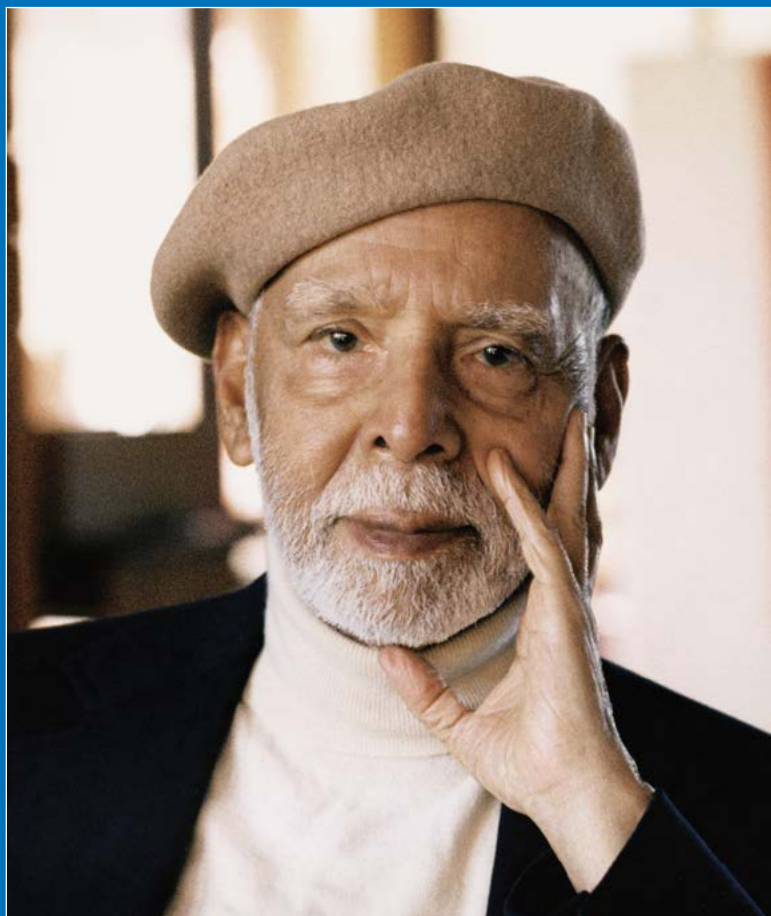


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

Blue Mountain Journal

SPRING | SUMMER 2018



Towards a Wiser Use
of Technology

In This Issue



The spiritual teacher sees clearly the karmic seeds we are planting with our actions at any given time, and the harvest that those seeds will bear in the future. So it's no surprise that we can find a wealth of advice from Easwaran on a wiser use of technology, even though he

never saw an iPhone or a Facebook page.

On one hand, Easwaran was an early adopter of technology wherever it would help his audience – encouraging his students to start recording his talks in the 1960s, for instance. We've continued in that tradition in the BMCM with our online outreach.

And on the other hand, he could see the dangers of where we were heading. In 1984 he wrote:

“I am never critical of science. But I am often critical of the uses to which science is put... Science, and particularly technology, makes a good servant but a most obnoxious master.

“But science can be put in its place. We want to arrive at that delicate balance where science will not deprive us of

our humanity but will serve us with humaneness: where it will help us solve our problems rather than create new ones.

“This is a difficult balance to achieve, because technological progress is heady stuff. We can get swept away with it and lose our personal relationships, our sense of the unity of life, without being aware that we are losing anything at all.”

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The Blue Mountain Center of
Meditation,
P. O. Box 256,
Tomales, CA 94971
707. 878. 2369
info@bmc.org
www.bmc.org

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is a publication of The Blue
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organization founded in 1961
by Eknath Easwaran to carry
on his work.

Easwaran also warned strongly against the growing influence of the media, which presents an obstacle for us that spiritual aspirants in less technological cultures did not face. Making wise choices in what we consume is vital for the health of our families, environment, and society.

These are themes you will find in this Journal, together with tips and stories from our BMC M community to show how passage meditators today apply their practice to inform their use of technology. On pages 30 and 31 you can read twelve key quotes from Easwaran on technology. We invite you to study them and draw your own conclusions. In the next issue of the Blue Mountain Journal we will continue exploring Easwaran's teachings on the impact of technology and the need to develop a higher image of ourselves as human beings.

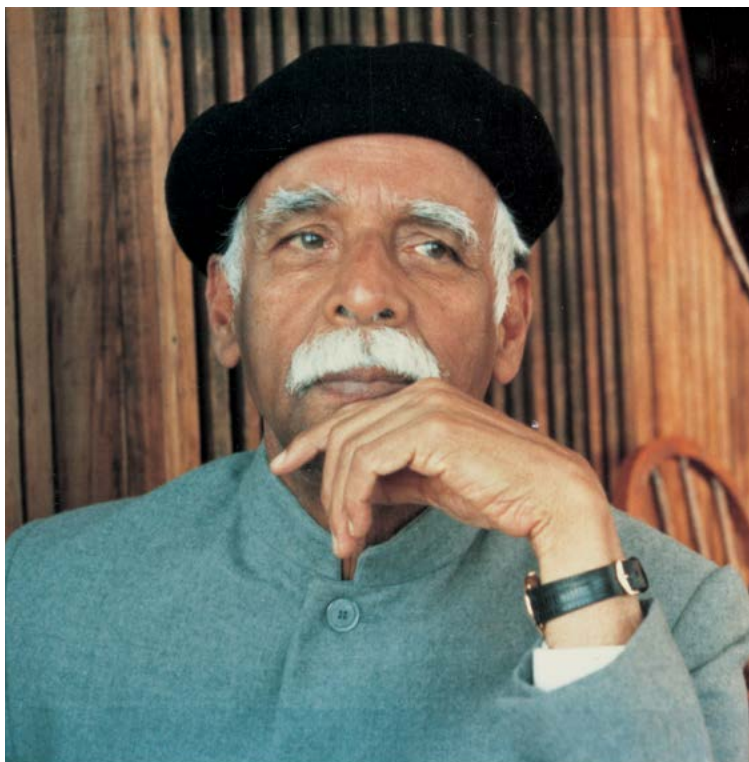
Whenever Easwaran urges us to change, he also expresses his deep faith in all of us. In Volume 3 of his *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* he writes:

“I consider myself a very ordinary person, and I presume that by and large my readers are ordinary also. That, to me, is our glory. But even ordinary people like you and me, when we harness our personal desires to achieve a selfless goal, can do extraordinary things.

“If we draw on meditation to ally our personal efforts with the forces of truth, love, and unity, we can help to reverse the disastrous trends we see around us, even if we ourselves are very small.”

Whether you are reading this on your phone, your tablet, or as a paper version, we hope you enjoy Easwaran's guidance and inspiration!

— Sue Craig, and the BMC M Editorial Team



Easwaran, 1980s

“As I look at our modern civilization, I see a transference of faith in God to faith in technology and all that goes with it.”

Science, Technology, and Faith

Eknath Easwaran

If Arjuna, the great warrior prince of the Gita, were here today he might ask, “Our times are considered civilized and advanced. We have put our faith in science and technological growth, and we have achieved tremendous breakthroughs. Why is it that the problems we face are more menacing than anything faced in previous centuries?”

“Faith,” in this context, is a rather inadequate translation of the Sanskrit word *shraddhā*, which means much more. Literally, *shraddhā* is ‘that which is placed in the heart’: all the beliefs we hold so deeply that we never think to question them. It’s the set of beliefs, values, and prejudices that colors our perceptions, governs our thinking, dictates our responses, and shapes our lives, generally without our even being aware of its presence and power.

Our very substance

This may sound philosophical, but *shraddhā* is not an intellectual abstraction. It is our very substance, Sri Krishna will say: it reflects all that we have made ourselves and points to what we will become. It is a highly sensitive expression of our values: what we deem worth having, attaining, being. We back our *shraddhā* with our time, our energy, our very lives.

In these tremendous verses from the Upanishads –

We are what our deep, driving desire is.

As our deep, driving desire is, so is our will.

As our will is, so is our deed.

As our deed is, so is our destiny –

that “deep, driving desire” is our shraddhā.

If scientific knowledge is the test of evolution, if technology is the standard by which to measure progress – if, in other words, we have put our shraddhā in the right place – then it stands to reason that with all our scientific progress, we should be more at peace with ourselves and with others. We should have banished sickness from both body and mind and banished violence from the earth.

Technology has become the faith of our fathers, yet we are finding the fruit of it often bitter. And we feel bewildered, like Arjuna. We did so much with science and industry, went so far. Why is the world more fraught than ever with alienation, hunger, and insensitivity, with violence so virulent that one or two individuals can hold whole cities hostage, with side effects of industrial growth that blight the planet?

I have a very high regard for science, and would be the first to acknowledge the debt we all owe to technology in making our world safer and more comfortable. But we need to remember that in other ways, technology has made the world vastly more dangerous and less comfortable, often in the pursuit of goals that do not, in retrospect, seem worth the price.

If we look at medicine, for instance, I think we have to be careful about boasting of the progress we have made. On the one hand, science and technology have done so much to improve human welfare since the Middle Ages. But drug-resistant strains of diseases that plagued our past for thousands of years are returning, proving more adaptable than science can ever be.

In the meantime, of course, we still face the same degenerative diseases that have become epidemic in the developed world because of “lifestyle factors”: things we do to ourselves, whether individually, nationally, or globally.

A transference of faith

Science has achieved great things, but it has also enabled us to magnify the consequences of our desires to such an extent that our ways of thinking are literally killing us, as prematurely and pervasively as a virulent disease.

As I look at our modern civilization, I see a transference of faith in God to faith in technology and all that goes with it. We have come to believe that technology can solve all problems – even though we know that technology has given rise to more problems than solutions.

If we had leaders who could show us how to use technology as a faithful servant – to make sure, for example, that children all over the world have the minimum comforts that they need – then technology could play a great part. But that’s not where technology goes. Technology goes where profit goes. And wherever profit may call, it is leading us down a blind alley.

Our modern shraddhā: Life is physical

Sri Krishna says, “You are what your shraddhā is.” Here is a modern shraddhā of both individuals and nations: that life is physical. It leads us to evaluate everything on the basis of appearance. We are typically impressed by size and fascinated by speed. Bigger and faster are always better. We find ways to build tankers so big that their seams give from their own weight, tasteless oranges as big as grapefruits, bombs that can incinerate thirty cities at a tenth of the size it used to take to destroy only one.

The karma for all this is extremely interesting. Overuse of chemical fertilizers, for instance, is very much like abusing drugs: you get Mother Earth hooked. It does mean high yields the first few years, although natural ways have been developed of getting even higher yields. But each hit of phosphate fertilizers, though a shot in the arm for the crops, actually depletes the soil. The next time you need a stronger shot to get the same results, which of course depletes the soil further. Pesticides have similar problems: over a period of time, they actually make crops more vulnerable to pests.

The whole idea of unlimited progress rests on the prospect of unlimited resources. We are seeing that prospect dry up today, but many think it is only a matter of particular shortages: if we run out of one source of fuel, for instance, we can develop another one, and so on. But everything is limited, and we are gobbling the earth as if it were ours, all ours, to gobble.



Easwaran, 1970s

Tenants on earth

If we had had a different shraddhā, when petroleum was discovered we would have said, “All our successors are entitled to this – our children, their children, all succeeding generations.” We would have used it very thriftily, so that they could do the same. But we do not see so clearly when the children are out of sight, perhaps in other countries. And when they are still unborn, how many of us remember that to consume the present is to steal from the children of the future?

In fact, in terms of energy resources, “There is always more in the future” translates very easily into “I can take whatever I want now.” That is the shraddhā. “What do I care what happens in the future? What do I care what is left for my children and grandchildren?

“And global warming? They’ll think of something. Why should I change my vacation plans, my lifestyle, just because of something that might happen thirty or forty years down the road?” That’s really the meaning of this attitude, and we are beginning to reap the karma of it. It is lack of love.

If we cared about those who come after us, we would not waste anything, because nothing is ours. Nothing on earth belongs to us. We are tenants on earth, nothing more.

The entire industrial world, this technological wonder-world, has been built up because we have been watching helplessly, hypnotized by its brilliance, unable to turn our eyes away from the life of luxury it promises, or to make the small changes in our daily habits which might mitigate its destructiveness. This is what Gandhi called “knowledge without character” – extraordinary technical expertise without the will or wisdom to use it well.

Little time to lose

In Gandhi's perspective, it is up to individuals like you and me to reverse this situation. Environmental abuse and exploitation are not "necessary evils" – no evil is necessary. In fact, Gandhi went so far as to say that evil in itself is not even real; it exists only as long as we support it. The moment we withdraw our support – the moment we make the connection between what we know and how we behave – it begins to collapse. As the eighteenth-century British statesman Edmund Burke put it, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Nevertheless, in our current situation, good people have little time to lose. At a breakneck pace, we're seeing drastic changes in our atmosphere, our agricultural resources, our forests, and our seas. The cost in life is immeasurable, though it is the sad task of many of today's scientists and naturalists to bear witness to it. They draw up lists of the hundreds of species of higher animals now threatened – the elephant, the whale, the snow leopard, the polar bear, the jaguar, and the cheetah among them. If present rates of destruction of the world's rainforests continue, as many as half the world's species of animals, plants, and insects will become extinct.

And, I would add, our time is coming. Extinction does not happen only to other creatures. If we do not change our ways of living and thinking, it is slowly but without doubt coming to us.

All this comes from the underlying shraddhā that life is essentially physical. From that it follows that the satisfactions of life are physical and external. To enjoy life we have to travel around, have a lot of things, do a lot of things, move, consume, get, hold, and hoard. Why? We cannot bear the thought of reducing, of wanting less, having less, going fewer



Easwaran giving class in the 1980s

places, looking inward for satisfaction instead of outward, even though all this is not only necessary now but beneficial.

Our problem is that science and technology make good servants but very poor masters. And we have let the servants take over the house – in the shraddhā that for every problem we face, every desire we want fulfilled, technology has the answer.

We can change our shraddhā

“You are what your shraddhā is.” It is right shraddhā when we function rightly, wrong shraddhā when we function wrongly; but everyone has shraddhā of some kind, and even if your shraddhā is of the lowest kind, you can always elevate it. If your shraddhā is very selfish, you can change it to selfless. If it is violent, you can make it loving. This, to me, is the real glory of the human being: not intellectual achievements or prowess in science or any other external field, but the fact that there is no one on earth who cannot change the meanest shraddhā into the noblest.

Until I took to meditation, I had no idea that this could be done. I had read that spiritual disciplines could transform the human personality, but this was knowledge placed in the head; it did not affect what was placed in my heart. Like most people with a university education, I believed in intellectual knowledge, and it shaped my life: when I had time, I used to spend it reading or going to plays or lectures.

Gradually, however, this faith began to weaken. When great literary figures came to my campus to speak, I would be seated right in the first row to take in everything they said. But when we began asking questions afterward, the answers such people gave seemed ordinary, immature, or misleading. I knew that

if I asked my illiterate grandmother the same questions, the answers would be mature and helpful.

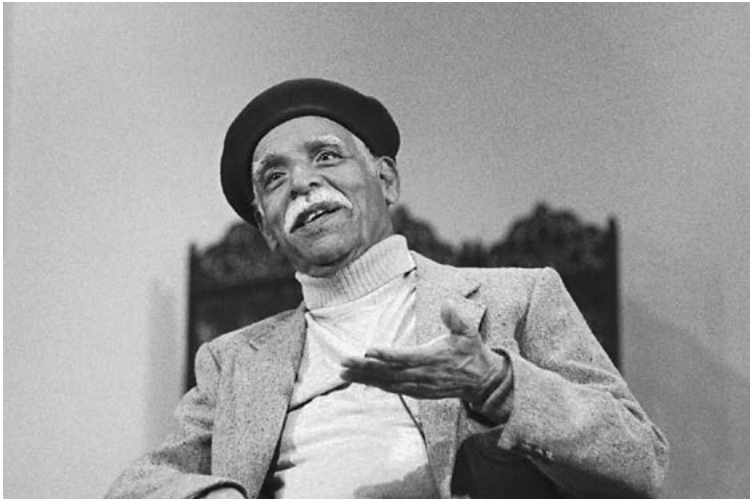
It was terribly unsettling. Yet as my discomfort grew more and more acute, I began to see that my grandmother embodied an entirely different shraddhā than all the other people I had come across. In her understanding of life she towered above every other person I knew, above every literary or intellectual figure I had heard or seen or read. That is the purpose served by a spiritual teacher. She showed me that a human being does not have to be caught in this shallow shraddhā that everything is physical; she taught me to question the very basis of life as it is generally lived.

A deeper explanation

A British biologist, Sir Peter Medawar, once advised a group of aspiring scientists, “You must feel in yourself an acute discomfort at incomprehension.” That is a fine phrase. Most human beings take everything for granted. But there is a particular kind of person – the scientist-to-be, the philosopher, the mystic – who begins to feel increasingly dissatisfied with what the world accepts as real and to desire a deeper explanation, a prior cause.

It is the same with changing to a higher shraddhā: it begins with an acute discomfort with the way things are around you. If you look upon yourself as physical and think of life as having no higher goal than the satisfaction of physical desires, you should feel uncomfortable. As Gandhi says, it is good not to feel well adjusted in a wrong situation.

Our collective shraddhā can be changed – for better, as well as for worse – and when it is, the result is a revolution in outlook. To take a trivial example, for years in athletics



Easwaran giving class in the 1980s

everybody believed that running a four-minute mile was an inherent human limitation. Then Roger Bannister, an athlete who didn't believe in that limitation, ran a mile in under four minutes. It was humanly possible! Belief in a four-minute mile collapsed. Today nobody is willing to set a limit to how fast a human being can run.

On the one hand, the shraddhā of our times does have ruinous ramifications. But on the other hand, shraddhā is full of potency, so if we can change it, we can shed these ancient, imprisoning, disastrous superstitions as a snake sheds an old, constricting skin in order to grow.

Science can be put in its place

I want to emphasize again that science and technology are neither good nor bad. I am never critical of science in itself. But I am often critical of the uses to which science is put, and deeply apprehensive of making it the basis of our civilization's shraddhā.

But science can be put in its place. We want to arrive at that delicate balance where science will not deprive us of our humanity but will serve us with humaneness: where it will help us solve our problems rather than add to them or create new ones. This is a difficult balance to achieve, because technological progress is heady stuff. We can get swept away with it and lose our personal relationships, our sense of the unity of life, without ever being aware that we are losing anything at all.

I want a technology with a human face, on a modest scale. I can give you a personal example. Recently I had to make an emergency visit to my periodontist, a very skillful man. I admire all the technology he used, which enabled me to

recover quickly and get back to giving my talks. (During my lengthy appointment, the mantram was my consolation and my joy. I wish I could let every patient who goes to a dentist or a periodontist know how wonderful it is to use the mantram at that time!)

A humble technology for a simple lifestyle

So I'm not against technology at all, but I want a technology that doesn't put forward arrogant claims that it can fix anything – a technology that is humble, efficient, and nonpolluting, that supports a simple, healthy lifestyle.

By simplifying our lives, we can get more time and energy and interest for working with, loving, and serving other people. Instead of multiplying human wants, we can begin to reduce them voluntarily. Such a civilization is not poor, not even in a material sense. It has a place for every material thing that enhances human life. But it has no place for things that are at the expense of life, or that sap vital resources – including time, most vital of all. It renounces, so as to leave life freer for the things that matter most.

With such a shraddhā guiding our lives, our health would improve; depression, alienation, and boredom would shrink or disappear.

In our relationship with the environment, we can bear in mind that the real power does not lie in the hands of technologists or politicians or directors of multinational corporations. It is individuals like you and me who make the final decisions about what is bought and sold at the mall, how much carbon dioxide is pumped into the atmosphere, and what is dumped into the sea.

Make small changes

To counteract climate change, we do not have to renounce fossil fuels. There is a reasonable margin for their use, since Mother Earth provides an abundance of trees to “breathe” in our carbon dioxide and return oxygen. But all of us, as an expression of love for our grandchildren and for the earth, can look for ways to produce less carbon dioxide.

We need not be unrealistic: there are occasions when we need to travel by airplane, for instance, but let’s try to do it only when necessary. And we often need to use our cars – then we can express our love by taking a few people along. Try to rearrange your schedule so you can start early and go a little out of your way to pick up a friend. This will not always be easy, but every time you travel with two people per car instead of one, you are cutting your personal pollution by fifty percent.

We can also look into ways of reducing the amount of garbage we produce, especially items like plastic cups and bottles, batteries, appliances, and household chemicals. Every week, each of us produces about twenty-five pounds of garbage. Why not just plan to reduce this figure by five pounds? Make it just twenty pounds per week. That will leave a little extra room in the garbage can, and you won’t have to take out the trash so often.

This doesn’t have to be done overnight. You might start by simply trying to cut back on the amount of packaging you buy. And when you need to buy products packaged in metal or glass, please be sure to recycle. But even better – especially where plastics and toxic chemicals are concerned – reduce waste before you buy, by choosing the least-packaged, least-processed product available.



Easwaran, 1970s

Postindustrial art at its highest

If these suggestions seem like trifles, remember that there are a large number of tremendous trifles in life. We think they are trifles until we look back and add them up; then we discover that, taken as a whole, their effect has been tremendous. Each time you buy the least-packaged, least-processed product, you are helping to reduce the garbage glut.

To me, cutting down on waste is a fine example of combining thrift and cooperation to make daily life a work of art. In every form of art, from painting to architecture to poetry, isn't it considered the height of taste to leave nothing superfluous, to use every element of the composition in the most elegant and efficient manner?

By this standard, what could be more beautiful than a meal that comes straight from the farm, or from your own garden? I go to the theater regularly and enjoy concerts and dances, but I can think of nothing more utterly artistic than such a meal. Not only is it fresh, tasty, nourishing, and free of toxic residues, but it is a living expression of love for Mother Earth. This is postindustrial art at its highest. And, as I said, it does not have to happen overnight.

If we make enough positive changes like these, we shall see over time such a revolution in human welfare and human happiness that we shall look back on today's civilization as the Dark Ages – despite its microchips and CT scanners and its hard-won capacity to destroy itself several times over.

We need meditation

At the start of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna is suffering from a very contemporary malady, paralysis of the will.

This is often our problem too. We can diagnose our shortcomings and give a brilliant synopsis of the world's woes, but as long as our knowledge is limited to intellectual analysis, we will not have the capacity to make the necessary changes.

Following in Gandhi's footsteps, I believe that unless we learn the very difficult art of getting some mastery over our desires, for instance, the environmental problem will not find a permanent solution. We will not be able to prevent pollution, avoid war, or even bring together estranged families and friends.

For all these, we need meditation. If our shraddhā is the key to our destiny, then meditation is the key to changing our shraddhā. Through the practice of meditation, we can learn to withdraw our trust from the things that separate us from others – wealth and pleasure, power and prestige – and place it more and more in what contributes to the welfare of us all.

Sri Krishna, in his infinite grace, helps Arjuna find his source of strength within himself. Through meditation, we too can grow fearless and strong enough to grapple with the grave problems that threaten us all. 🌸

The Mirror of This World

Mahmud Shabestari

Every particle of the world is a mirror,
In each atom lies the blazing light
 of a thousand suns.
Cleave the heart of a raindrop,
 a hundred pure oceans will flow forth.
Look closely at a grain of sand,
 the seed of a thousand beings can be seen.
The foot of an ant is larger than an elephant;
In essence, a drop of water
 is no different than the Nile.
In the heart of a barley-corn
 lies the fruit of a hundred harvests;
Within the pulp of a millet seed
 an entire universe can be found.
In the wing of a fly, an ocean of wonder;
In the pupil of the eye, an endless heaven.
Though the inner chamber of the heart is small,
 the Lord of both worlds
 gladly makes his home there.

Nature as an Antidote to Technology



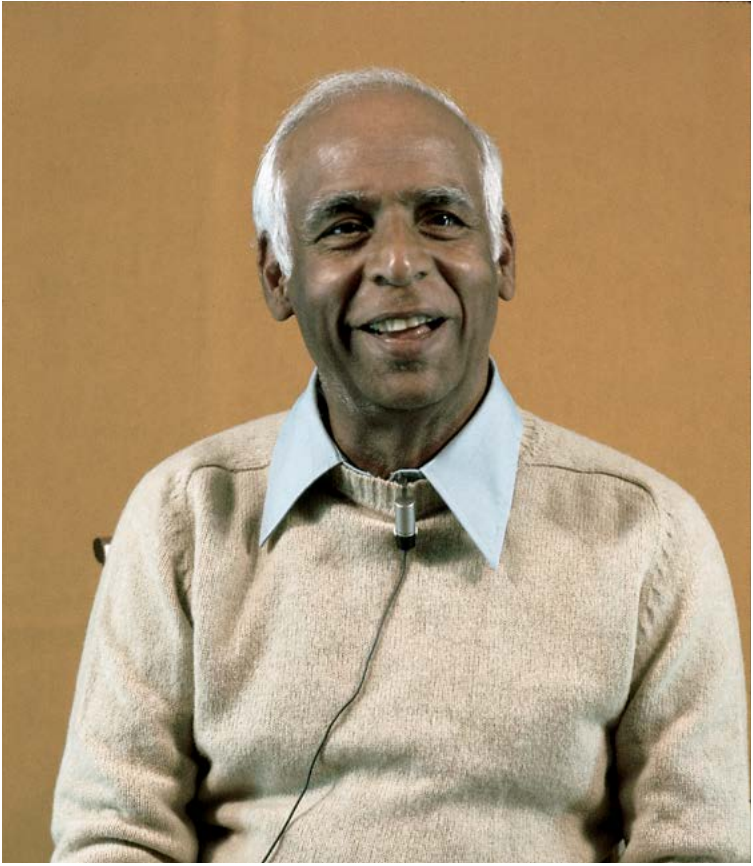
Deer resting at Ramagiri

Community comment:

Photography helps to pull me in closer to nature. With photography, one is looking to capture the image of a fellow creature in the very best light. With a shy doe or a nervous hare I often whisper my mantram as I approach to see if I will be allowed a little closer without disturbing them. Stillness, patience, focus, being aware of those around you and making sure that you, yourself, are not causing a shadow are important aspects of photography, and of the spiritual life, as well.

When those aspects are all in play and alive in nature, other technological distractions fail at even a nudge of my attention.

– JB, California



Easwaran giving class in the 1970s

“No matter how far technology advances, without an overriding goal in life it is not possible to live well, just as without a destination it is not possible to get where you want to go.”

Meditation Gives Us a Goal in Life

Eknath Easwaran

I had a friend in India who once got so restless that he went down to Madras Central, laid his money on the counter, and said, “Give me a ticket.”

The clerk, who was used to all kinds of people, asked politely, “Where to, sir?”

My friend shrugged. “Just give me a ticket – any ticket. I don’t care where I go.”

This seems to be our condition today, and as a result we find ourselves with an increasing number of problems. To make wise choices in life, even in simple matters, we have to have a goal to which we can refer every day. Otherwise events are irrelevant; they do not hang together in any meaningful pattern.

An ideal to keep our eyes on

I came across a good illustration of this the other day when I went into the living room and found that our friend Rama had spread the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle all over the floor. “It’s an elephant,” Rama announced. “But I can’t even find a tusk.”

I grew up with elephants, so I would have sworn that I could recognize one from every imaginable angle. But nothing on the floor looked like any part of an elephant I had seen.

Then Rama tactfully showed me the picture on the box. “Oh!” I said. “Now I know what I am supposed to be looking for. This must be the trunk; that must be an ear.” After that,

though it probably would have taken me several hours, I knew I could find all the pieces and put them together if I tried.

This is what meditation enables us to do. In meditation we take an inspiring ideal like the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi and set it before us morning and evening: “Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.” An ideal like this gives us a picture to keep our eyes on throughout the choices of the day, so that little by little we can rearrange the pieces of our lives.

As we learn to do this, boredom disappears. Many serious contemporary problems can be traced back to acute boredom, which is intimately connected with lack of purpose.

No matter how far technology advances, without an overriding goal in life it is not possible to live well, just as without a destination it is not possible to get where you want to go. The strongest argument I can offer against personal pleasure and profit is that they cannot function as a goal. And without a comprehensive purpose, events cannot make sense to us; incidents cannot be related to a whole.

If we were asked to give an accounting of our society’s achievements, we could claim many great technological developments and scientific discoveries, plenty of skyscrapers, and the amassment of huge sums of money, but few truly secure, truly wise, truly great men and women. It is not for lack of ability or energy, though; there is simply nothing to strive for.

To grow to our full height, we need to be challenged with tasks that draw out our deeper resources, the talents and capacities we did not know we had. We need to be faced with obstacles that cannot be surmounted unless we summon up every last ounce of our daring and creativity. This kind of challenge is familiar to any great athlete or scientist or artist.

Those I have spoken with all agree that no truly worthwhile accomplishment comes easily.

It is exactly this challenge that most young people hunger for today. Look at the Olympic Games, for example. Divers, skiers, runners, swimmers, gymnasts: these athletes work many hours a day, day in and day out, for years, making sacrifices and denying themselves things other teenagers crave – all for the sake of a distant and nearly impossible goal. But when the Olympics are over, and the medals are put away, and these daring young people pass into adulthood, what challenge does our society provide to draw out their courage and constructive energy? What do we have to offer these men and women who have glimpsed the joy of self-discipline and sacrifice?

The answer is, as I discovered for myself, very little. In almost every area of modern life, we direct our young people toward an ideal that is, to be charitable, utterly ridiculous.

A sense of fulfillment

Mahatma Gandhi once said something that appealed to me deeply: It is not possible to be completely happy unless everyone in the world is happy. As meditation deepens, wherever you find sorrow – in the lives of your friends, in a community crisis, even in a tragedy on the other side of the globe – that sorrow is your own.

But at the same time, this deeper sensitivity releases the capacity to help. You find ways to help others solve physical problems, set emotional difficulties right, repair their relationships, and even forget their personal problems in making a lasting contribution to the rest of life. This brings a sense of fulfillment that nothing else can.

A goal like the polestar

That is why every one of us has a crying need for the highest ideal, on which we can keep our eyes always. Whenever we wander, we can still find our way back.

All of us, being human, are likely to make mistakes in life. But when we have a great purpose that transcends passing, personal satisfactions, a goal that rises high above the horizon like the polestar, we need not get lost and wander in the maze of our mistakes.

By keeping our eyes on this shining ideal, we can retrace our steps, correct our error, and continue to pursue our journey until we reach the goal. 🌸

Easwaran's Method of Meditation on a Passage

Silent repetition in the mind of memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions. Practiced for one-half hour each morning.

See Easwaran's book *Passage Meditation*, or go to our website, www.bmcm.org, for more instructions.

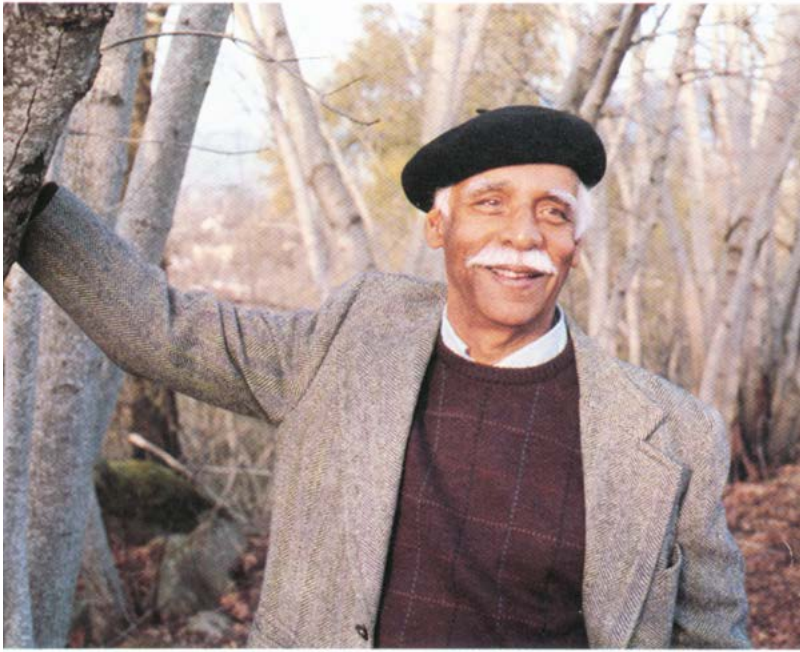


At a recent retreat

Easwaran on Technology

- 1** I admire science and technology. But they cannot bring peace, they cannot bring love, they cannot bring wisdom, and they cannot teach us devotion to God.
- 2** I use technology, but I am never going to allow technology to use me.
- 3** As I look at our modern civilization, I see a transference of faith in God to faith in technology and all that goes with it.
- 4** Science and technology deal with the fragmented, the divided. The sages deal with the indivisible, the full. Life is indivisible, so we should look to the saints and sages for guidance.
- 5** There is a seductive glamour about technology that very, very few human beings can resist. It is only a few very daring men and women who can step out of the conditioning of their time.
- 6** Telecommunications are no substitute for human contact. If we persist in the direction in which we are going, human relationships will break down.
- 7** I'm interested in the Information Age, but I'm not impressed by it. Information is useful, but it cannot make you good. That's the ultimate purpose of spiritual disciplines – to make you good.

-
- 8** Use technology in detachment, as an obedient servant. Don't let yourself be used by technology, because it will become a tyrannical master – as we see today.
 - 9** Technology goes where profit goes. And where profit calls, that is a blind alley.
 - 10** I want a technology with a human face, on a modest scale – a technology that is humble, efficient, and nonpolluting, that supports a simple, healthy lifestyle.
 - 11** I am not complaining about science and technology or the conveniences of modern life. I'm simply saying, "Draw a line beyond which you don't allow yourself, or your family and children, to go."
 - 12** We can appreciate the technological advantages of our modern civilization. But we must never forget that, as far as spiritual values are concerned, our civilization has been weighed in the balance and found lacking. So for our children's sake, and for our children's children, let us try always to cultivate those timeless values, those fundamental virtues that make us really human.



Easwaran 1980s

“I admire science and technology. But they cannot bring peace, they cannot bring love, they cannot bring wisdom, and they cannot teach us devotion to God.”

Making Wiser Choices

Ekknath Easwaran

When I first started meditating, many, many years ago, in the midst of an active academic life, I had difficulty finding time for it. Most of my activities were harmless enough, but they were numerous and consumed a good deal of time and energy. I read a lot of books in those days, and much of what I read I don't think was useful even for the literature classes I was teaching. I read those books because I enjoyed them and because I had been trained to believe that literature is for enjoyment. That was the appeal made by many important figures: literature for its own sake, art for its own sake.

As my meditation deepened, however, these attitudes began to change. Nothing, I realized, is for its own sake; everything is for life's sake. This one insight simplified my priorities enormously. I began to prune my activities, lining out things that made no real difference to anybody, including myself.

In the service of all

At first it was difficult to make myself put my books aside an hour earlier to make time for evening meditation. Often my mind would protest, "Can't we read just a little more?" Yet the joy that fills my life today cannot even be measured on the same scale as the pleasures I once held dear.

Today, everything I do from morning meditation on – eating breakfast, going for a walk, writing, reading, even recreation – is governed by one purpose only: how to give the very best account of my life that I can in the service of all.

The Buddha, the most practical of teachers, defined the wise person in a thoroughly practical way: "One who will gladly give

up a smaller pleasure to gain a greater joy.” That is discrimination, the precious capacity to choose wisely. When it is understood, every choice becomes an opportunity for training the mind.

To act wisely, we must see life clearly. “Does this particular choice bring me closer to my partner or my family? Does it resolve a conflict, foster clean air, bring peace to my mind or to people around me?” If the answer to such questions is yes, that course of action is in harmony with the unity of life. If the answer is no, it is not – however pleasant it may be.

Temporary pleasure or lasting good?

One of the most stirring of the Sanskrit scriptures, the Katha Upanishad, uses two marvelous words to help us see which course of action will lead to trouble in the long run and which will lead to detached, loving living.

I say “marvelous” because these words apply to every choice, in every circumstance, so they dispel the haze that often surrounds a difficult situation. Wherever you have a choice, ask yourself this question: “Which is *preya*, that which pleases, and which is *shreya*, the long-term good?”

Preya is what we like, what pleases us, what offers immediate gratification to our senses, feelings, or self-will. *Shreya* is simply what works out best in the end. *Preya* is the “pleasure principle”: doing what feels good, whatever the consequences. *Shreya* means choosing the best consequences, whether it feels good or not – often forgoing a temporary pleasure for the sake of a lasting benefit.

Junk food is one of the clearest illustrations of *preya*: sugar, salt, and saturated fat so fast and easy that you don’t even have to sit down for it. The consequences are equally clear.

Or look at exercise: “no pain, no gain.” Training and toning the body is often not pleasant. We do it for the sake of its long-range benefits – because later we will really feel good in a deeper, longer-lasting, more satisfying way. That is shreya, choosing what is best.

Protection from the gravest dangers

When we learn how to look for it, we see that this choice between preya and shreya comes up every moment, in virtually everything we do. There is no escaping it. The moment dawn breaks, the choices begin: “Shall I get up for my meditation, or shall I pull the blanket over my head and stay in bed a little longer?” It starts there, and it goes on until you fall asleep at night.

Early morning, therefore, have your meditation right on time. It sets the tone for the rest of the day. The Bhagavad Gita, in a verse that is etched on my heart, assures us that regular meditation will protect us from life’s gravest dangers. “Even a little meditation will guard you against the greatest fears”: against physical ailments, emotional problems, disrupted relationships, spiritual alienation.

Most critical, perhaps, meditation slowly opens our eyes and hearts to the needs of those around us. That is wise discrimination, and I know of no better protection against the mistaken choices that can so burden life with guilt and regret.

After meditation, of course, more choices come in a flurry, generally at the breakfast table. With all the conditioning of the media, where eating is concerned, right choices are not easy.

Food has become a kind of religion, and business is quick to cash in on it. To choose wisely, your senses must listen to you.

Community comment:

I am very grateful that technology has brought into our lives things like the motorized treadmill, which helps us take care of our physical health. However, I used to binge-watch episodes of TV shows on my tablet to pass the time while I walked on it.



After beginning Easwaran's eight-point program, it occurred to me that I would actually rather log some mantram time than get lost in fictional programs. So now when I hop on the treadmill, I keep my eyes on my beautiful picture of Krishna and Arjuna in their chariot, recite my mantram over and over, and remind myself that with every habit I free myself from, I am getting all the closer to realizing my true Self, and the Lord of Love, of whom we are all a part.

– Jodi, New Jersey

That is the essential prerequisite. And for your senses to listen to you, your mind must listen to you.

That is why, as you train your mind in meditation, your eating habits come under your control. Likes and dislikes begin to change, and choices open up everywhere.

Yet discrimination, of course, extends not only to eating but to everything. In the Sanskrit scriptures, we are said to eat through all the senses. Just as we learn to be discriminating about what we put into our mouths, we learn to be vigilant about the books and magazines we read, the movies

and television we absorb, the conversation we indulge in, the company we keep: in short, in everything we do and say.

When you are training a puppy, you don't try to teach it limits for an hour and then say, "All right, you're off duty now. Go do whatever you like for the rest of the day." It is the same with training the mind. Why spend half an hour every morning in meditation, going through the agony of teaching an unruly mind to be calm and clear, and then go out and stir up all its appetites again in the name of relaxation?

Potent mind drugs at the touch of a button

I have always enjoyed movies, for example, but it is more and more difficult to find something I want to see. A good film is hard to uncover among the hundreds that are filled with excessive, graphic displays of violence. It is not merely that I do not enjoy movies like this; I don't approve of what they do to my mind.

Potent mind drugs are available to us now at the touch of a button, acted out for us on the screen so that everything is reduced to its lowest level. The real problem raised by this kind of mass distribution of mind drugs is spelled out in two terrible verses in the Gita:

*When you keep thinking about sense objects,
Attachment comes. Attachment breeds desire,
The lust of possession which, when thwarted,
Burns to anger. Anger clouds the judgment
And robs you of the power to learn from past mistakes.
Lost is the discriminative faculty, and your life
Is utter waste.*

As our minds fill up with junk thoughts and junk feelings, we get addicted to them. We lose our discrimination, and as these junk thoughts fail to satisfy – as they must – the craving for them becomes more and more acute. But we are hooked: we can't get them out of our heads.

Is it merely coincidence that angry, frustrated teenagers are turning to just what mass media touts – sex and crime?

Consider the effect on their relationships. If a child spends an hour a day with a parent and five or six hours absorbed in the fantasies and so-called realism of the mass media, what

Community comment:

Soon after beginning the regular practice of meditation, I gradually started making healthier choices for entertainment – movies, TV shows, books, and magazines. Our kids grew up probably observing these choices I was making.

Our teenage son likes to play video games. It is not uncommon these days for kids of his age to spend hours playing games that include violence scenes. I used to worry about this situation as he was growing into his teenage years. I had doubts as to how I would be able to effectively draw the line in this matter.

Years have passed since and he is now an active teenager. I'm looking back on this journey and am happy to notice that he never asked or showed interest in those kinds of games. I don't remember taking explicit steps to draw a line for this. It may be that, as parents, when we do our best to set an example and to be sincere about it, drawing that line may become easier or may even occur naturally.

– a member of our Affiliate Program

images of people and of personal relationships are going to fill that child's mind? Whether we like it or not, this is the world that child will live in; those experiences are teaching that child how to act.

Draw a line for yourself and your family

I am not complaining about science and technology, or the conveniences of modern life. I'm simply saying, "Draw a line beyond which you don't allow yourself, or your family and children, to go."

I don't think any of us realizes how pernicious are the threats to a child's mind in the modern world. It is not that the mass media are inherently bad, but we are not mature enough, we are not farsighted enough, we are not selfless enough to use the tremendous power of television and film. Children have wonderful creative faculties which will not come into play if they grow up with interactive video and TV.

So my personal appeal would be to turn your TV off and make time for nourishing your home with the images and ideas needed to make this a better world.

One gentle, effective way children can be weaned from TV and other media is for their parent to take a good book and read to them. If that sounds old-fashioned, try it. Many families of former media addicts will tell you that it works. Younger children love to have a story read or told to them, and if older children want to read to themselves, encourage them and set an example. We need to educate their tastes, show them how to appreciate stories with depth, sensitivity, and strength of character rather than just action – and most parents find that in educating their children's tastes, they educate their own as well.

Community comment:

Modern technology is a big part of my day-to-day life. At work, I serve as director of technical solutions for an organization dedicated to improving lives through science. At home, I am grateful for the million ways technology adds comforts and saves time. I am grateful for the doors technology opens, such as human connection at a distance, and the vast treasure trove of the internet – literature, knowledge, song, and so much more.

And yet Easwaran's advice to "draw a line" seems essential to me. I often think of my Mom's favorite verse from Ansari's "Invocations": "O Lord, give me that right discrimination that the lure of the world may cheat me no more." It's no surprise that living wisely with the modern Pandora's box is very difficult. Without discrimination, having instant access to everything and everyone is a tremendous distraction.

Drawing the line

In our family, "drawing the line" is a constant juggle. Easwaran gives clear guidance on the criterion. "Will this deepen my meditation, improve my concentration, make my mind more even, make me less self-centered? If so, I will do it; if not, I won't." But how to apply that to our family, how to agree on the details, is an art we work day by day to learn.

Our three-year-old daughter, Rosie, is captivated by technology, and video in particular, as much as any child. Many tantrums have followed taking the phone or computer away. Fortunately, my wife and I are both eager to shield her from "flickering" fast-paced videos, and to limit her time with even high-quality tech entertainment. Talking openly



about this as a family and setting clear boundaries has been a great help. And with those supports, Rosie has found it natural to enjoy books, make-believe, and nature right along with YouTube.

Probably the most important and most challenging part of helping Rosie with managing technology's temptations for the long term of her journey is staying on the right side of "the line" myself. I work on this by aspiring to lots of little habits like always making eye contact with Rosie when I speak, no devices at mealtime, and being one-pointed when using my phone. Most of all, I try to model making God my only goal. When I remember that, technology falls into proper perspective!

– Adam, California



At a BMCM family program

Turn to the mystical tradition

There are many good books available today, not only the time-tested classics but good stories by contemporary authors, and no end of books that explore science and culture in ways young people can understand. I have seen children coming to ask for such books. They won't be content with the cheap substitutes our mass media try to force down their minds.

But we need to set them a good example with our own reading too.

There you can do no better than to turn to the mystical tradition. It is a whole world of beautiful literature – inspiring, practical, nourishing, strengthening.

These are words that have endured the passage of centuries. In the Hindu tradition we have magnificent epics, the

Ramayana and the *Mahabharata*, which cannot be surpassed for drama, adventure, character, and spiritual insight. Most Hindu children grow up on these stories, which offer noble role models and teach the basic laws of life in the midst of high entertainment.

Every spiritual tradition has its literature, full of poetry and the passionate desire to communicate what words cannot contain, where men and women who have soared to the heights of human experience try to convey to us what they have discovered and what they encountered along the way.

A practical touchstone

The Buddha had a very practical touchstone for making wise choices. In his eyes, everything we do shapes the kind of person we are becoming. So he says, “If an experience calms your mind, slows you down, makes you more likely to be compassionate and kind, that experience is beneficial; you can enjoy it. If it agitates your mind, speeds you up, excites your senses, or makes you angry or resentful, it is not beneficial; you should avoid it.”

This is the ideal of discriminating action, which flows spontaneously from those who know the spiritual basis of life. It comes when we live in the highest state of awareness, when our lives become a benediction to every person and creature around us. We live then a truly selfless life, one in which we think never in terms of personal profit or pleasure but always in terms of global prosperity and world peace.

All of our beautiful children need something to aspire for that is much higher than money and material possessions. They need to absorb an awareness of the world as our family, and they need to have an underlying perception of the law of

unity that governs life. When they have this awareness, I can assure you, they will leave many of their problems completely behind, because all their resources, all their energies, all their ambition, all their restlessness will be harnessed into this channel of making a contribution to life. That is why Saint Francis says it is in giving that we become rich, and it is our responsibility to teach this to our children through our personal life.

All of us are one

A beautiful prayer from the ancient Hindu scriptures echoes in my heart always: “May all creatures be happy. May people everywhere live in abiding peace and love.” For all of us are one, and joy can be found only in the joy of all. May that prayer guide each of us in our daily lives. 🌸

Perennial Joy

Katha Upanishad

The joy of the spirit ever abides,
But not what seems pleasant to the senses.
Both these, differing in their purpose, prompt us
To action. All is well for those who choose
The joy of the spirit, but they miss
The goal of life who prefer the pleasant.
Perennial joy or passing pleasure?
This is the choice one is to make always.
The wise recognize this, but not the ignorant.
The first welcome what leads to joy
Abiding, even though painful at the time.
The latter run, goaded by their senses,
After what seems immediate pleasure.

Well have you renounced these passing pleasures
So dear to the senses, Nachiketa,
And turned your back on the way of the world
Which makes mankind forget the goal of life.

Community comment:

In my work, it is important to keep up with computer technology and I very much enjoy exploring the latest new developments. This combination can lead to getting caught in habitually thinking about hardware and software.



I remember being at a retreat in Tomales, hearing about compulsive habits called *samskaras*. I could see how my interest in computer technology has been beneficial in my job as well as in helping others and how it can be a waste of time.

Having meditated for about a year, I had experienced positive effects and wanted to continue training my mind to be quieter and less agitated. The lines in “Living in Wisdom” from *God Makes the Rivers to Flow* stood out for me: “When you keep thinking about sense objects, attachment comes. Attachment breeds desire.” I began to see how my compulsive thinking was not just keeping up with technology, but also increasing my desire to have the latest big thing.

I am also aware of my tendency to compulsively dwell on practically any new gadget I acquire. When this something new is computer related, the obsession becomes just that much more compelling. These kinds of thoughts siphon off energy and are distractions from a calm mind.

I now employ one of Easwaran’s tips – using the mantram. When I walk past the office and sneak a glance at the new huge computer monitor, or contemplate its fast CPU on a



walk, I try to repeat the mantram as soon as I can, to interrupt my obsessive thinking.

Or if I am sitting at the computer admiring how fast this software can perform some process, I say my mantram and remind myself how this is a tool for benefiting others. With the mantram, I can detach from the hardware or software and put it into perspective, performing a job or being of service; thinking about computer technology when necessary, otherwise tuning it out.

As I practice passage meditation, my desire to be more balanced is growing, even as I am more aware of habits. I am very grateful to Sri Easwaran for his deep insights into these common everyday behaviors and his practical tips.

– Ken, California

Technology at the BMCM

Community comment:

In a video talk we watched recently, Easwaran said, “We lead a thrifty, active, selfless life as far as we are able, surrounded by technology of which we are still the master.”

At the BMCM, we’ve always utilized technology in the service of our mission. As an example, from the very early of days in Berkeley when Easwaran gave talks in the living rooms of local friends to his later talks in Ramagiri, we’ve always made careful use of recording technology.

This “right use” involves thoughtful consideration, experimentation, trial and error, before we can be sure that a particular technology is appropriate.

We live in an online world today where a good deal of our outreach and support to our audience means the use of advanced computing and networking technology. Here too we are as thrifty as possible – making use of refurbished computers, taking advantage of nonprofit discounts wherever possible, and utilizing the time and expertise of our generous friends.

We’re keenly aware of the misuses of technology that seem to be so prevalent today. It reminds us more than ever that our responsibility is to keep Easwaran’s goals in mind – technology with a human face, with the maximum benefit to our audience, and where we hold the reins firmly.

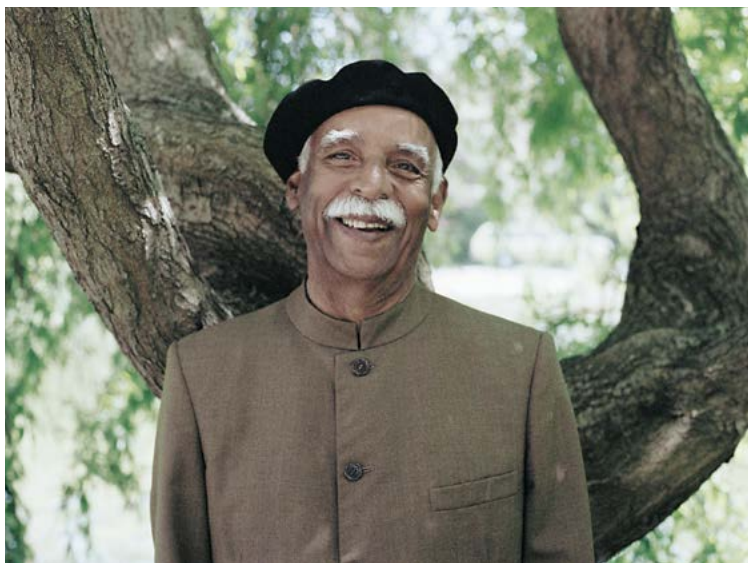
– Satish, California



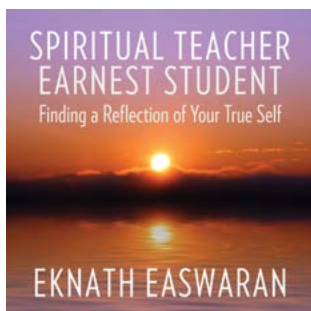
Greeting a colleague in a BMCM video meeting



Preparing videos for the Easwaran Digital Library



Easwaran, 1980s



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Spiritual Practice in a Technological World

1. Put Your Meditation First

Easwaran: Meditation is the basis of a life of splendid health, untiring energy, unfailing love, and abiding wisdom. It is the very foundation of that deep inner peace for which every one of us longs. No human being can ever find lasting satisfaction in money or success or prestige or anything else the world can offer. What we are really searching for is not something that satisfies us temporarily, but a permanent state of joy.

Meditation on a passage is the premier discipline for developing these inner treasures, and that is why I appeal to everyone over and over again: put your meditation first.

Duncan: I have always taken seriously the recommendation not to check my email before morning meditation – and it really helps. I gave into temptation once, because I knew there was something important coming in, but it really agitated my mind and made it difficult to settle down in meditation. Waiting half an hour would have made no difference – I still didn't act on the email until after meditation – so now I choose to wait, and tackle upcoming challenges with a slowed-down mind.

2. Repeat Your Mantram

Easwaran: The mantram, in some traditions called a prayer word, is the living symbol of the profoundest ideal that the human being can conceive of, the highest that we can respond to and love. The more we repeat the mantram, the deeper it sinks into our consciousness.



At a retreat

There is nothing magical about this. It is simply a matter of practice, as you can verify for yourself. When I travel, I don't say a word; I keep repeating my mantram. Those traveling with me (except the driver) do the same.

There are many, many hours you can use for the mantram that are idly lost in watching television, in unnecessary talk, in doing ridiculous things to kill time. The little waits and delays that life is so full of are all opportunities to repeat the mantram. In this way we regain our natural energy, confidence, and balance.

Preethi: I try to have no technology use on my bus commute. Instead, I say the mantram and make it into a game – a mantram for every person that gets on or off, or a mantram for every red car that passes by. It's a good reminder to relax and enjoy the scenery instead of clinging to my work emails on my phone.

David: I've taken my iPod on several holidays over the past few years, but I never use it. In airport line-ups and on the plane, I prefer my mantram. It's more relaxing and keeps me in the present.

3. Stay Slowed Down

Easwaran: Hurry makes for tension, insecurity, inefficiency, and superficial living. To guard against hurrying through the day, start the day early and simplify your life so that you do not try to fill your time with more than you can do. When you find yourself beginning to speed up, repeat your mantram to help you slow down.

People say that modern life has grown so complicated, so busy, so crowded that we have to hurry even to survive. We need not accept that idea. It is quite possible to live in the midst of a highly developed technological society and keep an easy, relaxed pace while doing a lot of hard work. We are not mere victims of our environment, and we don't have to go fast just because everybody else does and urges us to do it too.

Lisa: I try and keep life simple in order to stay slowed down and focused. I like to use technology for one of three purposes: to foster connection with others, to help me develop a new skill, or to support the practice of a healthy habit.

When I'm considering using technology in a new way, or thinking about pulling a device out, I'll ask myself if it falls into one of these three categories, and if so I'll use it, and if not, I'll repeat my mantram and not use it. It ends up being great training for my self-will to really say "no" when needed, but having set up these "gatekeepers" ahead of time makes it easier!



On a Young Adult retreat

4. Keep Your Mind One-Pointed

Easwaran: Doing more than one thing at a time divides attention and fragments consciousness. When we read and eat at the same time, for example, part of our mind is on what we are reading and part on what we are eating; we are not getting the most from either activity. Similarly, when talking with someone, give him or her your full attention. These are little things, but all together they help to unify consciousness and deepen concentration.

Make wise choices about what you read. Read only what is necessary or worthwhile, and then take the time to read carefully. With television, the equivalent is channel surfing. Once we have learned there is nothing worth watching, why not turn it off? Flitting through fifty or more channels just divides attention even more.

Time passes moment by moment, and each moment shapes consciousness, so be particularly careful to do one thing at

a time with full attention, even if it seems trivial, and not let your mind get divided or speeded up.

With a one-pointed mind, you will find your senses are keener, your emotions more stable, your intellect more lucid. Whatever you do, you will be there more fully.

Thea: My husband and I made an agreement that we would not have the phone on the table while eating. That we would start reading the news at breakfast only after we both finished eating. That we would focus on our meal and each other. Of course also no TV. We found that this gesture of mutual respect leads to sharing thoughts and feelings that otherwise might not get expressed.

Bob: I used to find it unthinkable to ever drive without my iPod loaded with thousands of songs and various podcasts for entertainment. As part of my work on one-pointed attention I began leaving the iPod home and driving in silence. I now drive without it or the radio. It has left me more focused on the road and my mind is quieter overall.

Margaret: There is an unspoken expectation at my company that employees should respond to instant messages instantly, even when we are on conference calls, resulting in frequent multitasking. I've taken a different approach. When I receive an instant message, I ask those on the conference call to excuse me for a moment so I can respond. Then I tell the sender when my call will be done and that I will give the sender my full attention at that time. I've found that both those on the conference call and those sending instant messages appreciate having my undivided attention even if it is not immediate.

5. Train the Senses

Easwaran: In the food we eat, the books and magazines we read, the movies we see, all of us are subject to the conditioning of rigid likes and dislikes. To free ourselves from this conditioning, we need to learn to change our likes and dislikes freely when it is in the best interests of those around us or ourselves. In this age of mass media, we need to be particularly discriminating in what we read and what we go to see for entertainment, for we become in part what our senses take in.

Sense training always gives you greater willpower. For instance, I like to read my newspaper, so when the paper comes someone puts it in my room. And just see what the senses are capable of—when I am walking around, repeating my mantram, my eyes clamor to look at the paper, just the headline, or the photos. So when I go round the room on my mantram walk I won't glance at the paper even once. That's teaching my eyes to train themselves.

Craig: I recently turned off most of the notifications on my smartphone, including news headlines. This has resulted in several fewer daily interruptions that had pulled my attention from my chosen task and often led to an unplanned five or even fifteen minute stay on a news website. I now catch up on the news later, when it fits my schedule. I feel no less informed in doing so, as many of the “breaking news” headlines are more sensational than important, and the news stories several hours after an event generally are more meaningful than those immediately reported.

Ken: I have been applying the mantram to my news consumption. I write five lines of the mantram before reading. My mind is pretty tricky and it helps to keep the mantram notebook on top of the table.

6. Put Others First

Easwaran: Human bonds are becoming more and more tenuous in today's world. We can reverse the tendency of our civilization to impersonalize everything by making an effort every day to see other people as people, not objects. Despite the convenience, for instance, I never use automatic teller machines in my bank. I like to talk to a human being. These are not just financial transactions. They are human relationships in which trust and concern for each other can grow.

Television has had a devastating effect on human companionship. I do watch good shows on television, though they are few and far between. But even then I like to watch with friends. We enjoy each other's company, and we are together not just physically but in spirit too.

Personal relationships cannot be left to chance, especially in a speeded-up world. But we can learn to shape our relationships if we are willing to take the time to do so.

Stephanie: I'm trying to call family and friends sometimes, rather than emailing, texting, or looking at their Facebook pages. Talking is so much more personal.

Hasmita: I watch videos or play games with my daughter. As we do those things together, my time limit with it reflects on her, too. If either of us is tempted to do the activity in the absence of the other, we somehow don't enjoy it as much; it feels healthier when we do them together.

Afiza: When we have a team lunch, my co-workers and I put our phones in a pile at the center of the table and leave them there. We end up having so much more fun and sharing of stories – actual bonding!



Easwaran in the 1970s

7. Spiritual Fellowship

Easwaran: When we are trying to change our life, we need the support of others with the same goal. What we think is highly susceptible to the influence of those around us. If you have friends who are meditating along the lines suggested here, it is a great help to meditate together regularly. Share your times of entertainment too; relaxation is an important part of spiritual living. Choose your company carefully and, if you possibly can, come to a Blue Mountain Center retreat.

Kathy: Satsang, online and in-person, has been a great support to my practice. For months I cared for my 96-year-old Mom. As she died, I meditated and said the mantram. I was far away from my satsang but had their support through my phone. They said the mantram with me as Mom shed her body. And at a retreat many people shared with me about death. Miraculously, it all helped!

8. Spiritual Reading

Easwaran: We are so surrounded today by a low concept of what the human being is that it is essential to give ourselves a higher image. I recommend devoting half an hour or so each day to reading the scriptures and the writings of the great mystics of all religions. If you are following my method of meditation, I would also encourage you to read my books. Just before bedtime, after evening meditation, is a particularly good time, because the thoughts you fall asleep in will be with you throughout the night.

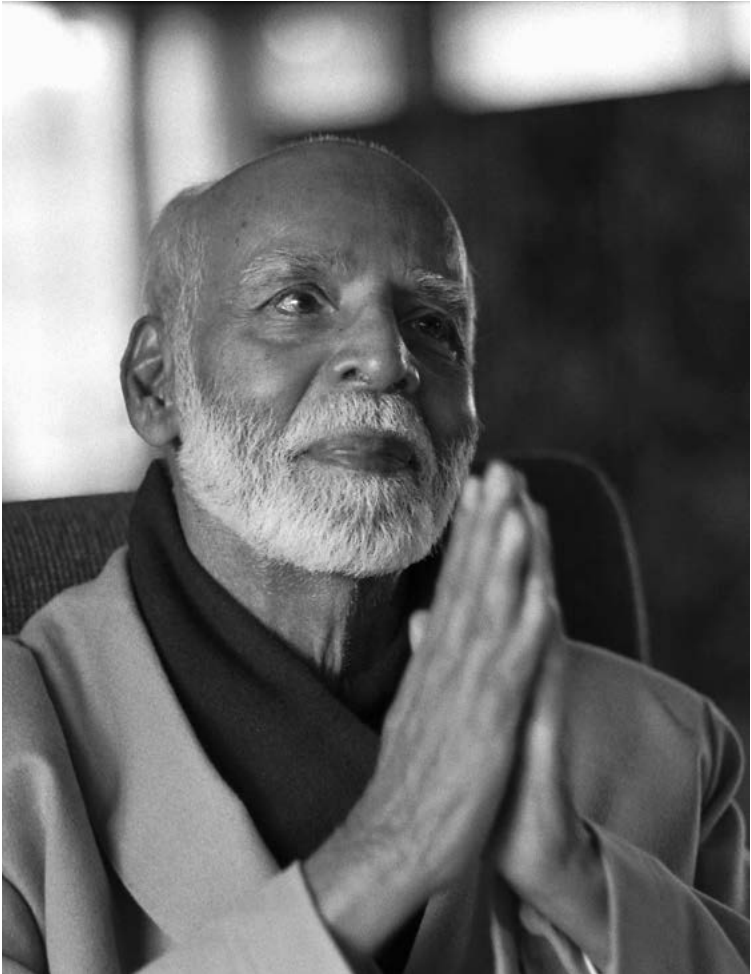
Stephanie: We've been watching part of an Easwaran talk from the Easwaran Digital Library in the evening, before watching anything else, and after that we often don't have time to watch anything else – so we don't.

Chris: For years my spiritual practice has been mainly about weaving the eight points through my waking hours. Reading Easwaran before bed helps me remember that I can continue to grow spiritually all night long. It's opening a new door in my spiritual journey.

Your Life is a Trust

Easwaran: Your life is a trust, and your time is part of that trust. Time is given to us not for feathering our own nest, but for giving back to life.

So please, for the sake of your children as well as yourselves, spend part of your time meditating and following these disciplines, part of your time helping causes like ours, part of your time making your children and friends and co-workers aware that life is one for all. 🌸



Easwaran, 1990s

Shankara's Three Blessings

Let me share with you a beautiful verse from Shankara, a towering spiritual teacher from my native state of Kerala in South India:

There are three blessings most difficult to attain.

First is to be born as a human being.

Second is the dawning of the desire for liberation. And third is the personal guidance of a man or woman of God.

When you know that it has taken some fifteen billion years for you to become a human being, this great sage asks, how can you waste your life – the result of billions of years of endeavor – in going after pursuits that are worthless, or achieving things for yourself which contribute to nobody else?

Every morning when you sit down for meditation, remind yourself that you have three crowning blessings it has taken millions of years of evolution to attain. You are a human being, with the capacity to realize God. You burn with the desire for that realization. And you have a loving, experienced guide.

With these three, the great saints and sages of all religions would agree, by the grace of God, you will reach the goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cashman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial letter.

Meditation Retreats

Whether you're interested in starting a passage meditation practice or want to sustain and deepen your existing practice, there's a retreat for you. We'd love to meet you at the BMCM Headquarters in Northern California!

Introductory Weekend Retreats:

June 8–10, October 5–7

Young Adult Weekend Retreats: (20s & 30s)

April 27–29, November 2–4

Returnee Weekend Retreats:

August 17–19, September 7–9

Weeklong Retreats:

May 5–11, July 7–13 (Affiliates & Cohorts), August 4–10, October 13–19

Family Weekend: July 28–29

Senior Retreat: August 24–28



Online programs

If you'd like to connect from home, join us for an online program. We strive to live out Easwaran's teachings with a slowed-down and one-pointed atmosphere.

Introductory Webinar: May 19, September 1

Returnee Online Workshop: June 23, November 10

Living Out the Eight Points with Children – Webinar:
May 20, September 16

Learn Passage Meditation – Online Course:
September 14 (six weeks)

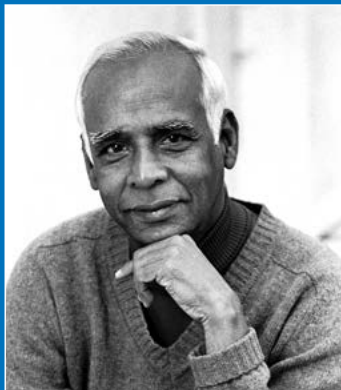


We offer a sliding scale and scholarships for all our programs. Some online programs are free of charge.

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I'm not against technology at all, but I want a technology that doesn't put forward arrogant claims that it can fix anything - a technology that is humble, efficient, and nonpolluting, that supports a simple, healthy lifestyle.

- Eknath Easwaran



**Blue Mountain
Center of Meditation**

P. O. Box 256
Tomales, CA 94971
www.bmcm.org