

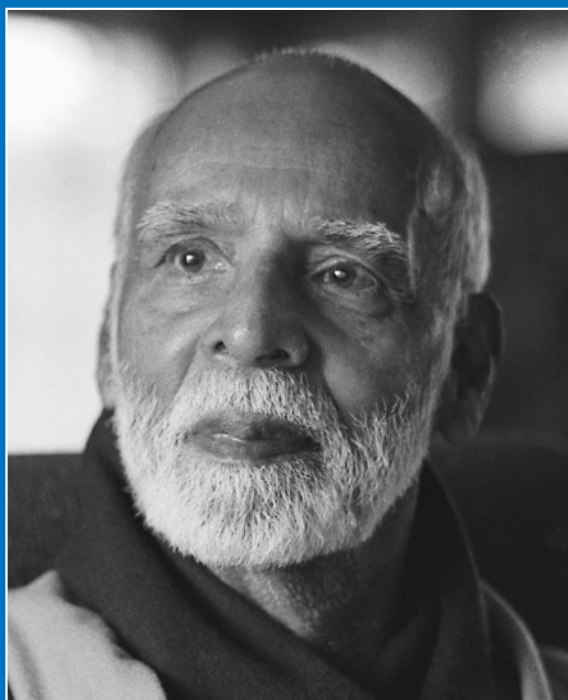
Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

SUMMER 2021



60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BMCM



# A Living Force

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## In This Issue

On the walls of our offices you can read the statement of the BMCM vision: “Eknath Easwaran is a living force, changing lives to build a better world.” This vision has guided us ever since the Center was founded in 1961. It continues to guide us now and will do so into the future, as you can see from the stories contributed in this issue by passage meditators. Some met Easwaran personally, and some came to his program long after he had passed on physically, but they all share the heart-felt assertion that he is a living presence in their lives. We hear the same from many friends worldwide.

“I am timeless,” Easwaran tells us in this journal. And he gives us this promise: “I shall continue to guide all those who have faith in me. The Presence that is within me will not be affected by death in any way, and through Sri Krishna’s grace we shall continue to flourish so that my dreams for the next century may come true with our children and our children’s children.”

–The BMCM Editorial team

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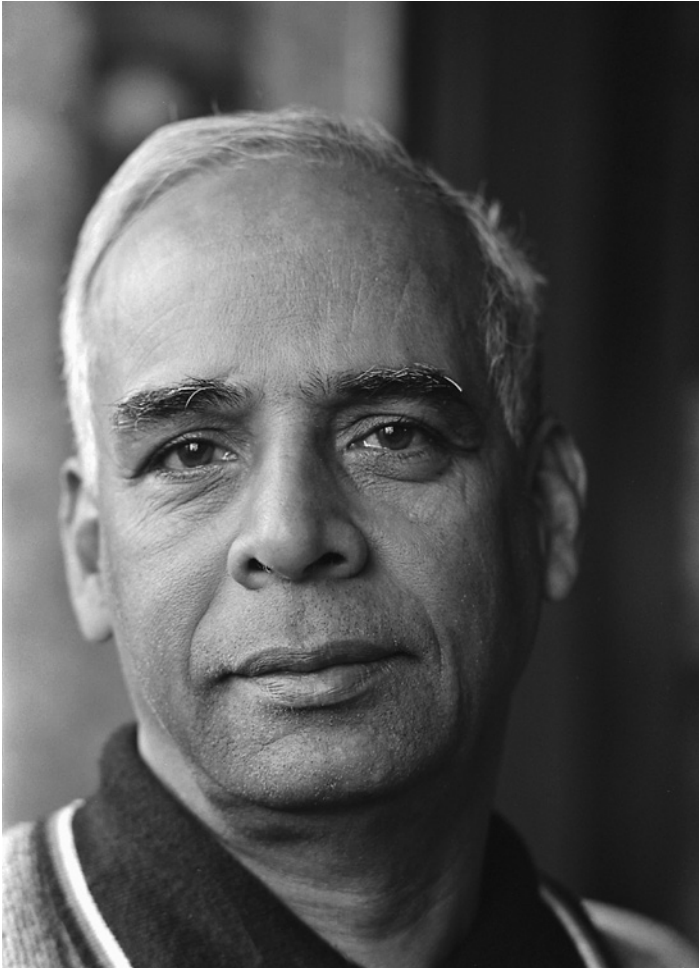
## From Easwaran

Sri Ramakrishna says a man of God comes and crosses the world's stage with his handful of disciples like a little caravan of traveling players. He comes from nowhere, plays his part, and quietly takes his leave, and nobody even knows who he was.

Whenever righteousness declines and the world loses its way, the Lord has promised to come like this to restore the scriptures and show us a way from darkness to light, from untruth to truth, from death to immortality.

It need not be as a divine incarnation. Even in little people like you and me, the Lord can come to life. By ourselves we are nothing, but every one of us can become a little lamp that shines like a beacon for all around to follow . . .

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



Easwaran, 1970s.



# Our Mission

Ekknath Easwaran

I have really been astonished at the great drama that has been enacted in this beautiful place in the last thirty years.

You may be surprised to hear that statement, but I don't have anything to do with it at all. If you look at the image of my beloved Boss, Sri Krishna, I am just a little flute like the one you see in his hand. The music doesn't come from me. All that I have done is to make the flute as empty as I possibly can.

This is the supreme truth declared by all the great religions of the world: if you extinguish your self-will, God can use you as a flute to send his music to awaken people everywhere. I can give you some inside information: any dedicated group of men, women, and children, if they can expunge the desire for profit and prestige and work hard together in harmony, can attain an impossible goal that cannot be achieved by human beings alone.

This is the great drama in which we have all been privileged to be cast, and it has been staged over and over again in the annals of mysticism: by Francis in Assisi, by Teresa in Avila, by Sri Ramana Maharshi and Swami Ramdas in my own India and many, many others around the world. The cast may differ; the story is the same.

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Our mission is to teach the eight-point program I have practiced in my own life. Nothing more is needed for anyone to realize God and release fathomless resources for the service of all. I have not the slightest doubt that our mode of meditation is one of the best in the world. It will be treasured by posterity; it can be practiced in every religion.

I am just Sri Krishna's office boy, running on errands, and as an office boy I don't have to be modest. This country, which is so young and has such a wealth of drive in its young people, needs the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation more than anything else.



Easwaran, 1970s.



## An Inspirational Force

A spiritual organization is not just an institution. It is an inspirational force that will be at work in the world for generations. It does not require monastic vows, but it requires a monastic commitment. I wish I could express to you somehow in words that convey my passion: ever since I started meditation, all I wanted was to see this final encounter with myself and the Lord. Into that all my desires have flown.

If, say, fifty of us here long with unified heart for a Francis to appear again, he will appear. I do not have the slightest doubt about that. He will appear in some other form, fit into the needs of the twenty-first century.

But we need this kind of undivided longing. There is a current of devotion in humanity, but it is covered now with all kinds of moss that must be cleared before a God-inspired person can return. It doesn't depend on numbers. Spiritual movements don't depend upon area and quantity; it is quality that is most important.

The seeds we have sown during the last thirty years may bear fruit soon – perhaps even in our own children. Don't go by what they are doing now; it's not at all impossible. That is how I sometimes try to console myself when I see the terrible negative trends in this country: it is when these trends are darkest that a Francis arises. Even though a room has been dark for a thousand years, we say, once a lamp is brought in, the darkness disappears.



## Recapture the Fire

When I was about to shed my body a few years ago I don't think I had even a thought about myself. I was trying to imagine how the ashram would be, how all our thousands of friends would be affected, all the ways in which I could still continue to guide them without being present in the body.

I am not just talking, you know. Jesus continues to guide us. The Buddha continues to guide us. Great sages and saints like Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Francis of Assisi, continue to guide us. They are not dead. Their bodies are gone, but they move about freely in the world, helping those who turn to them with a unified heart, strengthening those who carry on their work.

When we call upon Jesus, he comes to those whose hearts are united with Jesus. When we call upon the Buddha, he comes to those whose hearts are united with the Buddha. These are eternal forces; their lives are eternal.

My grandmother is not present physically, but she is more present in my heart now than she was when she was alive on earth. Similarly, don't ever make the mistake that I am confined to this brown body. I am not confined to this brown body; I am in every one of you.



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You have always to remember that a teacher is as eager to have dedicated pupils as the student is to find an illumined teacher. To such disciples, the wise teacher gives with both hands the greatest of gifts, in which is included abundant health, unshakable security, and endless fertility to contribute to life.

This ashram will be a well of living waters where people from around the world will come to quench their thirst. Our responsibility is to keep the well pure, keep the living waters alive, by preserving the purity of these teachings in our daily lives.

Every one of you is here in response to the call of my Boss's flute. There were some who met me on their way to Mexico, to Europe, to India; all kinds of people received the call. I still like to remember those days on the campus when so many bright faces came to us responding to this call. I remember how your eyes shone, how eager your hearts were.

That is what I want you to recapture: all that old fire and eagerness and hunger and thirst. That is the kind of fire you all have. Recapture it now so that we can pass the torch blazing to the generations that will come.



## Three Blessings

There are three blessings, Shankara says, that are almost impossible to attain. The first is to be born a human being. Even according to biological evolution, it has taken millions and millions of years for us to reach this state. How tragic to waste this precious opportunity in the pursuit of profit and pleasure, in quarreling and conflict, when time runs by so fast!

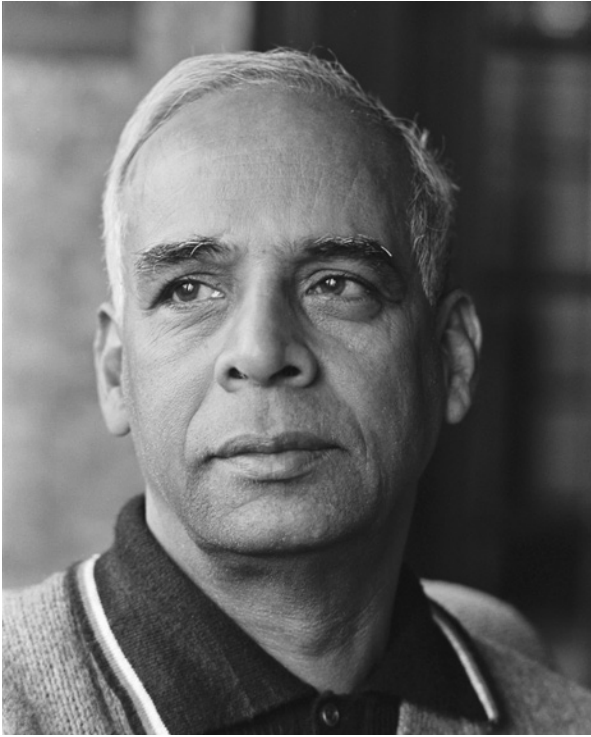
Second is an ardent longing for the realization of God – an all-embracing passion for discovering the Lord of Love who is enshrined in the depths of our consciousness.

And third and most precious is the blessing of an illumined teacher – someone who has been enabled to make this supreme discovery and can answer with the conviction of personal experience those timeless questions that all of us asked when we began our search: Who am I? Where do I come from? What will happen to me when I die?

How often do these three blessings occur together? It doesn't happen through chance. When it does happen, that is the proof of divine grace.

I want you to remember this always: through my grandmother's infinite grace, I am timeless.

I keep reminding you of this because it is so difficult for the imagination to grasp: through the blessing of my teacher and the infinite mercy of my Boss, Sri Krishna, I am not going to die.



Easwaran, 1970s.

My body will fall away one day, but death will not affect me. This is the refrain in every religion. That is why the Gita says, “When you have this, what can this world offer you?” Nothing can even be whispered in the same breath as freedom from death.

That is why I keep repeating to you over and over, “Aspire for this. Long for this. This is within the reach of all.”

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## COMMUNITY STORIES

### All the Difference in the World

In the late 70s, I decided to become a vegetarian and purchased *Laurel's Kitchen*. Years later, I ordered *The End of Sorrow* and then the meditation book, and decided that passage meditation was the answer for me. But how would I fit this into my life with an agnostic husband and a baby who needed me? Easwaran said it was a "come as you are party," so I chose a date and told myself, "Tomorrow, you're going to meditate every day for the rest of your life." And that's what I did. It was March 1988. And it has made all the difference in the world.

#### Leaning on the eight points

Easwaran's eight-point program has become the backbone of my life. Everything revolves around it. Morning and evening meditation anchor the day and the other seven points are woven through the rest of the 24 hours. I don't need to think too much about what is happening in my personal life. I can lean on one of the points, not be attached to what is happening, and move forward. It keeps me calm.

When life was tough, I stuck to the mantram. When my daughter had a concussion and was in a state of primal fear on a stretcher crying out, I whispered the mantram into her ear and it calmed her and regulated her breathing. I saw this happen.

When my husband had a cardiac arrest and was in the ER and I was in Manhattan stuck in traffic, I held onto the mantram for the 2.5-hour ride to the hospital and then held

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his hand saying the mantram while he recovered. I don't know what I'd do without the mantram as a tool to keep the mind calm. It's so very, very powerful.

### My spiritual schedule

I really like the idea of a spiritual schedule not just daily but weekly, monthly, and yearly. Weekly there is the BMCM Satsang Live and local online satsangs. Then there is inspiration by Easwaran through the Easwaran Digital Library. When the online retreats opened up last year, I wanted to take all of them! But now I'm settling down to one every quarter and when the in-person retreats resume, the annual visit to BMCM will once again be on my schedule.

### Meeting Easwaran

When my children were young I couldn't go to California, so the Center encouraged me to write to Easwaran and he guided me in my practice.

In the end I did get to meet him. It was very emotional and difficult to explain the feeling of being in the presence of an enlightened being. I felt his peaceful essence sweep over me and I broke down in tears. A part of me used to wish that I had started to meditate in the 70s when I was able to travel and could have spent more time with Easwaran, but life has a way of unfolding just the way it is supposed to.

I feel so very grateful that I found this spiritual path and a wonderful teacher to guide me while being a householder. Easwaran still feels so very much alive to me.

– Julie, New York State

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## Alive in My Heart and Mind

Nearly 30 years ago, I had the very good luck to meet Sri Easwaran and was also blessed with the grace to recognize my Teacher. At the time of our meeting at a retreat and for many retreats to follow, however, I certainly wouldn't have called myself a promising student. I immediately felt close and completely devoted to Sri Easwaran, very at home with all of his teachings and delighted with his longtime students as well. But . . .

As a person in my early 20s, very physically active, very busy with my career, I didn't come even close to fully practicing the eight points for quite a while. I began meditating each day from the very first time I picked up his book though, so that was a good start! I memorized literally hundreds of passages in that first decade. I adored the spiritual reading Sri Easwaran recommended and loved attending my many retreats and satsang gatherings.

### Some significant gaps

But from slowing down on through to one-pointed attention, there were some significant gaps! Plus, whenever I had the chance to be near Sri Easwaran in those early days, I couldn't fully absorb nearly anything he said in his talks, either live or recorded. Whenever Easwaran or even his image appeared in front of me, my mind pretty much went blank!! Supremely happy, yes, but blank. It was always wonderful to hear the questions from the longtime students

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and I cherished the words Sri Easwaran spoke, but could I tell you later what they were? No. Nor did I really begin to understand his instructions for a very long time.

### Deep love for my Teacher

The only thing in my favor (and not due to anything but grace and good luck) was my deep, deep love for my Teacher, who came even more splendidly alive to me, gloriously alive in my heart and my mind, after his passing.

His still photos seem to move and sparkle when I meet his eyes, video recordings of Sri Easwaran always hit home as if he is sitting in front of me, even readings, especially now in BMCM Satsang Live, seem like each one is more significant, more potent, than the last. Whenever I see his image I have the urge to creep as close as possible, to take shelter at his feet.

Now, finally, I begin to grasp small portions of his teachings and I am every day stunned at the wisdom that pours out of this Teacher, seemingly targeted straight at me, right from the start.

– Passage meditator, Canada



Easwaran with his wife Christine and niece Meera, 1980s.





# Family Living

Ekknath Easwaran

To begin the spiritual life, we do not need a gigantic canvas. One of India's greatest artistic achievements is the miniature art of the Mogul period – paintings done in a tiny area with such tenderness and such precision that only another artist can grasp all the love and labor that has gone into them.

I sometimes think family living is this kind of miniature art. The ambit is so small and the skill required so great that most of us never evaluate the vast potentialities of family life to enable us all to find our freedom.

You can be as perfect an artist just in your own home with your mother, father, brother and sister, brother-in-law and occasional country cousin. You can make a masterpiece of your life by constantly keeping your awareness on the needs of those around you and forgetting your own. When you forget yourself completely, you have discovered the Lord.



## A Message the World Urgently Needs

For ordinary, unmythical men and women – for the world at large – what does our work mean? What do our lives mean? What are our links with the so-called real world of Petaluma, of San Francisco, of New York and New Delhi and London and Rio de Janeiro, where people are making money, buying and selling, enjoying the pleasures the world offers and suffering the sorrows it brings? Ordinary people whose health might be bad, whose security might be poor, who feel inadequate, suffer from boredom, get burnt out, lack purpose in life – what do our books mean to them? What do our lives mean, the lives of little people like us?

These are highly relevant questions, and everyone asks them at one time or another. That is why I keep reminding you that our work is important for every human being. It embraces health, happiness, education, right occupation, war and peace, family, relationships, entertainment, everything.

Everything comes into my purview because, as Gandhi said, the sum of these is what religion means. Training the mind is the alpha and omega of the spiritual life.

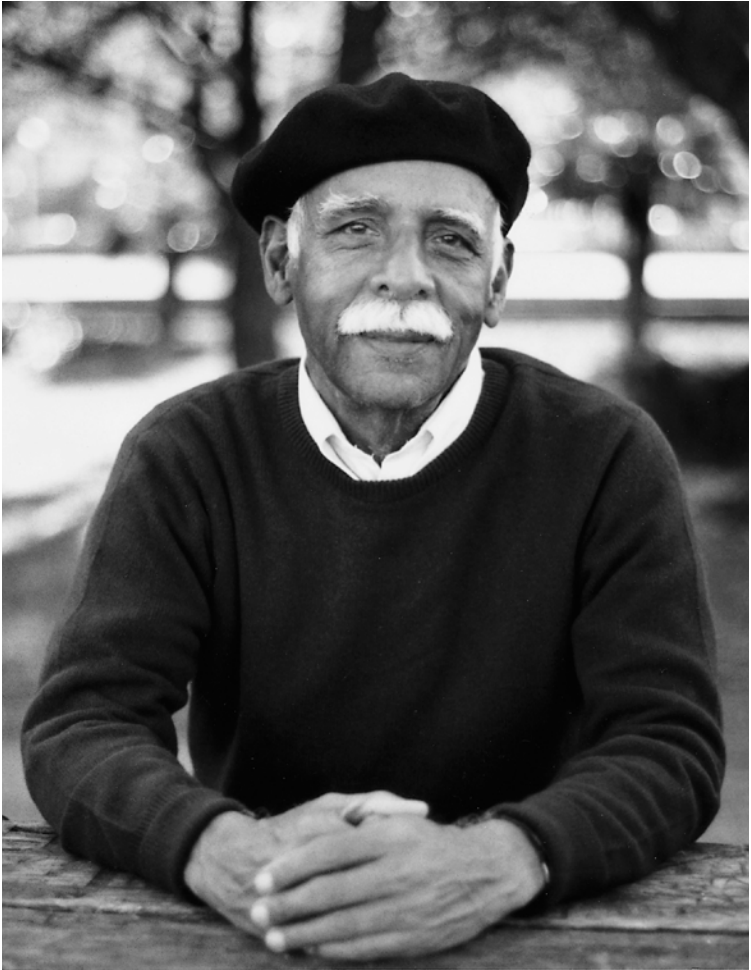
I don't think there is any message the world more urgently needs – not only this country but the whole world. Our books are in so many countries now, and people are coming here from every continent, even India. Though it too may be caught in this frenzy



Easwaran, 1980s.

of consumerism, I have enough faith in the civilization of my old country to believe that great figures will rise when the darkness is densest to open the eyes of the Indian people and turn them inwards to discover that God is always present in the depths of their consciousness, however much we turn our eyes away.

The three volumes of our *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* contain all the instructions necessary. I have no doubts about that at all.



Easwaran, 1980s.



## The Supreme Education

No amount of technological achievements, however impressive, no amount of political and economic changes, however beneficial, will ever succeed in establishing a world order founded in love, living in love, until and unless we give ourselves what the Upanishads call the “supreme education” – meditation – and through our own personal example pass this education on to our children. It is because children do not have this education that when they come to the threshold of youth they find themselves facing so many problems which they not only don’t know how to solve but don’t even know how to understand.

Like our publications, like our medical projects, these retreats are a humble attempt to serve God through the hundreds of people who have responded to us so deeply. What we are attempting is actually service of God. I want you to let these words go like arrows into your consciousness.

In all our retreats, this is going to be my message: If you want to live to your full capacity, if you want to give a great gift to life, if you want to love in a manner that will never change, meditation is the supreme education for the art of living.



## A Spiritual Renaissance

Like thoughtful people everywhere, I am deeply troubled by the direction in which the world is moving. I don't think any changes in politics or economics are going to set right this almost compulsive drifting away from all that is noble in human nature.

The twentieth century has made great advances in science and technology, but it has also to be admitted that this same science and technology has been misused in terrible wars and supports an undeclared war that the industrial world is waging against the environment today. I am aware of what the industrial revolution has done for us, what comforts it has brought, what conveniences it has given. But the bills are coming in.

Just as there was a cultural renaissance in the West several centuries ago, the world needs a spiritual renaissance today. Just as there was an industrial revolution two hundred years ago, the world needs a spiritual revolution here and now. And the wonderful feature of a spiritual revolution is that it cannot be accomplished by governments or multilateral corporations. It can be brought about only by little people like us: every man, every woman, every child, changing their personality from selfish to selfless, from human to divine.

For this we need, first and foremost, a higher image of the human being. So far the human being has essentially been looked upon as a separate, physical creature that enters life through one door at birth and disappears through another at death. Every



Easwaran, 1980s.

mystic in every great religion, on the basis of personal experience, has rightly called this an utterly superficial and distorted view.

So the first step in a spiritual revolution is for parents and teachers to practice spiritual disciplines that replace this low image with a lofty one. This is where our mode of meditation excels, for the passages we meditate on exalt the human being to the stars. What we meditate on, we become. What parents and teachers practice, children will absorb.

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## COMMUNITY STORY

### A Practice That Changed My Life

I started meditating in 1993. I decided to learn after visiting my Aunty and Uncle who lived on the Blue Mountain in Kerala, India. I hadn't heard of Easwaran at that point but maybe I picked up something in the air there!

That autumn I discovered his book *Your Life Is Your Message* and then moved straight to *Passage Meditation*. I started meditating before I finished the book. Something in me was very hungry for the practice that I intuited would change my life.

And it certainly has in pretty much every respect. I was lucky enough to meet my future wife in the same year and I'm sure that my meditation meant that she could stick it out with me! We've been together ever since and now have two teenage children. Meditation certainly was an invaluable help in bringing up children. I don't know how I would have coped with the challenges of parenthood without it.

#### Working as an actor

In my career, meditation has made it possible for me to work as an actor for the past 30 years. Firstly, it grounds me every day. Acting can possess you. If you're not working you can descend into spirals of paranoia and self-pity. If you are working you can get caught up in a frenzy of long hours, late nights and head-turning company. Daily meditation reminds me that there are more important things in this life.



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My spiritual practice also helps me to get on with others when I'm at work. Acting involves starting a new job, with new people, sometimes every few weeks. It can be tiring and it can be easy to be judgmental of others and consequently fall out with them. Actors who can't get on in groups often find that they become less and less employable, no matter how talented they are. Conversely I have often been told that I got a job because a director or producer remembered me as being someone who is good to have around. This is not luck. This is down to the practice of being able to put others first when I am at work. And the ability to do that comes directly from daily meditation.

### Present in the moment

Meditation has also been invaluable in terms of my actual acting practice. The best acting comes from people who are completely present in the moment. As soon as you drift into the past or future whilst acting, then that negative voice can sneak into your mind: "you don't know the next line," "you're not very good in this scene," "your accent is off," etc.

The best way I've learned to silence this voice is to use the mantram to stay in the present moment and to remind myself that this moment isn't about me. I am a conduit for the voice of the writer, to connect them to the audience on stage or through a camera lens or microphone. Having the presence of mind to continuously do this comes from the discipline of daily meditation. Talent only gets you so

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far, concentration (or one-pointedness) is the key. I am a far better actor today because of meditation.

### A conduit for Easwaran's voice

Looking back it was almost like all my life experience led me to record Easwaran's words, most recently for his audiobook of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*. My family was from India and I have played many Indian roles, so I'm very familiar with Indian culture and language. I've meditated for years, and I've done a lot of radio and voice work. Even so, I always remind myself that I am just a conduit for Easwaran's voice. Just as he is a conduit for Krishna's. If I can play a small part in his work, then it is probably the most important acting job I will ever do. I'll settle for that happily.

### Central to my sadhana

I never met Easwaran. He did kindly answer a question I sent to him, but I didn't feel I could call him my teacher until my first visit to the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in 2005, well after he was no longer with us physically. I did a weeklong retreat and at the end I felt surprisingly choked up trying to say goodbye to one of his closest students. She calmly said to me, "It's all right, you're one of us now. You're one of Easwaran's boys." After that I knew that his practice would always be central to my sadhana.

– Paul, UK

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## Dive Deep, O Mind

*A Song of Sri Ramakrishna*

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of

God's Beauty;

If you descend to the uttermost depths,

There you will find the gem of Love.

Go seek, O mind, go seek Vrindavan in your heart,

Where with His loving devotees

Sri Krishna sports eternally.

Light up, O mind, light up true wisdom's shining lamp,

And let it burn with steady flame

Unceasingly within your heart.

Who is it that steers your boat across the solid earth?

It is your guru, says Kubir;

Meditate on his holy feet.

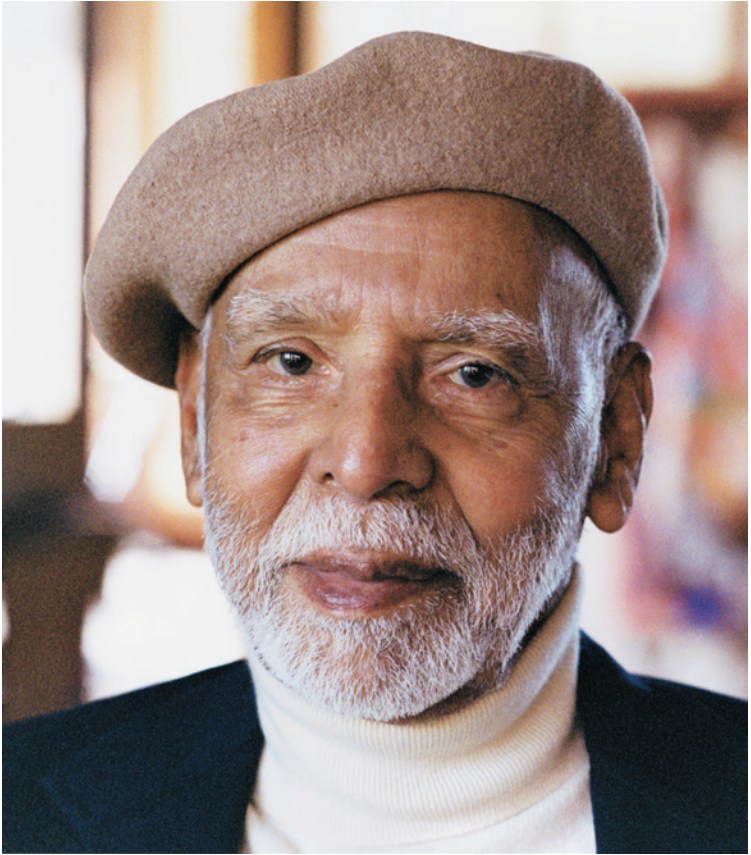
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## Easwaran's Eight-Point Program

- 1. 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.
- 2. Repetition of a Mantram** Silent repetition in the mind of a holy name or a hallowed phrase from one of the world's great religions. Practiced whenever possible throughout the day or night.
- 3. Slowing Down** Setting priorities and reducing the stress and friction caused by hurry.
- 4. One-Pointed Attention** Giving full concentration to the matter at hand.
- 5. Training the Senses** Overcoming conditioned habits and learning to enjoy what is beneficial.
- 6. Putting Others First** Gaining freedom from selfishness and separateness; finding joy in helping others.
- 7. Spiritual Fellowship** Spending time regularly with others who are practicing passage meditation for mutual inspiration and support.
- 8. Spiritual Reading** Drawing inspiration from writings by and about the world's great spiritual figures and from the scriptures of all religions.



The memorial garden, Ramagiri Ashram.



Easwaran, 1990s.



# For the Welfare of the World

Eknath Easwaran

When like-minded people gather together for a spiritual purpose, a great force is generated which can be used for the welfare of the whole world.

According to one Sanskrit verse, the future of this work is guarded by four doorkeepers: “*shama*, *vichara*, *santushti*, and the fourth, *sadhusangama*.”

*Shama* is the peace that comes when self-will subsides and all desire to take from life has dissolved into the desire to give. Every religion is unanimous on this account: unless greed, fear, and anger have subsided, nobody can enter the kingdom of God.

*Vichara* is meditation: finding out who you are. If you ask me, “Who are you? When were you born?” I would quote the Gita and say, “I was never born. That is why I will never die.” This supreme discovery is the only goal of life, and the practice of meditation is meant solely for the purpose of stilling the waves of greed, anger, and fear so that we can make this discovery for ourselves in our own heart.

*Santushti* means to be completely fulfilled. Until we make this discovery, there is a hunger in our hearts that cannot be appeased by anything the world can offer, a thirst we cannot quench until we turn our back upon ourselves and make our lives a trust for the benefit of all.

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And, last and most essential, the fourth, *sadhusangama*: association with spiritual aspirants, but especially the presence of a man or woman who has attained the realization of God. This is not just physical presence, you know. I am with you every day. It doesn't require my physical presence; it requires your open heart.

And when all of us gather together, a great force evolves that you carry into your home, your place of work, wherever you go. Even when you are traveling in the car, on the seat next to you is this spiritual force, working even without your knowledge.

“Where two or three are gathered in my name,” Jesus says, “I am present also.” I know it to be literally true. The spiritual life is a very adventurous one, but it's also a very perilous one.

That is why we get together again and again, ten, fifty, a hundred of us gathering together like this to support one another and draw inspiration from one another. Unless spiritual groups get together like this, not much can be done to elevate the world.





## A Message to Parents

I don't expect us to complete this work. I hope with all my heart that our work will be continued – by our children, by our friends' children, by their children and their children's children. This is how spiritual work develops and is completed, from generation to generation. In the mystical tradition, it is after the physical passing of most of us that the work really increases in depth and beauty.

For this, give your children not just tender care but, more important, wise guidance. I have come to believe profoundly that children are not what we preach; children are what we are. Whether you like it or not, you teach by your very existence.

First, improve your meditation. When you deepen your meditation, you are able to reach people below the surface level even without trying to. Most of the influence that I exercise over all of you is far below the surface level, and my meditation has continued to deepen even while you have known me.

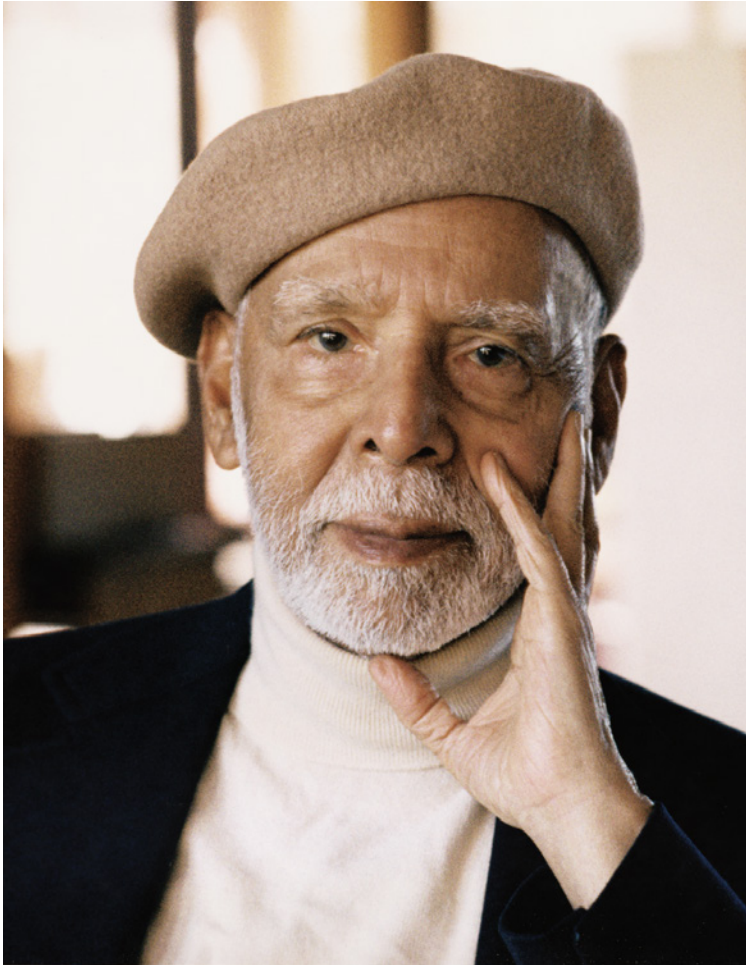
Second, fill your children's minds and hearts with high ideals that you embody in your own life. Give them role models that set the very highest goals. Fill their consciousness with inspiring words and images and examples from books and plays that show the human spirit at its loftiest. We have great literature in the mystical traditions of all religions. I am all for elevating entertainment, but don't depend on the media. You can stage your own plays and act in them with your children. All these things will go in deep, just like the passages we choose for meditation.

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Third, associate with people who are selfless. Be friends with those who have a higher motivation in life than just personal satisfaction. Without elevating company, as the Buddha says, it is better to walk alone.

Remember, there are forces for good in the world that are always active. Our work has a living influence that is looking for suitable persons to inspire for its continuation. You have been practicing these disciplines while your children were growing up; some of you were practicing them when they were born. They have come here and absorbed the atmosphere of this ashram. It is very reasonable to expect that some of them may be chosen to carry on this work.

There is a force blowing through life that uses each of us as it can. But it is up to us to empty ourselves so that we can be suitable instruments. That is our responsibility; the selection is not in our hands.



Easwaran, 1990s.



## A Message to Children & Young People

When I was back in India after my first visit to this country on the Fulbright exchange, people used to ask me, “What do you miss most from America? The skyscrapers?” “No.” “The hundred and thirty-seven varieties of ice cream?” “Not at all!” “Then don’t you miss anything?” And I would say, “What I really miss most is the young people of America.”

I want you to remember this always. It is not that I take you to be good boys and girls. Not at all. But I see the possibilities in you, the potential.

Whether you know it or not, whether you are aware of it or not, your life is a trust. Every faculty that you have, all the training that you receive, is a trust granted to you so that you may give to the world, which stands badly in need of your contribution. Don’t go by what the media say. We are in a very, very difficult situation all over the world, and it’s not enough to talk about peace or say that you work for peace; you have to live in peace, and you have to help others live in peace too.

It is you boys and girls who are going to change all this. And it doesn’t require a large number of people. One of the greatest statements Mahatma Gandhi made was when he said, “Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glory in fighting alone.” Never forget that you don’t need numbers to change all this. Start a small group, bright boys and girls like yourselves, and start to make changes in your own lives. Don’t say, “I’m going to wait until I graduate, until I get the right job.”

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Start making changes right away.

Then the next step is to have a great role model. The Buddha, Jesus, Sri Krishna, Saint Francis, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux – they were not colorless personalities; they throb with the pulse of life. If you go near them, a lasso of light will fall on you and you'll be caught.

Choose your role models carefully. Even today I keep my college teacher's picture on my table because I know how much I owe him for understanding life. I keep saying to myself, "If only he could visit here, he would be so proud that I had been his student." This is the kind of satisfaction a teacher wants: to be able to say, "I produced a great student like Naren, like Hari."

I hope that's the kind of reputation I'm going to have. A teacher's reputation depends on the quality of his students. Once a maharajah told some of the Buddha's disciples, "If this is what his students are like, I don't have to see the teacher. It is enough if I see all of you." That's the reward that I am going to expect from every one of you. Even if I don't see you in this life, I hope to see you again many times. And I am going to say, "Hey, Sam, show them what kind of student you are." That is the greatest tribute any teacher can ask for.

Each of you can make your life a perfect work of art. That is what I want you to try from tomorrow onwards. When you get home, write down, "My life is going to be a work of art." Just as others write beautiful poetry, you can make your life such a work of art that everyone who looks at it will be inspired. Every one of you is gifted in a special way.



Easwaran, 1990s.

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## COMMUNITY STORY

### Shaping My Life

I was lucky enough to meet Easwaran when I was around 13 years old. I remember feeling his presence in the room, large and weighty and comforting. Easwaran was near the end of his life, so that presence didn't come from either his voice or physical movement but simply from his being.

In the beginning, I saw Easwaran as an older gentleman my parents deeply respected and that my 13-year-old self thought was "pretty cool," and then there was a moment that I felt that shift. At the end of one visit Easwaran walked through the room to say goodbye to everyone. When he passed me Easwaran stopped, clasped my hands, looked me in the eye and said, "come back." I felt this instruction reverberate through my body, and so I did. While I could, I came back to see him in person, and then when he was no longer in the body, I felt the best way to "come back" to Easwaran was through his eight points, and so, in my late teens, I began my own practice of passage meditation.

Finding my spiritual teacher and using the eight points has shaped my life, helping me find fulfilling work and build rich relationships with friends and family. I'm grateful to Easwaran for laying out such a rich path with tools I know I can turn to whenever I need them and for continuing to illuminate my path forward through his books and talks.

– Passage meditator, California



# The Good Student

Eknath Easwaran

It is not only good teachers that are rare. A good student is almost as rare, and you have to remember that a teacher is as eager to find good students as the student is to find a teacher.

In my experience, there are three kinds of people who take to meditation. The first come with some long-standing physical or emotional problem that has yielded to no other remedy. Finally they try meditation – and I have no objection whatever to being treated as a last resort. Second are those who want to lead a better life, who want to draw on their hidden resources or open the deep reservoirs of creativity that lie within us all.

But a teacher lives for the third group. In every country, in every age, there are always a few with a rage to know who they are, why they are here, what happens when they die. They have tasted what life offers and they know that the deep hunger in our hearts cannot be satisfied by any amount of money or possessions or prestige or fame; it can be filled only by awareness of God.

These are the people who come to me and stay. They don't leave me so I don't leave them. I take a long time to watch my students, and I want them to take a long time to look at me. But once we come together, we are not likely to part.





Christine Easwaran



## Prompted by Love

It was in this country that I realized how important it is for everyone to have the support of others who are following the same path. Sadhana is difficult for everybody. It involves the whole of consciousness, the whole of daily living. Food, eating habits, working habits, sleeping habits, recreation – everything has to be changed, from unhealthy to healthy, unloving to loving.

That's the main reason why we had satsang so often – in Tilden Park, on Stinson Beach, at the Lee Street ashram. That's why we used to meet four or five times a week. Almost every day we had times to come together and support one another and give everyone a chance to make this breaking away as easy and as painless as possible.

All these tremendous changes are prompted by love. That's the important thing. In our Hindu tradition, I have only to think of my teacher or look at her picture to know I would do anything simply out of my love for her, which has no bounds. That's why some of my friends carry a picture of me, as a reminder. "Whenever you look at that photograph," I tell them, "just remind yourself, 'If he can do it, so can I.'"



Easwaran, 1990s.

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## COMMUNITY STORIES

### Drawing Me Like a Magnet

I can't imagine what kind of life I would have had if I had not met Sri Easwaran. I live in Kyoto with my American husband. I first received the BMCM journal in 1995 after mailing back a postcard I found in the book I was reading (*Meditation*). I flipped through the journal and got a joyful feeling from it: the photos accompanying the articles had people with big, open smiles, including the author, Eknath Easwaran.

On the last page was the retreat schedule. My husband heartfully suggested I could participate, as he knew I was in search of a spiritual path. A few months later, I was on an airplane to California for a weeklong retreat at Dillon Beach. It turned out to be one of the most important events of my life.

#### Tears of joy

Meeting Sri Easwaran was an awesome experience, an encounter that changed my life's direction. It was a real good fortune to meet him despite his difficult physical condition in those days. Curious to see an "illumined man," my eyes were fixed on him. After introducing ourselves, I felt a warm atmosphere enveloping the space. I noticed tears flowing from my eyes; looking around, I saw everyone's eyes doing the same. I knew Sri Easwaran's love had poured onto us, washed away our tensions, our worries, and turned all sort of emotions into tears of joy. This unforgettable, miraculous moment was deeply engraved into my heart, drawing me to the BMCM like a magnet.

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## My questions were answered

What attracted me intellectually to Sri Easwaran was the clarity of his messages: his explanation of “meditation” and “the mechanism of the mind” dispelled the ambiguity and puzzlement I had towards meditation. When I read “we become what we meditate on,” and “we can re-form ourselves by meditating on words which embody our ideals,” my long-standing question about the purpose of meditation was answered.

This was in my mid-40s. I participated in retreats almost every year for twenty years, then every other year. In time, with comprehensive support from the BMCM, Easwaran’s eight-point program has become an integral part of my life.

## New challenges, good tools

Now I have entered the age group of seniors. I face new challenges, which appear quite suddenly and in undesirable ways. It is hard, but I have good tools, books, and programs that I can depend upon. So I accept them with detachment, hoping I can navigate difficult situations positively.

A particularly helpful support the last year has been the online Satsang Live. It is such a blessing that even during the pandemic, I can join a weekly spiritual gathering from afar. It is an honor to be a member of this spiritual family. I hope I will also be able to contribute more to society by sharing Sri Easwaran’s valuable teachings with Japanese people.

– Kimiko, Japan



Outside Shanti, the meditation hall.



Outside the BMCM offices.



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## A Powerful Force

I was introduced to Easwaran and passage meditation at an informal presentation at my local BMCM satsang. Though I wasn't particularly interested, I agreed to go. My life was in a crisis at the time – my marriage had ended and my teenage daughter's behavior was terribly troubling. I'd hit a dead end in my ability to deal with my problems and desperately needed guidance.

In that context, the benefits of meditation sounded appealing, like “develop unsuspected capacities for insight and understanding.” The method sounded simple enough. I started the next morning and have continued ever since.

My absorption of Easwaran's teachings has been gradual. I grew up in a non-religious family and he's opened my heart, for the first time, to God and faith. Reading his books, going to retreats, watching videos, I keep learning.

I consider Easwaran to be my savior for helping me through those very difficult times, and will always be grateful. I never met him, but his words have given me a whole new perspective on what really matters in life. Through his wisdom I've been able to support my daughter by being a steady, loving force in her life.

I know Easwaran will help me with whatever challenges come my way in the future. As long as I keep reading and listening to him, Easwaran is a powerful force in my life, my beloved spiritual teacher.                      – Passage meditator, US

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## I Had Found My Teacher

I was in my early forties when the world I knew, and thought I was on top of, began to unravel. It had been a great run till then – a good education, advanced degrees from top universities, a solid career track, a growing family, intellectual interests that I believed would sustain me for the rest of my life. Yet there lingered a vague dissatisfaction, a deeper yearning, a small (and annoying) voice reminding me that there was more to life than this.

And then, all of a sudden, things did fall apart. A steady procession of personal and professional challenges followed culminating with my father's sudden passing. In the turmoil-filled months that followed, I did feel at the end of my rope when a friend suggested meditation to calm my mind. That can't be for me I thought. After all, I was not religious, even adamantly agnostic. I filed the suggestion away for a rainy day.

### A calmer mind

Around this time a colleague of mine at work who was an eight-point program practitioner invited a couple of folks from the Center to give a noon lecture on passage meditation. I happened to see a flyer announcing the session. It mentioned passage meditation and Eknath Easwaran.

I went, expecting to meet someone called Easwaran. Instead, I met the people from the Center and asked about



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Easwaran. He had just shed his body a short while ago, they said.

Something about how they spoke of him and their demeanor kept me there. They explained the method of meditation, a bit about Easwaran and his teaching years in Berkeley and Tomales, and their journeys as his students. I was fascinated by now. They invited me to a day-long retreat in the local area and I went.

I found passage meditation appealing and practical, but I still was not interested in a teacher, much less the spiritual life. I'll do this for six months, I thought, and see if I stick with it. I started meditating the next morning and a few months later went back for my next retreat, and the next and next. As I practiced, I found that slowly the fog in my mind began clearing. The eight points were becoming the anchors of my day. A calmer mind meant that I got new perspectives on personal and professional problems and gradually I resolved them.

### [My relationship with Easwaran](#)

A couple of years into my practice, I realized at a retreat in Tomales that despite my initial reticence, I had found my teacher. I can still remember the feeling of joy that came over me. My relationship with Easwaran is central to my life. I've sought his presence in every way I can – reading his books, listening endlessly to his talks, poring over old photos of his life in Tomales, anything. It has sustained me

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through some significant life challenges over the last decade and grown in me a deep faith and devotion that I had no idea I had in me.

Today, as a member of the BMCM organization, I help to carry on Easwaran's work in a small way. It's a privilege and a responsibility which can be daunting at times. Through it all, I have Easwaran's gentle daily reminders that his expectations of me as a representative of his organization are to put my meditation first, work constantly on lowering my self-will, unify my desires, and contribute as much as possible to the welfare of those around me.

And perhaps, by cultivating these qualities, the circle will close and I can inspire another struggling soul to connect with Easwaran, as I was inspired to all those years ago.

– Passage meditator, US



Shanti, the meditation hall.



# Death Is Not the End

Ek Nath Easwaran

A short while ago, as you know, I almost crossed the bridge from this life to the next.

On that bridge, there is a point beyond which no human being can return. But at that point Sri Krishna sent me back with a direct assignment.

I want to convey to everyone that death is not the end, only the end of one brief chapter in the long volume that our life is. And I want everybody to understand that there is a great deal we can do in this life to make it happy, to make it healthy, to make it holy, so that when this chapter closes, we can go with certitude into a future that is healthier, happier, and holier.

Most people are not equipped to face death when the time comes. It is going to come to every one of us, but they don't know how to prepare. A few have told me, "I'm not afraid of death." That is not enough. It is good to face death unafraid, but it is absolutely necessary to understand what happens when the body dies and to know how to prepare for that great journey.

That is what I can teach. I went that way. I saw what happens to the body, what happens to the mind. And I know how to guard everyone who can follow these disciplines so that when the time arrives, they can walk across that bridge in freedom and in nobility.

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My body is getting quite old now, moving close to ninety. But — and I mention this very casually — I am timeless. It is not just a simple statement; it is the truth. Nothing can affect me because the Self is beyond all change. As the dust of the lotus feet of my Sri Krishna, no change can ever reach me.

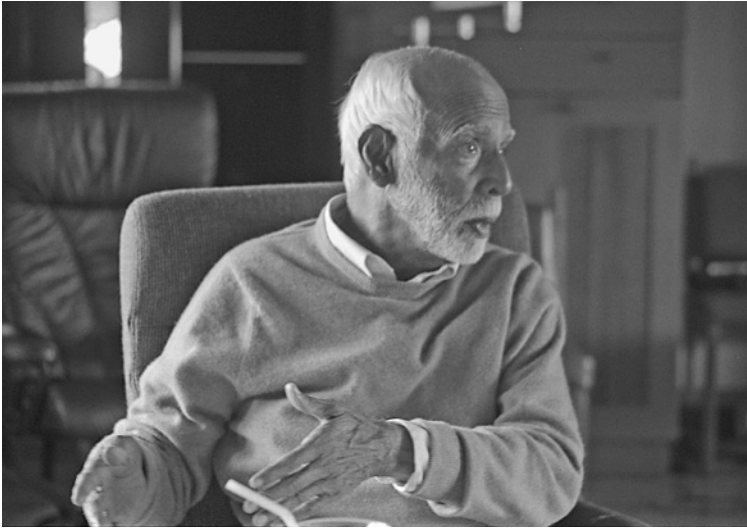


## Our Setu Project

Out of my suffering, as happens to be the way of my beloved Boss, a great project has grown up. For a long time I have wanted to do something substantial to improve the situation of older people in this country, which sets a model that is emulated around the world. Our Setu Project will help everyone in the second half of life to build a bridge over death so they can cross in triumph from this life to the next, however that is conceived.

Our modern civilization is so obsessed with youth that almost no one today understands the significance of growing older. I want to tell everyone that the first half just sets the stage. That is when we make mistakes and explore what the world has to offer.

It is in the second half, with family and career behind us, that we have the experience to know life's real priorities and the opportunity and resources to give back to life and pursue Self-realization. I want to remind everyone of the Buddha's plea: "Don't spend your life working on what you can't take with you.



Easwaran, 1990s.

Work on what you can't help taking with you": your mind, your character, yourself.

And I am going to tell every older person in this country, and demonstrate it with my life: "You can improve your performance in the second part of life. You can enrich precious qualities of which you had only a faint inkling when you were younger. You can take up a new career of service, even if you are in a wheelchair." That's what life is for. I may not be able to play soccer or swim across the Russian River now, but I live a million times better than I did when I was in my twenties, and my life is a million times more significant.

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I see hardly any attempt today to show the new faculties we can actually acquire in old age. Compassion, forgiveness, patience – these are all qualities that it is our very purpose here on earth to develop, and in the second half of life we have the opportunity to develop them even while the body is undergoing its inevitable decline. It must decline; that is the nature of all physical things. But we do not have to decline with it. We can grow. It is our evolutionary duty to grow.

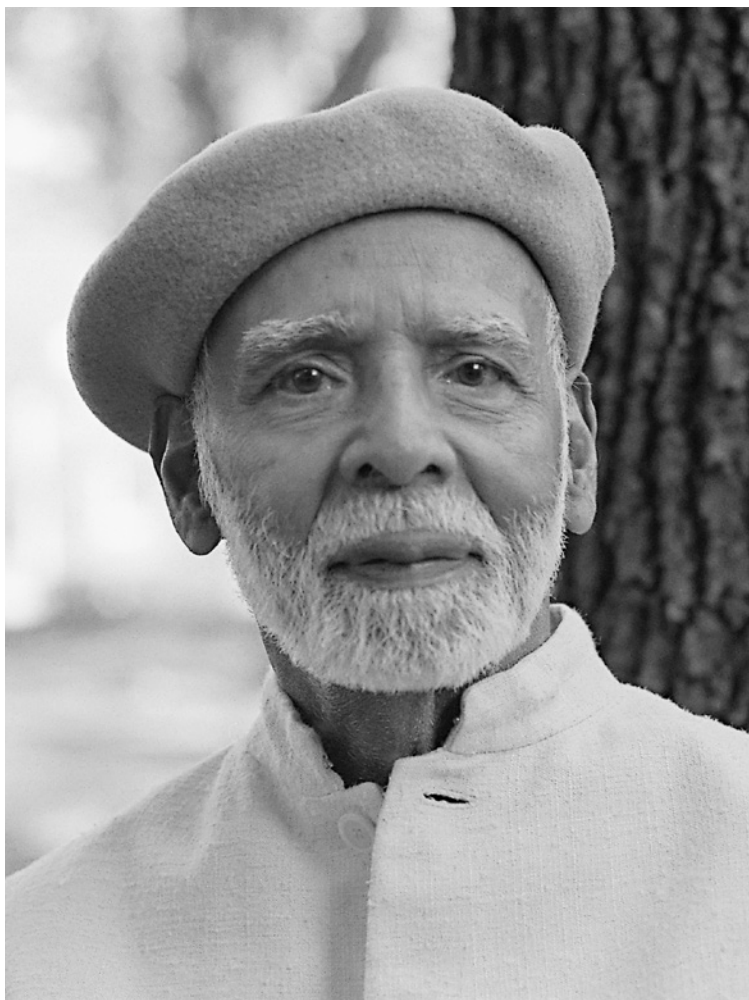
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## Setu Prayer

*Ek Nath Easwaran*

Dear Lord, please fill my heart  
with love and devotion for you  
and burn out all seeds of selfish desire  
and sense craving in my mind.

Grant that I may be carried by you  
from this life to the next without suffering  
and be born in a holy family  
with my heart overflowing  
with love and devotion for you  
from earliest childhood onwards.



Easwaran, 1990s.





# A Continuing Contribution to Life

Ekhnath Easwaran

In order to find the Lord, who is present in all creatures, we don't have to leave home, get into a cave, and meditate there for twelve years. We can do all this right on the Berkeley hills, right in San Francisco or Petaluma or San Jose – working at our job, going to school, going about our business everywhere, and seeing the Lord not in the great pilgrim centers but at the supermarket, at the bookstore, at the garage.

People often ask me, “What happens after Self-realization?” In Hinduism we say you can live on as *jivan mukta*, a “free soul” – looking just like Tom, Dick, and Harry, only free. You can go to the market, you can go to the theater, you can take your friends to an ice cream parlor and your nieces to Cocolat; you can enjoy all the innocent joys of life and yet never forget God even for a moment. It is an extraordinarily difficult art.

And after the body is worn out, as the Gita says, just as I will shed this turtleneck pullover and put on a new one, you can come back and again be with all those with whom you worked in loving harmony, who love you with all their heart. It won't be the end of the story. It will be another glorious chapter for all of you to work together so that you can again make a continuing contribution to life.



## The Guru's Grace

This word *guru*, so absurdly misused in this country, literally means one who dispels darkness. If you want to know who a guru is, you have a simple test. When you are depressed, when you feel desolate, when you feel utterly lonely, inadequate, consumed by passions that you cannot control, go to such a person. He may look like you, she may dress like you, but if the windows of your heart are open — this is the chorus of our Indian tradition, five thousand years old — you will come away with a ray of sunshine. That's the real test.

I can testify from my personal experience that if it had not been for my granny's grace, while I might have made a name for myself in the world of Indian letters, I would not have done what each of us is born to do. I was swept away by the glitter and glamour of Western civilization, and my life would have been an utter waste if God's grace had not come to me through my guru, my mother's mother, Eknath Chippu Kunchi Ammal, into whose arms I had the benediction of being born.

In the classical mystical tradition in India, they always talk about the guru's grace. This is a phrase I seldom use because I look upon myself instead as the best friend you have in the world. However intimate your other relationships may be, I don't think any of you will ever get any friend so loving, so tender, so firm, and so farsighted as I have been trained to be by my teacher.

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But I can interpret “guru’s grace” very practically. I don’t identify with my body; I identify myself with the Self, the Atman. And the Atman is the same in each of you. So I identify myself – without your knowledge! – with the Self in you, because it is one and the same as the Self in me.

When you sit in meditation, I am able slowly to release the tremendous pull of the Atman. You can object that it’s *my* Atman; sure, but it’s yours too. If you are doing your best to respond to the pull and to remove the obstacles to it, you will slowly feel its power. This is what happens in the second half of meditation: if you are doing your very best, another power comes to supplement your own. But it’s not enough if I pull with all the might of my Atman. You also have to respond to the pull.

### We shall continue to flourish

I shall continue to guide all those who have faith in me, because I believe that this life is only a chapter in the saga of my spiritual evolution. The Presence that is within me will not be affected by death in any way, and through Sri Krishna’s grace we shall continue to flourish so that my dreams for the next century may come true with our children and our children’s children.



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*I am with you every day.  
It doesn't require my  
physical presence;  
it requires your  
open heart.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cassian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

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## Further Resources for Learning to Meditate and Deepening Your Practice

From the BMCM Programs team

### Introductory Online Webinars

A chance to try out passage meditation.

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

### Introductory Online Weekend Retreats

Everything you need to get your passage meditation practice started.

[www.bmcm.org/programs/introductory-weekend-online/](http://www.bmcm.org/programs/introductory-weekend-online/)

### *Passage Meditation – A Complete Spiritual Practice*

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



Our Programs team on BMCM Satsang Live.

### BMCM Satsang Live

Our twice-weekly online satsang takes place on Tuesdays from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. PST and is repeated on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PST. Find more at [www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/](http://www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/).

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## Online Retreats, Webinars, and Workshops for 2021

Our new online retreats and programs have become the training ground for those of us who yearn to join Easwaran in making the spiritual renaissance a reality. In the retreats, you will experience turning to your practice, to Easwaran and his teachings, and to a strong spiritual schedule. The retreats combine contemplative activities with practicum times in which you apply your practice directly to your own unique home environment.

### Introductory Webinars:

May 15, August 7, October 9

### Introductory Weekend Online Retreats:

September 10–12, October 1–3

### Returnee Weekend Online Retreats:

May 21–23, August 13–15, November 5–7

### Weeklong Online Retreats:

July 9–13, August 20–24, October 15–19

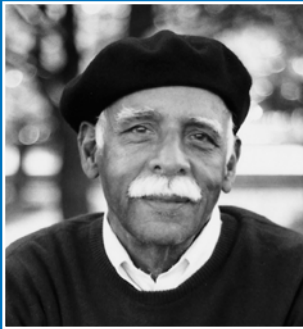
### Setu Half-Week Online Retreats:

June 4–7, September 17–20

### Returnee Online Workshops:

June 19, November 13

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



My grandmother is not present physically,  
but she is more present in my heart now  
than she was when she was alive on earth.

Similarly, don't ever make the mistake  
that I am confined to this brown body.  
I am not confined to this brown body;  
I am in every one of you.

— Eknath Easwaran



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Center of Meditation**

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