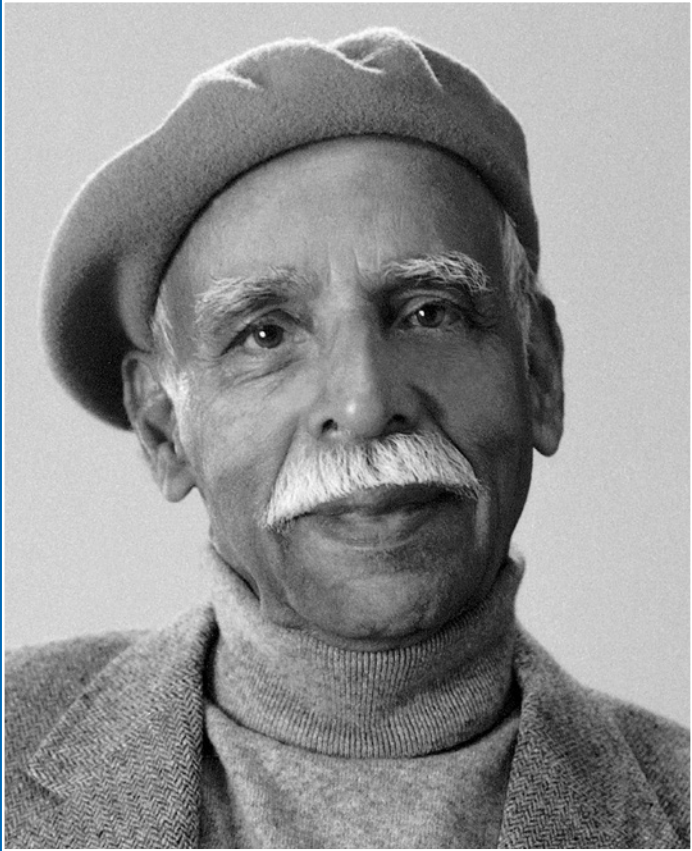


Ek Nath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

Blue Mountain Journal

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The Power of the Mantram

In This Issue

In this issue the mantram takes center stage. As Easwaran writes: “The mantram stands open to all. And since it can calm our hearts and minds, it is about as practical as anything can be.”

Easwaran explains how the mantram is always there to help us. “Everybody has scars from the past. Don’t talk about them; don’t think about them. I am the first to admit that this is a tall order. It can be done, though, through repetition of the holy name.” And when problems arise: “Problems bother us because they agitate the mind. The problem is not the problem; it is the agitation. And the work of the mantram is to quiet the agitation in the mind.”

This issue includes a section in which Easwaran answers questions on the mantram from his close students. Our community shares stories of the mantram in daily life, and you’ll also find passages on the mantram and training the mind for use in meditation.

Finally, Easwaran describes the state in which “the Lord himself is present, pleased to utter his own name as a perpetual blessing on a devoted servant.”

– The BMCM Editorial Team

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The Staff of Life

Ekknath Easwaran, from *The Mantram Handbook*

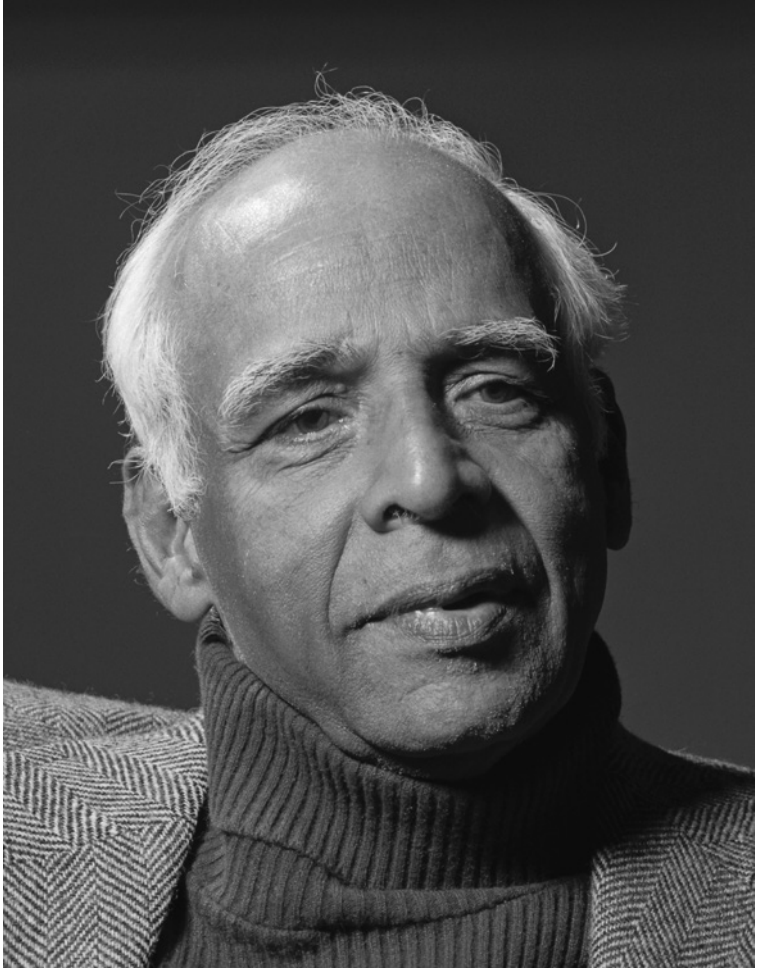
The mantram is the living symbol of the profoundest reality that the human being can conceive of, the highest power that we can respond to and love. When we repeat the mantram in our mind, we are reminding ourselves of this supreme reality enshrined in our hearts.

It is only natural that the more we repeat the mantram, the deeper it will sink into our consciousness. As it goes deeper, it will strengthen our will, heal the old divisions in our consciousness that now cause us conflict and turmoil, and give us access to deeper resources of strength, patience, and love, to work for the benefit of all.

“The mantram becomes one’s staff of life,” declares Mahatma Gandhi, “and carries one through every ordeal.”

So, my advice is simple and direct: when you are faced with an overwhelming challenge or simply a difficult situation, repeat *Rama, Rama, Rama*, or whatever other mantram you have chosen. Just try it and see.

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



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

The Power of the Mantram

Eknath Easwaran, from our journal archive

On festival days in India you will often see a huge elephant, caparisoned in gold and gorgeous cloth, carrying an image of the Lord on its back through the village streets. Everyone enjoys the sight: the musicians with their drums and cymbals in front, then the beast slowly lumbering along and the devotees behind, all on their way to the temple.

But there can be one difficulty. Stalls of fruits, vegetables, and sweets line the narrow, crooked streets, and the trunk of an elephant, as you may know, rarely stays still. It sways back and forth, up and down, constantly. So when the procession comes abreast of a fruit stall, the elephant seizes a shelled coconut or two, opens his cavernous mouth, and tosses them in.

At another stall the big fellow twists his trunk round a bunch of bananas suspended from the roof. The mouth opens again, the whole bunch goes in with a thud . . . you hear a gulp . . . and that's the end of it.

The humble people who own these stalls cannot afford this kind of loss, and to prevent it the man in charge, the mahout, asks the elephant to grasp a firm bamboo shaft in his trunk. Though not sure why, the elephant, out of love for his mahout, does as he is told. Now the procession can pass safely through the streets. The elephant steps right along with his stick held upright in a steady trunk, not tempted to feast on mangoes or melons because he has something to hold on to.

Something to hold on to

The human mind is rather like the trunk of an elephant. It never rests . . . it goes here, there, ceaselessly moving through sensations, images, thoughts, hopes, regrets, impulses. Occasionally it does solve a problem or make necessary plans, but most of the time it wanders at large, simply because we do not know how to keep it quiet or profitably engaged.

But what should we give it to hold on to? For this purpose I recommend the systematic repetition of the mantram, which can steady the mind at any time and in any place.

What is a mantram?

Of late, the ancient word *mantram* (or the familiar variant *mantra*) has had considerable exposure on talk shows and in the Sunday supplements.

To many it may conjure up an exotic image of flowing robes, garlands, and incense. It may seem to be something impractical and otherworldly, perhaps a bit magical and mysterious. Actually, just the opposite holds true. The mantram – under other names, to be sure – has been known in the West for centuries, and there need not be anything secret or occult about it. The mantram stands open to all. And since it can calm our hearts and minds, it is about as practical as anything can be.

The mantram is a short, powerful spiritual formula for the highest power that we can conceive of – whether we call it God, or the ultimate reality, or the Self within. Whatever

name we use, with the mantram we are calling up what is best and deepest in ourselves. The mantram has appeared in every major spiritual tradition, West and East, because it fills a deep, universal need in the human heart.

Select a mantram that appeals to you. Every religious tradition has a mantram, often more than one. But you needn't subscribe to any religion to benefit from the mantram – you simply have to be willing to try it.

What the mantram can do

If you have any preconceptions or preconceived notions about the mantram, let me ask you to put them aside and give it a personal trial. Why take someone else's word for it?

Enter the laboratory of your mind and perform the experiment. Then you will be in a position to judge for yourself, and nothing can be as persuasive as that.

If you're like me, at this point you may doubt that such a simple skill could do what I claim. I doubted it, too, when my grandmother tried to tell me what the mantram can do. Granny was the wisest person I have ever known, and I loved her passionately, so I always took her advice seriously. But, after all, grannies don't know everything. "Granny," I protested, "that's just mindless repetition! What can repetition do?"

"Walking is just repetition too," she said. "One step after another, each one the same."

She had me there. But I still didn't believe her.

Give it a try

But life went on presenting challenges, and in college I encountered a really intimidating one: public speaking. I found the activity fascinating and took every opportunity to learn, but no matter how many times I stood before an audience and lived to tell the tale, I was always afraid that on the next occasion I would trip on my way to the podium or open my mouth and find that no words would come out.

When I confessed this fear to my granny, she had a very simple piece of advice: not to sit there going over my notes or trying to size up my audience, but to repeat the mantram to myself quietly while awaiting my turn.

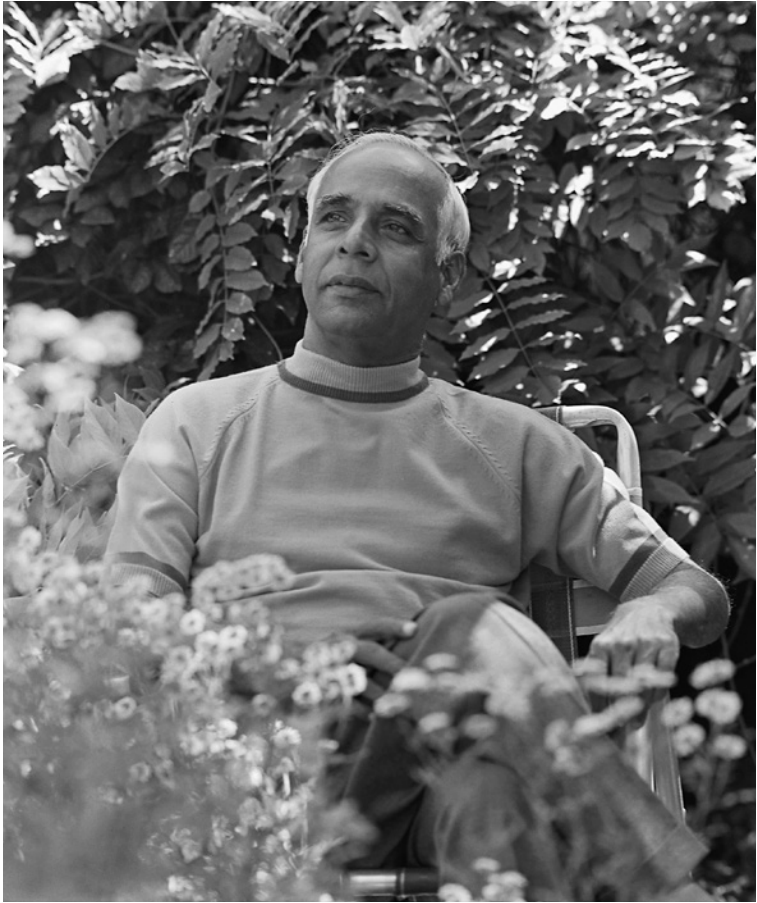
I decided she didn't really understand. After all, she never had to give a speech! But because of my love for her, I promised to give it a try.

Personal experience

The next time I had to give a talk, I sat quietly repeating *Rama, Rama, Rama* over and over and over in my mind. Whenever my thoughts tried to blurt out "I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" instead, I would bring them back to "*Rama, Rama*" – adding to myself, every now and then, "I hope it works." And the talk went well. With my mind calmer, the words came up right on cue.

I kept on practicing this little trick, and after a while I began to say, "*Rama, Rama, Rama . . .* I think it works!"

Today, after years of practice, I can assure you with complete confidence that I know it works. This is really the only way that trust in the mantram can come – through your own personal experience. 🌸



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

How to Choose and Use a Mantram

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Take Your Time*

Every major religion has a mantram, often more than one. If you have no affiliation with a religion, however, you can still use a mantram and benefit from it. I have heard countless times from confirmed skeptics and agnostics that the mantram came to their help just when they needed it, though they hadn't expected it to mean anything to them at all.

One of the oldest and most popular mantrams in India, *Rama*, is the one Mahatma Gandhi used. *Rama* (the word rhymes with *drama*) is a name of the Lord that comes from a word meaning "joy" or "to rejoice," so repeating *Rama, Rama, Rama* is calling on the source of joy in our hearts. When someone comes to me for a mantram and says that he or she doesn't believe in God or belong to any particular religion, this is the mantram I most often give them. It is short, rhythmic, easy to remember, and powerful.

Another mantram I often give is the Buddhist phrase *Om mani padme hum*. *Mani* means "jewel" and *padme* "lotus"; together the words refer to "the jewel in the lotus of the heart." This mantram simply means that the Buddha-nature, a jewel beyond price, is present in every heart.

The Catholic tradition has a beautiful mantram in the simple words *Ave Maria*. In the Eastern Orthodox traditions, variations of the Jesus Prayer – "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us," or simply *Kyrie eleison* – have been used for centuries. And for Christians of all traditions, the very name of Jesus is one of the oldest mantrams of all.

Similarly, in Islam, the name of Allah itself is a mantram. Another is *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*: “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” Jews may repeat the familiar *Barukh attah Adonai* – “Blessed art thou, O Lord” – or a revered formula used as a mantram by the Hasidim: *Ribono shel olam*, “Lord of the universe.”

Diligent, determined practice

Select your mantram carefully. Please don't make up your own; use one that has been sanctified by tradition, as have all the ones I recommend here. Then, once you have chosen, stick to it. Don't try one for a while and then change to another. If you do, you will be like a person who keeps digging wells in many places; you will never strike water.

*

Use your mantram as much as possible – silently, in the mind – whenever you find an opportunity: while waiting in line, while doing mechanical tasks like washing dishes, and especially while falling asleep at night. Practice – diligent, determined practice – is what counts with the repetition of the mantram. At first the repetition may seem mechanical, but every repetition takes you a little deeper. Gandhi used to say it's like walking: each step is like all the others, but you are moving forward with every stride.

Times to use the mantram

Of course, when you are doing a job that requires attention, you should not try to use the mantram. That is the time to give your complete attention to the job. Most work requires this kind of

attention. When operating a piece of machinery, one-pointed attention is not just training the mind; it is vital for safety. (Driving, incidentally, is operating a particularly dangerous piece of machinery.) These are not times for the mantram.

However, there are many, many occasions during the day when the mind is not actively engaged in a one-pointed task, and those are just the times when it tends to get caught in old, compulsive habits – worry, resentment, insecurity, gossip, replaying old recordings from the past. These are all times to use the mantram instead.

You can use the mantram to invigorate the mind when you are getting bored, and to overcome inertia when you feel physically or mentally stale. And you can use it to control restlessness when the mind is speeding up. The mantram is an indispensable tool that I recommend to anyone who wants to find peace in a world of stress and hurry. 🌸

Weaving Your Name

Kabir

I weave your name on the loom of my mind,
To make my garment when you come to me.
My loom has ten thousand threads
To make my garment when you come to me.
The sun and moon watch while I weave your name;
The sun and moon hear while I count your name.
These are the wages I get by day and night
To deposit in the lotus bank of my heart.

I weave your name on the loom of my mind
To clean and soften ten thousand threads
And to comb the twists and knots of my thoughts.
No more shall I weave a garment of pain.
For you have come to me, drawn by my weaving –
My ceaselessly weaving your name
On the loom of my mind.



Singing Your Name

Meera

Singing your name day and night,

It echoes in my mind all the time.

O Krishna, I am the dust of your feet;

How can I lift my voice in your praise?

Singing your name heals all wounds,

And guards the mind against selfish thoughts.

I am armed with the arrow of your name

Fixed on the bow-string of my heart;

I wear the armor of your glory

As I sing of your life and divine deeds.

My body is a musical instrument

On which my mind plays songs of love.

To awaken my soul from sleep,

I sing and dance before the Lord

Waiting for the door to open.



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

Giving and Forgiving with the Mantram

Ekknath Easwaran, from our journal archive

It is meditation every morning that gives you the wonderful capacity to stay patient and forgiving no matter what the day brings. When you know from your own experience what the tremendous benefits can be, you look forward to meditation. When the alarm goes off in the morning, even in the dead of winter when the bed is warm and the blankets hold you down, you get up for your meditation with eagerness and enthusiasm every day, well or not so well, because you know that meditation is the key to the art of living.

But meditation alone is not enough. You can make great progress during a morning's meditation only to see it all undone at the breakfast table, when someone admits to having dented a fender slightly or overdrawn the checking account. To hold on to the precious advances you make in meditation and to extend the effects of meditation into the rest of the day, you need to practice certain supporting disciplines as well.

Your undivided attention

The first of these is the use of the holy name, called the mantram in Sanskrit. Meditation is going inside to pay a formal visit to the Lord who lives in the depths of consciousness: you sit down and politely give him your undivided attention. Repeating the mantram, by contrast, is quite informal, though never casual. There are times throughout the day and night

when you need to draw on the Lord for love or wisdom or strength, and you need to do it right now, regardless of where you are or what you are doing. You're not paying a visit in person; you can't even afford the price of a phone call. Instead, you're calling the Lord collect.

A wave of fear or anger is about to overtake you, or a great wave of selfish desire, and you just go out for a brisk walk repeating *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus* in your mind. The rhythm of your breathing will blend with the rhythm of your footsteps. Soon you will find that the rhythm of your mind has slowed down too, and its turbulence has subsided.

The capacity to forgive others

The power of this simple discipline has been laid out eloquently by the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

. . . a naked intent directed unto God, without any other cause than himself, sufficeth wholly. And if thou desirest to have this intent lapped and folden in one word, so that thou mayest have better hold thereupon, take thee but a little word of one syllable, for so it is better than two; for the shorter the word, the better it accordeth with the work of the spirit. . . .

And fasten this word to thy heart that so it may never go thence for anything that befalleth. This word shall be thy shield and thy spear, whether thou ridest on peace or on war. With this word thou shalt beat on this cloud and this darkness above thee. With this word thou shalt smite

down all manner of thought under the cloud of forgetting; insomuch that if any thought press upon thee to ask what thou wouldst have, answer with no more than this one word.

When people say or do harmful things to you, you can almost see the cloud of darkness forming across your mind. It is this cloud that covers over your need to give and forgive, and it can seem as thick as a great thunderhead. But with the mantram you can just beat on that cloud until you disperse it and drive it away, and there behind it, shining like the sun, is the capacity to forgive others and draw them closer to you. It isn't always that you forget the wrongs that have been done or said, but there is no longer any emotional charge.

Learning to forgive

In the Hindu tradition, one of the names of the Lord is “the ocean of forgiveness.” If we want to be united with him, we need to forgive all those around us, for in learning to forgive we move closer and closer to the Lord, who is the source of forgiveness itself.

When you begin to travel inward through meditation, you will see for yourself how many things the mind has not been able to pardon. For a while, all you can do is look at them in dismay. But if over many years you have developed compassion for others, then that same wealth of compassion will come to you when you most need it. It will equip you with a kind of spiritual eraser. Now you will be able to walk up to a memory that has spread hostility, fear, or greed in your mind for decades and just rub it out.

If anyone were to ask me about the mistakes I made in the past, I would say simply, “That was how I saw life then. Now, through the grace of the Lord, my vision has been corrected.” That is why I repeat over and over again, “Don’t let your mind dwell on the past.” Everybody has scars from the past. Don’t talk about them; don’t think about them. I am the first to admit that this is a tall order. It can be done, though, through repetition of the holy name.

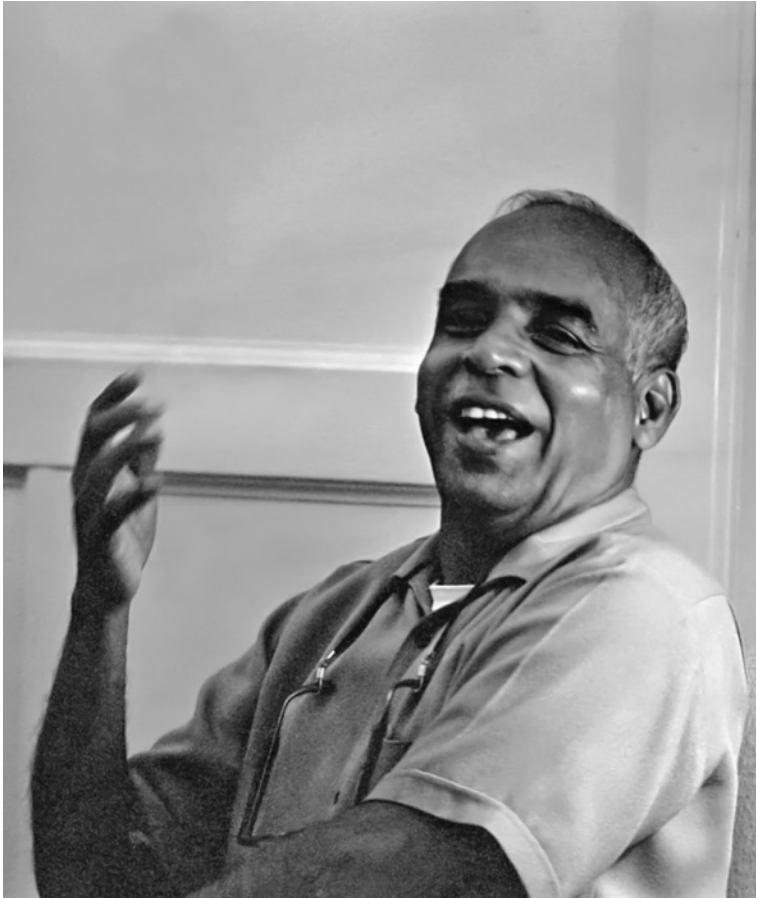
Strategies of the spiritual life

Our best defense against the fast thinking that plunges us into anger is the holy name – particularly when it is combined with a really fast walk. In India, some of these essential strategies of the spiritual life are handed out with a delightfully light touch in a little story.

One such story concerns a wandering sage who was asked by a villager what to do about anger. “That’s simple,” the sage said. “Whenever you get angry, just get outside and walk as fast as you can, repeating to yourself the holy name: *Rama, Rama, Rama.*”

Time passed, and it was months before the sage’s wanderings led him to that village again. His disciple ran to greet him, but the sage could hardly recognize him. He looked calm and secure but exceptionally fit as well, strong and bronzed by the sun. “I’m glad to see you looking so well!” the sage exclaimed. “What is the secret of your good health?”

“Oh,” the man answered with an embarrassed smile, “I’ve been living mostly in the open.”



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

Healing the wounds of the day

The most precious period of the day for repeating your mantram is at night, just as you are falling asleep. Between the last waking moment and the first sleeping moment, there is an infinitesimally narrow tunnel into the unconscious. If you can learn to fall asleep in the holy name, you can send it in deep where it will heal the wounds the day has inflicted; it will soothe the raw edges of daily experience. The proof that the holy name is doing its work is that sometimes you may hear it reverberating in your sleep.

This is the miracle St. Paul refers to when he enjoins us to “pray without ceasing.” It goes on wherever you are, whatever you are doing, protecting your mind against any negative emotion. In fact, I like to compare the holy name to a highway patrolman riding about on a Harley-Davidson, round and round the alleys of the mind – most of them blind. He keeps an eye on the thoughts traveling there and gives out tickets for excessive speed, for drifting back and forth across lanes, for driving too close to the car ahead. Day and night, your mantram is always on duty.

Making progress as we sleep

Increasingly as we grow older, sleep can become problematic. Old memories come to stalk us; fears and resentments come to nibble at our security. Sleep may be a long time coming, and when it comes it is often shattered by unpleasant dreams. Small wonder that people spend five hundred million dollars each year on sleeping pills. Small wonder they come to dread going to bed at night.

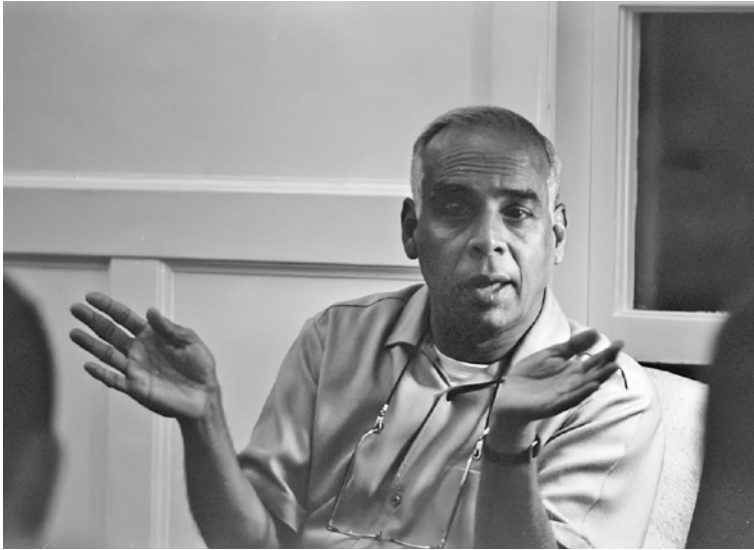
But the great mystics speak very differently of both sleep and sleeplessness. The German mystic Angelus Silesius wrote in beautiful, enigmatic language: “The light of splendor shines in the middle of the night. Who can see it? A heart which has eyes and watches.”

Of course, the light he is describing is not physical, and the night is not only the stretch of time between sunset and sunrise. What you are doing in meditation is trying to make the unconscious conscious: to travel deep into the dark realms of the unconscious and set them ablaze with spiritual awareness. You do this in a small way each time you meditate, but you also enter the unconscious when you go to sleep at night, and one of the remarkable discoveries you will make as your meditation deepens is that you can make considerable progress during your sleep. Later on, in fact, some of the most thrilling experiences to come your way are likely to take place not during meditation and not during the day, but in the middle of the night.

A bedtime sequence

This is why I place so much emphasis on a simple bedtime sequence that everyone can follow with benefit, whether their desire is for spiritual awareness or just the blessed gift of a sound night’s sleep. First, put away your Agatha Christie or John Le Carré. The last things you read about, or think about, or see on television, will follow you into your sleep and color your dreams.

Second, spend fifteen minutes to half an hour reading something of genuine inspirational value – ideally, works from the great mystical traditions. (Dame Agatha Christie would very likely agree with this advice: a friend told me recently that Miss



Eknath Easwaran, 1970s

Marple herself always read a few lines from Thomas à Kempis before bedtime.) When you have finished, turn off your light and begin repeating your mantram, giving it all the attention you can, and keep repeating it until you fall asleep.

To do this is much harder than it sounds. It is terribly difficult, in fact, because the period just before sleep is like listening in on a party line. Someone is talking on one line about the happenings of the day, while on another a voice keeps harping on your mistakes and shortcomings, and still a third is chattering away about tomorrow. To keep your attention on the holy name when all this is going on is hard, hard work. For many nights, you may not be falling asleep in your mantram at all; you'll be drifting off into your own thoughts. If this happens, don't get discouraged; be patient and keep on trying.

When you have learned to fall asleep in the mantram, you may sometimes hear it in your sleep. When a nightmare is slowly tiptoeing in, the mantram will reverberate and the nightmare will vanish. All night long the name of the Lord can go on echoing, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,” and as it does, old wounds are healed and long-standing conflicts are resolved. Diffidence gives way to confidence, and despair to faith.

Relieving others’ pain

The holy name reverberating in the depths of consciousness transfigures our entire vision of life. Whether our mantram is *Rama, Rama* or *Jesus, Jesus* or *Hail Mary* or *Om mani padme hum*, it fills us with the same joy, security, and beauty. Just as the mantram transforms negative forces in consciousness into constructive power, so it now transforms all our perceptions of the everyday world into unbroken awareness of the unity of life.

When spiritual teachers talk about meditation, they often speak of putting an end to sorrow. It is easy to misunderstand this. “Don’t you feel any grief, then?” I am sometimes asked. And of course I do. It is not that I do not feel pain; but the pain that is in my heart today comes of seeing the pain of others. All my capacity for sorrow, which I used to waste on myself, has been turned into compassion. And the joy that comes of being able to relieve pain never goes away. In the deepest stages of meditation, when I became aware that everybody’s suffering is mine and that I had developed a capacity to help, I began to find an unlimited joy.

As a child I had always been sensitive to suffering, but whenever I asked myself what I could do to relieve suffering around

me, the answer had always been, “Nothing. You’re too small.” But my capacity to feel suffering grew with deepening meditation, little by little. And my desire to relieve suffering kept deepening with my capacity to feel it. Today I know that once a person becomes one with the Lord, he or she feels the suffering of all. Yet there is a simultaneity of suffering and joy, far beyond the duality of pleasure and pain. When there is great pain, when there is great grief – physical, emotional and, of course, spiritual – I can attest to you from my own personal life that the repetition of the name of the Lord heals your wounds, sets your mind at rest, lets you sleep in peace. Now I am prepared to face any amount of pain, because the Lord has granted me the immense desire to relieve the suffering of others.

Serving the Lord everywhere

When we change our way of seeing – when, after years of spiritual striving, we begin to see with the eyes of love – we will live in a different world.

If we give others deep respect and trust, and bear all suffering with patience and internal toughness, we will find ourselves in a compassionate universe. The eyes of love see the core of goodness in the hearts of others, and that is how I see the world today. It is not that I fail to see suffering and sorrow. But I understand the laws of life and see its unity everywhere. All I ask is that I may ever see this vision, and ever serve the Lord of Love in every living creature. 🌸

I Come to Him Running

The Mishkat Al-Masabih

The Prophet said,

God Most High has said:

When my worshipper's thoughts turn to Me,
there am I with him.

And when he makes mention of Me within himself,

I make mention of him within Myself:

and when he makes mention of Me in company,

I make mention of him in a better company.

If he draw near to Me a hand's breadth,

I draw near to him an arm's length;

and if he draw near to Me an arm's length,

I draw near to him the length of both arms

wide outstretched;

and if he come to Me walking, I come to him running.

And if he meet Me with sins equivalent to the whole world,

I will greet him with forgiveness equal to it.

Community Stories

From readers who are practicing Easwaran's eight-point program

The Mantram for Forgiveness

The past year has been a very challenging one especially regarding relationships, and this in turn has had a detrimental effect for me on both physical and mental fronts. It has shaken the very foundation of my faith and my spiritual practice.

And although, almost without fail, I manage to get my morning meditation in, I have felt the key to combating negative thoughts arising from these challenging relationships has been the mantram.

Perhaps, through the 26 years of my eight-point program spiritual practice, my sense of discrimination and my ability to recognise negativity has developed. Nowadays, I can hear and recognise "Mr. Negative" starting to chatter in the corner of my mind; I then use the mantram to distract my mind and he eventually fades away.

Although I may not have recognised "Mr. Negative" every time, I have found that using the mantram more throughout the day has had a very positive effect. I have had much success in introducing the use of the mantram when doing my exercises such as my yoga, or cardiac workout, rather than listening to something on my headphones.

I write the mantram at least twice a day, just before morning meditation and just before lights out. It may literally be just a few lines, but by dedicating those few lines to the ones I choose

to forgive and writing their names at the top of the page, it lightens my load.

Consequently, when I am about to engage in a difficult conversation or feel that a conversation is becoming difficult, I find I spontaneously start chanting the mantram in the back of my mind. This gives me the ability to keep calm and deal with the situation with both compassion and reason.

I believe the Lord is always testing us in different ways and I really believe that He and our dear beloved teacher have conspired, whether we like it or not, to ensure that we all obtain a PhD in a love that is patient, forgiving, and kind!

*

The Mantram for Concentrated Energy

Lately, I've been working on being vigilant about junk thoughts, reminding myself during multiple points of the day to step back for a few seconds and take a look at what I'm thinking. It has been enlightening.

Sometimes, my thoughts are concentrated on selfless activity. Great. Keep going. Sometimes, they are thinking about the future. It is helpful to plan, but most of the time when I'm thinking about the future, no useful planning is happening. I'm perseverating, worrying, anticipating. Most of my future thinking is just churning.

And thinking about the past – well, every now and then I am getting an insight to help me avoid past mistakes or to take something positive in the future. But 99% of the time, thoughts about the past are nothing I really want to be thinking about.

No wonder I'm so tired at the end of the day. My mind has

been chewing up prana – wasting vital energy on thoughts, and sometimes on the actions they stimulate, that I don't even really want to be doing.

This is where the mantram comes in. Every time I find myself thinking junk thoughts, I try to call up the mantram. It helps! It gives the mind something to hold on to, instead of churning. It slows me down. It increases the chance of my making a positive contribution to whatever activity I'm engaged in. And the more I can notice my junk thoughts and substitute the mantram, the less I have a mid-afternoon fade, and the more concentrated energy I have to take into evening meditation. Vigilance + mantram is a good combination.

*

The Mantram for Overcoming Anxiety

My husband needs to explain the technicalities of administering our family finances to me to make sure I can take over our affairs in case of an emergency. As we are no longer young, this is becoming urgent. Our sessions have been hard. I have failed to understand how a small action can have big consequences, and digital systems have a way of changing just as I try to learn.

Recently, I noticed how sped up and anxious we become as he tries to stop me jumping into action without double-checking, and I get despairing. So I suggested we put our mantrams between any action or any comment. It slowed us down to a snail's pace. We often did nothing, just sat silently.

The atmosphere changed. We attempted less and succeeded at almost everything. We listened better to each other. It's a bit comical, but the more we do it, the more natural it becomes. 🌸



Memorial Garden, Ramagiri Ashram

Thy Holy Name

Shankara

I do not ask Thee, Mother,
Riches, good fortune, or salvation;
I seek no happiness, no knowledge.
This is my only prayer to Thee:
That as the breath of my life forsakes me,
I may chant Thy holy name.



Eknath Easwaran, 1980s

Keeping the Mind Steady

Ekknath Easwaran, from *The Mantram Handbook*

The popular etymology of the word *mantram* gives us some clue what it means to have the holy name at work in our consciousness. It is said that *mantram* comes from the roots *man*, “the mind,” and *tri*, “to cross.” The mantram is that which enables us to cross the sea of the mind. The sea is a perfect symbol for the mind. It is in constant motion; there is calm one day and storm the next. We see only the surface, with hardly any inkling of the strange creatures that lurk below or the tremendous currents that sweep through the depths. From where we stand on this shore, the far shore is so completely out of sight that we find it hard even to imagine that there is another shore.

Most of us are aware of the motion of the mind only on the surface level of consciousness, where our thoughts jump like grasshoppers from one thing to another. Stray observations on our surroundings, old memories, plans for the future, a rush of elation over some good news, regrets over the past, a line from a popular song, worries about our problems, physical sensations, resentments towards those around us, and a craving for something to eat all follow one another in just a matter of minutes. In themselves, most of these thoughts are not actually harmful; a few of them may even be rather elevating. The trouble is that we have very little control over them. If you ask the thoughts, they would say, “This poor fellow thinks he is thinking us, but we are thinking *him*.”

Storms sap our will and our vitality

Below the surface level of consciousness, what storms rage! Here are our deep-seated fears and hostilities, our cravings and conflicts. These are the deep divisions in our consciousness which make it difficult for us to concentrate, difficult to be loyal and steadfast. Often these divisions are at the root of serious physical ailments. They come to us in our sleep as nightmares, and all too often they plunge us into depression. Such storms sap our will and our vitality.

The vast majority of us see no way to change this situation; we have come to accept it as inevitable, as part of human nature. But let me assure you that this is not our real nature; it is only our conditioning. Deep within us we have immense reserves of will, loyalty, patience, compassion, and love; it is only that we do not know how to unlock these resources and bring them into full play in our daily lives. But this is something all of us can learn to do if we can gain control of our minds.

The well-trained mind

Control of the mind is something that has never occurred to most of us; to some it may even sound cold or rigid. Many people, especially those who are highly educated, feel that control would stifle the untrammled freedom of their thoughts. But none of us question the need for control, for discipline, in mastering physical skills.

Take eating, for example; it never even occurs to us what dexterity it requires simply to get food onto a fork and guide it to our mouths. Only when we see a baby learning to feed itself, getting more cereal on its face than in its mouth, do we

realize that our effortless skill in eating comes from long years of practice. We have taught our hand to obey us. How would you feel if your hand suddenly refused to take orders from you, if it poured the coffee over your salad or fed you soup with the spoon upside down?

This is exactly how we let our mind treat us, because we have never given it the proper training. When we want to concentrate, the mind generates a host of irrelevant worries and distractions. When we want to be dedicated, it brings in all sorts of conflicts and reservations. When we want to be loving, it drags out its little collection of trivial resentments and old hostilities.

Mastery over our life

But when we learn to control the mind – to slow down its feverish pace, to welcome those thoughts we approve of and dismiss those that are negative – we will find what a sense of mastery this brings

When most of us think of self-control, we think of something external. We may manage to keep from doing the wrong thing, but our mind is in turmoil; we may manage to keep from saying the wrong thing, but the words we're thinking are far from parliamentary.

Here it is not enough to tell ourselves, “Keep a stiff upper lip, old boy,” and put on a calm front. We can all have such control over the mind that calmness becomes our natural state. We can learn to turn our backs on our private satisfactions when necessary without a ripple of protest in the mind, and we can learn to function in the most trying circumstances without a trace of agitation. This is not control imposed from without; it is real mastery over our life.

The barrier between the conscious and the unconscious

The great mystics call this process calming or stilling the mind, and it means bringing every mental process under our complete control – not just on the conscious level, but in the unconscious too. For the vast majority of us, our will is operative only on the surface level. Most of us have little enough control even over our conscious mind, but the fears and hostilities and cravings that we are aware of are just the tip of the iceberg. In dreams and nightmares, we get some inkling of the strange world below the level of waking consciousness. Our fears and cravings are much stronger at this level, and we have virtually no control over them.

The deepest levels of the unconscious are completely beyond our awareness, yet it is here that our problems have their taproot. In the deeper unconscious, instead of the many small fears that we are aware of on the surface level – the fear of going bald, for example, or the fear of overdrawing our checking account – there is fear itself. And here too, bound up in our unconscious conflicts, fears, and cravings, is an immense reserve of creativity, wisdom, and love.

Of course, we cannot get at the unconscious directly. We have to strengthen our will gradually and learn to extend our conscious control over deeper and deeper levels of the mind. As our will grows, we transform and harness the negative forces in consciousness, which unlocks all our vast potential. Finally, when we have eliminated all barriers between the conscious and the unconscious, we are able to move about on any level of



Eknath Easwaran, 1980s

consciousness fully aware, with our will completely operative. Mahatma Gandhi assures us that we can come to have such effortless mastery over our mind that even in our dreams a selfish thought will not arise. This is what stilling the mind means: laying to rest permanently every negative and selfish force in consciousness.

A still mind

There is a popular misconception that to still the mind is to become a zombie or robot. It is just the opposite. The calmer and stiller the mind becomes, the more we can realize in our daily lives our true birthright of security, joy, and tireless energy to work for the welfare of those around us. Meher Baba, a well-known saint of modern India, used to say that a mind that is fast is sick, a mind that is slow is sound, and a mind that is still is divine. This is what the Bible means when it says, “Be still and know that I am God.”

In comparing the mind to the sea, I again recall those walks my wife and I used to take every day around Lake Merritt in Oakland. Usually the wind ruffled the water, and all we could see was the surface. But on rare mornings when there was no wind and the lake was absolutely calm, we could see right down to the bottom. Similarly, when the mind is stilled, we become aware of the divine presence, the Lord of Love, who is enshrined in the very depths of our consciousness. This does not mean seeing visions or hearing voices; it means that we have had direct, immediate experience that all life is one. When we have had this experience, we will be incapable of doing anything that violates this unity of life, and we will live for the welfare of all. 🌸

The Blessing of a Well-Trained Mind

The Dhammapada

As an archer aims his arrow, the wise aim their restless thoughts, hard to aim, hard to restrain.

As a fish hooked and left on the sand thrashes about in agony, the mind being trained in meditation trembles all over, desperate to escape the hand of Mara the Tempter.

Hard it is to train the mind, which goes where it likes and does what it wants. But a trained mind brings health and happiness. The wise can direct their thoughts, subtle and elusive, wherever they choose: a trained mind brings health and happiness.

Those who can direct thoughts, which are unsubstantial and wander so aimlessly, are freed from the bonds of Mara.

They are not wise whose thoughts are not steady and minds not serene, who do not know dharma, the law of life. They are wise whose thoughts are steady and minds serene, unaffected by good and bad. They are awake and free from fear.

Remember, this body is like a fragile clay pot. Make your mind a fortress and conquer Mara with the weapon of wisdom. Guard your conquest always.

More than those who hate you, more than all your enemies, an untrained mind does greater harm. More than your mother, more than your father, more than all your family, a well-trained mind does greater good.

Community Stories

From readers who are practicing Easwaran's eight-point program

The Mantram in the Workplace

My job has many challenges, and they all come down to gaining the cooperation of people and agencies that work with, rather than for, our organization. Yet, there are mutual goals to be achieved. One of my strategies to help foster healthy discussion amidst divergent interests is to have quarterly, in-person meetings, bringing together representatives of each relevant agency to discuss how our missions can intersect to achieve success.

Before these meetings, I write mantrams for the people present. I list their names at the top of a page, then fill the page with mantrams for the welfare of each person. Honestly, I started this practice because I was a bit intimidated, and it did immediately help with my anxiety. Interestingly, as time went on and I continued the practice, I found more and more of the meetings filled with cooperation and consideration of divergent points of view. The mantram kept me focused on others around the table and I believe that caring energy can be enormously contagious, helping us to work in harmony.

*

Something Positive in the Universe

I regularly check trusted news sources from around the globe, often for less than two minutes at a stretch; it's a quick scan to keep up to date on what's happening in this world of ours. Many, many times, I do not click on items, as their content may be either violent or salacious. However, sometimes it's impossible to avoid disturbing images and in those moments, I quickly glance away from the screen and repeat my mantram. Often, I may direct my mantram at helping Planet Earth, other times it's for a certain group of people or animals at risk. I find this practice helpful for two reasons. It stops me from dwelling on tragic or terrible circumstances, and it allows me to focus on the power of the mantram to project something positive in the universe.

*

Taking Away the Fear

The older I get, the more running repairs for my body inevitably come my way, and although they're necessary, they can be a bit of a challenge. Take the visits to the dentist, for instance. I'm lucky enough to have an excellent dentist, but my heart still sinks when he reaches for his drill. After years of spiritual practice, however, I know I can count on my mantram to keep me calm and steady. I start repeating it as I walk up to the surgery, and after a brief chat with the staff I focus on the mantram as I settle down in the chair. We don't have music or other distractions so that the dentist can concentrate on the treatment, and the mantram works away invisibly, taking away my fear, helping me to relax, creating a healing environment for us all.

*

Calming Rising Panic

The mantram has truly been a staff of life for me. I learned this years ago, on a family holiday. We were driving down a major highway when traffic ahead suddenly slowed to a crawl. An off ramp exiting to a suburb was jammed, while straight ahead our route led down a very long dark tunnel underneath the ocean.

A short distance in, we saw why so many cars had taken that exit. There was a terrible crash ahead, and all vehicles came to a stop to allow emergency crews past. I felt my heart start to speed up with deep concern for those in the crash and unease at our own predicament. It was very hot in the car despite the AC, and the tunnel seemed to be heating up as we sat there, now at a complete halt. I started repeating my mantram silently while letting my husband field questions from the kids. Thirty minutes passed.

Trapped

The sirens, the flashing lights, the terrible wreckage with unknown injuries to the people inside, plus the increasing heat all combined to spark a latent claustrophobia unknown to me. My heart raced, I was covered in sweat and tears leaked out of my eyes while my mantram grew louder and louder in my mind. I used every bit of focus I could to distract my mind from the crash and the fact that my family was trapped at the very start of this very, very long tunnel, carved out deep under the ocean.

Finally, I warned my family: "I need to say my mantram out loud now!" and I literally started to shout my mantram, *Rama Rama Rama*, very loudly indeed.

But apparently my family found this hilarious, as while they'd all heard me sing or say my mantram, they had never heard me shout it. They started laughing, and the tension instantly decreased in our car.

Panic dissipated

Eventually the emergency crews reached the victims and amazingly people were now walking around, seemingly unharmed. I continued with the mantram more quietly now for several slow kilometres inside the tunnel, sometimes also laughing with my family. Slowly but surely, the panic dissipated from within. I'm not sure I helped anyone outside the car that day, but my mantram certainly helped me and everyone in it. 🌸

Questions and Answers on the Mantram

Eknath Easwaran, from *Passage Meditation*

Is there a difference between “mantram” and “mantra,” as it is usually spelled?

They are the same word. *Mantram* is the neuter form, and that is the traditional way that kind of noun has been taught in India for thousands of years. In modern linguistics, the form used is masculine, *mantra*. There is no difference at all, but since *mantra* has become so common in phrases like “the Wall Street mantra,” I prefer to keep to the form I learned as a child.

You say that we should choose our own mantram, but that it should be one from your recommended list. Could you explain why that is?

Usually we receive the mantram from our teacher. In many of the Indian traditions, this is a secret between the teacher and the student. You are not supposed to tell anyone what your mantram is. Some people respond to that, and I have no quarrel with it whatever. But I belong to another tradition, which I call the tradition of the open hand: I say, “These are the great mantrams; you choose.” I like the intelligent cooperation of the student, and I try to help those who come to me to make a wise choice. The mantram still comes from me, but you can make your own choice.

In choosing, however, please don’t go by whether it sounds nice or it “feels right.” That is not the issue. Has it been honored

by time, practiced by millions? Does your teacher give it? There are certain requirements for a mantram of which most people are not aware. That is why I limit the mantrams in my books to a very few chosen ones that can always be trusted because they are universal, applicable to all countries and to all people. They come to us already surcharged with energy.

Is that why we shouldn't make up our own mantram?

The mantram should carry the power of many centuries of people who have used the mantram and benefitted by it. That is how the mantram becomes holy. *Rama*, for example, has been used as a mantram for thousands of years. The name of Jesus has been repeated as a mantram and hallowed by millions of Christians down the centuries. A mantram draws its power from the long procession of religious people who have used it. That's why when you make up your own mantram, it has no power: the power comes from the source.

Most important, you should receive the mantram “hot,” from someone who has verified it in his or her personal experience. My own mantram – *Hare Rama, Hare Krishna* – is important for me not only because it has been used for thousands of years in India, but because I received it scalding hot from my own teacher, my grandmother – so hot that I cannot hold it at all; I've got to pass it on to everybody.

What do you mean by someone “verifying” a mantram?

The mantram should bear the imprint of the spiritual awareness of the person giving it — someone who has brought it to life in



Ramagiri Ashram

his or her own consciousness. The stamp of this experience shows in everything they say and do. The great mystics whose history has come down to us tell us they have seen Rama, the reality indicated by the mantram, in the depths of consciousness. They have seen Krishna, the reality indicated by the mantram. They have seen Jesus, indicated by the Jesus Prayer. These are direct experiences of the same reality.

The mantrams that you recommend all sound religious, and I'm not religious. What should I do?

Many people today are averse to the religion of their childhood or to organized religion in any form at all. As I understand it, religion is beyond sectarian divisions and dogmas. It is realization of the unity of life. That supreme reality is what all mantrams stand for. All mantrams lead to that reality, and all have come down to us from men and women who have made that discovery themselves. To follow in their footsteps, there is no need for us to believe in anything; we have simply to trust them enough to make the experiment ourselves.

Isn't *Om* a great mantram? Can I just say *Om*?

Om — or, as it is sometimes spelled, *Aum* — is not really a word, not even a sound in the usual sense. It stands for a primordial vibration which can be experienced in very deep meditation, to which all mantrams lead.

So if you look at some of the great mantrams that have come down to us in India — for example, *Om nama Shivaya*, or *Om Yesu Christu* — you will see that *Om* has been added to one of the names of God or a great incarnation. If you want to use *Om*,

that is what I would recommend – but always make sure it is a traditional mantram sanctified by centuries of tradition.

Can you have the same mantram as your spiritual teacher?

Yes. In fact, if you have a teacher, it's traditional to choose your teacher's mantram. But there is actually no obligation to have your teacher's mantram. If you choose a traditional mantram like *Rama, Rama* or the Jesus Prayer or *Om mani padme hum*, it is already surcharged – “batteries included.”

Can we also write the mantram if we're struggling with a problem?

When Christine and I visited Swami Ramdas's ashram in India, we saw how he used writing the mantram in this way. He did not encourage people to talk because he thought most talk about personal problems does not serve any useful purpose. Instead he had a pile of what in India are called exercise books: blank notebooks with lots and lots of pages. When somebody would come to Swami Ramdas with a load of problems, Ramdas would say, “Here is an eighty-page exercise book. You just write *Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama*, fill it up, and bring it to me.” It takes a lot of mantrams to fill up an eighty-page exercise book. By the time the person had filled it up, he would come back to Ramdas calmer and more compassionate. That is the whole point, you see. Problems bother us because they agitate the mind. The problem is not the problem; it is the agitation. And the work of the mantram is to quieten the agitation in the mind.

How did you fit in those thousands of repetitions? I don't have the time.

This is what I hear from everybody. I comfort them by saying that's what I used to tell myself. In the early days, I too used to think I didn't have time for repeating the mantram. I was always active, as I still am. I had many, many vital interests, and what little time I had I would give to my students.

But when I began to long for the state where the mantram will begin to repeat itself, I longed for it so much that I worked for it at every possible opportunity. Standing in a queue, riding in a car, walking to the next classroom, waiting at the post office, before a meal, going to sleep – as the bank advertisement says, it all adds up.

But you need to look for opportunities. Many of the occasions when we get bored, for example, it is simply because we don't know how to use the time. Often we make silly statements, indulge in gossip, do silly things, or offend people with thoughtless words. All this could be saved just by repeating the mantram.

Can I sing the mantram? Chant it? Say it aloud?

If you are alone, you can repeat the mantram aloud to yourself, especially to get it started if you are agitated. If you are with other people, however, repeating it audibly can be confusing – and if they happen to have a mantram of their own, they are likely to be trying to repeat it themselves. The mantram is always most effective when repeated in the mind.

In India, as you know, devotional people like to come together to sing songs about the glory of God composed by



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some of our great mystics. But this is more a spiritual exercise than a musical exercise. It is possible for anyone to sing the mantram beautifully, but that is not its purpose. It is far more important to pay attention to the devotional part of it than the musical part. I remember Mahatma Gandhi, commenting on a distinguished singer in India, saying that there is always a possibility that you may get so absorbed in the music that you forget the devotional aspect of it. There may even come a time when the musical part becomes an impediment on the spiritual path: you may get so attached to the sensual pleasure that you stop there.

Here what I encourage is that we repeat the mantram silently in the mind and meditate deeply. If you like, you can always sing the mantram in your mind.

How can I encourage my children to use the mantram? And which mantram should I give to them?

The repetition of the mantram is a very valuable tool for all children everywhere. It can be used while going to the dentist. It can be used during examination time. It can be used at school. It can be used while competing in school.

You can introduce it through the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Explain how great a blessing he has been to the world and then, when they ask you “How did he become like that?” you talk about the power of the mantram.

There is no mantram better for children than Gandhi’s mantram, *Rama*, but you can also suggest your own mantram if it has been chosen from my list. It can be a great benefit when all members of the family use the same mantram.

How early should we introduce our children to the mantram? When did you start?

If you want to know when my spiritual life started, personally I started halfway through life, but today I would say that my spiritual life really began in my mother's womb when she was repeating her mantram given by her mother, who was God-conscious, repeating it all the time, so I got the full benefit of it.

In most religious homes in India the training of the baby starts with the mother when she's pregnant. Just as nourishing food taken by the mother strengthens the baby, nourishing mantrams repeated by the mother strengthen the baby. One is strengthening the body, the other is strengthening the mind.

How can we use the mantram with young children? Where should we start?

For the little ones, when they are crying, you can sing the mantram. That's the best lullaby, and this is how you let the mantram get deeper into the mind of the child even before he or she is aware. That is how I received the power of the mantram from my grandmother, without even knowing that I was receiving it.

Teach your child to repeat the mantram at night. Many of my friends sing the mantram to their children as a lullaby; it is more important than bedtime storytelling. Let Humpty Dumpty fall, let Jack and Jill go up the hill; the mantram can't wait. It will remove fears from your child's heart; it will refresh your child's sleep.

Similarly, whenever your child is afraid or angry, just teach

him or her to repeat the mantram. And the very best way to teach a child anything is for the father and mother to practice it themselves. The mantram may take a while to catch on, but it will give your children armor that the forces of life cannot break.

Can I meditate on the mantram? Isn't that done in India?

Not only in India, but in other mystical traditions too, the mantram is used for meditation. In my presentation, however, I draw a distinction between meditation on an inspirational passage and repetition of the mantram. To meditate on an inspirational passage, you need to be seated with your concentration focused on the words of the passage. But the mantram you can repeat at any time that concentration is not required.

How do meditation and the mantram work together in your program?

Both these disciplines help each other. The more you repeat your mantram, the deeper will be your meditation. The deeper your meditation, the better will be your repetition of the mantram. That is why, in my presentation, meditation and the mantram go together.

In addition, when you are meditating in the morning and again in the evening, repetition of the mantram helps as a kind of connecting thread, using the odd moments of the day.

Of course, this requires taking advantage of every opportunity. I learned to meditate at a great university in India where I had grave responsibilities and a very tight schedule. I learned to pick up every minute like a miser picking up a dime. If I got just two

minutes, I would walk and repeat the mantram. And I seldom took part in unnecessary talk; instead I would go sit in a corner, close my eyes, and repeat the mantram. My colleagues thought I was catching forty winks; I was catching forty mantrams.

The reward for all that persistent effort – this is the miracle of my teacher’s blessing – is that today I don’t have to repeat the mantram. It repeats itself. And when the mantram repeats itself, no negative thought can come in; no wave of anger can enter the mind. That is what everyone should aim at.

Can we attain this advanced spiritual state just by systematic repetition of the mantram? Do we really need meditation as well?

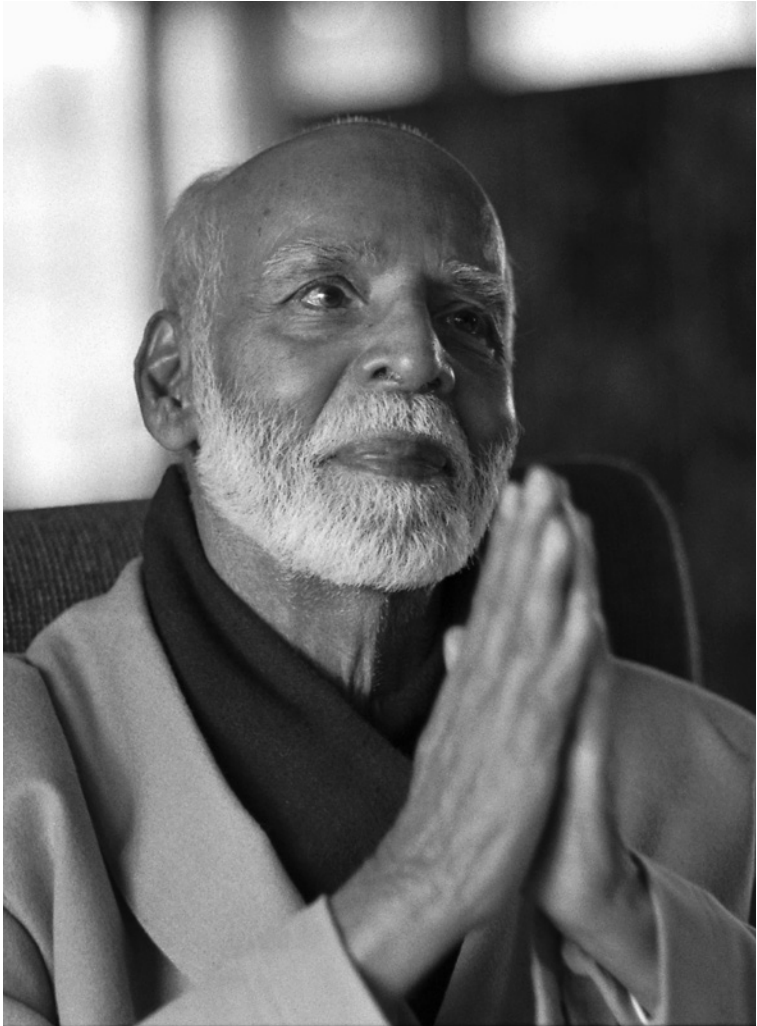
To be established in the mantram is Self-realization. It is nirvana. In today’s world, for the vast majority of ordinary people like us who have so much self-will and have been so thoroughly conditioned by the mass media, I don’t think it is possible to reach this state through repetition of the mantram alone. Even though I was brought up in a good Hindu household at the feet of my spiritual teacher, I didn’t have the kind of utter surrender in love to the Lord that is necessary for becoming established in the mantram. That is why I say, based on my own experience, that the regular, sincere, systematic practice of meditation is required.

First and foremost, therefore, please be regular about your meditation. Please be sincere about your practice and make the very best effort in it. Then use every opportunity you have for repeating the mantram. 🌸

To be continued in the next Blue Mountain Journal.



Eknath Easwaran and Christine Easwaran, 1990s



Eknath Easwaran, 1990s

The Mantram Repeating Itself

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Passage Meditation*

Naturally, skill at holding on to the mantram increases with practice. In the early days the mind is out of shape, and its flabby fingers won't close tightly. The grip feels tentative, modest. In time, however, its fingers grow stronger and the mind can grasp firmly, though occasionally the mantram still slips away. After a long while, the mind builds up sensational strength and has a permanent hold on the mantram.

In this glorious state, the mantram repeats itself ceaselessly without any effort whatsoever. Walking along a road, waiting for a friend, dropping off to sleep, you will hear the mantram tolling through consciousness. If you're fully absorbed in some activity – at a concert, for instance – the mantram repeats itself on a deeper level. Then, when the intermission begins the mantram rises and resounds on the surface level as well.

Sanskrit has a precise word for this state: *ajapajapam*. *Japam* alone means the repetition of the mantram, and *a-* here means “without”: *ajapajapam* is *japam* without having to do *japam*. You receive all the benefits without having to do the work. There is nothing magical or occult in this. It results from the steadfast practice of repeating the mantram at every possible moment for many, many years. This state may be likened to that of a person retiring from his career. For decades he has had to be at the office faithfully, and sometimes it may have taken a lot of effort. But now the harvest has been gathered – he draws a pension without having to report ever again.

At this stage, the mystics say, the Lord himself is present, pleased to utter his own name as a perpetual blessing on a devoted servant. Great waves of joy sweep through such a man or woman, and a divine radiance touches everything. Meister Eckhart spoke of this more than six hundred years ago:

Those who have God in mind, simply and solely God in all things, carry God with them into all their works and into all places, and God alone does all their works. They see nothing but God; nothing seems good to them but God. They become one with God in every thought. Just as no multiplicity can dissipate God, so nothing can dissipate them or make them multiple.





Memorial Rock 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.



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Everything you need to get your passage meditation practice started.

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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 Webinar:

August 15

Introductory Online Weekend Retreats:

July 24–26, November 13–15

Returnee Online Workshop:

October 3

Returnee Weekend Online Retreat:

November 6–8

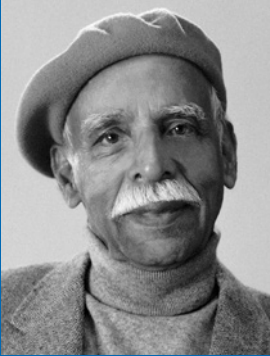
Setu Online Retreat:

September 25–29

Weeklong Online Retreat:

October 16–20

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!



The mantram is one of the best of prayers — one that we say not just when we get up or when we go to bed, but countless times throughout the day, and throughout the night as well. This prayer is not addressed to someone outside us, but to our deepest Self, the Lord of Love, who dwells in the hearts of us all.

When we repeat it, we are not asking for anything in particular, like good health or solutions to our problems or richer personal relationships. We are simply asking to get closer to the source of all strength and all joy and all love. To use Jesus' words, we are asking for "the kingdom of heaven," and we find at the same time that our health improves, our problems begin to be resolved, and our relationships blossom.

— Eknath Easwaran

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