a sure basis on which to stand. Everyone responds to this. It is one of the surest ways I know of to make our latent divinity a reality in daily life. 🌸



Christine Easwaran



# United in Heart

## *The Rig Veda*

May we be united in heart.

May we be united in speech.

May we be united in mind.

May we perform our duties

As did the wise of old.

May we be united in our prayer.

May we be united in our goal.

May we be united in our resolve.

May we be united in our understanding.

May we be united in our offering.

May we be united in our feelings.

May we be united in our hearts.

May we be united in our thoughts.

May there be perfect unity amongst us.

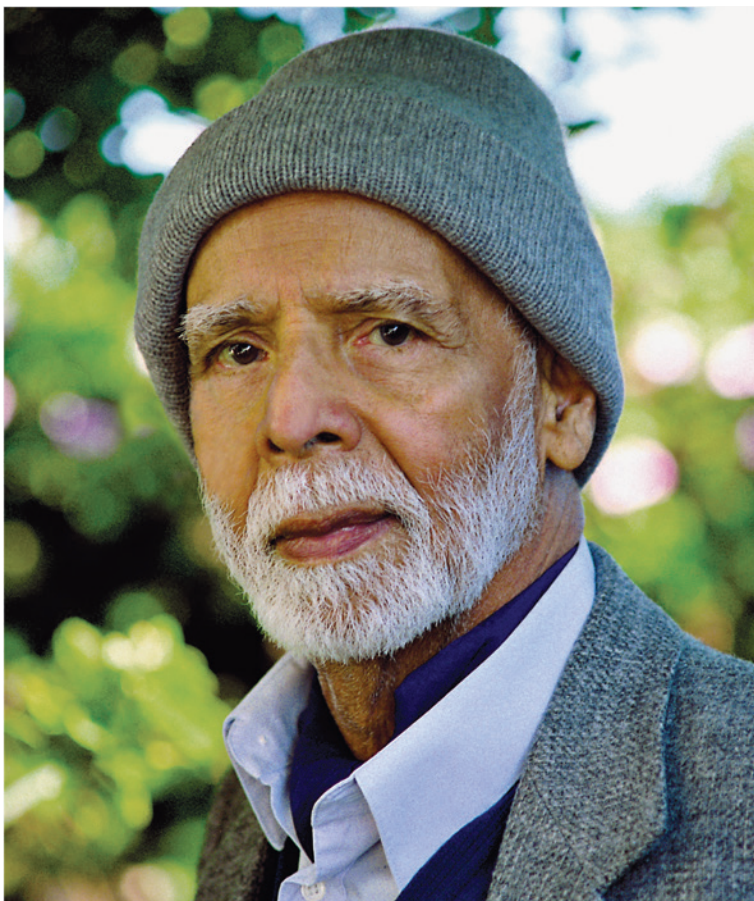
# Discovering Who We Are

Ekknath Easwaran, from *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*

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The whole purpose of spiritual discipline is to discover who we are. In the supreme climax of meditation called samadhi, I discover that there is no separate me, no separate you, that all of us are governed by the underlying unity that is divine. On making this discovery, the rest of our life becomes an earnest endeavor to live in harmony with this unity, never inflicting suffering upon any creature but contributing to the best of our capacity to the progress of those around us.

Sri Krishna emphasizes that until and unless we come to have at least a dim awareness of the Lord within – which is what he calls *shraddha*, faith in oneself, faith in the unity of life, faith that the Lord is present in all – it is not possible to live in peace. Violence, in whatever form we see it, is a negation of this central unity. Any attempt at violence can only move people further and further apart. In every home and community there are likely to be occasional differences, occasions when someone may make a mistake. But the home or community can be held together if we believe in this underlying unity and act upon it. 🌸



Easwaran, 1990s

## 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 video and audio recordings of his talks, and offers retreats and other 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 BMCM Programs team

### Introductory Webinars

A chance to try out passage meditation.

[www.bmcm.org/programs/introductory-webinar/](http://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/](http://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.



BMCM Satsang Live

### BMCM 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/](http://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 Webinar:

August 17

### Returnee Workshop:

October 5

### Weeklong Retreat:

October 18–22

### Introductory Weekend Retreats:

July 26–28, September 27–29

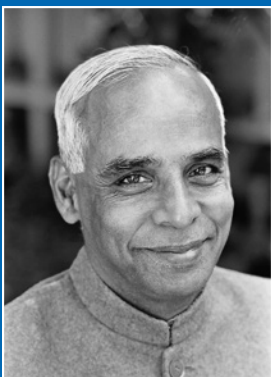
### Returnee Weekend Retreats:

August 9–11, November 8–10

### Setu (Senior) Retreat:

September 13–17

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



Discovering the Self is the greatest achievement possible. It brings with it everything else we have been looking for — peace of mind, joy, security, fulfillment. Once we make this discovery, we are no longer separate individuals. Our life becomes a lasting, positive force which does not end when we shed the body at death.

— Eknath Easwaran

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