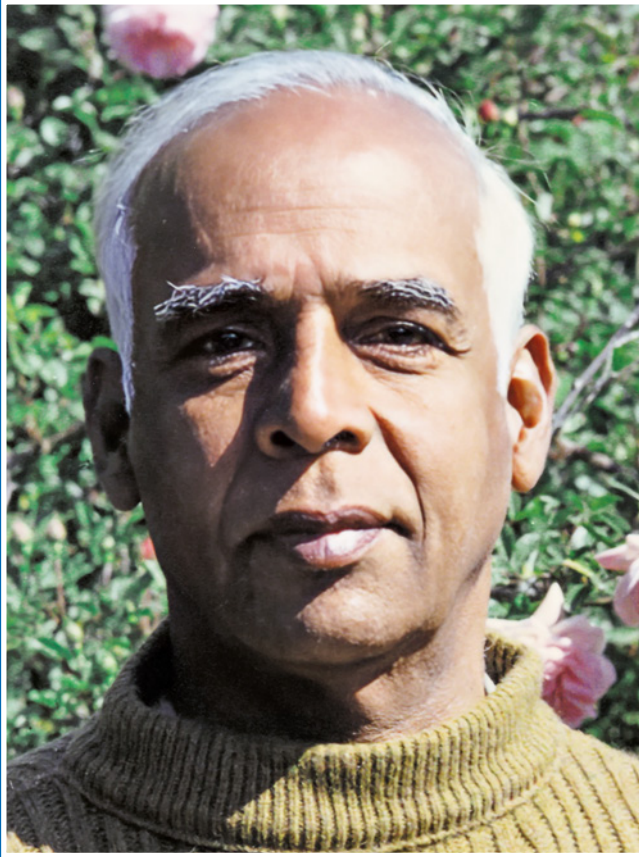


Ek Nath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

Blue Mountain Journal

SPRING 2026



Simple Living for a Higher Goal

In This Issue

In this issue, Easwaran tells us of the close relationship “between a cluttered closet and a crowded schedule, between too much activity inside and too much outside, between having no place to put possessions and having no priorities for our life.” To resolve this, he reminds us “to clarify priorities so we can give our time and attention to what matters most.” And as it turns out, what matters most is love.

To increase our capacity for love, Easwaran encourages us to simplify our lives. “The simple life is much more creative and practical than most of us imagine. It is a life that values human qualities, one that is rich in lasting relationships with family and friends and community.”

He continues: “If we simplify our lives, we shall find plenty of time and energy to be together with our circle of family and friends.” Community stories in this issue provide examples from people living out the eight points. Passages and an article from Christine Easwaran inspire us toward a quiet mind and a simple life filled with compassion for all.

– The BMCM Editorial Team

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Simple Living and Love

Eknath Easwaran, from *Your Life Is Your Message*

There is a close connection between slowing down, living simply, and bringing beauty and love into our lives.

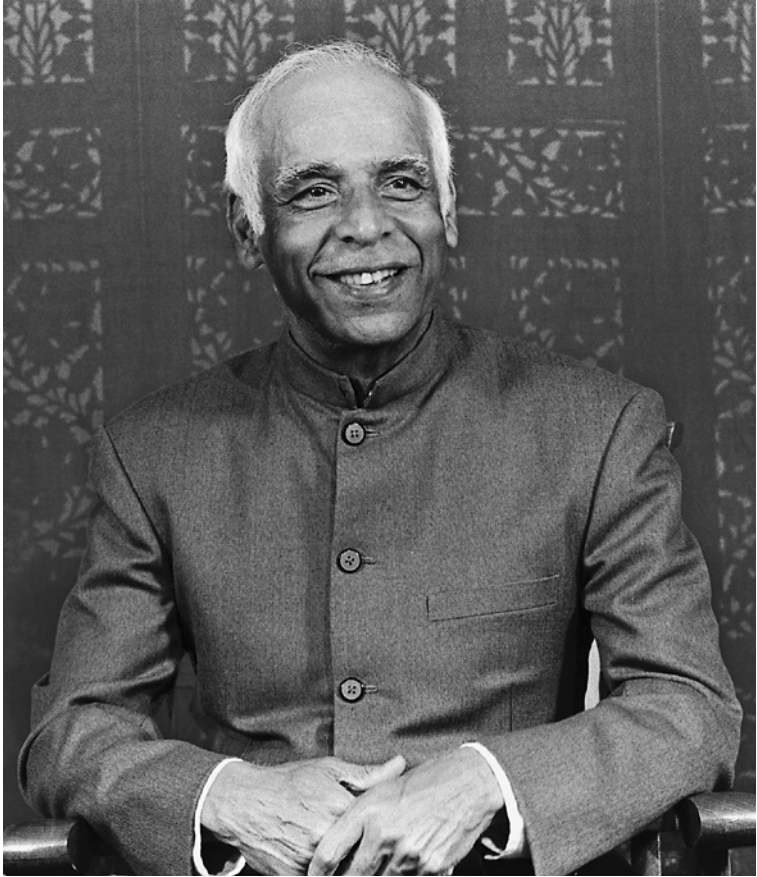
I am not a champion of poverty – no one anywhere should have to live in poverty – but I am a champion of simplicity. To me, the simple life is beautiful, artistic, and esthetically satisfying. It produces the maximum effect with a minimum of means.

Far too often our modern technology, despite its ingenuity, produces just the opposite: the minimum effect with the maximum of means. According to a saying in my mother tongue, Malayalam, we are using a sword to cut a ribbon.

This is not an issue for governments or corporations to solve. If every man and woman will try to simplify life in accordance with their needs and the context in which they live, they will find they have plenty of time to love.

Although “love” has become a common word today, it is frequently used without any understanding of what an uncommon thing it really is. People talk about falling in love like falling into a manhole. It’s not at all that easy. We need time, a slow pace, and a simple life to gain some understanding of what love is.

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



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

An Uncluttered Mind

Ekknath Easwaran, from our journal archive

[Easwaran is commenting on a book by Don Aslett, described at the time as America's number-one cleaning expert.]

Mr. Aslett offers humorous, practical suggestions for everyone who feels trapped by accumulated possessions. I enjoyed his anecdotes, but what struck me was how directly his advice applies to the mind. All of us can relate to basements stuffed with unread magazines and boxes overflowing with recipes waiting to be filed. But I think very few realize what clutter we have accumulated in the mind – resentments, outdated attitudes, unwanted habits – and what that burden does to us, not only mentally but physically too.

Mr. Aslett is a penetrating observer, and he writes from personal experience. Open the lower drawers of your closet, he says with confidence – after all, he has seen thousands of them – and you will find pants you'll never be able to wear, dresses you will never be able to zip. Why are they there? Why not give them away to someone who can wear them? Check your kitchen, he says; you're likely to find things that have lurked in dark places for ten or twenty years, forgotten because no one needs them. And in the basement, there's that old, sagging sofa you have never been able to find room for. Why keep it? It is blocking your passage; it prevents you from moving freely in your own home.

Not even gardeners escape his eye. Why keep those old catalogs? Why save packets of seeds that expired long ago? We just can't bear to throw them away.

Mr. Aslett doesn't just write about these problems. Like a family physician, he makes house calls. And his visits make us laugh in recognition. Sometimes, he says, his clients are so embarrassed that they cover things up. They throw carpets over them, dig pits and bury them, only to resurrect them as soon as he has left. "Why did they call me, then?" he wonders. "They wanted me to help them dejunk their lives, but then they go and hide things."

We get entangled

"This was given to us by our daughter," they explain apologetically. "That belonged to Grandmother. And surely someone can use this . . ." Hiding, apologizing, making excuses. Most ridiculous of all, he says, they argue. Imagine, arguing about junk!

Mr. Aslett helps his clients see the humor in their predicament, and soon has them laughing all the way to Goodwill. Likewise, there is no need to be glum if we discover that our minds have become cluttered with negative thoughts and unwanted desires. I'll be talking about some very effective methods for removing them and making room for more positive ones.

Junk has a way of multiplying, Mr. Aslett observes. You may have only a few things in your closet, but when you open the door after a year or two you find there has been a population explosion.

It starts so innocently. We get one thing, which leads to another. That leads to another, leads to another, leads to another, and we get entangled. And once we get entangled, we don't know how to free ourselves. Clutter grows like an insidious vine, a bit at a time, until finally the house doesn't belong to people any

more; it belongs to the Clutter family. The things we owned end up owning us.

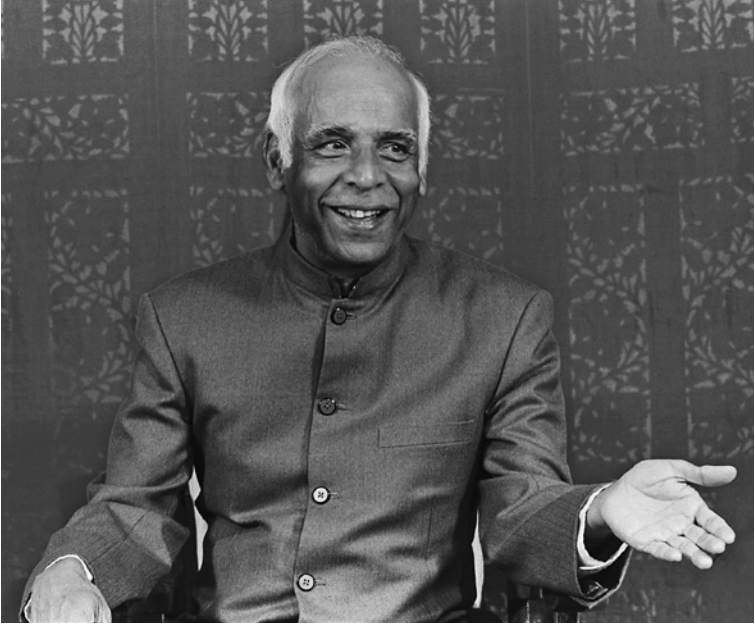
A tendency to fill with junk

Similarly, I would say, the mind – everybody’s mind – has a tendency to fill with junk, old thoughts and attitudes and impressions that have lost any value and just lie around getting in the way of thinking, acting, and loving in freedom. Malice, jealousy, hostility, resentment, all multiply quietly until sometimes they take over our lives.

When you leave a pot in the rain, the Buddha says, the rain does not pour down in a stream and fill the pot in two seconds. The pot fills drop by drop. This is how we succumb to junk thinking: little by little, by dwelling on innumerable negative thoughts.

When the mind is full of clutter, we can’t find our virtues. All of us have virtues, but often they are so covered by personal urges that we have to stop and search all over to find the one we need. We know we have a little compassion somewhere, but we can’t lay hands on it in that pile of resentments. We know we have put away some tenderness, but when we open the closet only hostilities tumble out.

This is why the Buddha says we should keep the mind free from clutter, with the artistic simplicity of the Japanese home. The mind needs lots of room, plenty of walking space, with just one or two little closets for the few great qualities we need. The rest should be wide open, so that we can move about freely and feel at home. An uncluttered mind is a very comfortable mind to live in.



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

Start dejunking your life from today onwards, Mr. Aslett promises, and you can lose two hundred pounds this weekend without dieting. That's the amount of junk he claims that every one of us can throw out. It's a subtle suggestion, comparing consumer buying with consuming food; both can add unwanted weight. And just as we sometimes eat for reasons that have nothing to do with physical hunger, we may buy and hoard things to fill a hunger in the heart.

Where weight is physical, we can understand this easily. But mental junk is the worst kind of weight problem. Opinions, resentments, hostilities – we cannot put them in a balance, but the mind has its own scales. Old ways of thinking, speaking,

and acting weigh us down and prevent us from giving our best – at school, at work, at home, even on the playing field.

I am all for keeping the body slim, but if your body is slim and your mind is fat, the imbalance is not very attractive. Do keep your body slim, do your abdominal exercises, but keep your mind slim by doing your meditation and mantram exercises too. Passage meditation can be called a process for slimming the mind. Training attention to go slowly through the words of a passage like the Prayer of Saint Francis puts negative thoughts like greed and resentment on a starvation diet. They need attention to grow, and the more attention we give to positive thoughts, the less there is for anything else.

Then, during the rest of the day, the premier exercise is the mantram – the silent repetition of a “prayer word” or holy name: *Jesus, Jesus; Ave Maria; Om mani padme hum; Barukh attah Adonai*; the name of Allah; or *Rama, Rama*; whatever you have chosen.

A fast walk repeating the mantram

When you are angry, when you are afraid, when you are frustrated, when you are agitated, don't take it out on other people; you'll just be adding more junk to your mind. And don't take it out on yourself either. Instead, go for a fast walk repeating your mantram. The rhythm of the mantram and the rhythm of your footsteps will combine to steady the rhythm of your breathing, which is closely connected with the rhythm of thinking. Wherever there is anger, wherever there is fear, wherever there is greed, the mantram will go on throwing them out while you walk.

It is a source of unending amazement to me why everybody does not take to this. It is so easy and effective! All that is required is that you keep on doing it whenever you are free, whenever your mind is in turmoil or you feel burdened or confused.

I sometimes hear dieters praise celery for its “negative calories.” Digesting celery burns more energy than the food provides. You can think of the mantram as a negative-calorie snack. It’s not helpful to snack between meals, but you can nibble at the mantram every time you get a chance. Put a little in your mind whenever you think of it. Make it a habit, and the great day will come when it is there all the time, keeping your mind free of clutter day and night.

Innumerable likes and dislikes

Mr. Aslett says that clutter starts in the cradle – an extra rattle, a couple of soothers, a little doll’s cap, a teddy bear, something in every corner. That’s how it starts: clutter in the crib.

Mental clutter starts early too. Strong likes and dislikes develop in childhood. Even a two-year-old learns quickly: cry a little, throw a tantrum, throw your rattle at mommy or dad, and draw your own conclusions. “If I keep doing this, I can have my way!”

When we get to know the mind better, we see that a great deal of its clutter is due to these innumerable likes and dislikes. The closets of the mind are no different from the closets of our home. We like this old coat, so we hang on to it even if it’s worn thin and no longer fits. And we like this particular opinion, so we hang on to it too – though it too is worn thin and no longer

fits the facts. Dislikes are equally tenacious. When we persist in disliking something, we get attached to disliking it. We cling to our dislike.

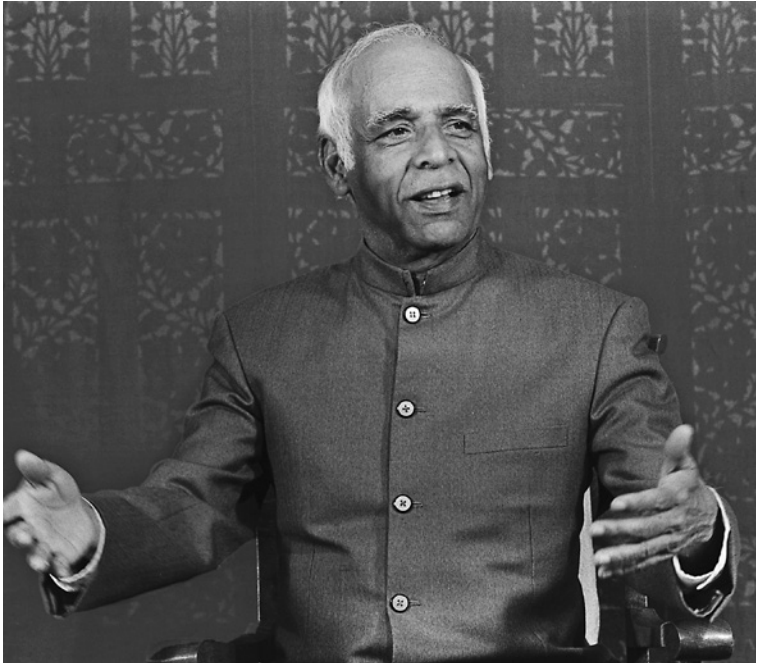
Many people, as I see it, cannot zip up their opinions. They have outgrown them. They've burst the seams; the back is torn. They can't pull them up, they can't pull them down; those tight, uncomfortable opinions are just caught there. Like that junk in the garage, why not throw them away? They lead to conflict with your family, conflict with your co-workers; they lead to conflict within yourself. Just as we give away sneakers as we grow, we need to cast off outworn attitudes, unbecoming resentments, childish likes and dislikes, immature ways of living.

Meditation gives detachment

Meditation gives us the detachment to say, "Take these designer jeans; I can no longer wear them. If I put them on, I can't walk. Take these consumer desires; if I keep them, I can't love."

Outside of meditation, whether you are facing a minor irritation or a major resentment, the answer again is the mantram. As soon as you begin to feel a little resentful – because you can't get your way, you can't do things at your own convenience, you can't work on the terms you like, you can't get what you want – that is the time to repeat the mantram and start working at the things you don't like, working with the people you don't like, doing things you don't like that contribute to the benefit of all. This is hard advice, but it makes for health, it makes for happiness, and most important, it makes for freedom.

Why do we let things pile up around us? Why do we let junk thoughts fill the mind? For both kinds of clutter, physical and



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

mental, the reason is the same: we get attached. The attachment is not really to a particular thing or thought but to ourselves. We identify ourselves with that old coat, that old opinion; getting rid of them seems like throwing away part of ourselves. The desires that create clutter around us create clutter inside too. All too often, a cluttered life reflects a cluttered mind.

We hold on to old photos, for example, for the same reason that we hold on to memories. We keep old clothes for the same reasons that we keep old ideas. We like them; they flatter us; we don't want to let them go. Clinging to the past like this,

pretending the future can bring it back, keeps us from living completely here and now.

A detached mind

Similarly, when we don't cling to our opinions, either, we gain freedom from a lot of unpleasant agitation. A detached mind can withstand criticism quietly, even welcome it when it is constructive. In our contemporary culture there are very few people who are capable of listening to constructive criticism with composure or even listening to criticism at all. This is the precious capacity that detachment brings.

It is in the nature of life that people will sometimes praise you and sometimes censure you, sometimes support you and sometimes oppose you. In the Bhagavad Gita, which Mahatma Gandhi called a reference for daily living, one of the frequent refrains is, "Be alike in praise and blame, profit and loss, victory and defeat." If you are kind both to those who support you and to those who oppose you, if you can be even-minded in victory and defeat, life cannot throw your mind into turmoil. And when there is no turmoil in your mind, when you are filled with the confidence that you are equal to whatever comes, far-reaching biological benefits follow. Detachment is a kind of armor; even resistance to illness soars.

Concentrate on what matters most

The amount of clutter we have is often related to our stage in life. In the first half of life, a certain amount of material accumulation comes naturally. We are acquiring knowledge, learning skills, gaining experience, raising a family, building a

career. But in the second half of life – roughly, after retirement – the essential skill to learn is one of focusing. With the experience of our earlier years should come the wisdom to know what is important and the desire to concentrate on what matters most. And that always involves letting go – turning away from the thousand and one other activities with which all of us experiment in our younger years and which we have learned are, at best, blind alleys.

Indian philosophy divides life roughly into quarters, each of which has its natural purpose. Today, I would say, the third quarter corresponds to the years after retirement, when the duties of family and career have been accomplished and everything we have accumulated in the first half of life – skills, experience, money, material possessions – can be utilized for the benefit of others. This often brings its own simplifications, as we shed possessions and distractions to focus on giving back to life.

But the fourth quarter is meant for lightening the boat. “You are about to go on a journey,” the Buddha says. “Don’t you want to be prepared?” This is not rhetoric. The body may not be able to accompany us on this journey, but rest assured there is an inner person with an itinerary and a destination. If you have a ticket for Europe, don’t you plan what you want to take? Don’t you ask in advance what the customs officer will let you bring in? At this border, the Buddha says, there is no forty-pound limit: nothing material is allowed across. Whatever it is, you can’t take it with you. The only baggage – the one thing you can’t help taking with you – is your character, the lifetime accumulation of all that you have thought and felt and loved.

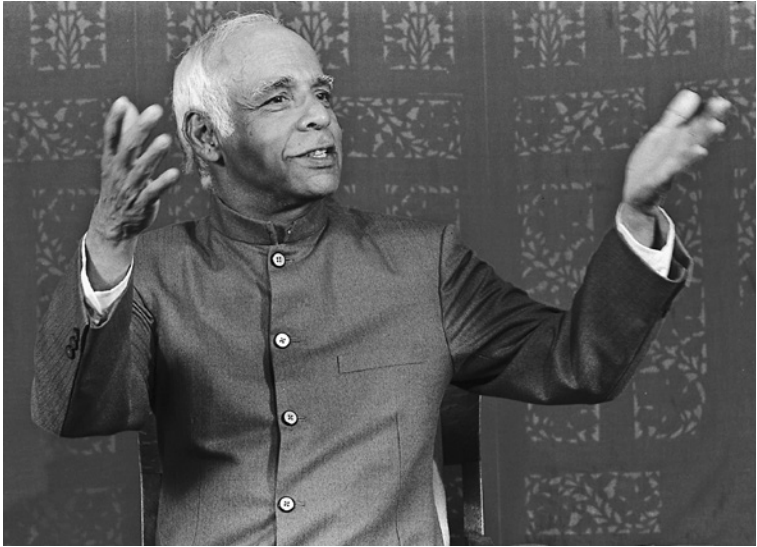
Don't take any negative attachments, he urges us. Don't take any anger, any hostility, any greed or selfish craving. Throw it out now, while you can. Lighten the load.

Work on who you are

Older people often tell me that in these years they feel the need to get rid of all the possessions they have accumulated – furniture, photographs, papers, letters. “I don't want to leave this for my children to deal with,” they say. I want to tell them, “Don't spend your time on things like that now!” If you have the detachment just to call Goodwill and deal with it in a single stroke, well and good. But if it means going through each letter, each photograph, each memory, it's much better to keep everything in the garage for your children to deal with later. I can assure you that they'll attend to it with much more detachment, and they'll be glad to see you giving your time to something vital – your inner life. At this stage of life, more than ever, why stir up the past? Work on what you want to take with you: don't work on your past; work on who you are.

Life becomes simple

There is a close relationship between a house full of possessions and a heart full of desires, between a cluttered closet and a crowded schedule, between too much activity inside and too much outside, between having no place to put possessions and having no priorities for our life. These are precious clues. They remind us to slow down, to live in the present, to reduce the desires that drain our vitality, to clarify priorities so we can give our time and attention to what matters most. Tragically, in



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

the press of modern life, we have managed to get backwards one of life's most vital truths: people are to be loved; things are to be used.

If all you want is to love, your mind can be quite clear. Life becomes simple; decisions are unencumbered. There is no asking "Should I like him or dislike him? Should I help her or hinder her? Should I move closer to him or move away?" Such questions do not arise. You're not interested in whether someone is for you or against you; you always want to help, always want to love.

When she wants an umbrella, the ideal shopper goes into the store, picks up the item she wants, pays for it, and leaves, all in a couple of minutes. There are no distractions, no impulse buying along the way. That is how the ideal thinker is too.

When it is necessary to think about a problem, the process is clear, direct, and practical. Decisions are taken without any emotional entanglement, without any sense of personal conflict at all.

Most of us think like this rarely if at all. What we call thinking is usually worry. The uncluttered mind thinks only when necessary – and a good part of the time, believe me, it's not necessary. Just as junk breeds junk, thoughts breed thoughts. Most thinking is about thinking. Most thoughts are about thoughts about thoughts about thoughts. Am I distracted now, or am I thinking about distractions? And now am I thinking about thinking about distractions? It goes on and on. You can spend a lifetime and never reach the end of the vagaries of the mind.

Statements like these are not even understood in the modern world, but I can give a simple illustration of an uncluttered mind. When you return from a drive, don't you park the car, turn the engine off, and put the key in your pocket? Through many years of meditation, mantram repetition, and the other skills in my eight-point program for spiritual growth, this is what I have learned to do with my mind. When there's no need to think, I turn it off and put the key in my pocket. When I need to think, I turn it on again. There is always plenty of petrol in the tank because it hasn't been idling all night with vain worries and regrets.

Remake yourself from the inside out

If you sustain your enthusiasm and practice these spiritual disciplines with the same kind of determined dedication I brought to them in the midst of a very busy life, I can promise

you that you will be able to remake yourself from the inside out. You will be able to tell your mind, “You may rest now. I’ll call you when I need you.”

This is not an unconscious state; it is fully wakeful. We can still think when we choose to. But if it serves no purpose, we simply let the mind rest.

This healing stillness, as it is called in Christian mysticism, is what the Buddha means by nirvana. In the language of the Bhagavad Gita, your mind will be as “motionless as the flame of a lamp in a windless place” – no flicker of fear, anxiety, selfishness, or greed.

The richness of this state of pure awareness cannot be described. It brings limitless joy, for you know then that you are neither mind nor body but the divine core of personality which is in every creature – and which can never die. 🌸

Entering into Joy

Saint Augustine

Imagine if all the tumult of the body were to quiet down, along with all our busy thoughts about earth, sea, and air; if the very world should stop, and the mind cease thinking about itself, go beyond itself, and be quite still;

if all the fantasies that appear in dreams and imagination should cease, and there be no speech, no sign:

Imagine if all things that are perishable grew still – for if we listen they are saying, *We did not make ourselves; he made us who abides forever* – imagine, then, that they should say this and fall silent, listening to the very voice of him who made them and not to that of his creation;

so that we should hear not his word through the tongues of men, nor the voice of angels, nor the clouds' thunder, nor any symbol, but the very Self which in these things we love, and go beyond ourselves to attain a flash of that eternal wisdom which abides above all things:

And imagine if that moment were to go on and on, leaving behind all other sights and sounds but this one vision which ravishes and absorbs and fixes the beholder in joy; so that the rest of eternal life were like that moment of illumination which leaves us breathless:

Would this not be what is bidden in scripture,

Enter thou into the joy of thy lord?

An Urgent Message

Christine Easwaran, from our journal archive

At this time in history, no one can afford to fill their lives with trivialities. Clutter – whether in our minds or in our closets – needs to be replaced with clarity and purpose if we are to take advantage of the great opportunities before us.

Modern civilization has brought the population of the earth together into a vast community, offering us the once unfathomable possibilities for a quantum leap in human development. The choices individuals make ripple out to affect the whole world. By facing the clutter, inertia, even negativity in our own minds, we can direct our thoughts and actions into positive channels. We can choose to align ourselves with the forces of goodness that every human being responds to, or we can succumb to inertia and allow ourselves to be pushed and shoved by circumstances.

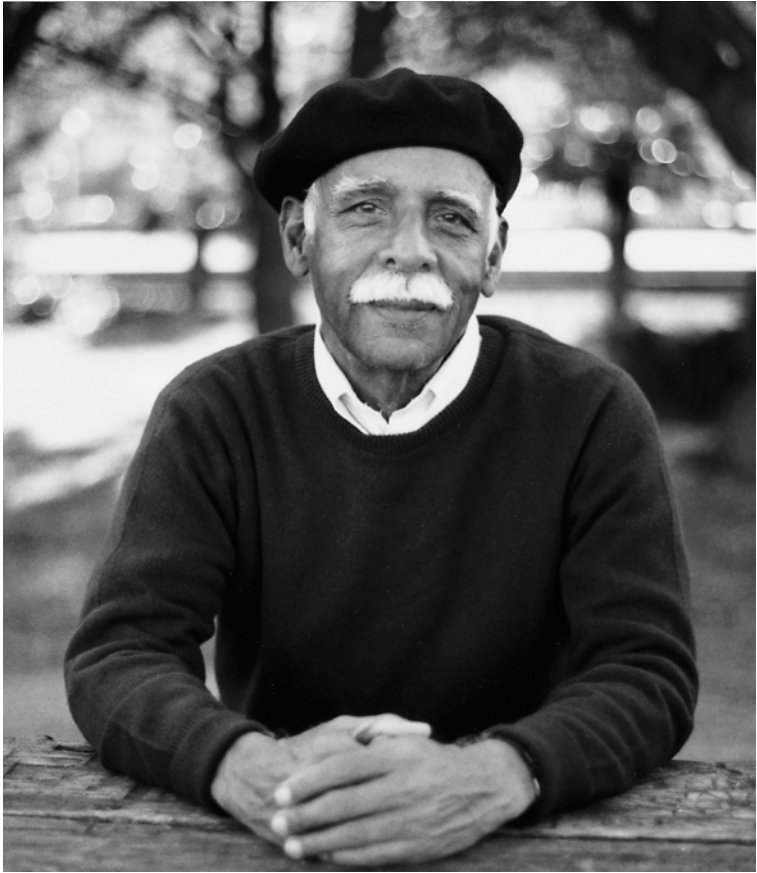
Ekhnath Easwaran showed us a way out of our dilemma. He offered us a way to change negative conditioning into positive behavior. He gave us a method that is simple, though the process may be slow and tedious. By replacing the cacophony in our minds with the harmonious, positive words of an inspirational passage from the scriptures or the great mystics, we deliberately transform our way of thinking from negative to positive, from angry and fearful to peaceful and loving. In this way we gradually set in motion ripples of energy that can bring about the golden age that every civilization has dreamed of.



Eknath Easwaran and Christine Easwaran, 1970s

Throughout this issue you will find passages that Easwaran has recommended. Try them and discover the strength they bring.

Just by reading and thinking about these positive, creative words throughout the day, our attitudes begin to change. But if we want to make substantial progress, the practice of meditation on these passages is more effective. By absorbing and gradually embodying sacred words from great saints and peacemakers from all ages and traditions, we can build a better world. 🌸



Eknath Easwaran, 1980s

Simple Living

Eknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” If we take these words as more than mere poetry, they mean that you and I are trustees. The resources of our planet have been entrusted to every one of us together, and like any good bank trustee, we are expected not to squander them but to invest them wisely for our beneficiaries: the rest of life, especially the generations to come.

This view has far-reaching consequences. The trust includes not simply the lives and resources of the planet, but inner resources too. The fact that nothing on earth belongs to us personally has some very practical implications, all of which come down to a simpler life: simpler in its externals, and so gentler on the earth; but simpler too in our inner lives, where desires are fewer but immeasurably richer and more productive.

Regard your life as a trust

To begin with, when you regard your life as a trust, you realize that the first resource you have to take care of is your own body.

This can be startling. Even your body is not really your own. It belongs to life, and it is your responsibility to take care of it. You cannot afford to do anything that injures your body, because the body is the instrument you need for selfless action. That is the fine print of the trust agreement: when we smoke, when we overeat, when we don’t get enough exercise, we are violating the terms of the trust. If you want to live life at its

fullest, you will want to do everything possible to keep your body in vibrant health in order to give back to life a little of what it has given you.

Simplicity is the key to trusteeship

This approach has helped thousands of people I know to give up harmful habits such as smoking and drinking, without my ever preaching at them or belittling them. I keep my eye on that core of goodness. Life is crying for the contribution of every one of us, and it stirs people to learn that most of us have no idea of the capacities we have hidden inside, or what tremendous energy can be released when we free ourselves from habits that drain our energy and tie our hands. When we begin to simplify our lives, ways of giving back to life appear without our ever having to ask.

In everything, simplicity is the key to trusteeship. A simple life conserves not just our personal resources but the earth's.

A good place to begin simplifying is with this “frenzy of consumerism,” to use Pope John Paul II’s apt phrase – this endless cycle of buying and producing beyond any reasonable need. Everywhere I see shopping malls cropping up like alien mushrooms. I can appreciate the convenience of a pleasant, sheltered place with a few good shops selling useful things, but how many do we really need? When I go to a mall I don’t often see people come to get the thing they need and then go home. Many come just to pass the time, looking for some thing to spend money on.

It is not only money that is thrown away in “recreational shopping”; this aimless activity is such a tragic waste of time

and attention. When shoppers go home, they leave part of their capacity to love behind in the shopping mall. Even if they don't spend money, they spend their energy. Only when this fever of buying and accumulating things quiets down can we begin to give that energy and attention to family and community, where they are desperately needed. If each of us can simplify in little ways, far-reaching changes are within our power.

Take gift-giving, for example. Is it really necessary to celebrate every birthday, anniversary, promotion, and "holiday" established by a greeting card manufacturer with a gift that is often neither useful nor desired? Why not give a gift of ourselves – of our time, attention, thoughtfulness, affection? "The most sublime act," wrote William Blake, "is to set another before you." If you have grown estranged from someone, you can move a little closer; you can begin paying attention to those you have ignored. And beyond the circle of those we live and work with, there are a great many people who desperately need love and attention and no end of deserving causes that need help.

Don't waste time and energy

This is one of the hidden problems of consumerism: it wastes the time and drains the energy we need for personal relationships. I don't think most people realize how much vitality can trickle away in a visit to the shopping mall. It's not only buying; just gauge how you feel at the end of a day of window-shopping. In terms of the impact on your personal energy reserves, you have written a big energy check and handed it over just for the time spent, even if you never wrote a check for a purchase and took things home.



Eknath Easwaran and Christine Easwaran, 1970s

A good deal of vitality escapes through the eyes, especially when desire comes into play. One simple tactic of defensive shopping, then, is to keep close watch over what your eyes are doing. Don't waste time and energy letting your eyes wander and then find that your mind and your desires have ambled along after. Don't let yourself be taken in by advertising tactics designed to make you pick up carefully placed "impulse" items. Keep your mantram going, keep your attention on what you are there for, get it, pay for it, and leave. When you get home, not only your checking account but your energy level will be relatively intact, leaving you more to spend where it really counts.

But the worst threat from a consumer society is the toll it takes on the environment: in the burning of fossil fuels, in the release of toxic industrial wastes, and finally in the problems of

how to get rid of the trash. I am not against buying things that are needed; my objection is that so many of the items produced for us to buy are neither necessary nor beneficial, and in environmental terms, all of us pay through the nose just to have them in the stores, whether we buy or not.

Manage our desires

Now, none of these things is in the stores because manufacturers hate clean air. None of them is produced just to fill up chain store shelves. They are there because people buy them, and manufacturers will go on making more so long as we go on buying. To escape from this sad-go-round of pollution and waste is simple: we must each begin to weigh our desire for an item against what it costs the environment to produce it – and then start saying, “No, it’s not worth it.”

In other words – just as John of the Cross would have told us! – even cleaning up the environment leads to managing our desires. Simplifying life implies throwing out things and activities we do not need, but what goes furthest is cleaning out the mind. The mind is an immense garage stuffed with desires, and every one we manage to throw away means a pile of plastic that need never be produced because we have no compulsion to buy.

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Simplifying your life, then, does not mean cutting back on anything of value. It means learning the delicate artistry of making your every action count, taking notice of the needs of the whole. You can think of it as a skill – and, as with any other skill, the more you practice it, the more opportunities you will find to put it to use, bringing your creativity and ingenuity into play.

Leaving the world a little better

This is one of the joys that come when you see your life as a trust. When your desires are focused on the welfare of the whole, all your faculties are magnified. Nothing is lost; on the contrary, your vitality and creativity increase, and so does the joy you feel at knowing you are leaving the world a little better, a little more hopeful, for those to come.

In this view, not even our time, talent, and resources are our personal property. They are precious resources that the Lord has given us in trust – meant to be spent freely, but for the benefit of all.

This throws fresh light on every aspect of life – our work, our relationships, and even the way we spend our leisure time. For example, I find it curious that people associate the idea of vacation with going somewhere else. For me, the very best vacation is to forget myself in working hard for a meaningful, selfless cause with people I know and love.

This is the kind of vacation I would like everybody to have: working to bring joy into the lives of others; working to remove the problems that face our children. Work like this, without wanting anything in return, is serving the Lord in all. 🌸

The Living God

Solomon Ibn Gabirol

Bow down before God, my precious thinking soul,
and make haste to worship Him with reverence.

Night and day think only of your everlasting world.

Why should you chase after vanity and emptiness?

As long as you live, you are akin to the living God:
just as He is invisible, so are you.

Since your Creator is pure and flawless,
know that you too are pure and perfect.

The Mighty One upholds the heavens on His arm,
as you uphold the mute body.

My soul, let your songs come before your Rock,
who does not lay your form in the dust.

My innermost heart, bless your Rock always,
whose name is praised by everything that has breath.



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

A Simple Life Can Be a Joyful Life

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

Many of our business empires and technological exploits, built on the idea of unlimited material progress, are now facing the fact that the earth's resources are very limited indeed. To the mystic, the real problem is not with our resources; it is what we are trying to do with those resources that is futile.

As we are forced to give up some of these activities, we make a marvelous discovery that the mystics have been trying to tell us about all along: a simple life can be a joyful life. By "simple life" I do not mean a romantic return to a rustic state. Nor is simplicity something we must just put up with because we are running out of energy. The simple life is much more creative and practical than most of us imagine. It is a life that values human qualities, one that is rich in lasting relationships with family and friends and community.

Most people do not have time to get to know their neighbors, or listen to what their children have to say, or be sensitive to the needs of their friends. They are too busy traveling between their city condominium and their country cabin. They have to work additional hours to buy two cars; then they need separate kitchens, separate bank accounts, separate televisions, separate sets of silverware, separate everything, all because they cannot live in harmony. Finally, they lose the capacity to exercise choice over their lives; the living room must be redecorated again and last year's car has to be traded in for a new model. Before they know it, life has become incredibly complicated – and far from satisfying.

Giving our time and attention

Simple living can be beautiful, right down to the smallest details. Some of the Japanese homes I have been in are remarkably beautiful with just a few well thought-out touches. On the other hand, I have also been in elaborate homes where I had to watch every move for fear of knocking an antique off its pedestal. Unfortunately, the more possessions we accumulate, the more we are possessed by them. It is only after we begin to taste the joy of simple living that we realize that these accessories can actually stand between us and our fulfillment.

Our modern way of life seems to be making us busier and busier about less and less. This is the vain superficiality Sri Krishna is warning us against. The more we divide our interests, our allegiances, our activities, the less time we have for living. The simple life doesn't mean a drab routine; it means giving our time and attention to what is most important.

For parents, it means having time and energy to devote to their children – and no matter what the latest psychological theory may tell us, our children can never grow to their fullest without continual support from the parents, particularly the mother.

For friends, simplicity means taking the time to deepen a relationship, and remaining loyal in times of trouble. To remain loyal even when someone is causing us a great deal of trouble, we must know that person very well, well enough to warn our friend when he or she is about to make a mistake. Such relationships take time. We cannot get to know someone intimately in a day or establish a lasting relationship during a weekend conference. If we spend eight hours a day at our job, an hour

or so at a bar after work, and the evening watching television, where is the time for cultivating close friendships? But if we simplify our lives, we shall find plenty of time and energy to be together with our circle of family and friends. These are discoveries all of us can make. 🌸

He Is Omnipresent

Swami Ramdas

In my heart I found my Beloved.
Now wherever I turn, His face I see
In all beings and things – great and small.
His light illumines all space.
He is there in nature's beauty.
He is present in men, birds, and beasts –
His power pervades all the worlds.
He is Love, Peace, and Joy.



The Memorial Rock at Ramagiri Ashram

Mother of All Things

Lao Tzu

The universe had a beginning
Called the Mother of All Things.
Once you have found the Mother
You can know her children.
Having known the children,
Hold tightly to the Mother.
Your whole life will be preserved from peril.

Open up the openings,
Multiply your affairs,
Your whole life will become a burden.

Those who see the small are called clear-headed;
Those who hold to gentleness are called strong.

Use the light.
Come home to your true nature.
Don't cause yourself injury:
This is known as seizing truth.

Community Stories

A Clear Direction and a Joyful Life

Simple living for a higher goal is a topic we often discuss, particularly after a house move and retirement. We have become more aware of the need to make wise choices with our time to slow down, change the pace of our thinking and doing, and practice the eight-point program. In practice, this has meant regularly reviewing our commitments, not having an overly busy schedule, and postponing or not doing activities or plans which conflict with morning meditation and the eight points.

At times, this has felt uneasy and disappointing for some of our friends and family, but it has allowed us to spend time with friends and family enjoying simple pleasures such as walking and cooking, and to commit to the eight points each day.

Reaching out and letting go

Simplifying how we spend our time has allowed us to reach out to family, friends and neighbours in our community who need more help, and to genuinely put others first. This might be taking family to hospital appointments, having a cup of tea with an elderly neighbour, or listening more attentively and with one-pointed attention to friends and family when they have problems. Somehow, doing less has enabled us to give more energy and time to others.

There is nothing like a house move after 28 years to come face to face with our accumulated possessions. Although initially painful to let go of some of our old possessions, we feel our new

home is simple, uncluttered, and calm and is a welcoming space for ourselves, family, and friends. We have been very careful not to accumulate possessions, clothes, or food since we moved or to spend time and energy on thinking about these, buying more, or decluttering. We now have a simple space for daily meditation which we are both very grateful for.

Committing to the eight points each day

We have simplified our daily reading and focus on reading Easwaran's books and using the Easwaran Digital Library and Thought for the Day for inspiration and to support our reading. There are frequently issues which arise in our daily life as parents, family members, friends and neighbours and we draw upon our reading and the eight points to support us to make the right decision.

So, we haven't been on a round-the-world cruise, taken up salsa dancing and bought a campervan and gone wild hiking. Some might say that our current life is a bit dull and unadventurous. We feel that simple living for a higher goal and committing to the eight points each day has given us a clear direction at this stage of our life. Far from being a dull, joyless existence it continues to be fulfilling, joyful and purposeful.

– Passage meditators in the UK

A Meaningful Life in an Eldercare Community

I have been a passage meditator for a number of years and even attended a Setu retreat at the BMCM retreat house many years ago. When I chose to move to an eldercare facility in a different state, it took me a while to realize that although in many ways my life was simpler, it was not as satisfying as I would like it to be.

I realized that I needed to deepen my focus on the eight points and Easwaran to have a more purposeful life, to experience my own divinity, and to see the divine in others. I can hear Easwaran saying “deepen your meditation practice” so that is where I started. I learned some new passages. I began to write the mantram before beginning my meditation and asked both Easwaran and Krishna to bless my meditation. I focused on each word of my chosen passage, hearing it resonate in my mind. I can feel that I am diving deeper even though there are times like yesterday, when I was not feeling well and had to accept that I was doing the best I could by just showing up.

Mantrams when I begin to worry

I have been very inspired by the invitation from Satsang Live to join with others in writing mantrams for peace and healing for the world. This gives me something to do when I begin to worry about what is happening in the world, and I started a special mantram book for this purpose. I have decided to write five mantrams each time I transition from one activity to another. This really works well, allowing me to slow down.

I have also chosen to focus on being one-pointed, which is such a good practice – challenging, but also very rewarding. This

morning as I was peeling and cutting apples with all my attention focused on just that, hearing the sound of the knife hitting the cutting board, feeling the peels as I put them into a bowl to dispose of later, my mind was totally quiet and I felt relaxed. This was a new experience for me. When I finished that task and was moving on to the next one, I began to feel a little anxious and noticed my mind was wandering – oh, time to write some mantrams.

Plenty of opportunities

I have some resistance to training the senses. My diet is good and I am disciplined about what I eat, so it took me a while to notice that watching movies, which I love to do as a way to wind down in the evening, was a part of what I was putting into my mind. I asked myself whether this was deepening my meditation and realized that it was not. So when I feel the urge to watch a movie, I write mantrams and then decide. Sometimes I choose to do some spiritual reading instead and sometimes I choose to watch the movie. It is definitely more satisfying when I watch a talk by Easwaran.

There are plenty of opportunities for putting others first in this eldercare community. I can visit people and just listen to them. Also, and more challenging, when my family comes to visit me, putting them first.

All of this is a process and some days are more successful than others. It is not easy, but it is so worthwhile. I always end each day by watching an Easwaran video and doing some spiritual reading. I am so grateful to have all of these tools that make my life meaningful.

– A passage meditator in the US



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

Give Yourself to All

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Original Goodness*

The mystics tell us that we are born for one purpose: to expand our awareness until we see everyone on the face of the earth as our very own, our kith and kin. Distant as it may sound, the joy of this all-embracing love is within the reach of us all, and we don't have to wait until the afterlife to taste it. Every step along the way brings greater happiness, love, and richness to life.

More than three thousand years ago, sages who belong not just to India but to the whole world gave us one of the earliest spiritual treasures known to history, the Rig Veda. Listen to a prayer addressed to all of us:

Meet together, talk together.
May your minds comprehend alike.
Common be your action and achievement,
Common be your thoughts and intentions,
Common be the wishes of your heart,
So there may be thorough union among you.

Unity is the purpose of love

Unity is strength; unity is the purpose of love. In relationships it may begin with physical expression, but holding hands and dancing cheek to cheek is just the surface of love. Two hearts becoming one, two lives becoming one: that is the meaning of love. We just don't know the signals. We don't know the code.

The joy of loving all

But Francis broke the code; Teresa of Avila deciphered its signs. Teresa said, “Amor saca amor.” Love begets love. When we give love, we draw love to us from everyone around us, and in that love is the highest heaven a human being can know. When you give yourself to all, the mystics say, you no longer love just one person here and another there; you become love itself.

This is a heavenly insight into the depths of the human heart. We begin by loving just one or two people, but the day will come when we catch the entire world in our love. Imagine the joy of loving all creatures, all people, the whole of nature! As the Upanishads say, everywhere such a person goes, he or she is at home in a compassionate universe:

Those who see all creatures in themselves
And themselves in all creatures know no fear.
Those who see all creatures in themselves
And themselves in all creatures know no grief.
How can the multiplicity of life
Delude the one who sees its unity?





Shanti meditation hall at Ramagiri Ashram

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 BMMC Programs team

Introductory Webinars

A chance to try out passage meditation.

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

Introductory Weekend Retreats

Everything you need to get your passage meditation practice started.

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

Passage Meditation – A Complete Spiritual Practice

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



An online retreat

BMCM Satsang Live Our twice-weekly online satsang, open to everyone. Find more at 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.

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:

May 9, August 15

Introductory Online Weekend Retreats:

July 24–26, November 13–15

Returnee Online Workshops:

May 30, October 3

Returnee Weekend Online Retreats:

April 17–19, November 6–8

Setu Online Retreat:

September 25–29

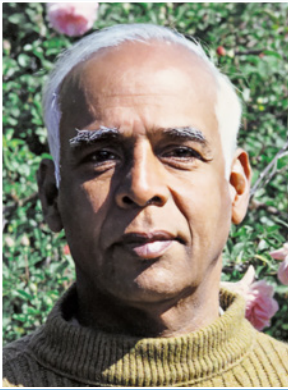
Weeklong Online Retreat:

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. We'd love to have you join us!



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Nothing is lost; on the contrary, your vitality and creativity increase, and so does the joy you feel at knowing you are leaving the world a little better, a little more hopeful, for those to come.

- Eknath Easwaran

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