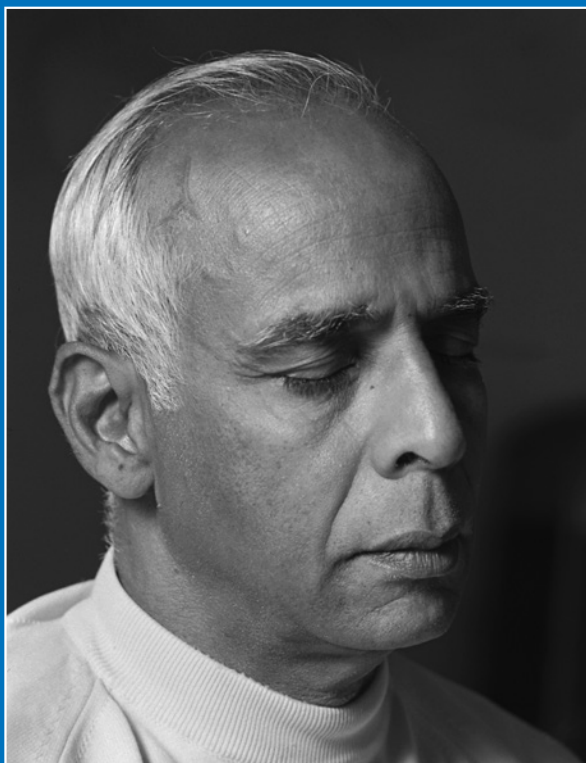


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

FALL 2021



Meditation:  
From Distraction  
to Absorption

---

## In This Issue

When we're confronted with problems, compulsions, or dilemmas, we know from Easwaran's teachings that we should deepen our meditation. But what does this mean, exactly? And how can we do it?

This issue addresses the theme of deepening meditation very practically, by exploring all the ways in which we can reduce distractions. It is only when we are free (or relatively free) from distractions that we can get down to meditation in earnest. And in the process of decreasing distractions, we also become calmer, kinder, more able to be of service to all around us.

You'll find a wide range of tips from Easwaran in this issue, so we hope you'll come back to these articles again and again as we did, trying out a new tip each time. We've also reintroduced the "Prayer for Meditation" (page 43), a passage which is not in Easwaran's books but which was written and approved by him.

In a world that desperately needs us to live out Easwaran's teachings, we hope you find support and inspiration in these pages.

– From the BMCM Editorial team

Fall 2021, Volume 32, No. 3

© 2021 by The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

P.O. Box 256, Tomales, CA 94971

info@bmcm.org, www.bmcm.org, 707. 878. 2369

To read previous issues of the *Blue Mountain Journal*, see [www.bmcm.org/journal](http://www.bmcm.org/journal).

To sign up for a free subscription, see [www.bmcm.org/subscribe](http://www.bmcm.org/subscribe).

The *Blue Mountain Journal* is a publication of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1961 by Eknath Easwaran to carry on his work.

---

## From Easwaran

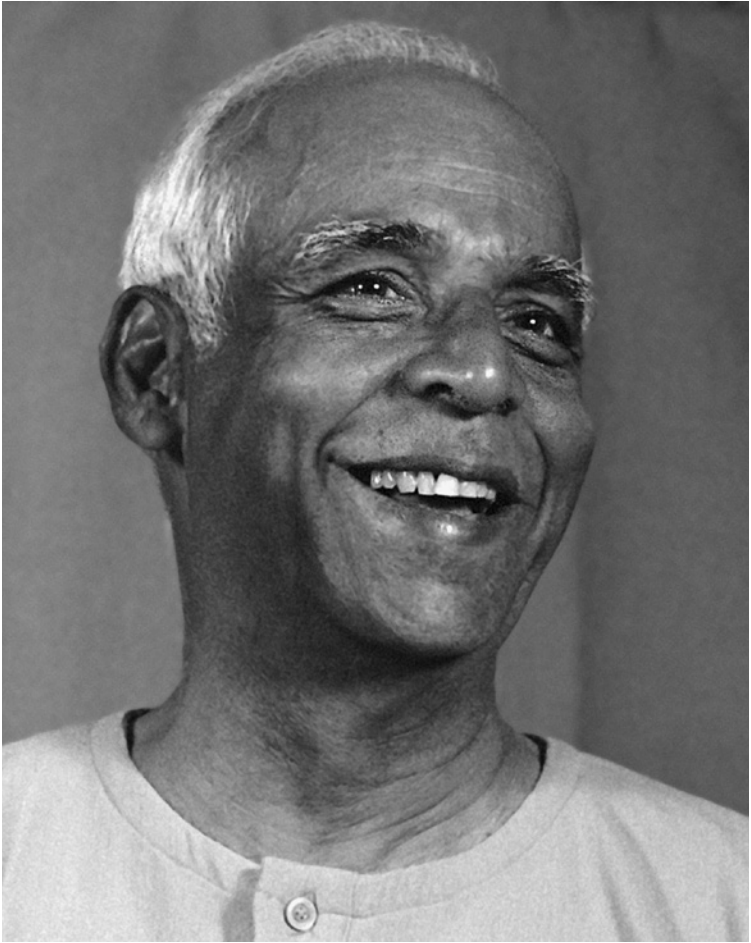
Meditation and the allied disciplines enable you to take your convictions deeper and deeper into consciousness, so that they become a constant source of strength and security. Whatever your field of activity, this is a most valuable asset.

Sometimes I picture the mind as a freeway with many wide lanes leading to loneliness and despair – lanes like anger, greed, and fear. On the other side of the freeway, there is just one narrow lane that heads toward peace and a healthy earth: the lane of love. When you meditate on the Prayer of Saint Francis, going through the verses as slowly as possible, bringing your attention back every time it wanders, you are learning to drive your mind in one and the same lane: the lane of love, patience, and forgiveness.

And during the day, by trying not to dwell on your personal interests but focusing instead on the needs of others, you can deepen the effectiveness of your meditation.

Through the practice of meditation and the supporting practices, every one of us can learn to love like this. In all our relationships, we can humbly but irresistibly blaze a trail for the world to follow. Even a small group of such people, living a simple, self-reliant, loving life, will be enough to bring about far-reaching changes in our society.

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



Easwaran, 1970s.

---

# Spiritual Growth That Is Swift and Sure

Eknath Easwaran

“I try hard in meditation,” people sometimes tell me. “I have thirty minutes in the morning and thirty more in the evening, and I really give it my best. But I don’t seem to be able to go deeper. What can I do?”

“If you are trying consistently to concentrate on the inspirational passage during those thirty minutes,” I reply, “you are doing very well. But if you want to dive deep, you have to give your best during the times that you’re not meditating too. It is not only during meditation that we make progress in training the mind, but also during the rest of the day.”

## Make little changes

In the actual practice of meditation, when you are going through an inspirational passage like the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi – “Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand” – you are driving these precious words deeper and deeper into the unconscious. That’s what concentration means. If the words fall so deep into the unconscious that they begin to change your ways of thinking and reacting, that is what meditation is for: we become what we meditate on.

But that doesn’t happen if you meditate and then spend the rest of the day following the same old patterns, reacting

---

in the same old manner. We need to draw upon the power released in meditation to implement the words on which we are meditating. At the breakfast table, when there is a little provocation, you should be able to smile and come up with a kind word. In the evening, when you come home tired, you should still be able to be kind and supportive. This is how old habits are changed, old patterns of thinking are transformed – with little changes in thought and behavior during the rest of the day.

### We participate in meditation everywhere

That is why I say that it's not enough if you meditate regularly or longer than half an hour. The rest of your day must facilitate that meditation. If you have a good meditation in the morning and then yield to compulsive urges, dwell on yourself, or get self-willed or angry, you are undoing all the work you did that morning in meditation.

On the other hand, if you go on doing your best to follow the rest of my eight-point program throughout the day, not only are you going to have a better meditation on the following day, you are beginning to solve your problems and even to help other people solve theirs. When you're able to do your job with cheerful concentration, when you can give and take when things go wrong, when you're working under pressure and are able to remain kind, you're helping your meditation immensely. So try to remember every day that you are participating in meditation even at breakfast, at work, at school, in the garden, everywhere.

---

## “Why do I have so many distractions?”

In the early days, when I had to look through mountains of meditation notebooks from my students at Cal, one question that kept coming up was “Why do I have so many distractions in meditation?” I would write, “Because you have so many distractions during the day.” Distractions come up in meditation because there are distractions in life. If you don’t have any distractions during the day, you won’t have any distractions in meditation. That is the sum and substance of it.

Once we get beneath the surface of the mind, we begin to see that there is a very close connection between the kinds of distractions we have in meditation and the kinds of problems we face in daily living. It is these problems that prevent us from diving into deeper levels of consciousness. They are both internal and external. They arise in the mind, and we encounter them there in meditation; but because they shape our actions, we also encounter them during the day in a hundred and one disguises.

## Reduce the things we do to please ourselves

Sri Aurobindo, one of twentieth-century India’s most luminous figures, has a good motto for reminding us of this: “All life is yoga.” Every moment, he means, is an opportunity for training the mind.

The explanation of this is simple. Every moment, from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed, we have a choice: to give our attention to ourselves, or to give it to those around us. If we indulge ourselves during the day, we should

---

not be surprised to find strong distractions in meditation the next morning. On the other hand, if we reduce the number of things we do just to please ourselves, distractions will be fewer and concentration deeper.

I would go so far as to say that dwelling on oneself is the root cause of most personal problems. The more preoccupied we become with our private fears, resentments, memories, and cravings, the more power they have over our attention. When we sit down to meditate, we cannot get our mind off ourselves. With practice, however, we can learn to pay more and more attention to the needs of others – and this carries over directly into meditation. Less self-centered thinking means fewer distractions, a clearer mind, fewer outgoing thoughts to impede our gathering absorption as meditation deepens.

### Keep from getting agitated

There is a famous definition in the Bhagavad Gita: “Yoga is evenness of mind.” Here, yoga means not only meditation but the essential art of living. The Gita is trying to say that keeping on an even keel through life’s ups and downs will protect your mind during the day. Not only that, it will deepen your meditation the next morning too.

Most people could make a lot more progress in meditation if they would learn to keep the mind from getting agitated. That is one thing I learned quickly, right in the midst of my university work. I had all kinds of responsibilities and difficulties, and often even personal conflicts, and I found quickly that if I could keep from getting agitated when dealing





Easwaran, 1970s.

with these problems, I could see the results in meditation the very next morning.

### Whatever you do, do it with detachment

In the Gita, this skill is called *vairagya*: the absence of personal entanglement, in which things and people are valued for what we want to get from them. Don't get entangled in anything, the Gita means: don't get all embroiled in how you feel about it or how you think it will benefit you. Whatever you do, do it with detachment.

---

Gradually you can learn to concentrate completely on the job at hand – whether it is interesting or not, whether it appeals to you or not – and then drop it at will at the end of the day.

This skill is essential for improving meditation, for to the extent you are glued to the events and problems of the day, you can't help taking them home with you. The day's distractions will slip into your mind, where they will continue to claim your attention while you're asleep and insist on more attention the next morning in meditation.

This doesn't mean neglecting your work, of course. Just the opposite: you give whatever you are doing your complete attention, your very best effort; then, when you go home, you give your full attention there too. Full attention everywhere – an unbroken thread of attention throughout the day. That is yoga.

### Be aware of others' needs

The same strategy applies to personal entanglements, which is where almost every human being has trouble. If you want to give your best to any relationship, you have to be detached – not from others, but from yourself. Otherwise you'll always be thinking about what you can get from that relationship. If you're completely detached from yourself, you'll be thinking about what you can give. You come to feel the needs of everybody else exactly as if they were your own, which means you cannot be negative, you cannot be unkind, you can only be supportive.

---

And this, in turn, helps meditation. You can remind yourself every day that progress depends upon how much you are aware of the needs of others and how much you try to meet those needs. Even though we hear this often, it is not easy to keep it in mind.

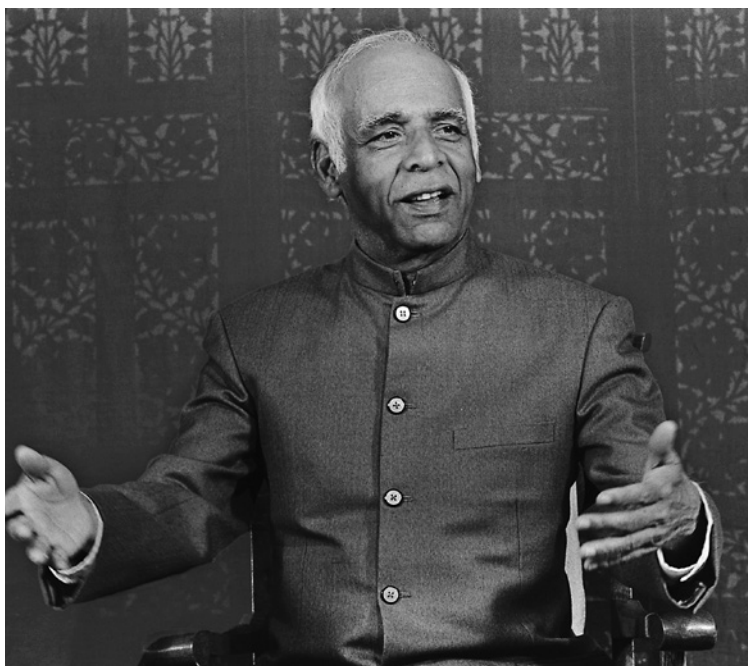
That is why I say it over and over again: being aware of the needs of all those around you helps your absorption in meditation. The connection is easy to see if you think about the other side of the coin: if you get absorbed in your own private pleasures and profit, that will act as an impediment to this ideal of total absorption.

### Cultivate a sense of what truly matters

Remind yourself every day, therefore, to cultivate a sense of proportion, a sense of what truly matters. I hear petty personal differences being ventilated as fundamental issues of life and death – differences so ridiculously small that to waste time and vitality over them is tragic.

If you can keep yourself from getting agitated by such things throughout the day, taking the rough with the smooth, the Gita would say you are mastering the art of living. If you can laugh it off when things go against you while still giving your very best, you are mastering the art of living.

If you are able to throw yourself heart and soul into a selfless job that you don't like, or work harmoniously with difficult people instead of ploughing a lonely furrow, you are mastering the art of living. And all of these skills will take your meditation deeper day by day.



Easwaran, 1970s.

### [“Am I going backwards?”](#)

These lofty achievements, of course, are slow in coming. After the honeymoon with meditation is over, people often tell me, “I have more trouble with my mind now than I did when I started. Am I going backwards?”

“No,” I reassure them. “It is possible to go sideways in meditation, but not backwards.” Then I explain what is probably happening. In the early stages, all of us have a thousand little imps of distraction dancing around. As we move

---

into deeper levels of awareness, this number is reduced to two or three; but then they are no longer imps. They are big, burly distractions, waiting for an opportunity to knock us to the floor.

This may sound bad, but it is really an encouraging development. When you have a thousand imps hitting you from all sides, how do you guard yourself? It is much better to have one big distraction right up front. It may be Goliath, but at least you know what you are dealing with, and you can train yourself to deal with it too.

### Recognizing our conditioned ways of thinking

These big fellows are not really distractions. They are *samskaras*: deep, conditioned tendencies to particular ways of thinking and acting, usually negative or self-willed, which have been dug in the mind through many years of repeating the same thought over and over.

Most of us, for example, have an anger *samskara*: an automatic response to want to lash out at others or ourselves when things do not go our way. At critical moments like these, it can be most helpful to remember that the disturbance has little to do with, say, whether someone took our parking place or we had to wait in line at the grocery store. Beneath every separate incident of anger, resentment, hostility, and irritation lies a single reflex in the mind which says, “I don’t like this! Hit back.”

Greed – not only for money but for material possessions, for pleasure, for power – is another root *samskara* in the deeper consciousness of us all. It may show itself in different

---

ways, but the drive is the same: we feel incomplete, so we try to manipulate things and people to get what we can to fill the vacuum inside us.

As meditation deepens we begin to recognize these ways of thinking in ourselves, and it may seem as if meditation has brought them on. I can assure you, they have been there all along; we simply haven't noticed them. Only as the mind begins to clear can we look down through the glass-bottomed boat that is meditation and see these monsters lurking below.

### What we have been training for

When we find ourselves face to face with a samskara in meditation, there is no need to get rattled or try to run away. This is what you have been training for. A kind of Madison Square Garden has been rented in the mind, and we are in the ring. Every morning's meditation begins another round. But to win, we have to carry the fight out of meditation and into daily living. Samskaras may originate in the mind, but they express themselves in words and actions. To oppose them, we have to learn not to act on them – not to do what our compulsions demand.

This is terribly difficult; otherwise, a compulsion would not be a compulsion. But there is Job's consolation in knowing that we cannot run away. We may want to jump out of the ring and make for Brooklyn, but there is no Brooklyn in the mind. The samskara is inside us; wherever we go, it has to follow. Even if we refuse to fight, the Bhagavad Gita says, our very nature will impel us into situations where we have no choice. When we

---

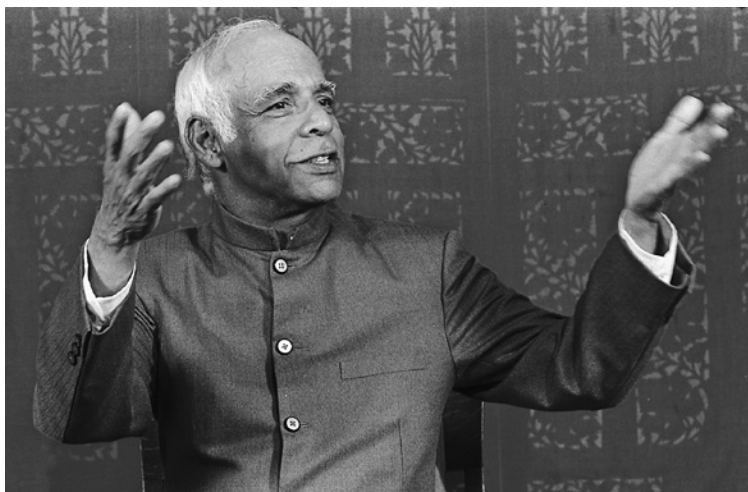
are against the ropes with a burly samskara and cannot escape, reason and self-respect agree: why not make a good job of it and try to win?

Whatever romantic notions we may have about spiritual growth, it never really happens in a short time. Like the Thirty Years' War, this war within goes on and on. There is so much to transform! Naturally there come times when the mind gets tired and complains. "Why not call it off for a while?" This cannot be done. Once we come face to face with a samskara in deeper consciousness, we are in the ring with it until we win. As my grandmother used to tell me, "The Lord will never put on your shoulders even one pound more than you can bear. But," she would always add, "you will never have to carry one pound less, either." Otherwise we would not grow.

### No more distractions

Eventually, we are trying to extend the influence of morning meditation until it becomes like a thread running through the day. Then there is a continuous connection between meditation and daily living. The timeless values on which we are meditating begin to transform every word and action.

As we practice this, we forget ourselves little by little – our problems, our little personal desires, our conveniences, our opinions – not only during the day but in meditation too. Then, when we sit down to meditate, there are no more distractions about our income tax or the letter we owe Aunt Julie. "Like bees returning to the hive," Saint Teresa of Avila says beautifully, "which shut themselves up to work at making



Easwaran, 1970s.

honey,” all our thoughts gather on the words of the meditation passage and remain absorbed there, deepening our awareness for the day to come.

This is a miraculous achievement, but there is no miracle about how it is accomplished. It requires a lot of hard work. When your meditation is progressing well, if your mind goes into a negative mood – about yourself, about your problems, about other people, about the state of the world – you should be able to switch your attention away from the negative and focus it on the positive. By doing this over and over again, you can reach a state in which negative thoughts cannot even appear on the scene. Then your behavior is always kind, your words are always helpful, and your life becomes a positive influence on all.

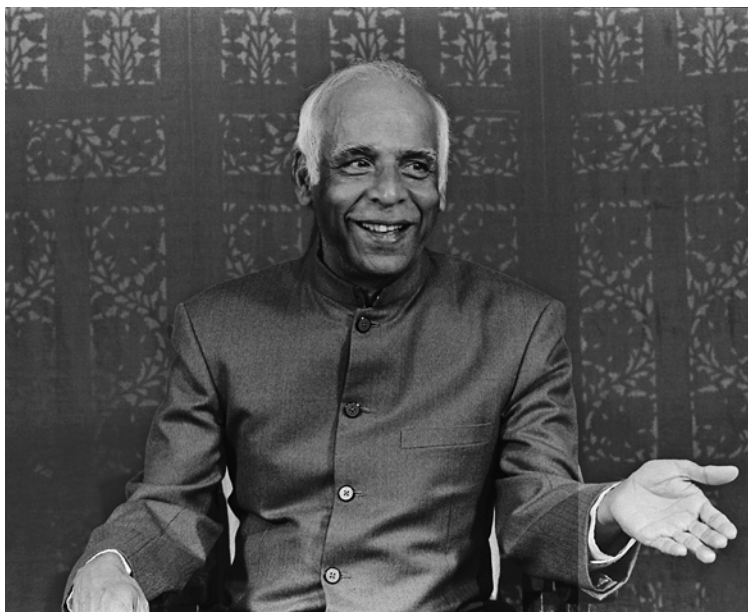


---

## Proof your meditation has been good

Below a certain depth in meditation, when you have really learned to concentrate, there will be a living charge in the words on which you are meditating. Then it's no longer a line that you are reciting; if your concentration is unbroken, the words will fall right into the depths of your consciousness, where they come to life. "When you keep thinking about sense objects, attachment comes . . ." As you are repeating words like these from the Gita, their application also comes along, not just their meaning, bringing with it an appeal – "Don't let your mind dwell on sense objects" – and a kind of resolution not to let your attention wander to sense objects because "attachment breeds desire, the lust of possession which, when thwarted, burns to anger . . ."

Now all the practical applications of those words will come. Such a wealth of application to daily living! You're no longer meditating on words; you are meditating on the vital applications of eternal truths. And the test is that after you finish your meditation, the application of the words will follow you, helping you make the best choices throughout the day. That is the proof that your meditation has been good. If you see that the vital applications of the inspirational passage are with you, your meditation has been very good. If they are not with you, there is still considerable room for improvement.



Easwaran, 1970s.

### For the benefit of the whole world

So try to focus your attention all the time on the supreme goal. Renew your commitment every day. It is a commitment that will benefit everyone around you. And as your spiritual awareness grows, you'll find more and more opportunities for contributing to the welfare of those around you. Remind yourself every day that meditation is not for your benefit alone; it is for the benefit of the whole world.

In this way, with meditation and daily living supporting each other, your spiritual growth will be swift and sure. 🌸

---

## 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 half an hour each morning.
- 2. Repetition of a Mantram** Silent repetition in the mind of a holy name or a hallowed phrase from one of the world's great religions. Practiced whenever possible 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.



Easwaran, 1970s.

---

# Stages in Meditation

Eknath Easwaran

Understanding how meditation works can help a good deal in understanding all the little ways in which it can be improved. Meditation is essentially a process of stilling the mind – slowing down the rush of thoughts until it finally comes to rest.

## The preparatory stages

For the vast majority of us this is a long, frustrating process. The mind does not like to meditate; it wants to wander. When someone is not doing very well in meditation, consequently, one explanation is simple: his or her mind is elsewhere.

To be accurate, this is not meditation. It is a necessary preparation for meditation, a kind of primary school for the mind. Patanjali calls this stage *pratyahara*: simply trying to get the mind to stay on the school grounds until the last bell rings. That is all we can do at first. The mind has been playing truant for years; when we try to concentrate, it simply is not present. All we can do is stand at the doorstep and whistle, trying to call it back in.

In *dharana*, the high-school stage, we try to keep the mind in the classroom. It is still hyperactive. It can't stay at its desk; it keeps getting up and running around in the middle of the lesson. But at least it is in school; it is gradually quieting down.

---

## What we can properly call meditation

The next stage is what we can properly call meditation: in Sanskrit, *dhyana*. The mind is in college; it has learned to study. When we start it out on a single thought – say, the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi – it stays on that thought and does not wander.

This happens gradually. At first we may only have a minute or two of real meditation, but that minute or two is tremendous. The mind is completely absorbed in the words of the passage; attention flows without a break. Yesterday I was watching my friend Laurel decant olive oil from a big gallon tin into a flask. The flow was perfect and unbroken; the thin descending thread of oil merged in the oil below without a ripple of disturbance. That is the classical illustration of how meditation should be. “Laurel,” I said, “if you could pour your thoughts like that, you would be in *dhyana*.”

When concentration is complete even for a few minutes, the rushing, turbulent process we call the mind has almost come to a healing halt. In those few minutes all kinds of changes take place throughout the body and the mind. The breathing rhythm may fall drastically – say, to two or four times a minute instead of sixteen.

Correspondingly, I would say, other biological processes are slowed down, without our even being aware of it. It is such a deeply restful, renewing state that after a taste of it, we will want it again so badly that we will do everything we can during the rest of the day to make our next period of meditation

---

deeper. One minute of this experience is worth hours of running after the mind to serve a truancy notice on it.

But we do not get that minute until we have trained the mind to quiet down.

## Two parts of the mind

Logically this sounds like a paradox: you can't still the mind without meditation, and you can't meditate unless the mind is still. Thirty years ago, before spiritual conundrums became commonplace, people really used to bristle at this kind of statement. "You can't get a job unless you join the union," they would complain, "and you can't join the union unless you have a job." But once you try it you see that it is possible, and that there is no other way.

One explanation I can give is that there are really two parts of the mind, a higher mind and a lower. We begin by using the higher mind to control the lower — the senses and passions. In the end we are going to throw them both out; the mind has to be completely stilled. But we don't mention this to the higher mind yet. We just say, "I want you to be in charge. This lower mind is completely undisciplined. You have some vestiges of discipline; why don't you teach him how to behave?" This is a responsibility that the higher mind responds to nicely.

Then, when the higher mind is a model of decorum and the lower mind is behaving like the higher, we say politely, "Now both of you please leave." The mind has to become completely still if we are to go beyond it into a transcendental mode of knowing. 🌸



Easwaran, 1980s.



---

## Tips for Tightening Up the Ship

At every stage in meditation, we need to be dedicating ourselves anew to all the disciplines. It's very much like the constant work aboard a ship at sea. The boat might be sailing along without any visible effort on anyone's part, but on deck and below there's likely to be a lot of activity. One sailor is mending sails, another is putting tar over all the cracks, still others are swabbing the decks or making sure the lines are secured. On long voyages there are periods of deadly, boring, uneventful work.

For long stretches of time in meditation, too, you can't really see any progress. But when a great tropical storm bears down upon your little ship — storms of anger, fear, or greed — and not so much as a keg of molasses gets washed overboard, you feel rewarded. All that dull, dreary labor has paid off.

To re-ignite enthusiasm when it is slowly fading, the best thing you can do is to spend time with a passionately enthusiastic teacher. A spiritual teacher can help you by a kind of osmosis. But they can help you very practically, too, by giving you a thousand and one tips for tightening up the ship. It's all little, little things, but the sum total is what determines the quality of your meditation.

You may have gone over the instructions in meditation over and over again and feel there is nothing more to learn, but you still need to review them regularly. The deeper significance of some of those instructions will not be clear until you have been practicing meditation over a long period of time. That is why I'd like to go into some of the finer points now.

---

## 1. Have your morning meditation as early as possible, and be as regular about it as you can

Most of us get hungry for breakfast at a particular time; soon you will find you get hungry for meditation at a particular time, too. As John of Kronstadt said, “Prayer is the breathing of the soul. Prayer is our spiritual food and drink.” At the time when you would normally be settling down and starting a passage, the mind begins to draw inward of its own volition, no matter where you are. You’ll feel a restlessness, a strong pull toward the room or corner you have set aside for meditation – and this is just how it should be.

## 2. Get your meditation off to a good, concentrated start

What I do is very much in the mainstream of the Hindu tradition, over five thousand years old. I begin by offering all my love to Sri Krishna, the Lord of Love, in my heart. Then I ask the blessings of my teacher. This is traditional, but it has a very practical effect: it focuses your attention and reminds you of the supreme purpose behind your meditation, which otherwise can get fuzzy around the edges.

This way of beginning is a personal choice, which I leave to each person to decide. But everybody can benefit from repeating the mantram a few times in the mind before actually embarking on the meditation passage; it immediately helps to quiet the mind. In traditional language, this too is a way of calling upon the Self within to reveal itself in the depths of our consciousness.

---

### 3. Keep memorizing new inspirational passages

Don't be content with just a few passages. Any passage can get stale with long use, but you can keep your favorites fresh for years so long as you have a repertoire of new ones on hand. This is very much like going over your ropes, like a sailor or a climber, and being sure none of them is frayed.

It's one thing to know you need new passages and it's another to carve out time in a busy life to memorize them. You may wait in vain for enough free hours to commit the entire "Wonderful Effect of Divine Love" to memory. But five minutes will open up here and there. Just keep handy an index card on which you've copied part or all of the passage you're currently working on. Don't be discouraged if at first you find it hard to memorize passages. Memory is like a muscle. You can build it up.

#### Try some longer ones

Later on, after you have learned to concentrate well and need a greater challenge, try a longer work. I find the Katha Upanishad, for instance, perfect for meditation. It is lengthy and complex; you have to be alert to use it.

When it goes smoothly, you will feel you are traveling down one lane of a six-lane highway, such an expert driver that you hardly have to move a hand. It is like driving from Tomales to San Francisco; there are many exits and incoming roads, but you can go past them all without looking to this side or that, without any distractions.



Easwaran, 1980s.

---

## The right use of memory

In our modern civilization, memory has been put to very different uses. There are people who are able to remember all kinds of numbers. They amaze me. When I say, “Why don’t you memorize the Prayer of Saint Francis?” they are not able to do that. It is not that we lose our memory; we lose our right use of memory.

I don’t mind confessing to you that after my illness, my memory wasn’t as good as it used to be. I had difficulty in remembering some passages. But that’s where I have faith in God, who is in my heart, and I memorize all these Sanskrit verses from the chapters of the Gita now.

This is not very easy at my age. What helps me is my all-consuming passion for the Gita and my immense desire to translate the Gita into my own daily life. As we get deeper and deeper in our consciousness, many of the streams that were flowing on the surface of consciousness begin to come together. There is a depth at which memory, joy, wisdom, selfless living – all these come together.

In the tenth chapter of the Gita, Arjuna asks, “How shall I meditate on you?” It’s a very beautiful question. Sri Krishna gives a number of embodiments of his glory and one of the statements there is, “I am memory.”

---

## COMMUNITY STORIES: MEMORIZATION

### A Few Words Each Day

When I started passage meditation many years ago I realised that learning new passages was necessary. Not just the easy, short passages but also long and complex ones. I was having difficulty learning the Prayer of Saint Francis!

I'd been told that the human brain is capable of learning up to seven new items of information at a time but not more. Anyway, I thought if I could learn around five words a day, repeating them before and after meditation, I might remember them. I found that sometimes I could and sometimes I couldn't. Mostly, I could. When I couldn't, I tried again with the same words the next day or sometimes I tried reducing the number of words to three or even two.

To test the method I decided to learn the longest passage in Easwaran's anthology, *God Makes The Rivers to Flow*, the one by Ansari of Herat. Over many months I did learn the whole passage. I had conquered my fear of long passages. It's a good beginner's piece as the lines are short and fairly easy to remember.

Emboldened by success, I learned more passages. Sometimes fiddly lines took up to a week. I think it took about a week to learn the three words 'infinite and invisible.'

---

## My system of rotating passages

I always included the new passage in every meditation, which gave variety. After about five years I was shocked to find that I'd learned half the passages in the book. However, I'd forgotten the passages I'd learnt at the beginning of my memorizing, and I missed them like old friends.

So I divided up all the passages I knew or had known into days of the week – a few for Monday, then others for Tuesday, and so on. For each meditation session, I put in one passage I knew, one that I half remembered but that was likely to come back fairly easily, and one that had completely gone, that I needed to refresh. I was surprised to find that even passages I thought I'd completely forgotten came back – in part because I had the rhythm and the word shapes.

New passages are slower to commit to memory right now as I am relearning the older ones as well, but I have plenty of variety, so I am in a good, easy place anyway. I feel that anyone could learn as much as they wanted to with this method as you don't have to put much time aside and it is not a success or failure situation.

A few years ago, I went through a major health crisis, and my passages gave me so much strength and endurance. I cannot sufficiently express my thanks for passage meditation.

– Margaret, UK

---

## Learning Through Stories

I have been a passage meditator for about four years. Everyone has a method of memorizing passages; mine is to picture the passage line by line like a story so that I'll be able to remember the order in which the verses appear. Here's how I memorized the first few lines of Psalm 23, "The Lord Is my Shepherd."

The setting is a small hill with a valley and a church. For the first line: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Lord Jesus is standing as a shepherd, with a little lamb in his arms. I am the lamb. I look up at Jesus and he smiles enquiringly at me as if to say, "What do you want?" I shake my head.

In the second verse: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters," Jesus gently sets me down on the green pasture, where we are standing. I go and graze happily. Then the Lord walks beside me, leading me to a nearby pond, where I drink clean water.

"He restoreth my soul, he guideth me in straight paths for his name's sake." After drinking water, Jesus lays his hand on my head as if to comfort me, and shows me the straight path ahead of us. I start walking on the path.

This technique works really well for me, but of course the story is only to help memorizing; during meditation itself, my effort is to focus on the words themselves, without getting distracted by the meanings or the picturised story.

– Shashi, India



---

## Learning By Listening

I've been enjoying listening to the audio recordings of passages read by Easwaran and Christine. I have a collection of them downloaded from the audio links at the bottom of each passage on the website ([www.bmcm.org/passages](http://www.bmcm.org/passages)). Now, they're also available on the Easwaran Digital Library, beautifully organized by topic and book, so it's easier to enjoy them in one place even without download.

I'm mostly a visual learner for memorizing passages but I've been finding these recordings really helpful. When I listen, I sometimes catch a word or phrase that I've been using incorrectly or have missed and make a mental correction after checking against the printed passage.

During meditation itself, sometimes my mind goes blank and can't remember the words in the passage. I'll try repeating the passage from a few lines earlier, and because I've listened to the audio, the cadence of Christine's or Easwaran's voice from my memory can suddenly bring up the word I've forgotten and help me continue smoothly.

I've also found it easier to memorise a new passage because of my familiarity with the audio recordings. For example, some lines from a long Upanishads passage come to me in a continuous flow in Christine's voice – not only do I remember them easily, it's also a quiet blessing to sometimes have her company or Easwaran's during meditation in this way.

– Hasmita, India



Easwaran, 1980s.

---

## Tips for Tightening Up the Ship, continued

### 4. Strengthen your defenses against distractions

Distractions will be a challenge in meditation from the earliest weeks until the most advanced stages. In warning you about yielding to them, I'll be as firm as Theophan the Recluse: "You must not allow your thoughts to wander at random, but as soon as they run away you must immediately bring them back."

Let us be absolutely clear: any thought, any idea, any association or image, anything that comes into your mind beyond the words of the passage itself is a distraction and has to be treated as a distraction.

#### Resist the tendency to fantasize

Distractions come in a thousand attractive shapes and colors. One of the chief sources is the innate human tendency to fantasize. It isn't only abnormal people who fantasize; everybody does. All these millions of people buying lottery tickets are thinking, "When I win the jackpot, the first thing I'll buy is . . ." The mystics describe this impulse to fantasize as almost a zone in consciousness, a region you travel through as you move deeper in meditation. "As we pass from without to within," says Theophan the Recluse, "we first encounter the powers of imagination and fantasy." These powers are heightened in meditation, and they can paint very alluring pictures. Especially if you're artistic, it is tempting just to stay in fantasy land, build a little cottage, and never take a step further.

---

Anyone who has tried to meditate even a little can attest to the fantasizing power of the mind, and anyone who knows anything of life knows what havoc that power can wreak. We have a simple but profound story in India about a milkmaid who is going to the village with a pot of milk on her head. While walking she thinks, “I like dancing, and when I sell my milk I’m going to buy dancing bells. I’ll fasten them to my ankles so they make music whenever I move, and when I dance — !” She starts to dance, the pot falls, and the milk she was going to sell is gone. The story applies to every one of us, for we all have our own equivalent of dancing bells and pots of milk.

### Catch the mind as it starts to steal away

Once you decide to take the problem of distractions in hand, you make some interesting discoveries. First, you find that often distractions will enter through association. A particular phrase or word in the passage might be highly charged for you, so that it is like a door that suddenly swings open and lets the mind run out. There are few thrills quite as satisfying as waiting quietly with concentration, going through the passage, and catching the mind just as it starts to steal away. Now you know to put up a sign there: “Wrong Way, No Exit.”

You also gradually discover that just before a distraction comes, your concentration will begin to flicker a little. That very flicker can usher in a wave of restlessness, anger, or fear. It requires great capacity and years of experience to observe this: the mind is almost on the passage but not quite settled, and just coming up is that split second when concentration

---

might be lost. Unless the party of distractions (they don't usually come alone; they travel with lots of relatives) sees this kind of opening, they won't try to come in. Once you have observed all this for yourself, you'll have all the motivation you need to sit up straighter and give more concentration. That's all you have to do. Don't try to fight the distractions off. Just strengthen the defense.

### [Go back to the beginning of the passage](#)

Even with the best of efforts, even for experienced meditators, the passage will sometimes slip away. Without knowing how you got there, you find yourself back downtown, walking along your favorite boulevard while your eyes dart pleasurably into the shop windows. When this happens, don't gnash your teeth or get depressed. Just bring the mind back – quietly, firmly – to the beginning of the passage. This is a simple but highly effective discipline. The first few times I invoked it, my mind would cry out, “No! Oh, no, not that!” It might even have had the nerve to add, “It's not fair.” But once my mind saw I was unmoved, the mid-meditation excursions were over.

### [Turn up the volume](#)

The purpose of all these tactics, of course, is to enable you to go through the words of the inspirational passage with complete concentration. Saint John of the Ladder states it clearly: “You must make a great effort to confine your mind within the words of the prayer.” It will take years, but once you have perfected this skill no distraction will be able to enter your mind. It can come and knock on the door; you will not open it. It can ring

---

the bell; you will just turn the volume of the passage up louder. This is what Saint Teresa did; this is what Saint Francis did. They just kept turning up the volume until it became so loud in the depths of consciousness that all distractions were drowned.

## 5. Do everything you can to resist sleep

Sleep is a recurring problem in meditation. As soon as your neuromuscular system begins to relax, there is a tendency to let go. Don't yield to those waves of drowsiness, no matter how delicious they seem. Be sure there is fresh air coming into the room and that you haven't gotten too comfortable. If you still feel you need tea or coffee, determine just how much will help keep you alert and don't drink more than that. Jumps and jitters aren't a great improvement over sleepiness.

### Sit up straighter

Even when you've taken all these precautions, you may feel the passage drifting away like a kite whose string is slipping through sleepy fingers. Dimly, you see the kite zigzagging across the sky, and then it's lost. As soon as you feel this happening, move away from the back support and sit up straighter. If necessary, open your eyes for a moment and repeat the mantram, but do not yield to sleep. If you do, some of the later transitions in meditation will be much more difficult.

### Make a real effort of will

In changing levels of consciousness like this, at each new level we are like a child learning to walk. We know how to walk on



Easwaran, 1980s.

the surface level of the mind, but we don't know how to walk in the dark realms of the unconscious, so the easiest thing for the mind to do is to black out. This is simply the mind saying, "I don't know how to walk here, so I'm going to fall asleep."

This image of falling is an apt one, because all kinds of vague fears come up when we are about to change levels in meditation. We can't name those fears or face them, so we just go to sleep. Again, this is just the mind saying, "I don't want to have anything to do with this!"

When you are changing from one level of consciousness to another, you find that your will has been left behind. It can be

---

depressing: every time you sit down to meditate, you fall asleep. Even when you do everything in your power to sit up straighter and stay awake, you may not be able to; that's what lack of will means. And even if you do stay awake, after a while the wave of sleep will come over you again, and the same story will repeat itself. This can go on for a long time.

In order to wake up on a deeper level of consciousness, make a real effort of will, draw yourself up, and stick it out with all the doggedness you can muster.

This problem is not always what we usually call sleep. At a certain depth in meditation we are neither awake nor asleep, neither in the world within nor the world outside. This state is called "the sleep of yoga," and it descends like a blanket.

Most professionals I have talked to on this subject maintain that it is impossible to be awake in this state – to be conscious in the unconscious. Psychologists will tell you you're wasting your time. But this is precisely what we are doing in meditation: learning to wake up on a deeper level of consciousness.

### Leap, and don't hold back

If we fall asleep at this level, between a shallower state of consciousness and a deeper one, we cannot go deeper; we just stay on the surface. What we need to do at that point is take one leap and fall in. When the time comes to leap, leap; don't hold back. There is a point of no return when even if we try to sleep, we won't be able to. Then we slip into a deeper level of consciousness.



---

## Keep making the effort – there is no failure

There is no need to be despondent over these recurring episodes of drowsiness. As long as we are making the effort to stay awake, there is no failure. It is when we stop making an effort and yield to the wave of sleep that our meditation actually stops. Instead of going deeper vertically, we are going off horizontally. All kinds of things can take place when we lose our hold on our attention. If I may sound a note of caution, there is even the possibility that we may wander into an Alice's Wonderland where the demarcation line between fact and fantasy becomes dimmer and dimmer.

So please don't be under the impression that the struggle to resist sleep is a vain effort. Every time we do this we are strengthening our will. It's only a matter of time before we find that we can overcome these waves of drowsiness and make the change to a deeper level of consciousness.

## 6. Don't worry about results – just keep on plugging

In the early stages of meditation, most of us are likely to do fairly well. Many times when I asked students after a few months how their meditation was going, they would say naturally, "Oh, very well. I don't see anything so difficult as you make it out to be." And I learned to be patient and say, "Very good. I am glad; you seem to be a natural." Then, after a few months more, I would ask again, "How is your meditation?" And they would reply, "Stuck."

---

This is the rhythm of meditation: a little progress, then getting stuck. That's the time when you just keep on plugging. Keep on, keep at it, keep at it, keep at it, until the Lord gives you another push from within and you break through to a deeper level.

All this can be bewildering, and much of it cannot be understood at all until later, when you look back. That is why I keep repeating that whenever meditation is difficult, whenever it is disappointing, whenever it doesn't seem to be going anywhere, don't concern yourself with results; don't ask if you are going forward or backwards or sideways. We have nothing to do with these things; our part is simply to do our best.

The Gita gives very good advice: the only right we have is to do what we can; the results are not in our hands. Don't give up; keep trying and all this will come to fruition. Gandhi says, "Full effort is full victory." That is all you are concerned with. Do everything you can and leave the results in the hands of the Lord. 🌸

---

## A Prayer for Meditation

*A free rendering by Eknath Easwaran of an  
Invocation to an Upanishad*

May I open my eyes in the morning  
with the holy name on my lips.

May I see God everywhere and in everyone.

May I never hurt anyone  
and may I never be afraid of anyone.

May I be inspired to choose persuasive words,  
loving language, creative and positive thoughts,  
to carry peace and good will throughout the world.

May my meditation deepen,  
so I can draw upon the Source of all life.

May I fall asleep at night with the holy name on my lips,  
to heal my wounds and prepare me  
for another day of service.

---

## COMMUNITY STORY

### Slowly Going Deeper

“A Prayer for Meditation” is a powerful way to start or end the day. In the morning it is a prayer of supplication and a way to drive these ideals deep in my consciousness. At night it reminds me about using the mantram as I fall asleep, and offers a mini daily inventory.

Underpinning any progress I experience in meditation lies the hunger Easwaran planted in me to become what I meditate on. Grasping the importance of building a spiritual schedule atop that morning meditation came next. This has been a gradual understanding, closely connected to an ever-expanding mantram practice. Year by year I was getting quieter, more aware, slowly going deeper.

It took lots of experimentation to find where a regular evening meditation fit in my life, but I did. Now I’m trying for daily spiritual reading and video/audio talks.

These foundation stones and efforts have contributed to an increased sense of stability or spiritual fitness. During these pandemic years I have come to meet the suffering and uncertainty that surround us, believing the world cries out for me to deepen my sadhana; to increase my mantram practice, prioritize weekly Satsang preparation, chip away at persistent warts of hostility and self-will, and increasingly put the welfare of those around me first.

My ears open up when I read Easwaran, listen to his talks,

---

or memorize a new passage. His words (and the passages) contain the advice I need daily. They remind me that no two people view the world through the same lens, and admonish me to bear with people, to look for the Lord in all. On self-forgiveness, how to deal with cravings, facing unexpected circumstances or keeping the complaints of my aging body in proper perspective, his counsel and example are always on point.

### A woven fabric

Can we train our minds and become what we meditate on? Progress certainly does not feel linear. It feels more like a woven fabric in which holes sometimes appear. But when the mantram starts up without us thinking about it, that's progress.

A brand-new capacity to stay one-pointed, a fresh willingness to combat the impulse to judge others harshly, these too show progress. The freedom to douse a potential resentment, rather than feed it, that's a gold thread of hard-won progress. To cease worrying about *being enough*, that's peace.

The spiritual schedule and continued practice of the allied disciplines deepens my devotion to our teacher. The surprising gift is that my devotion to him has unlocked a tangible and very personal sense of Easwaran's love for and faith in us.

– Rosemary, North Carolina

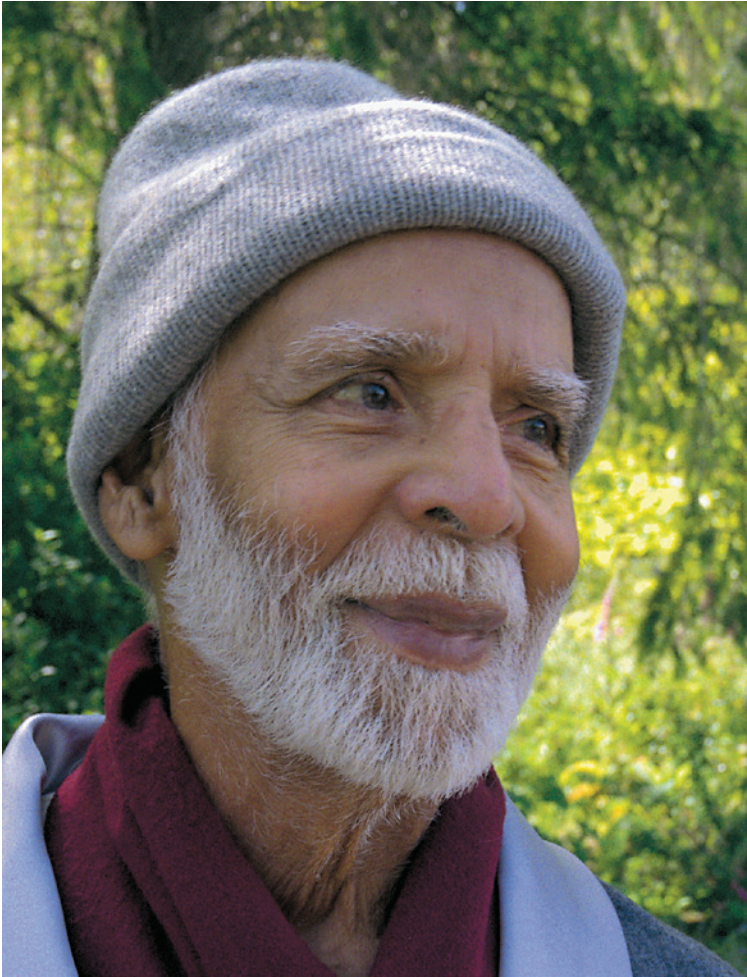


Christine Easwaran on her 100th birthday.



Ramagiri Ashram





Easwaran, 1990s.



---

## In the Final Stages

Eknath Easwaran

In the Katha Upanishad, Yama, the King of Death, encourages us with words that are among the most famous in all of spiritual literature:

Get up! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an  
Illumined teacher and realize the Self.  
Sharp like a razor's edge is the path,  
The sages say, difficult to traverse.

“Wake up!” says the King of Death. “This is the fight for which you were born. You have been sleeping for four and a half billion years; isn't it time to wake up? Don't just say 'Okay.' Don't pull the covers over your head and mutter, 'Just a little while more.' Leap to your feet and rub the sleep from your eyes!”

“Sharp like a razor's edge is the path.” If you have seen a straight razor, you know why using one requires continuous concentration. If you let your mind wander, you may end up in intensive care. This kind of skill is not learned from a book; you ask someone with experience. How much more necessary is a good teacher on the spiritual path – someone you can trust completely, who knows every foot of the path and can show you how to guard yourself against every danger.

In the final stages of meditation, I do not think any human being can make progress without this kind of loving, experienced, utterly dedicated guidance. When awareness is

---

deep, just when we are getting confident about our progress, we are really put to the test. Circumstances develop in such a way that we have to give up some intense personal attachment. And there is no other way. When we have gone as far as we can on a particular level of consciousness, we simply have to let go and jump.

### Changing levels in consciousness

A few years ago, with our children, I was admiring the skill of some circus trapeze artists. They would take a swing or two to get momentum; then, at just the right moment, they would let go and sail through the air to catch hold of another trapeze several yards away.

That is very much like changing levels in consciousness. Our first idea is usually to keep a tight grip on one trapeze and still try to jump; all we get for it is whiplash. Or we go on swinging back and forth expecting someone to toss us a vine, so that we can swing over like Tarzan. But no vine comes; there is no one to toss it to us. And finally we have to take a breath, make a good, wide swing, and let go.

While we are on the first trapeze, this is a terrifying prospect. We have something in our hands; if we let go, we think we are losing something. We are not; we are only gaining. All we are letting go of is insecurity, self-will, some tenacious attachments that kept us from making progress. But it is terribly distressing. Physical and emotional suffering is bad enough, but this is worse. The only comparison I can think of is that it is like a

---

welding torch burning away in consciousness; but there are no goggles you can put on, because this torch is not outside. And it bursts into your awareness at the most unexpected hours.

### Joy beneath the suffering

This happens over and over, until suddenly you move into a deeper level of consciousness. You have burned out a number of selfish attachments which were holding you back, and now that they are gone, you begin to understand. “Oh, this is what that burning was for: to remove those chains, to set me free.” Then, somehow, there is joy beneath that suffering. Like John of the Cross, you have to fall back on poetry and contradiction: “O healing wound, O fire that burns to purify . . .”

To use a cruel simile, these chains have become part of our feeling, thinking, and being. How is it possible to remove something that you believe is part of you, “bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh”? Compulsive desires cannot easily be cast aside by any human being, for the simple reason that we do not want to cast them aside; otherwise they would not be compulsive.

And we do not want to cast them aside because they are pleasant. To let go of them we must have a greater desire, something higher to reach out for. “We require,” in the words of John of the Cross, “a more ardent fire and a nobler love” — a passionate, deepening desire for Self-realization that finally makes it intolerable to hold on to anything that keeps us from the object of our desire.

---

## The ardent deepening of desire

In the later stages of meditation, experiences may come which have as their sole purpose this ardent deepening of desire. The annals of mysticism provide countless examples of these brief glimpses of the goal. Here is only one: the testimony of Suso, a fourteenth-century German mystic who describes himself in his autobiography in the third person. While he is alone in the choir with “a heavy trouble weighing on his heart,” he is suddenly plunged into absorption so deep that he forgets himself completely.

“Then did he see and hear that which no tongue can express”: something without shape or substance,

yet he had of it a joy such as he might have known in the seeing of the shapes and substances of all joyous things. His heart was hungry yet satisfied . . . he could do naught but contemplate this shining brightness; and he altogether forgot himself and all other things. Was it day or night? He knew not. It was, as it were, a manifestation of the sweetness of eternal life in the sensations of silence and of rest. Then he said, “If that which I see and feel be not the kingdom of heaven, I know not what it can be: for it is very sure that the endurance of all possible pains were but a poor price to pay for the eternal possession of so great a joy.”

This last sentence is the key. Whether romantic or spiritual, love does not barter. I once saw a film of which only one line stuck in my mind: “For some things in life you do not ask the price.” If that is true for a few weeks’ romance, how much more



Easwaran and Christine, 1990s.

---

so for the fulfillment of all desires – not just for ten minutes or three weeks, but forever?

From my own experience, I can testify that if I had known at the outset of sadhana how much joy there is in the unitive state, I would have cast away all my selfish attachments without hesitation. But in that case it would not have been sadhana. It would have been the stock market: “You give me this, I’ll give up that.” Just as in love, you cannot set conditions in sadhana. Otherwise these experiences cannot come; your heart is still pulling in different directions.

### Closing the circle

In these last stages of sadhana, we are trying to keep consciousness in a continuous, unbroken channel. The morning and evening periods of meditation set the standard; then we try to extend these periods of one-pointed attention through the rest of the day. While we are working at something, we give the job our complete attention. And the minute the job is over, we start the mantram.

Attention must become one smooth-flowing stream from morning to night and through the night until morning again. In a sense, it is like taking two ends of consciousness and trying to bring them together into a closed circle, so that there is no leakage of prana at all.

At the beginning of sadhana, this may not seem like much of an achievement. We have hold of about ten degrees of the circle, so we have no idea of what it means to close the other three hundred fifty degrees. But as the ends of the circle get

---

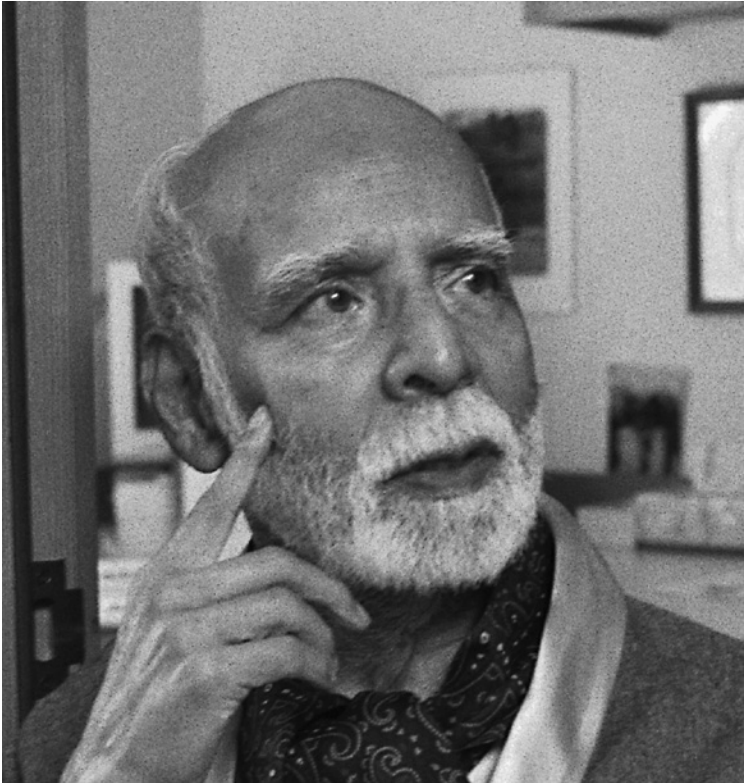
closer, it is like trying to close floodgates against a powerful river. A student of physics will tell you that the smaller the opening across a river, the faster the water flows through. It is the same in consciousness. All the thoughts that could not get our attention while we were meditating or repeating the mantram, all twenty-four hours worth of them, are just waiting to rush in if we give them an opening.

Last to be closed are the hours of nighttime. As you begin to wake up inside, it is only natural to find yourself wakeful for hours while you lie in bed at night. These are terribly critical times, for there is very little to do to keep the mind engaged. To keep attention from wandering, all you have to hang on to is the mantram. And the fight is on.

### Maya tries everything

At this stage, concentration is really deep. For five, ten, fifteen minutes you stand inside a kind of magic circle: your mind is absorbed in the mantram, so no other thought can come in. But then you become aware of all kinds of other thoughts outside, skulking around and trying to tempt you out. It is a tantalizing scene. One of the beautiful paintings in the caves of Ajanta depicts the Buddha seated quietly in meditation while Mara the Tempter dances around him with his voluptuous daughters and his army of demons.

Most people would find this a fanciful painting – very quaint, very colorful, but born of the imagination. In the second half of sadhana, you will testify that the scene is all too real. As Sri Aurobindo explains it, Maya sees that you are about to



Easwaran, 1990s.



---

escape from her forever, and she tries everything in her power to hold you close in her embrace. Great saints may endure great temptations like this; smaller people like us will have smaller ones. But all of us will be tested to the full measure of our capacity. To everyone these tests must come.

As long as you cling to the mantram, all that these fierce distractions can do is dance around and try to tempt you out. “Come on, Nachiketa, just step outside. Elephants, chariots, dancing girls with eternal youth – you don’t have to choose; you can have them all.” But anyone can get drawn outside by all this hullabaloo; and once you get outside, your samskaras will beat you up. They cannot finish you off, but they will pummel all the prana out of you, rob you of your security, and run away, leaving you with a sinking heart.

### Cling to the mantram

But on the other hand, there is no need to feel panicky when seductive distractions come; they are an essential part of the drama. You cannot say, “I don’t want that Iago on the stage”; if there were no villain, the play could not be acted. All you can do is cling to the mantram and not let your mind even flicker to these thoughts. Grit your teeth and let them caper all they like. Eventually, if you do not give them an audience, they will get tired and go away.

Even in sleep this struggle goes on. Then it is like shadow-boxing in a world of shadows. You are deep in the unconscious, which is terra incognita for the will. Yet you have to learn to wake up even in the unconscious; the whole of the mind must

---

be flooded with light. This usually happens in stages. When you are sunk in sleep, part of you is awake with a little will, and that part tries to repeat the mantram. Sometimes you cannot even remember it. There is something you are supposed to be doing, but you cannot think what it is; or if you remember the *Ra-*, you cannot remember the *-ma*.

As you can see, I am not trying to disguise what a challenge this is. But even at this stage there are rewards. For one, you may suddenly hear what mystics call the “cosmic sound,” for which the nearest approximation in sensory sound is the word *Om*. You cannot anticipate it or bring it on, but suddenly you will hear this sound rolling through consciousness, not drowning but absorbing all other sounds. It is such a tremendous experience that Saint Francis says if it had gone on longer, so sweet was the joy of it that his body would have melted away.

## The lover and the Beloved

If all this seems agonizing, it is the most delicious agony in sadhana. Words cannot describe these experiences. They are so far beyond the realm of everyday thought and sensation that in both East and West, aspirants fall back here on poetry and the language of a lover to his or her Beloved.

In these last stages, the Sufis say, all veils but one have fallen from the object of our desire. We can make out the eyes of the Beloved, the hair, the smile, but nothing clearly, and all other desires are consumed in the overwhelming longing to

---

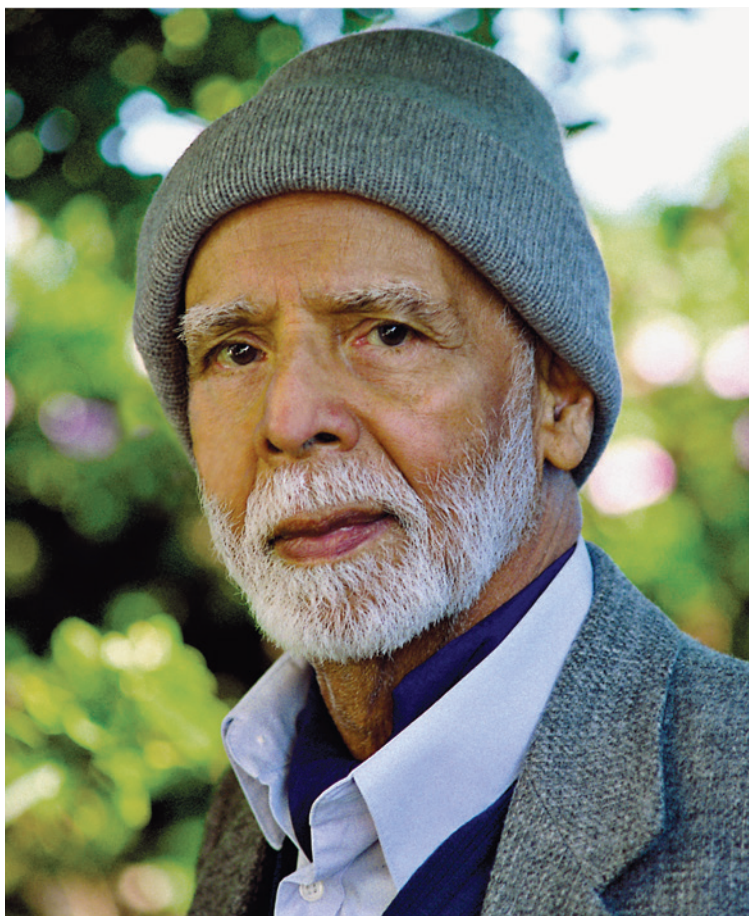
tear that last veil aside. Every day there is this delightful pain of separation, this impatient patience. You expect the veil to fall that very evening, yet you are prepared to wait another day more.

Mystics everywhere speak this way, and scholars just throw up their hands and leave. They want rational talk and all they get is contradiction. It is not that mystics are inadequate when it comes to logic; the inadequacy is in language. Give them a language that embraces opposites, that transcends the senses; then they will express all this. Otherwise words have to fail.

### The curtain rises

All sorts of signs come now that the end of your years of searching is very near. It is like waiting for the curtain to go up on a play for which you have been waiting a hundred years. You are seated in the front row, the theater is full; now the lights are dimmed and everyone falls still in breathless anticipation. Behind the curtain you can see tantalizing glimpses: props being adjusted, the last-minute movements of stagehands, a ripple of the heavy draperies as someone brushes by. Every morning in meditation, every evening as you fall asleep, it is as if the whole universe is waiting for the play to begin at last.

And finally, just when you do not expect it, the curtain rises and you are lifted out of time into the unitive state, beyond change, beyond death. 🌸



Easwaran, 1990s.

---

# A Summons from the Depths of the Heart

Ekknath Easwaran

Once you turn inward in meditation, the words of the passages urge you forward in response to a summons from the very depths of the heart. This need to return to the source of our being is nothing less than an evolutionary imperative – the drive to realize our full human potential. Something deep within us must find expression beyond the plane of pleasure and profit; that is our glory as human beings.

In every sensitive human being, there comes a time when we cannot help feeling homesick. As the great mystics of all religions tell us, we are simply beginning to remember who we are. All this time we have spent sojourning on this earth, buying and selling, getting and spending, is like a dream. We are passersby, wayfarers traveling from eternity to eternity. Eternity is our home.

Now we are beginning to wake up, and consciousness is flooded with old, old memories that inflame our longing for our real home. And once this longing comes up, it begins to consume all other desires. For as the Upanishads say in glorious words, “There is no joy in the finite. There is joy only in the Infinite.”



---

## 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/)

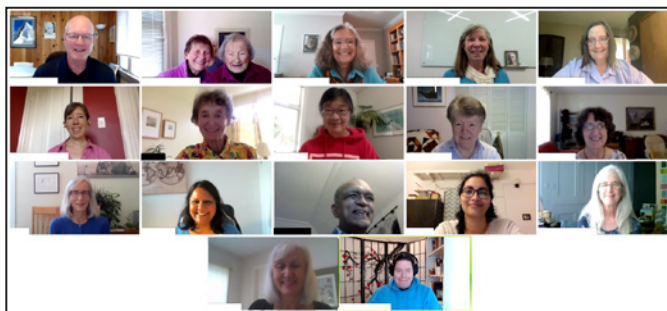
### Introductory Online Weekend Retreats

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.



Attendees at a 2021 online weeklong retreat.

### BMCM Satsang Live

Our twice-weekly online satsang takes place on Tuesdays from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Pacific Time and is repeated on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Pacific Time.

Find more at [www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/](http://www.bmcm.org/community/bmcm-satsang-live/).

---

## Online Retreats, Webinars & Workshops for 2021 and First Quarter 2022

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

### Introductory Webinar:

January 22, 2022

### Introductory Weekend Online Retreat:

January 14–16, 2022

### Returnee Weekend Online Retreats:

November 5–7, 2021; March 18–20, 2022

### Weeklong Online Retreat:

February 11–15, 2022

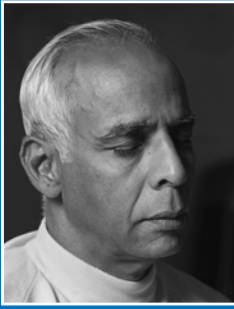
### Setu Half-Week Online Retreat:

January 28–February 1, 2022

### Returnee Online Workshop:

November 13, 2021

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!



Remind yourself every day that meditation is not for your benefit alone; it is for the benefit of the whole world.

In this way, with meditation and daily living supporting each other, your spiritual growth will be swift and sure.

– Eknath Easwaran



**Blue Mountain  
Center of Meditation**

P. O. Box 256

Tomales, CA 94971

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