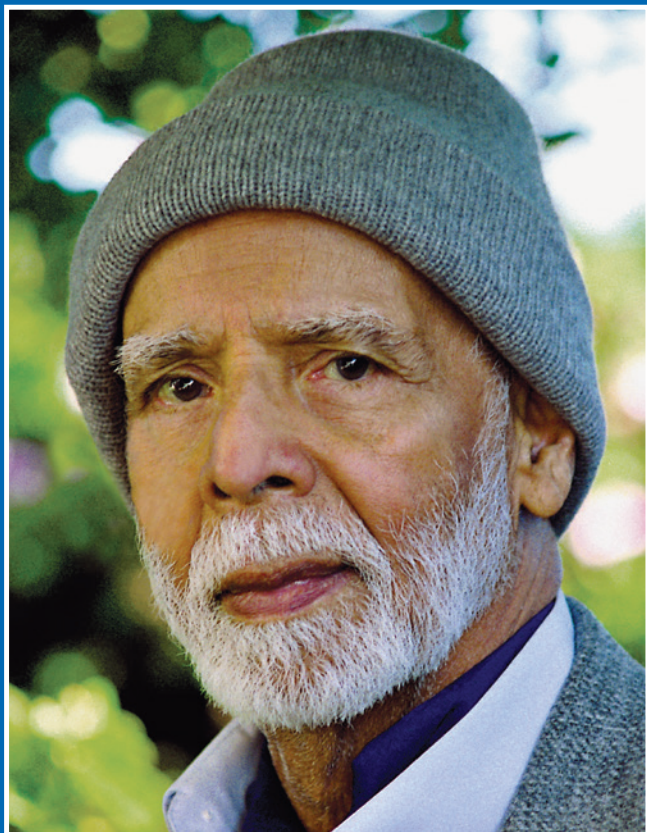


Ekhnath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

WINTER 2025



## A Spiritual Renaissance

## In this Issue

This issue is based on a special journal from our archive, featuring Easwaran's teachings from the last decade of his work. He tells us that "in every age, in accordance with the needs and distress of the times, God inspires rare men and women like Saint Francis of Assisi or Mahatma Gandhi to show the world a way out of the suffering that engulfs it."

He also writes that "spiritual movements do not depend much upon geography and numbers. It is quality that is most important, the depth of longing and devotion."

Community stories show how readers are applying his eight-point program, and an article from Christine Easwaran reminds us of the importance of our contribution, however small.

Easwaran closes with this message: "Just as there was a great revolution in this country two hundred years ago, our country needs a great spiritual revolution here and now. And the wonderful feature of a spiritual renaissance is that it has nothing to do with governments or corporations. It can be brought about only by little people like us – every man, every woman, every child – changing their personality from selfish to selfless, from human to divine." – The BMCM Editorial Team

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P.O. Box 256, Tomales, CA 94971

[www.bmcm.org](http://www.bmcm.org)

[info@bmcm.org](mailto:info@bmcm.org)

707.878.2369

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# A Spiritual Renaissance

By Eknath Easwaran, from our journal archive

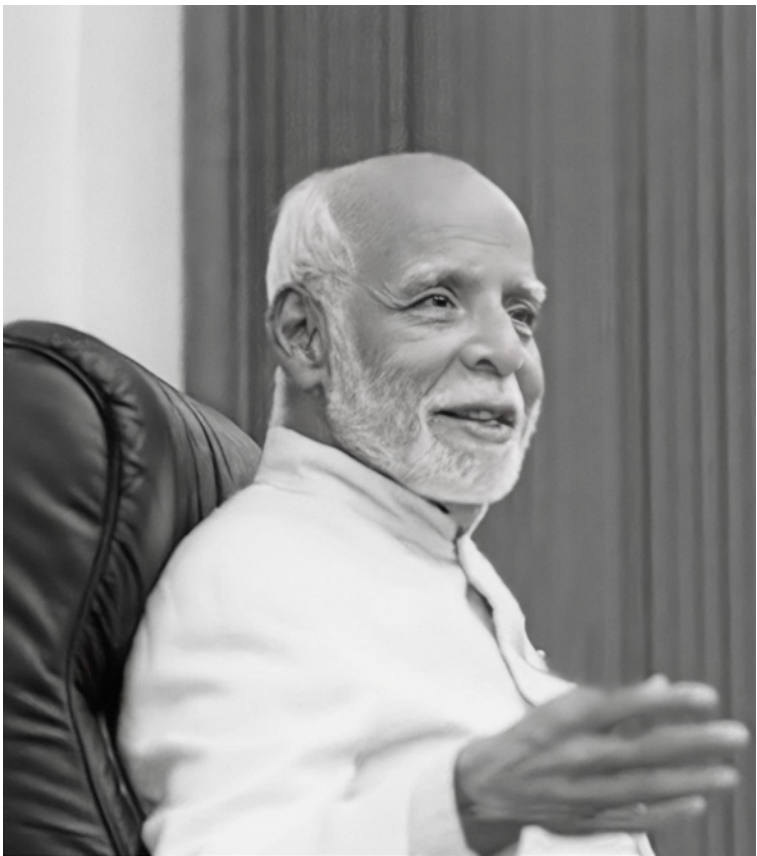
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The Bhagavad Gita assures us that in every age, whenever spiritual values are being forgotten, the Lord will be born on earth as a human being to dispel the darkness and turn us again toward the light.

Our scriptures often dramatize this as Mother Earth going to the Lord and appealing to him to lift from her heart the burden of hatred and violence brought on by her children. It is this appeal, the collective longing of suffering humanity, that draws the Lord into our lives.

The Gita's words are usually interpreted as referring to a great incarnation of God like Sri Krishna, the Compassionate Buddha, or Jesus the Christ. But I also interpret this promise in another way. In every age, in accordance with the needs and distress of the times, God inspires rare men and women like Saint Francis of Assisi or Mahatma Gandhi to show the world a way out of the suffering that engulfs it. That is another way in which God can answer the appeal of suffering humanity: by being reborn in someone who embodies the spiritual values needed to restore the world to peace.

This is the call for which Saint Francis was born. One day he walks into a little church, San Damiano, just as you or I might wander out of curiosity into a chapel in the country that had fallen into ruin. He enters without any sense of purpose, and all of a sudden the walls of the church echo with the voice of God: "Francis, my church is falling into ruin. Repair my church." It



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

happened in the twinkling of an eye, in the span of an *Ave Maria*. But the words went like arrows of light deep, deep into Francis's heart and demolished the foundations of his superficial life, building in their place a foundation so unshakable that European civilization would never again be the same.

This cannot be said of any political leader or world conqueror, but it is true of this poor little man of Assisi. His conquest still spreads; he still calls unto the depths in millions of hearts.

### The stormiest century is the right century

Italy at the close of the twelfth century was a very sanguinary society, with blood flowing over the land. When Francis appeared before the Pope to seek approval of his new order, the Pope had a vision of this frail monk in tattered robes supporting the whole Christian church. But it is not only the church; the whole of Europe cried out for someone who would embody the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Similarly, the more you think about it, the more you will realize that the twentieth century is just the one for Gandhi to be born in. Do you remember Trotsky's remark that anyone who wants a quiet life has chosen to live in the wrong century? But for Gandhi, the stormiest century is the right century. He used to say, "I love storms."

One of the advantages in the Lord coming to our rescue in a person like Francis or Gandhi is that we can see their transformation. Great saints often begin life with weaknesses that you and I can recognize. We can observe Gandhi's transformation through his twenty years in South Africa, and Francis is so human that we

find it easy to identify with him even though his transformation was not gradual but very rapid. I don't think anyone who had known Francis as a young man expected him to take to the spiritual life. That was grace with a capital G.

## See the Lord born in your own heart

But the best way of looking at the miracle of incarnation is to see the Lord born in your own heart. As you can see, I am a terribly ambitious man in spiritual matters. A great German mystic dares to say, "What does it matter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, if he is not born in your own heart?" That is the tradition to which I belong.

The secret of this transformation is simple. Saint Francis, Moses, Teresa of Avila, Jalaluddin Rumi, all would agree with the words of Gandhi: "Make yourself zero." What acts as a barrier between ourselves and the Lord is our individual ego, our individual separateness, and our individual self-will. If we can sacrifice all these three, the veil between us and the Lord falls.

This is not mere self-sacrifice. It is worship: we are worshipping the Lord by sacrificing everything that excludes him from our hearts. When Gandhi says that his great ambition was to make himself zero, he is telling us his mode of worship. Like Saint Francis, he longed with all his heart to empty himself of himself so that God could fill him with His presence. "God expects but one thing of you," Meister Eckhart says: "that you should come out of yourself in so far as you are a created being and let God be God in you."

The power behind this transformation is the longing to remake oneself in the image of someone who embodies our loftiest

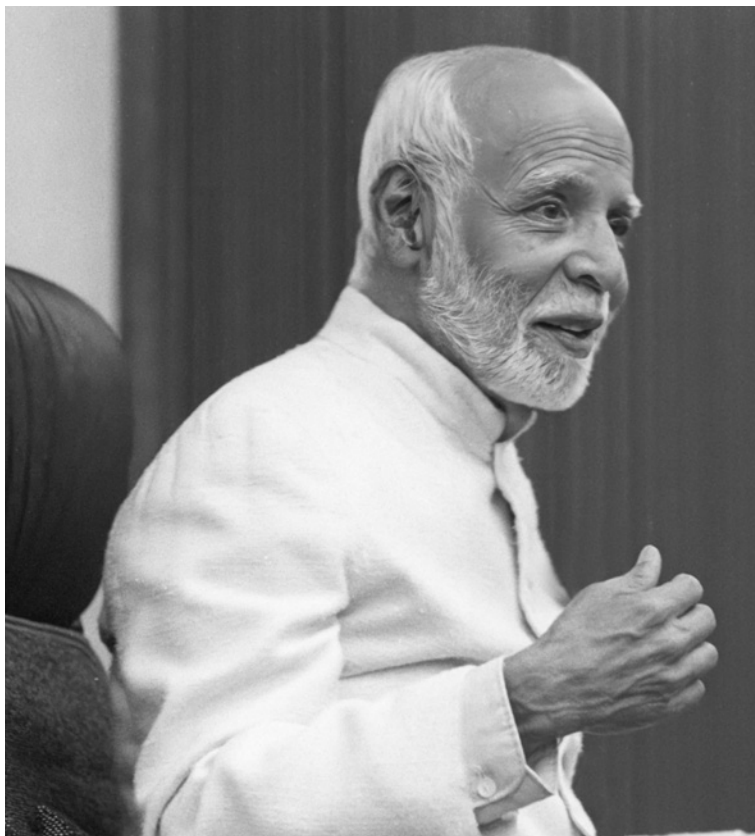
concept of the human being. As Saint Bernard explains, “The main reason for the invisible God incarnating himself physically in the midst of human beings was to lead them who can only love physically to the healthy love of his physical form, and then, little by little, to spiritual love.”

## Attracted to God in different forms

This doesn’t mean we need to go shopping for our favorite incarnation, saying to the Buddha and Sri Krishna and Jesus, “Oh, you don’t suit me, you don’t suit me; *you* suit me.” That’s not the way to go about it at all. You don’t choose the incarnation; the incarnation chooses you, by coming in a form and personality that fulfills the deepest longings of your heart. That is the purpose of what in India we call our *ishta* or “chosen ideal.”

In other words, this varies from person to person. Different people are attracted to God in different forms. For example, I would not be deeply drawn to an incarnation who sits on a mountain top aloof from humanity and never comes down to the plains. Although I was utterly devoted to my spiritual teacher, my grandmother, whose *ishta* was Sri Rama, I was deeply drawn to Sri Krishna. In the Gita, whenever Krishna addresses his devoted disciple Arjuna, he seems to be speaking directly to me. This doesn’t rule out other divine ideals from my heart. I am still drawn very deeply to the Buddha and to Jesus the Christ. But Sri Krishna is the perfect ideal for me, the wisest figure who ever lived.

This same longing is what attracts us to a particular spiritual teacher, who embodies our longing for God in a very personal way.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

## The needs of different seekers

Just as the Lord appears in many forms to satisfy different kinds of people, there are different types of teachers to meet the needs of different seekers. For example, there are teachers from India who travel all over the world and address vast gatherings. Others, like Sri Ramakrishna, stay in one place and devote their attention to training a few devoted disciples who are willing to dedicate their lives to attaining the supreme goal.

In the West, it is still not very well understood that even the choice of a teacher has to fit a seeker's needs. That is why I deprecate people being caught up by exotic appearances and rituals. It is not helpful to go by fads and fancies in these matters. It takes a long time to find a teacher who fits your deepest needs.

In Berkeley, California, in the nineteen-sixties, when hundreds of students attended my talks and classes on meditation, skeptics told me, "How many of these students do you think are really going to stick to the spiritual life?" I said, "You are going to see." And on more than one occasion someone objected, "These young people are here because of the need of the times." I said, "Exactly. The need of the times is a deep spiritual hunger, and it is to that need I am responding."

## Favorable currents

This is why a God-inspired person is often born in violent times but surrounded by very favorable currents. According to the Gita, those who have practiced spiritual disciplines in a previous life are born again into the precious intimacy of parents who meditate and friends who support them,

to be drawn to someone God-inspired to help carry on his or her work.

The one doubt the Buddha nearly yielded to was when Mara, the Tempter, said, “Yes, you have attained nirvana, but who will believe and follow you?” That was a terrifying question. The Buddha kept quiet for a long time before he replied, “There will be some whose eyes are clouded by only a little dust. It will fall.” That is the certitude that comes: sooner or later, a band of very responsive people will come who only need to be reminded of the goal for their eyes to clear.

This has been very well verified in my own life, but we see it illustrated in the lives of mystics throughout the world’s religions. There are wonderful stories of the men and women who first came to follow Francis. Gandhi drew people from all over the world who devoted their lives to helping him. And I don’t think any saint in modern times has had a more devoted group of disciples than Sri Ramakrishna, who lived in Bengal about the middle of the nineteenth century. Every one of his direct disciples was a person of outstanding stature. From childhood onwards, they wanted nothing but to realize God. That is why Sri Ramakrishna’s message has been carried around the world undiminished after more than a century. When such a person comes into the world, our scriptures say, he draws into his orbit men and women who are ready to devote their lives to continuing his work.

## An intimate connection

When Sri Ramakrishna meets Naren, the college student who would become Swami Vivekananda, and eulogizes him in extraordinary terms, Naren is convinced that Sri Ramakrishna has lost his reason. But there is much more to this than the intellect can grasp. Sri Ramakrishna was able to see an intimate connection which Naren did not understand. Because of this connection, he charged Swami Vivekananda with carrying out his work after his passing. Sri Ramakrishna never traveled, never gave lectures. It was Vivekananda who started the Ramakrishna Order in India and the Vedanta Societies in the West, as an instrument of Sri Ramakrishna's work.

Sri Ramakrishna said of another of his disciples – Rakhal, Swami Brahmananda – that he had been one of the cowherd boys who played with Sri Krishna on the banks of the Yamuna River centuries before. He was reborn to be with Sri Ramakrishna in this age. Ramakrishna had a galaxy of great disciples like this who must have practiced spiritual disciplines under his direction very ardently in a previous life in order to be born with him again. Our intellect cannot reach these flights. I don't ever try to follow them. But whether we believe in reincarnation or not, Sri Ramakrishna's work could never have spread so widely and so permanently except for the devoted work of his disciples. Because of them, I think he has been blessed more than the founder of any other monastic order.

## An inspirational force

So the God-inspired person is an inspirational force that continues to work long after his physical passing. But even so, the force has to be renewed now and then by another God-inspired person. Even the movement begun by Saint Francis, I believe, will be renewed like this at the appropriate time. One of the mysteries is that this renewal need not come from within the movement. It can come from outside, from someone who towers like an isolated peak into the sky.

When Christine and I were in Kotagiri on the Blue Mountain in the early nineteen-sixties, we were in contact with a number of Franciscan friars, some of whom were from Kerala, who had come for the summer to a beautiful friary near where we lived. I was invited there to speak, and I looked upon it not as an opportunity to address them but as an invitation to kneel before Saint Francis. They must have understood this because they were very deeply responsive to me, even though I was, in their eyes, neither a Christian nor a Catholic nor a Franciscan.

It was during those days that Francis appeared to me in a vision. I never talk about visions, but what must have taken place was that the grace of Francis entered my heart. I wish I could try to tell you more, but I don't find any words which can express what I experienced. At that time, Francis was not somebody other than me. There is no observer, you see, so it is not possible to describe when the duality is transcended. But Francis entered the stream of my consciousness, the stream of my life. The proof is the transformation that took place in my life. I may not put ashes on my pasta, but the words of his prayer are imprinted on the very depths of my consciousness.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s



Shanti meditation hall, Ramagiri Ashram

# The Prayer of Saint Francis

*Saint Francis of Assisi*

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

## A higher mode of knowing

Perhaps that is why I chose the Prayer of Saint Francis among all the thousands of passages to recommend for meditation. It comes to you charged not only with the love and wisdom and tenderness of Francis, but with my own passionate desire to become like Francis. If you can see through the words, Francis still lives in that prayer. It is not just his ideas; it is he himself that I see in the words. That is a higher mode of knowing, whereas reading even a brilliant biography of Francis, like the one by G. K. Chesterton, is still a lower mode of knowing.

This is a web of very intimate connections. Our scriptures would say that what draws the Lord to be born again in the heart of someone like Saint Francis of Assisi is the unified power of longing for the Lord that must have been building up in strife-torn Europe for generations. That longing drew the Lord to Francis just as it drew people from the towns around Assisi to follow him as the image of their highest ideal. I think it is Chesterton who says that if we cannot understand the Christ of the Gospels, we have only to look at Saint Francis, so human and yet so transfigured, to see Jesus again.

## When times are darkest

It is possible that if some of us long with all our desires unified for someone like Saint Francis to appear again, he *will* appear. I do not have the slightest doubt about that. Similarly, in India, when the time comes for the people to want Gandhiji back again, he will come, though of course in a different physical form. We needn't expect someone with big ears or a would-be troubadour; these are just superficial characteristics. When the

need is acute, the spirit that moved Gandhi, Saint Francis, and other great God-inspired men and women will come in another form that fits perfectly into the needs of the twenty-first century.

In fact, when I see the terrible negative trends in this country, I sometimes console myself that it is when times are darkest that a great soul arises to bring light again. As Sri Ramakrishna put it, even if a room has been dark for a century, when a lamp is brought in, the darkness disappears.

### People who are deeply devoted

Spiritual movements do not depend much upon geography and numbers. It is quality that is most important, the depth of longing and devotion. In India, even though the country's timeless values have been grievously eroded by modern civilization, I think there still must be communities where devotion to the Lord runs deep.

I understand that while monastic orders all over the world are having difficulties getting new personnel, the Ramakrishna Order and other orders in India are thriving. Many young men and women join when they are eighteen or nineteen, completely untouched by the world. Not long ago I received a letter from a young physician in Central India who has joined the Ramakrishna Order. It was very uplifting for me to read that his decision was blessed by his parents, who attended the ceremony for initiation.

There was a time when good families in Spain and Italy and elsewhere in Europe were proud to have at least one of their children join a monastic order. It was like that in my native Kerala also, but I think no longer. Throughout the modern world our objectives have changed; our level of consciousness has changed.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

But it is still possible that with a religious renaissance, we will again have young men and women whose highest vocation is to take to the spiritual life.

In fact, it is not impossible that the work our meditation center has done during the last thirty-five years may prepare the ground for somebody like Saint Francis to be born right here in California. It is not impossible at all.

I am sure that even here there must be people who are deeply devoted. They may not be noticed by the mass media, but it is men and women like this who sustain the world. One of India's modern saints used to say that the very fact that the world survives the tragedies it does shows that there are still people devoted to God.

### A deep vein of devotion

All of us have a deep vein of devotion in the depths of consciousness. That is the wellspring of our longing for God. But people need to undergo exacting spiritual disciplines to remove the crust that blocks this current of devotion so it can flow. During the last thirty-five years of this work, I have come to the careful conclusion that many, many people in this country – not only the young, but also the not so young – are ready for the challenges of the spiritual life. But unfortunately they don't know it, and even if they knew it, they don't know where to go or what guidelines to follow. That is where modern civilization is at a loss. In order to bring the Lord into our lives, we have to unify our desires, and that can be done, as far as I know, only through spiritual disciplines.

This is the importance of our work. I don't have any modesty

where our mode of meditation is concerned; I think it is perfect for our times. It is practical, precise, and profound; and it is universal. You don't have to accept any philosophical claims to practice it, and you don't have to adopt a different religion. When I came to this country, I went about systematically looking at all the methods of meditation available, and I was open-minded enough that if somebody had a better way, I was prepared to follow it. But I have never found a method so open to everyone and suited to the temper of our times.

## **Meditation is concentration**

You may have no idea what was in the air in the sixties. People were saying all kinds of things. "Close your eyes and imagine you are on a cloud drifting slowly over the sea . . ." There was even a school called Chaotic Meditation, for which the mind has a natural gift. People are so used to the media and to going by appearances that exotic robes and occult claims sweep them away. I used to wear a suit and tie in those days just to show that one could wear a three-piece suit and still be a man of God.

In every religion, whatever it is called – meditation, contemplation, interior prayer – meditation is concentration. This has nothing to do with concentration on an external object. The aim of meditation is to still the mind, and concentration on objects of the senses cannot still desires. If you concentrate on a shop window, you want to go and buy what you see. In meditation, you want to get detached from such cravings more and more, until the mind is still.

## Single-hearted dedication

Saint Francis, Sri Ramakrishna, and other great saints founded monastic orders, but a formal monastic movement is not really necessary. What is essential is this unification of desires. Our Ramagiri Ashram is not a monastery, but if we had put up a building for single people it would have been a monastery in spirit. It is not the particular initiation that makes a monastic order; we have people right here who have made a monastic commitment in their hearts.

I wish I could convey to you in words even a little of what this single-hearted dedication means. Ever since I started meditation, all I have wanted is to see this final encounter between my Atman and the Lord. Into that one overriding desire all my lesser desires have flowed. I don't have any other desire. In the Gita, Sri Krishna says that he is desire itself when that desire is pure. All of you know how much passion I have, but it all has only one single goal: to come face to face with my Lord.

This is the kind of unified desire I want all of you to develop, for the sake of an anguished world that desperately needs a spiritual renewal to lead us out of darkness into light.

## Practical suggestions

For those who are prepared to do this, I have a number of practical suggestions for unifying your desires. Please write these suggestions down so that you can remember them every day. Keep them on your desk. This is of the utmost importance for your children – and for those who do not have children, I recommend my attitude: all children are my children. That's

why they respond to me so easily. All children are God's children; therefore all children are yours and mine.

First, be very regular about your meditation. Have your meditation at the same time, if possible at the same place. If you can meditate early morning, that is very, very helpful. In the tropical climate of India, my grandmother used to get up for meditation at about three o'clock. In a temperate climate, five or six o'clock is reasonable, but in general, the earlier the better.

For those of you who want to go forward as rapidly as possible and whose schedule allows, I would say the time has come to have regular meditation every day both morning and evening. If you cannot do this during workdays, you can meditate twice on the weekend.

### Keep giving your very best in meditation

Be very systematic about your meditation. Follow all the instructions carefully, and read my *Passage Meditation* book over and over. Books like this mean more each time you read them, but the words can't go deeper with each reading if you only read them once. I am not claiming any stylistic excellence for my books, but they are written with compassion, with understanding, and from my own personal experience – and I hear often that they are not bereft of humor, as well.

Keep giving your very best in meditation, and don't ever let sleep come. Use any means available to prevent yourself from sleeping, because when you fall asleep in meditation, you stop growing.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

## Keep repeating your mantram

Second, during the day, repeat your mantram as often as possible. Whether it is *Jesus, Jesus*, or *Barukh attah Adonai*, or *Rama, Rama*, or *Om mani padme hum*, or *Allahu akbar*, every religion has mantrams which have been sanctified by millions of people, so don't make up your own. The waters of holiness flow everywhere. And don't keep changing your mantram. If you do, you are like a person digging many wells at the same time; you will not find water anywhere.

Whenever you are walking, keep repeating your mantram.

Whether it appeals to you or not, try to keep repeating it whenever you are angry or afraid or anxious, or in the grip of a strong desire. If you can possibly have a good, fast walk at such times, that is the very best way to drive the mantram deeper. The rhythm of the mantram will mingle with the rhythm of your footsteps and steady the rhythm of your breathing, with which the rhythm of thinking is intimately connected.

If you find yourself about to explode in anger, rush out for a fast walk repeating your mantram. Practice makes perfect: you will find that in half an hour's time your mind has become calmer and your heart has become kinder. This gives you confidence. Gradually, whatever problems come, you know you have the remedy for it. It is this confidence that is called faith.

Keep a notebook at home and at work, and if you find your mind getting agitated, keep writing the mantram with concentration for one or two pages. You will find that the manual activity helps to focus and steady your mind. This is effective with children, but it works equally well with adults too.

## A precious treasure

In certain traditions in India, the teacher gives a mantram in initiation and says, "Don't reveal it to anybody!" This emphasizes how precious this treasure is, and I respect that tradition. But I follow a great South Indian mystic, Ramanuja, whose teacher told him, "Don't reveal your mantram to anybody. They will gain the benefit, but you will lose it all." Ramanuja went straight to the temple tower and called, "Listen to me, everybody who can hear! I want all of you to be happy, even if it means I will be miserable all my life." Of course, his teacher was

highly pleased. So share your mantram with anybody who asks for it; I will take the responsibility.

Older people who are seriously ill, perhaps in their last days, can benefit from the mantram greatly. If they cannot repeat it, hold their hand and keep repeating the mantram silently for them. You will see for yourself how comforted they will become because of the depth from which you are able to repeat the holy name.

### Fill your mind with lofty spiritual ideals

There is no magic about this. I have been repeating the mantram with a single-minded dedication most people can't imagine, picking up every minute like a miser. When I travel, I don't say a word; I keep repeating my mantram. Those traveling with me (except the driver) do the same. There are many, many hours you can use for the mantram that are idly lost in watching television, in unnecessary talk, in doing ridiculous things to kill time. As Thoreau says, you can't kill time without injuring eternity.

One of the best ways to use free time is to fill your mind with lofty spiritual ideals. This is one reason for spiritual reading and satsang. If we do not fill the mind with lofty ideals, modern civilization is sure to fill it with very meretricious stuff. I would recommend a few of our books even for family reading.

Take one of our books with you when you travel. Carry it with you wherever you go and dip into it anytime. It will speak to your condition because every page is based upon my personal experience with the thousands of people whom I have had the privilege of guiding in their meditation.

# Community Stories

## The Healing Power of Satsang

For several years, my Sunday mornings have had a lovely routine: taking part in the online BMCM Satsang Live program, watching an Easwaran video, and then meditation. After meditation I would phone one of three family members who lived thousands of miles away. But time marches on, and one by one my family members grew ill and ultimately passed away. I didn't realize how important those Sunday telephone calls were to me until the last family member (of my generation) passed away.

My grief had begun a few years prior with the sudden passing of the family member I was closest to. In truth I still miss her physical presence and wish I could pick up the phone and tell her of something that happened during the day or thoughts about a book I had read. With each subsequent death, it seemed to me that there was less light in the world.

### Spiritual fellowship

Without being consciously aware of it, I found myself turning more and more to satsang, or spiritual fellowship, within the BMCM spiritual family. I renewed my commitment to participating every week in local satsang by Zoom. In addition to participating in this weekly satsang, I continued attending BMCM Satsang Live once a week.

Interspersed with all this, I participated in BMCM online retreats and webinars. Now that I met the Programs requirements, I was able to join the online Affiliate Program

and even attend an In-Person Pilgrimage Retreat this year at our much-loved retreat house. I became committed to strengthening my spiritual schedule, and my meditation and daily efforts were enhanced, knowing that my fellow participants were striving alongside me.

## Power and grace

My turning to my spiritual family, my spiritual brothers and sisters, wasn't a conscious decision on my part to deal with losing the last generational members of my family. I am certain that it was the gentle nudge of Easwaran and Christine that opened my eyes to these opportunities.

The conclusion of the BMCMLive Satsang group meditation still elicits a bittersweet moment to my day. I counter this by saying a prayer for those family members, their children and grandchildren at the conclusion of my meditation. Having encountered various successes with one or another of the eight points over the years, I believe the last few years have caused me to fully appreciate the power and grace of satsang.

– A passage meditator

## The Ultimate Goal

I've searched most of my adult life for a spiritual practice that sustains me. And although I'd been a long-time meditator, it wasn't until I discovered Easwaran's passage meditation that my search was over. The eight-point program has changed my life for the better and my love for Easwaran continues to grow.

However, this past spring, my practice became a bit shaky and off kilter. My husband and I made the decision to move from our farm where we'd raised our family and lived for over 40 years. I knew selling our farm and buying another house wouldn't be easy. But I'm a take-charge person, and plunged right into planning, scheduling, cleaning, packing, organizing, and directing.

### Stuck in a revved-up state

As we hit snags and some significant bumps along the way, life suddenly seemed to ramp up to a dizzying speed. I became overwhelmed and was scrambling to keep up with all the demands. Somehow, I managed to continue my spiritual practice, but I was floundering and unfocused – especially in my daily meditations.

Finally, we sold our farm and moved into our new place, and I couldn't wait to get my sadhana back on track. But I found myself stuck in a perpetual revved-up state, like I'd forgotten how to relax. I often snapped at my husband and wanted everything to be just so at the new house. That's when I had to admit that my take-charge persona had turned into impatience, bossiness, and a hefty portion of self-will.

Then unexpectedly I had an opportunity to take a five-day BMCM online retreat, and it couldn't have come at a better time. Almost immediately my mind calmed down and my body began to unwind as I soaked in the support of the participants and their invaluable tips for strengthening my practice.

### My sadhana is stronger

Firsthand, I began to experience how the eight points were interwoven and working in unison. I learned too, that my hectic pace and frenetic thoughts were spilling into my meditations, preventing me from going deep. And even though I was putting effort into my sadhana, it was definitely not *full* effort nor fused with enthusiasm. I had lost sight of the ultimate goal.

Perhaps the greatest aha moment of the retreat came when I asked one of the presenters for more precise instructions on how to use the passages during meditation. In her gentle response, she suggested being more flexible with myself and others. Those words resonated in my soul. And when I realized their truth, I consciously released some of my rigidity, creating an opening for my teacher to enter. Becoming aware of Easwaran's presence is a precious blessing and has brought me an immeasurable sense of security.

Now, thanks to the support of the BMCM family and especially Easwaran's love and guidance, my sadhana is stronger and I'm prepared to face the next storm in life with more grace and equanimity.

– A passage meditator

## The Gift of Faith

Before meeting Easwaran on video, that Tuesday evening, in a church in Petaluma, I had not read any of his books, attended any of his lectures, read about him, or had any idea what an ashram was. I went because some friends needed a ride to some class on a Tuesday night and their driver was no longer available.

So there I was walking down the aisle toward a projector screen, stopping when I could see the screen well enough without my glasses. It turned out that my seat was directly across the aisle from Christine Easwaran, but at that time I had no idea she was Easwaran's wife.

None of this was making any sense to me. My friend tried to explain the program to me including handing me a copy of Easwaran's book, *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. But I still I thought I was just passing through.

And then the lights dimmed, all chatter ended, and the video began. Thirty minutes later, I was hooked. Still am. I cannot imagine my life without Sri Easwaran and Christine and the ashram.

Before she died after a five-year battle with cancer my wife gave me a quote by Tagore to hang on my bathroom wall. I see it many times a day. "Faith is like the bird who feels the light and sings while the dawn is still dark."

I believe Sri Easwaran is helping to lead me down this path of darkness toward the light. He has given me the gift of faith.

– A passage meditator

*Find how to watch Easwaran's videos free of charge in the Easwaran Digital Library section at [www.bmcm.org](http://www.bmcm.org).*

## The Mantram with Young Adults

As our two teenagers grow into young adults, their growing abilities in debate (reassuring any concerns about mental acuity!) and defiance (strength in the face of opposition) is regularly on display. The sheer ability to repeat one's central argument can confound even the most loving parent.

When tempers flare, as they sometimes do, my spiritual practice helps me to respond calmly, at least some of the time. First step: repeat the mantram silently before answering! If there's no time to do so, just thinking about the mantram now and repeating it later helps me out.

And sometimes I repeat the mantram and don't respond at all. I quietly absorb what is being said and nod my head, knowing the storm will soon pass. Being slowed down even a fraction in these situations helps the kids to pause as well. But mostly I think it just calms my own mind. Often a response is not really required, and a short silence can allow them to hear the words they just said, which are sometimes hurtful. (They really know how to send some zingers into just the right spot!)

Invariably after one of these exchanges, the kids will speak to me quite cheerfully a little while later. These are lovely and reassuring moments that remind me what good and resilient people they are becoming. Finally the process finishes, when I thank the Lord for blessing me with a wise and patient teacher.

– A passage meditator

# A Spiritual Renaissance

continued

Eknath Easwaran

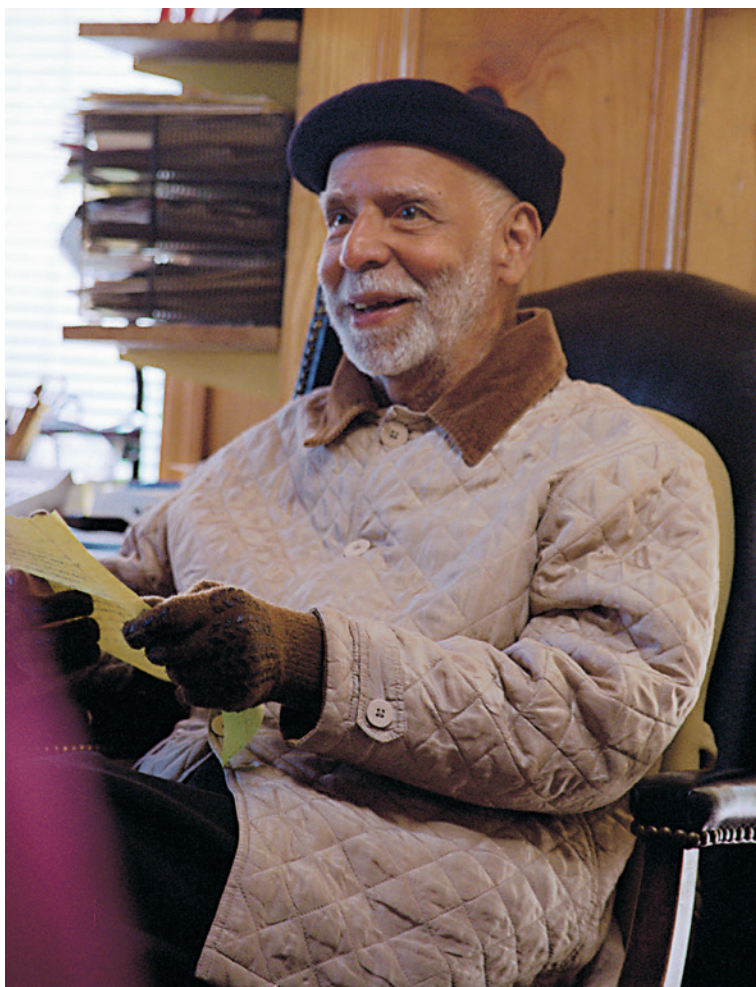
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Elevating spiritual values are particularly important for families. A spiritual reawakening is not going to happen in one generation. Our children have a very precious role to play, and we need to nourish them for that role from today onwards.

I don't think any of us realizes how pernicious are the threats to a child's mind in the modern world. It is not that the mass media are inherently bad, but we are not mature enough, we are not farsighted enough, we are not selfless enough to use the tremendous power of television and film. So my personal appeal would be to turn your TV off and make time for nourishing your home with the images and ideas needed to make this a better world.

Children have wonderful creative faculties which will not come into play if they grow up with interactive video and TV. I can give you a striking illustration: I never give extravagant praise, but this summer some of our children got together and put on a very moving three-act play on a spiritual theme, with roles for all ages, in just six days. I doubt very much if even the Royal Shakespeare Company could do a play in just six days.

Young people and adults can get together and enact plays like this. You can write your own plays, drawing upon the rich spiritual traditions of all the great religions. The creativity tapped by this kind of spiritual focus, for adults as well as children, releases unsuspected currents of devotion.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

But just as in choosing meditation passages, don't restrict yourself to one religion only. Draw on all the spiritual traditions. People don't talk about "German science" or "French science" or "Canadian science" as if scientific truth varied from culture to culture. Similarly, I don't make distinctions between religions at all. A great emperor who lived in India two hundred years before the birth of Christ said that if you don't respect other people's religions, it shows you lack respect for your own. All of us are children of God.

### Children will pick it up

This is the atmosphere our children should grow up in. In such an atmosphere your whole vision changes, and your children will pick it up. Children absorb prejudices first from their parents, and this is how you can give them a firm foundation that nothing on earth will shake.

When you are practicing the eight-point program and learning to develop the inward grace to withstand the vagaries of circumstance, your children are absorbing much more than you think. I did not know until I left my high school how much work my grandmother had already done for me. Don't think I was born with wings on my shoulders and a halo around my head. Far, far from it. That is why I have so much compassion for people who make mistakes – which means everybody. It is so easy to make mistakes, so hard to guard ourselves against the pressures of our times, of peer groups, of friends, of the mass media.

## Never give up on any child

When I made mistakes, my granny would take me to task, but she would never give up on me or withdraw her support. That is why I say never give up on any child. They will commit mistakes. They'll burn their fingers. Take them to task, but stand by them. When a student teacher came to me for advice when she was starting her career, I put it in two short phrases: "Don't lower your standards for anybody on earth, and don't give up on anybody on earth."

Whatever young people may do, in their own language they are often crying for help. It is the responsibility of all of us older people – not only parents, but all older people – to set them a higher example every day by translating the Prayer of Saint Francis into our lives. When your children see you going into the meditation hall agitated, angry, or afraid and coming out after an hour cheerful, calm, and compassionate, it registers in their heart.

## Push with your personal example

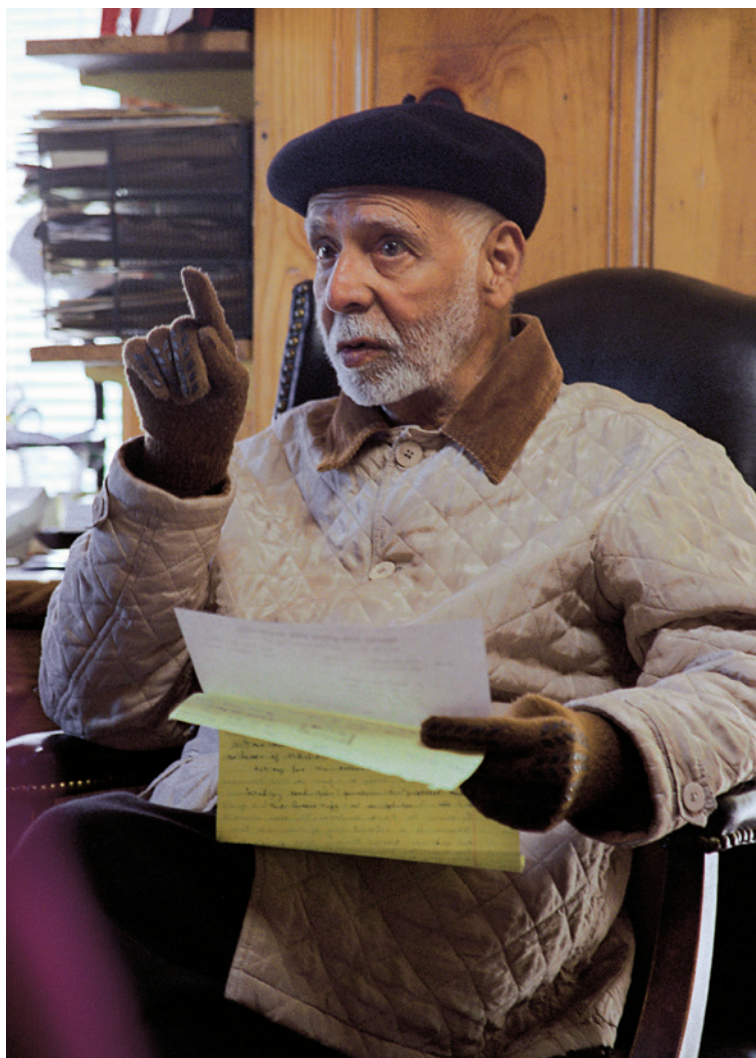
So don't push your children. Push them with your personal example. Teenagers particularly, you know, don't like doing anything under "environmental pressure." But they cannot resist the example of somebody who thinks more about others than about himself, who helps others more than she looks after herself. Our scriptures say over and over again that any person who moves closer to God every day will gradually carry the family, the community, and even the whole country.

Similarly, don't put pressure on your partner. When someone close to you sees the deep changes taking place in your own character, conduct, and consciousness, he or she cannot help absorbing the message below the surface of consciousness.

### **An endlessly demanding job**

Being a parent is an endlessly demanding job. A parent's love does not mean letting your children have their own way. One of the great messages of the Gita is to look on everyone with the same love. This is terribly difficult with children, but I look upon all children as my own, and not just verbally. While you have the responsibility for feeding and caring for your own children at home, it is good to regard all children with equal love; it will slowly remove this compulsive attachment that hinders our vision. Though we may not see it, children respond very poorly to this kind of compulsive attachment on the part of their parents.

That's why my grandmother, who was very tough, would never make distinctions between me and other children. Sometimes she would scold me in the presence of my friends, which hurt me terribly. When I would plead, "Granny, why do you do this in front of my friends?" she would smile and say, "Because it will hurt you more. That's how you will learn." That's not lack of love; that's great love. I would remind every mother and father that this is an important part of enabling children to grow up secure.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

## Learn to direct our attention

Next, please start reducing your desires, beginning on the physical and sensory level. This is absolutely essential for going deeper in meditation. Many of the difficulties in meditation can be resolved if we learn to direct our attention, which is constantly wandering outside in search of satisfaction. One of the Sanskrit names for a bee is *bhramara*, “wanderer.”

A little nectar here, a little there, all day long. But at least the bee doesn’t wander aimlessly, as human attention does. That is why concentrating attention is so intimately connected with reducing desires. On the sensory level, on the emotional level, on the aesthetic level, even on the intellectual level, we need to remove, one by one, every desire that draws the mind away.

I can easily guess a person who is not able to direct attention because I see them getting caught in every little thing that goes on around them. Such people find it very difficult to meditate. That is one of the reasons why I ask you to keep an eye on your attention even after meditation, during the rest of the day.

## A deeper mode of communication

For example, a lot of attention is wasted on unnecessary talk. When I hear unnecessary talk, it’s almost as if I close my ears; I don’t give it any attention at all. In school I had a classmate who could actually close the lobes of his ears without using his hands. That is what I do with my inner ear; I don’t even hear what is taking place.

Even when you are working, you can concentrate on the job and avoid unnecessary talking. There is a deeper mode of communication in which words are hardly necessary. I used

to tell Carol, one of the teaching assistants for my meditation course at Berkeley, that for the finals we might try releasing a number of parrots which would come perch on the heads of people and talk, talk, talk. Students whose concentration was undisturbed would get an A.

You can practice restraint with food, too. Eat in moderation, eat only what is actually nourishing for your body, eat only at mealtimes, and eat only when you are hungry. There are times when the body is trying to tell you, “I don’t need any food.” It is the mind that does the craving. That is why Gandhi says training the palate is such a valuable aid in training the mind.

## Learn to govern your senses

All the great religions observe traditional days of restraint when it comes to food. In the Hindu tradition, the eleventh day of every fortnight is a fast day, a custom my grandmother observed meticulously. I do not recommend fasting for us because we need to work, but there is equal restraint in the Buddha’s “middle path”: moderation in food, eaten in the company of people we love. But many people today have food cravings, and usually not for something beneficial. Acting on these cravings is just the opposite of training the mind. When you want a particular kind of ice cream, say, that’s the one kind you shouldn’t order. This is how you learn to govern your senses: training in little, little ways, in everything. These are precious aids to meditation.

You may think these are small things and not very effective. Many people say, “What does it matter?” and give in, which is just what the mind wants. But below the surface of

consciousness, the message of restraint is transmitted clearly. You are telling your mind, “You had better change your likes and dislikes, because you won’t be getting this kind of ice cream now.” That is language the mind understands.

## Your example matters

Often we don’t see ourselves doing these things. My first course in meditation in this country was in the home of a very hospitable couple who were careful to set out attractive containers of salted nuts for their guests in strategic places around the room. After one or two of these meetings, I asked my audience whether they had had their dinner before coming to the talk. “Oh, yes,” they said, “we’re quite full.” But after the break, every one of those bowls would be empty. These are things we do without thinking; that’s what habit does. One of the signs of awareness of God is that you become aware of everything you do, so that nothing can take place without your approval.

In this connection, it is good to remember that your example matters, even in these little things. Children, of course, don’t go by what you say; they go by what they see you do. And at work, too, you will find that your quiet example influences others.

## Train your eyes

Every one of the senses can be trained. I train my eyes even now. I’ve always been a regular reader of the newspapers, and I like to look at two or three every day – including the *Wall Street Journal*, which contradicts everything I stand for. So every morning the *New York Times* is put near my door with the headlines upwards, and every morning, even after so many years, my eyes – partly out of compassion – still want to steal



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

a glance at the headlines to find out what is taking place in the world. Every single morning I have to tell my eyes, “After breakfast.” Every morning. See, that is how our senses are. So train them gently; don’t be harsh. I don’t say, “I don’t want you ever to look at headlines again!” I say, “Wait until after breakfast.” And they say sheepishly, “All right, boss.” Then, after breakfast, I can read the paper in freedom.

The shopping mall is one of the best places to train your eyes. I haven’t been able to visit a mall for a long time, but I used to get a lot of my material at such places, particularly at one or two elaborate malls in San Francisco. I was interested in seeing the kind of articles displayed for sale, but what fascinated me

was looking at the people looking at those articles. Their eyes were glazed with what the Gita calls *moha*: infatuation. When you buy something out of infatuation, you don't buy it; it buys you. This can happen to anybody who becomes fond of material things. I have never favored giving material things to children because they may gradually develop an infatuation for them.

## Attention and desire

If you watch your mind, you can easily see the connection between attention and desire. Attention goes where desire goes. If you want to consolidate your desires, you have to train your attention and your senses not to go after what you like and not to avoid what you dislike. Only then can you go deeper and reduce what might be called “hidden desires”: the subtler cravings for pleasure, affection, prestige, or security that lurk beneath the surface of consciousness.

A lot of unnecessary talk, for example, arises from a need to draw attention. This can be subtle, and often we are not aware of it. In Berkeley in the sixties I was amazed at how many young people sought attention, particularly among the students. I have a very soft corner of my heart for young people, and I never hold such foibles against them. But I used to advise those who were responsive to me that when the chance comes to gain attention, that is a good time to sit in a place where you won't be recognized or observed at all, and give others an opportunity.

## Give the full credit to others

This kind of insecurity plagues almost everyone. Once I became aware of it in myself, when a time came even for credit I had earned, I would make it a point to give the full credit to others who had helped. When your ego wants recognition, to be able to say “No, it is these people who deserve the credit” stirs something deep. That is what it means to put others first and yourself last. Whenever you put yourself last, you will be able to deal with your own jealousies on a highly effective level.

This is how you set a hidden desire right. You can practice it every day. You may begin mechanically, but gradually insecurity disappears and there comes a profound awareness that in putting others first and yourself last, your own joy is not reduced but multiplied a hundredfold.

Again, it often happens that people who think they are the essence of loving-kindness find to their surprise that they are bursting with anger beneath the surface – and anger, when suppressed, can do more harm than when it is expressed verbally. When anger is smoldering under the surface like this, any little situation can fan the embers into flame. You may not like some of the things that go on in the world, but that need not make you an angry person. I don’t like many of the things that go on in the modern world, but I don’t get angry. I get compassionate, and compassion often gives you the skill to help improve a situation through your personal example.

## The six big crocodiles

Surprisingly, hidden desires do not vary much. Beneath the surface, most of us are remarkably unoriginal. Hinduism covers most of the ground with what it calls the six big crocodiles that lurk in the backwaters of everyone's consciousness: lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and malice.

On the surface, however, these Big Six hide in a wide variety of subtle disguises. It is extremely difficult to recognize them in ourselves and begin to reduce them systematically, but this is essential for spiritual growth.

Malice, for example – ill will – can disguise itself a thousand ways. One way to counteract it is to remind yourself, wherever you see someone whom you dislike or who belongs to a different nation or religion or race, that they are all children of God just as you are. But an intellectual understanding is not enough; you have to act on it. When you find somebody behaving discourteously towards you, remind yourself at that time that the Lord is present in him or her too, and return that discourtesy with kindness, respect, and love.

## A colleague who taught me a good deal

Let me tell you, I don't think any place is more difficult to practice this in than the English department of a university. Science has objective standards, but in the humanities everyone is free to maintain that his or her particular views are true – and to take it personally when others have different ideas.

I had a colleague who taught me a good deal without intending to. Every opinion I had about literature was anathema to him, and I have to admit that his opinions seemed wide of the



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

mark to me as well. He would look daggers at me whenever I entered the faculty lounge, and naturally I used to sit as far away as possible. But when I began to understand what was going on beneath the surface, I would deliberately sit down next to him and ask him for his views. He seemed to relish contradicting me, but whenever he did so, I would remind myself that the Lord is in him also and reply with courtesy and respect. It didn't have much effect on him, so far as I could tell, but it had an enormously beneficial effect on me.

### A hidden jealousy

Often ill will is prompted by a jealousy we don't even see. Particularly in a competitive society, there are a lot of people who are driven into action not because they want to improve themselves, but simply because they want to have what others have. That is why I have always been against competition.

Many, many people are capable of this kind of undirected, “free-floating” jealousy, which affects whoever comes into their orbit. It can take surprising forms. When Gandhiji was assassinated, one of the comments made by Bernard Shaw was that it is very dangerous to be good. It provokes a lot of jealousy – and not the kind of jealousy that one can see and set right, but a hidden jealousy which can destroy people.

That is what motiveless malignity does to human beings. There is no rhyme or reason to it: when such people are driven by jealousy, any little cause can goad them into fury; any little provocation, which would leave most of us unaffected, can throw them into destructive action.

### Look for this hidden motive

It is essential for all spiritual aspirants to look for this hidden motive. We can be victims of it without our knowledge, which may be one of the reasons why meditation doesn’t deepen as well as it should. The practical remedy is that when other people succeed in something, remind yourself that it is you who are succeeding with them. And when others fail, try to help them instead of basking in your own emotions.

These are all frailties to which all of us are subject. Don’t think anybody escapes from them. Most of us do not know the contents of our unconscious for a very good reason: we wouldn’t be able to survive it. In the deeper stages of meditation, when you come across some of the terrible negative emotions lurking in your own consciousness, you will have compassion for yourself to the extent you have been showing compassion to others. This is the practical side of Jesus’ words: “Bless them

that curse you; do good to them that hate you.” Forgive all those who have offended you, because the embers are there, still hot in consciousness.

## An effective strategy

Here it is helpful to use an effective strategy: a brief, regular period of detached reflection followed by determined redirection. For just ten minutes a week, perhaps on Sunday, look over the previous week in detachment. Detached reflection is not really looking at the past. You are observing recurrent negative patterns of thinking or behavior which you want to correct.

And please remember to look through my eyes, which are full of compassion. Don’t get engrossed in these compulsive habits, don’t get absorbed in them, don’t punish yourself for them, but get enough knowledge of your hidden motives so that when they come up again during the following week, you can watch and correct them carefully.

There are many practical ways of doing this. Particularly in the second stage of sadhana, we will all have opportunities for making right choices – and also for making wrong choices. The practice of detached reflection and determined redirection can help everybody to make the right choice and avoid the wrong choice.

## Strengthen the will

Of course, this requires willpower. Most of us have been taught to respect a high I.Q., but what plays a much more important role in life is W.Q.: “will quotient.” If W.Q. and I.Q. are put into the ring together, I.Q. will fall with a thud after a few rounds. Fortunately for us, will is connected with desire. Compulsive

desires in our deeper consciousness, of which we are not aware, are directly connected with the will; that is why they keep driving us on. If we are meditating well, we can strengthen the will by reducing our desires every day.

I have a very compassionate attitude even towards the drug habit, one of the most destructive of compulsions. But the most insidious drugs are not physical. They are the six drugs listed in the Bhagavad Gita: lust, anger, and the rest, the hidden drives that sap our will.

### A brave duel with a desire

I assure you over and over again, if you want to enter the deeper levels of consciousness, you have to lessen your desires. People with many desires will find it almost impossible to meditate. It is not that they are incapable of meditation, but their vital energy is scattered extravagantly in all kinds of directions, particularly through the senses. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, I believe, was once asked by her older sister why she hadn't soared to the heights Thérèse had. Thérèse wrote playfully on her sister's thumb, "Too many desires."

We can all begin by not nourishing unnecessary or destructive desires. If we don't feed them, they will lose weight rapidly. But the real fight begins when you defy a desire. When a major desire comes, you can challenge it. Just throw down the gauntlet. The desire will gladly pick it up, because desire has hold of the will.

For those who are meditating well, when a major desire comes, you can even go into your meditation room and fight it out. The desire will scatter the inspirational passage; it will dash the words from your mind. You will not remember verses you know



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

by heart because your memory is clouded by this compulsive urge. But after fighting a brave duel with a desire like this, you come out knowing that you are capable of beating it. That's a tremendous discovery. You no longer feel you have to yield to a fierce desire or explode; you know now that you can stand up to it, and all you need is training. After that discovery, that desire's days are numbered.

### Get under a desire and redirect it

In meditation, you can actually get beneath a desire. Go to an automobile repair shop and watch the mechanics lie down on those creepers and slip under the car to do all kinds of repairs. Sometimes they don't even have to look; they can feel where the problem is and fix it with effortless skill.

Similarly, meditation can enable you to get under a desire and redirect it. The modern approach is to try to get at a desire from above it, which doesn't work because compulsive desires are rooted deep in consciousness. When you get under the desire, you can see what it really is. Then you can actually siphon the power away from that desire and divert it to something deeper: the longing to realize God.

If you find, for example, that you are drawn by a strong desire to attend a particular event, instead of going yourself, let your friends go, and spend that time doing something for others. Here at Ramagiri, I encourage people on such occasions to let a friend enjoy that event while they use the time to work in the garden or the kitchen. They are siphoning off the power of that desire and letting it flow back into the mainstream of consciousness.

In order to do this, as Saint John of the Cross says, you must have a nobler ideal. Otherwise your desires may explode and lead to trouble. But those who are leading the spiritual life and eager to deepen their meditation have a proven shield against any kind of danger.

At my university in India, when I started looking at my own activities in this way, I can't tell you how much suffering I had to put up with. Plays that gave me a good deal of innocent enjoyment, movies I found highly entertaining, congenial company where nothing spiritual was ever mentioned – I started ruling out all these. It was one of the hardest periods in my sadhana.

## A friendly match with the mind

I used to practice this even when I was in Berkeley. I have always enjoyed a good movie, and I must have seen *Casablanca* – which I still think is one of the best movies this country has made – so many times that in those days I could probably have repeated the whole script. So I was keen on seeing more movies with Humphrey Bogart.

We were meeting at a church up the hill behind the Berkeley campus in those days, and just a few blocks from the church was a theater that was showing *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. I was eager to see it, and the show was over just in time to walk up to the church for my talk. So Christine and I went. The film gets off to a great start, and I immediately got absorbed. Just fifteen minutes before the end, I realized that I was so caught up in the action that I couldn't leave my chair. I didn't even think about it; I just pulled myself up, walked out, and came straight to class. I still don't know how the movie ended.

After that, my mind became very respectful. That is the way to do it. There is no animus in this; it's a kind of friendly match: you pull me, I push you, let us see who will win. Don't take it out on the mind – but don't ever let your mind know what you're going to do next.

## The attitude to cultivate

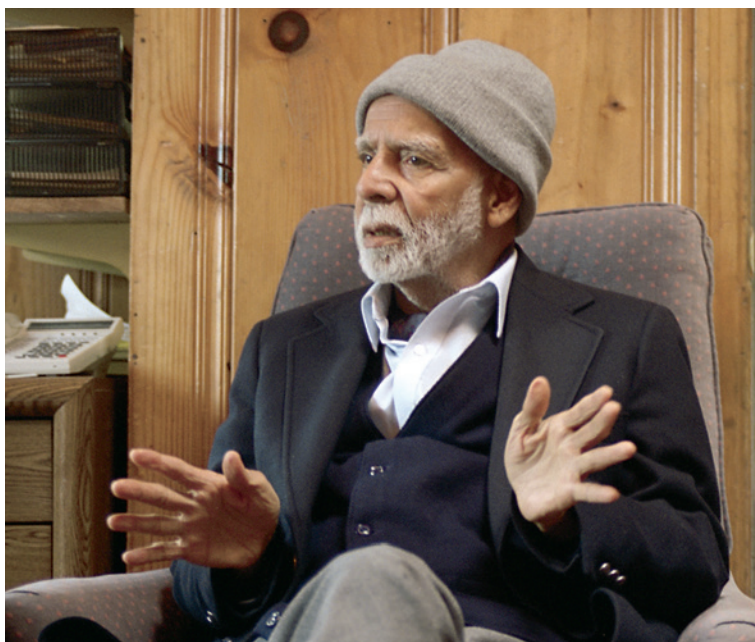
I have done this many, many times, not only with entertainment but with food and anything else my mind begins to clamor for. That is the kind of attitude I want you to cultivate. All your personal ambitions can flow into it, just as all my personal ambitions flowed into the desire for Self-realization until it became all-consuming.

Everything in your life can flow into this mighty river of unified desire. Restless desires are one of the best signs of being prepared for the spiritual life, and there are a lot of restless people in this country. You can pour all that energy into this channel of meditation. The motivation should be the highest: to see the tremendous drama that is celebrated in Christmas enacted in your own heart. When you have an overwhelming desire to see the birth of the Messiah or the birth of Krishna or the birth of the Buddha in your own heart, it has to take place. There is a saying in our scriptures: where there is a crying need, that need itself contains its fulfillment. But it doesn't come automatically; you have to practice it every day.

### Everyone has a part to play

That is why I appeal to you to unify your desires now and work harmoniously for continuing this work, which will reach the whole world in course of time after we are gone. Give your very best in meditation every morning and evening, repeat the mantram whenever you can, work together harmoniously, and pray to the Lord to grant to all of us the great blessing of being born in our midst. If we can meditate on the Prayer of Saint Francis with all our desires unified, I have very little doubt that our longing can draw the Lord into our lives again, just as he was drawn to Assisi eight hundred years ago.

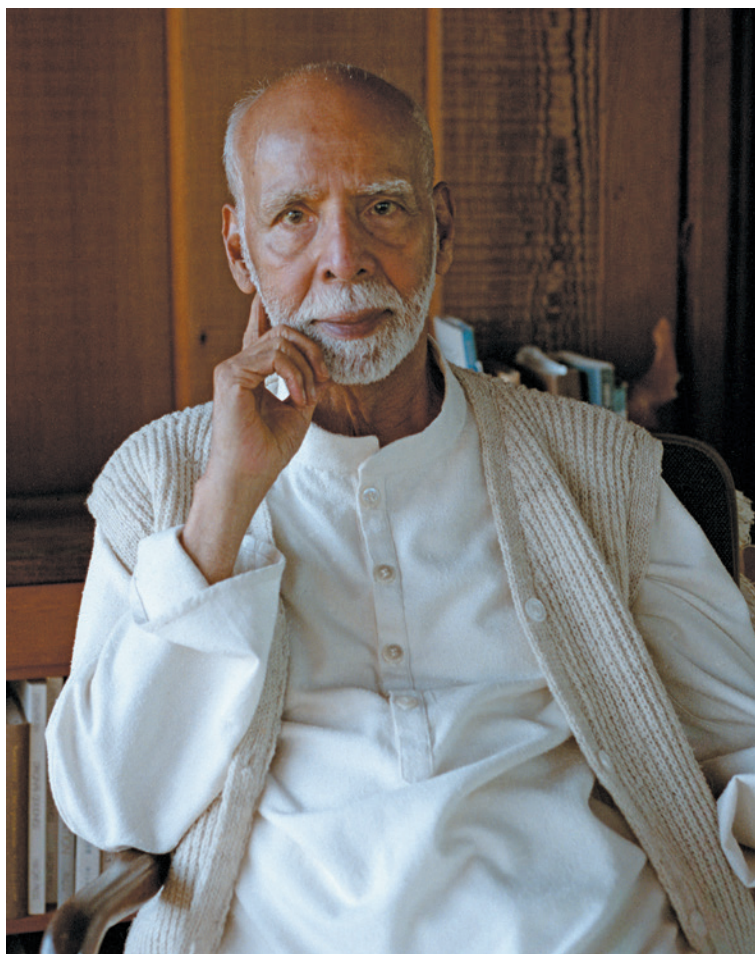
Everybody has a grave responsibility for unifying desires like this. That is where there is still much work to be done. I want you to remember that I know from my own experience how hard it can be. But according to Patanjali, when a person has unified his or her desires, whatever that person longs for



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

will come true. If it is our longing that some child from our own midst should arise to carry this message to wake up the whole of the country, it can take place. That is why it is said in the mystical tradition that it is after most of us have physically passed away that the work really increases in depth and beauty.

I don't think we have any disagreement that the whole country needs our work now. And each individual's contribution becomes effective to the extent his or her desires are unified. Everyone has a part to play, and anyone who doesn't play that part is contributing to the problem. But when we play that part, we are contributing to the solution.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

## A spiritual renaissance

Just as there was a cultural renaissance in Europe six centuries ago, the world needs a spiritual renaissance right during this decade. Just as there was a great revolution in this country two hundred years ago, our country needs a great spiritual revolution here and now. And the wonderful feature of a spiritual renaissance is that it has nothing to do with governments or corporations. It can be brought about only by little people like us – every man, every woman, every child – changing their personality from selfish to selfless, from human to divine.

And the one prayer I have found that is universally effective for this transformation is the Prayer of Saint Francis, the “Poor Little Man of Assisi.” Carlyle said that a great book is the lifeblood of a great author. If that is so, a great prayer is the soul force of a great saint. The Prayer of Saint Francis contains the living secret of how Francis the troubadour became Francis the light of the world – and how you and I, following in his footsteps, can bring this light into our lives and dispel the darkness of our times. 🌸



Christine Easwaran (1921–2022) at the memorial rock, Ramagiri Ashram

# Reaching Beyond Limits

Christine Easwaran, from our journal archive

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The saints and great mystics of the world have shown us what the human spirit is capable of. Easwaran gives us the example of Francis Bernardone's transformation into the beloved saint, Francis of Assisi. This is not just a pious illustration. Easwaran is trying to show the potential inherent in each of us by virtue of our being human.

More than that, he shows us how the inspired document known as the Prayer of St. Francis can begin a similar transformation in our lives. In his presentation, this simple but profound prayer gives us a complete educational plan for the higher way of living that our world desperately needs today.

And his eight-point program provides a perfect set of skills for translating these ideals into daily living. By meditating on the Saint Francis Prayer along the lines he recommends, each of us can begin to become instruments of peace, however small, among those we live and work with.

Easwaran always emphasizes that this requires work – day in, day out practice, much like the effort a champion athlete expects of herself when trying to break a record. With meditation, however, there is no record to break. The rewards begin as soon as we start training systematically, and they go on growing as our dedication deepens. Every sphere of life benefits from training the mind to reach beyond its current limits.

Mahatma Gandhi is another example Easwaran frequently used: an ordinary Indian youth who, deeply inspired by the

second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, worked tirelessly to eliminate the negative qualities of anger, fear, and lust from his own mind. It is deeply moving to observe the extent to which he was able to express love to those who opposed him bitterly. By emptying himself of all that was negative, Gandhi became a channel for the tremendous positive forces that surround and support us all.

It is only natural to ask how much difference our small contribution can make. Easwaran speaks to this at the end of the eighteenth chapter of his *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*:

Just as physical forces like gravitation are always operating, love, truth, and compassion operate everywhere, under all circumstances. . . . Love and unity are part of the fabric of life, part of its very nature. Just as we respond to these forces, others too will respond.

And he goes on to remind us:

We are surrounded by creative powers, as surrounded as we are by air, light, and gravitation. It is only when we fail to ally ourselves with the forces of light that they are unable to support us. If we give our whole-hearted support, love will triumph. 🌸



Eknath Easwaran and Christine Easwaran, 1970s

## 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, 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/)

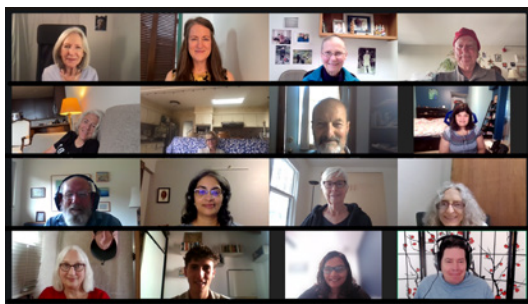
### Introductory Weekend Retreats

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.



An online retreat

**BMCM Satsang Live** Our twice-weekly online satsang, open to everyone. Find more at [www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/](http://www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/).

**BMCM eSatsang** Our weekly write-in study of Easwaran's books and journals for dedicated passage meditators. See [www.bmcm.org/community/esatsang](http://www.bmcm.org/community/esatsang).

## 2026 Retreats, Webinars, and 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:

January 24, May 9, August 15

### Introductory Online Weekend Retreats:

March 13–15, July 24–26, November 13–15

### Returnee Online Workshops:

March 7, May 30, October 3

### Returnee Weekend Online Retreats:

April 17–19, November 6–8

### Setu Online Retreats:

January 16–20, September 25–29

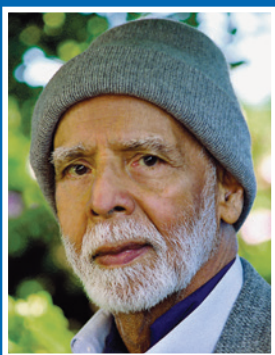
### Weeklong Online Retreats:

February 20–24, October 16–20

### In-Person Pilgrimage Retreats:

May 1–4, June 5–11

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!



The whole country needs our work now. And each individual's contribution becomes effective to the extent that his or her desires are unified. Everyone has a part to play, and anyone who doesn't play that part is contributing to the problem. But when we play that part, we are contributing to the solution.

- Eknath Easwaran

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation  
P. O. Box 256  
Tomaes, CA 94971  
[www.bmcm.org](http://www.bmcm.org)