



Blue Mountain

ESTABLISHED BY EKNATH EASWARAN
FOR PRESENTING HIS EIGHT-POINT
PROGRAM OF PASSAGE MEDITATION

EKNATH
EASWARAN

has been called one of the foremost teachers of meditation in our times. From his arrival in the United States in 1959 on the Fulbright exchange program until his passing in the fall of 1999, he taught to modern men and women his eight-point program, based on his unique method of meditation on memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions. Many thousands of people representing the full range of cultural and religious backgrounds attest to the benefits of his teaching. He continues to teach through his thirty books on spiritual living — over a million copies in print in twenty-seven languages — and through the ongoing programs and publications of the organization he founded in 1961 to carry on his work: the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation and its publishing arm, Nilgiri Press.

The Stages of Life

by Eknath Easwaran

THERE IS a beautiful side to the cycle of life when we understand it from a deeply spiritual perspective.

In India's ancient civilization, human life was divided into four stages — phases in a grand concept thousands of years old. Sadly, the spirit of these ancient traditions has gradually been forgotten, so here I would like to talk about the inner meaning of these four stages as a framework for life today.

Childhood

The first stage in life starts before the baby is born. When the mother is pregnant, she is given a mantram — a sacred phrase or holy name — that she will repeat most of the time. It shows the genius of our ancient civilization: not only the mother's diet but the mother's thoughts and feelings influence the baby. If the mother repeats the mantram, the baby has a head start on the spiritual path.

This stage of life is traditionally called *brahmacharya*, which is usually translated as “celibacy” because this is the period before marriage and family. But *brahmacharya* literally means “conduct that leads to awareness of Brahman,” or God, and the underlying meaning is not just self-control but a complete pattern of daily living that prepares us for the ultimate goal of Self-realization. The focus of this first stage of life is really education: gaining the skills of victorious living and learning that life is meant for the service of God in all around us rather than the pursuit of personal profit or pleasure.

Work & Family

In ancient India, this lofty ideal was embodied in forest ashrams where children were sent to be educated in self-control and meditation in addition to high intellectual and cultural attainments. Then the sages would send their young graduates home to their community, telling them, “Now you can contribute to life and leave the world a little better than you found it.”

This is the purpose of the next stage of life, that of the *grihastha* or “householder.” These are the years in which young people embark on a career and perhaps raise a family, ideally helping the whole community to prosper

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From our archives: Eknath Easwaran, 1997



BLUE MOUNTAIN

The quarterly journal of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

Spring 2012

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Printed on recycled paper

The Blue Mountain Center depends on donations to carry on its work. Every gift, large or small, is much appreciated and put to good use. The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation is a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit corporation. Contributions to the Center are deductible from state and federal income tax.

1 The Stages of Life



Indian tradition divides life into four stages, laid out as steps in each person's journey toward Self-realization. In this brief overview, Eknath

Easwaran gives a fresh perspective on this ancient idea to show how it can bring meaning and purpose to each stage of life.

5 What Do Children Need?



Easwaran focuses on some key points in the first stage of life, childhood: the theme for this issue. In his presentation, the main purpose of this stage is learning: not merely the three Rs, but essentially how to live and what life is for, the service of God in all around us.

8 Protecting Innocence



Modern civilization, Easwaran observes, is increasingly depriving children of their childhood. An ancient Sanskrit saying gives a framework for understanding how parents who meditate can protect their children's native innocence from birth through the turbulent teens, giving them "a flying start on life."

Easwaran's comments are accompanied by comments from parents in our international eSatsang and some photographs from our family retreats, showing just a few of the many families where children are growing up protected by their parents' meditation and the mantram.

The Blue Mountain journal is free. Postage costs apply for delivery outside the US. For a two-year subscription to Canada or Mexico, the cost is \$15. For all other countries, the two-year subscription cost is \$25. Please visit our website, www.easwaran.org, to sign up to receive the journal.

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

The Center offers instruction in meditation and allied living skills, following the eight-point program of passage meditation developed by Sri Eknath Easwaran. The approach is nondenominational, nonsectarian, and free from dogma and ritual. It can be used within each person's own cultural and religious background to relieve stress, heal relationships, release deeper resources, and realize one's highest potential.

Passage Meditation: An 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 other passage meditators 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.

Eknath Easwaran

Schooled in both Eastern and Western traditions, Eknath Easwaran took to the spiritual life amidst a successful career in India as a professor of English literature, a writer, and a lecturer. After coming to the University of California, Berkeley, on the Fulbright exchange program, he established the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Northern California in 1961. His 1968 Berkeley class is believed to be the first accredited course in meditation at any Western university. His deep personal experience and his love for his students have made the ancient art of meditation accessible to those who hold jobs and lead active lives among friends and family.

A Spiritual Perspective on Childhood



Christine Easwaran

IN FAMOUS lines, William Shakespeare compares our lives to a play in seven acts that runs from infancy through old age:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women
merely players;
They have their exits and their
entrances,
And one man in his time plays
many parts,
His acts being seven ages. . . .

It's a haunting image, but the lines throw little light on how to live. For this, Eknath Easwaran turns to the Vedas, India's ancient scriptures, which make a similar division into four stages from a spiritual perspective that adds meaning and direction. In our lead article, "The Stages of Life," Easwaran maintains that this framework is not bound to an ancient culture, but provides men and women today with a way to understand each chapter of life as part of a larger story.

Looking back, I find it deeply significant that Sri Easwaran devoted the last decade of his life to each of these four stages. Particularly dramatic were his experiments for the beginning and end of life: the Setu Program, aimed at those in the last quarter of their lives, and family programs aimed at the children of parents who meditate along

his lines. By helping us find a spiritual focus in each of these stages, he hoped to lay a foundation for a spiritual renaissance that could provide "unassuming leadership" to a world in crisis.

This issue of *Blue Mountain* focuses on the first of these four stages. We have chosen two short pieces in which Easwaran gives key messages for a spiritual perspective on childhood. "What Do Children Need?" (p. 5) stresses the importance of unconditional love, which requires not senti-



"Looking at us, a child should see the image of the Self." Easwaran with a young friend.

mentality or saying yes to every demand, but "a deep desire to put the children's welfare first and everything else second." This, of course, entails reexamination of our own daily lives and character. We need to be models of what we want our children to become, for they will not so much learn from what we say as absorb what we are.

This is a familiar idea, but Easwaran raises it to an exceptionally challenging level. One of the precious gifts he received as a child, he says, was constantly being blocked when he wanted his own way. It surprises us today to hear this prized; we may feel that saying no suppresses a child's independence. In fact, Easwaran says, it is just the opposite. Everyone meditating along his lines knows what a handicap self-will can become, how ugly it is, how utterly it can destroy relationships

at home and work. Who would want a child to grow up with a burden like this? That is why Easwaran says he is grateful that his grandmother did everything possible to block his self-will while he was growing up.

The ultimate reason for saying no like this is lofty beyond words. Children have to learn to obey their parents, Easwaran explains, "so that they can learn to obey the Self in them, the Atman, later on. In their daily life, the parents have to approximate themselves to the image of the Atman. This is why parenthood is an extremely valuable aid to meditation."

Finally, in "Protecting Innocence" (p. 8), Easwaran elaborates on an old Sanskrit proverb that tells us how our relationships with children should shift as they grow up. Children today, he pleads, are losing their childhood very early, in part because we treat them as adults rather than as children. All children, he insists, are born with a native innocence that keeps them open to developing key qualities they will need as adults: imagination, creativity, compassion, a sense of kinship with all life. Easwaran maintained that this innocence can be preserved right through the teens, even in the teeth of all the contrary conditioning of the mass media, without any loss of sophistication. He began our family programs twenty years ago, so I have had the privilege of seeing this faith borne out as these children grew.

On pages 8–13, alongside a few comments from parents on our eSatsang network, we share a handful of photographs of the many children and parents in our family retreats who are discovering for themselves the truth of Easwaran's words: "There is no greater blessing than to grow up in a family where meditation is practiced."

Christine Easwaran

Christine Easwaran
For the Board of Trustees

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with right livelihood while raising children with high ideals.

Giving Back to Life

The third stage, retirement, begins a process of detachment from personal goals. Here the skills, experience, and resources acquired during the second stage are “given back to life” in selfless service. Inspired by this ideal, many Indian physicians today dedicate large blocks of time and money each year to providing free medical care for the poor; successful business people initiate or underwrite critical social services, helping the underprivileged to start small businesses or get an education. Much the same spirit seems to be developing in other countries as well.

Spiritually, however, something more than selfless service is required in this stage. If we see the first half of life as a period of physical and material growth, we have to recognize that at this level, the second half of life is

marked by an irreversible decline. This is an insistent reminder that it is time to turn inwards and develop the spiritual side of our personality, which can grow even as the body ages.

The first signs of physical decline are distressing for everyone, of course. The natural tendency is to cling to youth and pretend nothing is happening. It took me years to realize that in trying to hide the signs of age, I was fighting not only a losing battle but a battle not worth fighting. Once I grasped this, I immediately started withdrawing my identification with the body through the practice of meditation. This is the traditional focus of the third stage of life, dedicated to the discovery that we are neither body nor mind, but the deathless Self that dwells within.

Letting Go

This growing detachment eventually becomes what in Sanskrit is called *sannyasa*: renunciation, letting go of every personal attachment. This begins with

material possessions, for as everyone knows, “You can’t take it with you.” Renouncing possessions can be difficult, but what I found nearly impossible is letting go of possessive attachments to other people. We call such attachments love, but all too often they include a good measure of attachment to ourselves. The mystics of all religions tell us that the highest kind of love shines equally on all.

I don’t mind telling you that this was the hardest lesson for me to learn. I have always been a person with passionate loyalties, and to learn not to restrict that devotion to a few individuals was a long and painful process. But today all that wealth of passion, all that depth of love, flows not only to my own family but to all of life. That is the fruition of the fourth stage of life. The body has to decline in these years, but what the Bhagavad Gita calls “the dweller in the body” can shine forth, a greater source of wisdom and inspiration than when we were young. ⇨

The stages of life: Easwaran and his mother with the newborn children of two friends.



What Do Children Need?

by Eknath Easwaran

THE MOST important gift we can give our children is our undivided love. No material advantage can ever take the place of such love, for without it children cannot grow to their full height as secure human beings.

All we have to do is look around at the anger and separateness in the younger generation to see what happens when children are deprived of undivided love. I have known many young people who come from well-to-do homes, go to good schools, take music lessons, play junior league baseball, surf, ski, and even travel all over the world, yet a deeply rooted sense of deprivation distorts their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

To help change the destructive direction in which our children's lives are moving, what is required is a deep desire to put the children's welfare first and everything else second. We have the perfect classroom right in our own home, where we can learn to make choices that put the welfare of our children first.

If possible, we should start doing this before the child is born, for the mother influences her child's life even before birth. If the mother has a deep desire for her child's greatest welfare, she will not fail to make wise choices in her daily living. Whenever she indulges an unhealthy habit, she is putting her own pleasure before her child's welfare, which is another way of saying that she deprives that child of her love.

Popular magazines and television would have us believe that our

responsibility for our children's well-being is met by buying fluoridated toothpaste and a balanced vitamin supplement. But health is not just an absence of disease. It is a dynamic, positive state of existence in which we function at our optimum, physically, mentally, and in all our personal relationships. The basis of such health is a heart filled with love for others and a mind at peace, which is first absorbed at home, in the family, from the parents' example of how to live.

Searching questions

When we realize how powerful the example of our daily life is, we will start trying to find ways of making improvements in the way we think, feel, and act toward our own parents, partner, and children.

This calls for a thoughtful look at ourselves, and at our habits and attitudes. We need to ask, How effectively do we communicate with our children? In what ways does competition between husband and wife, parents and children, and the children themselves disturb our home? What kind of guidance do we give our children? Can we say no to them when it is for their welfare without confusing them with elaborate excuses? Can we settle differences of opinion amicably? Do we spend our weekends pursuing our own personal interests, or do we give our time, energy, and full attention to our family?

In thinking about these questions, we begin to realize to what extent we exist as separate fragments, instead of as a family which is deepening all its relationships. It is this increasing isolation among family members that drives the sense of deprivation deep into the consciousness of children. To the extent that we work to reduce this separateness and estrangement, to that extent we dissolve the sense of deprivation from which our children suffer.

One of the most effective ways of reducing separateness is to establish

good communication among all family members. This is something we must work at constantly, for there is a natural tendency to split into peer groups, age groups, racial groups, religious groups, social groups, and economic groups. Often by the age of twelve or thirteen our children have become so absorbed in their peer group that they look there for direction and guidance, and since a twelve-year-old cannot provide a model of behavior, they begin to flounder and get into trouble.

Communication becomes even more critical during the teen years, when young people have to face so many new pressures: romantic relationships, sex, drugs, college, career, and finding meaning in their lives. Peer groups, television, movies, and the mass media often serve as substitutes for parental guidance in answering these questions because prolonged lack of communication has driven a deep rift between parent and child. What little communication does take place is often in the form of arguments which drive the rift even deeper and intensify the mutual lack of trust between parent and child. Then it does not mean much for a parent to say no to an activity they know from experience will bring sorrow. Self-will, which is just another way of describing separateness and deprivation, has become so entrenched that communication is almost impossible.

Loving, lasting companionship

The more we become preoccupied with our own interests, the less we are able to see what is in our children's best interests. For example, if we rush home from work eager for time for ourselves and park the children to one side while we indulge in some private pursuit that we enjoy, we are telling them by our actions that we do not have time for them or interest in them. After a

Continued on next page



Easwaran at tetherball with his nieces.

Continued from previous page while, our children are learning more from television than from us; they come to believe the message of the advertiser that things will bring happiness and security, and they take the violent, senseless behavior of television heroes as models to emulate. In this way we are encouraging them to accept a way of living that will bring misery and despair. It is not only the child, but the parents, too, who suffer, for the lives of parent and child cannot be considered separate.

Being a parent today is one of the most difficult jobs on earth. It requires a depth of patience and discrimination that very few have. But all of us can develop these precious capacities with systematic and sustained effort. Although difficult at first, we shall find that as we grow in our capacity to put our children's welfare before our own personal inter-

ests, many of our family's and our children's problems will resolve themselves. Every parent is the most influential teacher in a child's life, for children learn not so much from what we say as from what we do.

By spending more time with our children, we will gradually be able to understand the nature of the problems which confront them and give our best guidance. When we are giving our children more time and attention, there develops a loving companionship which enables the parents to say no and the child to accept it without a trace of anger. By establishing a lasting relationship in this manner with our children, we can give them the strength and guidance so desperately needed when they enter the stormy teenage years.

As parents, we can find many ways to build up a lasting relationship with our children. By learning to enter into their world, we can draw closer to

them and draw them closer to us. This does not mean we need to imitate their hairstyle or clothes or speech. I am talking about something much deeper, which expresses itself in more concern in what our children are thinking and doing than in the book we are reading or the TV show we are watching. When we show our children through our undivided attention that we are deeply interested in what interests them, they are assured of our love and affection beyond the shadow of a doubt.

This attention cannot be faked; it must be real. To give our complete and undivided attention is a precious skill that can be cultivated through regular practice. When we draw closer as a family, our children grow in awareness of the deeper unity that exists between husband and wife, parent and child, and sister and brother. This is the most effective way

of healing the disease of deprivation.

The scriptures of all the great religions of the world have bequeathed us changeless values by which we can live. The Sermon on the Mount, the Dhammapada, and the Bhagavad Gita are superb examples. They are meant as practical manuals for daily living and provide for every generation an unfailing direction which cannot be supplied by the pursuit of personal satisfactions.

How do we translate these timeless values into daily living? There is no quick and easy way; what is required is the sustained and systematic practice of meditation to alter our patterns of thinking and acting. The practice of meditation can be described as a mighty educational tool by mastering which we can transform anger into compassion, ill will into good will, hatred into love, and separateness into unity.

This transformation may take years, but even from the early days there is the joyful awareness that life has an unfailing direction and an underlying unity in which all things are held together. It is this increasing experience of unity which puts an end to every trace of separateness and deprivation. This is what our children are crying out for, and the most precious gift that we can give them. ⇨

Family Yoga

FAMILY LIVING is like Mogul art, worked in miniature. The canvas is so small and the skill required so great that most of us do not evaluate the vast potentialities of family life which can enable us all to find our freedom.

I can draw a little illustration from life with my mother and nieces when they lived with us here in California. My wife and I kept one day in the week for outings, and one beautiful, balmy Sunday we took the family to Santa Rosa. I sat in the back seat of a VW bug with Meera on one side and Geetha on the other, and the two girls were asking me all kinds of questions that from an adult viewpoint were juvenile. But that is exactly what children are: juvenile people, who ask juvenile questions that are just right for them. I kept reminding myself of what most of us older people forget: that every child has a point of view. They have their outlook on the world, their way of looking at life, which makes them ask these questions, and for them, why *Texaco* should be spelled with an *a* and *Mexico* with an *i* is a matter of vital importance.

When we got to Santa Rosa, we had to walk slowly because my mother is nearing eighty. But the children wanted to run. We were in a crowded shopping center, where it is not proper for a sedate professor to be running

about. But they were saying, "Uncle, we want you to run too. To run is fun." I did not say that a pompous professor like me should not be running; it would take away from my pomp. Instead I tried to make a good dash for it. I thought I was going to meet with appreciation, but little Geetha came up to me and said, "You are not supposed to step on the lines." There was no "Thank you," no "Well done"; I had to do it all over again.

On the trip home I had my arms around both of them, and every now and then I would get a kick from both sides. It hurt. I had to remind myself, "These are children, active and lively. They are not really kicking me; they are kicking their heels in the air, and my legs happen to be in the way." I had to repeat the mantram to keep smiling.

It is in these little things that we learn how to be loving: by being tender and unselfish and putting up with innumerable discomforts for the sake of adding to the joy of the members of our family, and then gradually extending our love to include our friends, our community, our country, and our world. We do not have to go to a mountain retreat in the Himalayas. We just go to Santa Rosa in one of those little VW bugs, where we are so constricted that every kick is amplified. —EKNATH EASWARAN

Protecting Innocence

By Eknath Easwaran

IN THE nearly forty years I have spent in this country, I have seen children losing their innocence fast. In our compulsive fascination with technology and material possessions, we are depriving our children of their childhood, and with it something irretrievably precious: the innocence of their hearts.

This is more than the loss of happiness. Childhood needs to be a time of wonder, and children need this period of innocence in order to learn and grow. They require time and protection from the media so that they can walk under the skies and make up stories from the clouds and stars, get to know animals, become intimate with nature; this is the beginning of awareness of the unity of life, which will serve them greatly when they take to meditation later on.

The answer to this loss is to restore their childhood to them, to protect and preserve their innocence. This can be done, despite the powerful contrary conditioning of our times, because at the core of personality, all of us have the same divine Self, the very source of our original goodness.



Protecting innocence: photographs of a few of the children and meditating parents at family retreats, with comments on dealing with this stage of life from participants in our international eSatsang.



The three stages of childhood

AN OLD Sanskrit saying gives guidelines for how this can be done. According to this saying, our relationship with our children passes through three stages, depending on what they need most as they grow up.

Until Age Five

In the first stage, until the child is five, we are urged to treat the little one as a god or goddess. This does not mean that we give up our power of authority, but that we give our children all the attention and affection we can, hugging them, carrying them, and keeping them physically close to us.

Such affection is essential for maintaining unity on the physical level, and children respond to it easily. These five years of intense physical intimacy and intense emotional love reassure them more than any other experience – more than any words can – and in later life they will be able to draw upon this security they received in early childhood.

Children absorb a great deal more than we realize, even in these very early years. If we constantly address the divinity with which they come to us – “trailing clouds of glory from God, who is our home” – they will grow up with an instinctive sense that their deepest Self is divine.

Of course, this is the time to teach them to use the mantram – the earlier the better. Parents can sing them to sleep with the mantram; their voices are especially precious at this age. If children learn the mantram as they learn to speak, it will be ready for them in deepest consciousness as they begin to face the trials of life and give them a flying start when they take to meditation later on.



“ I have been babysitting a 5 month old baby for about 2 months. It is a miracle! It is good to give his parents a break, and reminds me of EE’s teaching that when there is harmony in the home there is peace in the nation. I am totally one-pointed with this baby. I sing to him. Play with him. Splash him with water. Introduce him to flowers. Teach him what his nose is, clap his hands and feet, sing the mantram to him, not to mention the usual things like feeding, burping and changing. I am training his senses to see that life is good. There is barely time to get a drink of water myself, let alone any “comforts,” but it is a JOY and a privilege to be a part of his life. ”



From Five to Sixteen

AFTER FIVE, until the age of sixteen, the Sanskrit injunction tells us to teach our children to serve. It sounds harsh, but the more I see of life, the more I appreciate the utility of this training in obedience. Young people get puzzled when their parents cannot take a positive stand, and even though they may stomp out and slam the door in anger when we say no, I think they cannot help appreciating parents who can draw a line intelligently and tenderly, showing them how to make wise choices.

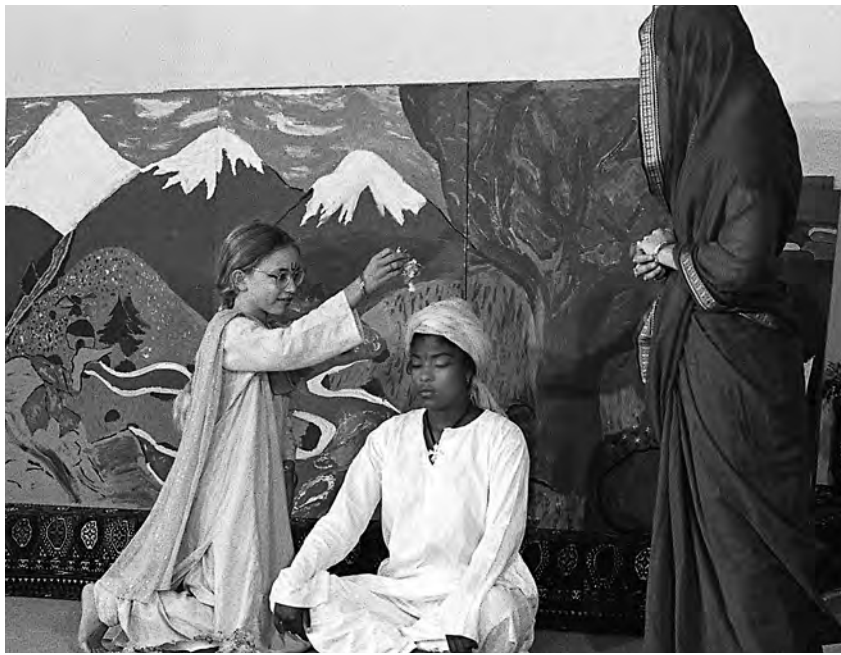
At every stage of life, love shows itself in not letting children have their way all the time, which millions of parents allow. Slowly, when you let your children have their own way – because otherwise they will cry or throw tantrums or run and hide in the tree house – they will learn to not listen to you at all. Eventually you will not be able to exercise any loving control over them, which is a difficult, dangerous situation for the child as well as the parent. When such children grow up, they are likely to have trouble in relating to others. Most important, they will be unable to say no to themselves.

It is during the years five to sixteen that children are going to rebel, and it is during these years that they must learn to obey their parents so they can learn to obey the Self in them, the Atman, later on. In their daily life the parents have to approximate themselves to the image of the Atman. This is why parenthood is an extremely valuable aid to meditation.

Most of us, of course, do not feel ourselves paragons of virtue. That is why it is so helpful to acquaint children with the lives of great men and women, particularly the great mystics of all religions, who embody the highest human ideals and role models. Since children of all ages take to play-acting, a family can have great fun in retelling these life stories in skits and plays in which the whole family joins in.

“ I’m developing a bad habit of either hurrying my kids when they want to talk to me or not listening with enough concentration. It’s clear that they need a lot of attention and have a lot to say. Sometimes it seems they can talk for hours. My son often wants to talk about video games and animation characters. This is not something I understand, nor does it interest me. Also, I don’t wish to encourage his interest in these. My daughter can talk for an hour without stopping ;-). When I come home from a long day that started early in the morning, I feel I’ve done my share. My wife has been home more and should have given them the attention they need, or so I think. So I give them some attention but don’t really do my best at it. Also the evenings are busy and there is not much time. So thinking “I’m tired, I’ve done enough today already, this is boring” is my negative wave. I think a positive wave could be remembering this line from Thomas à Kempis, “Love attempts what is above its strength” – and using the mantram and slowing down more effectively so I have more energy at the end of the day. ”





*“Lofty role models and high ideals”:
scenes from plays on the Buddha (above),
Gandhi (top right),
and Sri Krishna (right), staged and
performed at family
retreats by children of
all ages with some help
from their parents and
teachers.*



“ I want a calm mind to interact with my kids. Without discrimination, I sometimes put energy into friends, co-workers, or strangers, and become depleted when family time comes. Unfortunately, it is easier to let my “grumpies” out around my family. But my family may need my Highest Self even more. My attitudes around them have more meaning. As meditating parents we are a great influence on them. When they see how our practice helps us, they realize people can have a choice in how they think and behave. This is an amazing gift to children.”

“ Since they were just babies, I’ve stolen time for myself from my children by letting them watch good DVDs while they eat. Now it’s been very difficult to stop this – I need all my energy and creativity in the table to keep them interested in the present moment and food, not crying after TV! We are still far from the goal, but Easwaran has opened my eyes to see how harmful it is to escape from the present moment all the time, especially on the occasions when the family could spend nice time together and get closer. I don’t want to give this bad heritage to my children!”

After Sixteen

FROM SIXTEEN on, the saying concludes, your children are your equal. Afterwards do not try to push them about; do not throw your weight about, but try to explain. Appeal to their sense of reason; try to make them understand your position, and make a great effort to understand theirs.

Often it is because parents and growing young people find themselves unable to be detached from their opinions that there is conflict, and obsessive identification with opinions can be the worst kind of attachment. Parents are not their opinions, nor are the children theirs. If we are prepared to listen with respect to opinions that are different from ours – not only from our children but with everyone – we will find our feeling of hesitation and apprehension is lost. Children will appreciate this, and the father may even say to the mother, “You know, the boy may be right.”

In these ways, we can help our children grow up secure and selfless, well prepared to make wise choices when they grow up. ⇨





“There is no greater blessing in life than to be born into a family where meditation is practiced. It gives children a flying start at making their lives a work of art, of benefit to everyone around them.”

-Eknath Easwaran

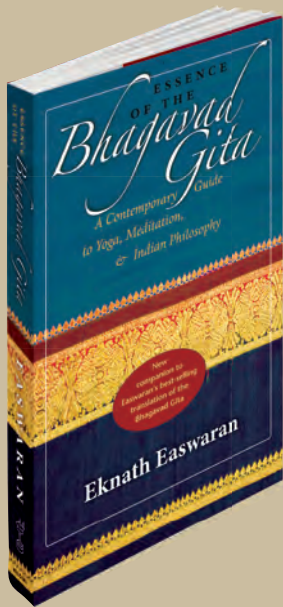


“ To me, setting aside my comforts is when my 11 yr. old granddaughter comes over (she lives close by) and asks me to fix her something good for dinner (parents may be busy or working), or play Monopoly, or watch *American Idol* (ugh), or just be with grandma when all I want to do is curl up in my chair and read my book, watch my movie, and have my time. I sometimes feel resentful . . . yes, it’s MY time! But, after I spend the time with her and we laugh and curl up together . . . and she kisses me and says “Grandma, I love you” . . . I realize that this was way better than what I thought was my comforts. Always so much better to do one kind thing for someone else than several for yourself. ”



Easwaran's *Essence of the Bhagavad Gita* – a five-star Amazon Review

In December 2011, a completely new book by Easwaran, compiled by his longtime editors in accordance with his instructions, went on sale in the US and internationally. This was the first reaction that we received - a five-star review on the Amazon.com website.



The Essence of Wisdom

This latest addition to Easwaran's legacy is one of the most insightful to date. If you enjoy Easwaran's teachings, if you're yearning for ultra-deep insights into this beloved Hindu scripture, or if you simply want to read elegant prose seasoned with delightfully modern, often amusing stories and analogies, you'll love this book.

Many Gita commentaries (including Easwaran's own three-volume set) explore the text passage by passage. Through these, we quickly discern that the battle described in the Gita is not physical but internal and that this battle is won using will power rather than firepower.

Beyond the individual words and passages, however, lies much more. Deftly wielding his little but powerful lamp, Easwaran leads us on a spelunking trip deep into the heart of the Gita. Along the way, we encounter wisdom from such varied sources as Shankara, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Spinoza, Jung, Canadian neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield, physiologist Hudson

Hoagland and others. The journey is at once simple and profound.

The book begins by introducing the split in consciousness between our lower and higher selves that causes separateness and struggle. Easwaran explores the nature of reality and personality, explaining that we are not our bodies or our minds (!) and that identification with these impostors keeps us feeling separate from everyone and everything.

Beginning with chapter six, we move from theory to practice. Easwaran explains how to heal the split using a system of living that includes meditation, living deliberately and experimenting with our likes and dislikes. The words are practical and enormously compelling.

The final three chapters describe the journey of humanity toward its ultimate goal: self-realization. We have no choice but to fight this battle, Easwaran and the Gita insist. Putting our heads in the sand or playing with the toys of life only delays the battle and prolongs our misery. Ultimately, Easwaran's Gita tells us we will not only fight but also win and that this glorious day comes much more quickly when we seize the initiative and realize our potential.

This story could only be told by a lifelong student of the Gita, someone who has lived it each day and is now so familiar with it that its words pale against the underlying meaning. Even so, in the hands of a lesser writer, no one but an enlightened being could even understand how the meaning derives from the words. But Easwaran's ideas fit together so well and are so nicely supported by the sparsely used but powerful Gita verses that, by the end, it's utterly impossible to deny both the wisdom of this interpretation and the inevitability of its effect on us. –Reader Review on Amazon.com

Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

A Contemporary Guide to Yoga, Meditation & Indian Philosophy

by Eknath Easwaran

304 pages \$14.95

Also available in an ebook edition from Amazon, B&N, Google, Apple, and Kobo

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation Retreats: Find Spiritual Replenishment

“Just as there was a cultural renaissance in the West several centuries ago, the world needs a spiritual renaissance today. 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.” – EKNATH EASWARAN



Passage meditation is meant for people who live in the midst of the world, interacting with frazzled relatives and grumpy grocery clerks. It's meant for people who yearn to dwell in peace and compassion while still getting the dog to the vet and the kids to school on time.

Does that sound like you? If it does, then you also know how hard it is to put Easwaran's teachings into practice during daily hectic activities, and to access his wisdom when you really need it.

We invite you to join us at a passage meditation retreat to learn and practice this great art. If you are coming to your first retreat, you will discover the power of passage meditation and how you can start practicing to see the benefits in your own life. If you are returning, you will spend your retreat quietly weaving the eight points throughout your day or weekend, bringing calm and replenishment. It will also be a time of engaging actively with Easwaran's teachings, perhaps bringing a new level of connection with his teachings.

The retreat presenters, lifelong students of Eknath Easwaran, span a range of backgrounds, careers, and ages. Our commonality is our practice of passage meditation – it's central to our lives and we're passionate about this practice.

Sliding Scale & Other Information

A sliding scale fee structure and financial aid are available. For more information, write to financial.aid@easwaran.org or call us at 800 475 2369.

Our retreat calendar for 2012 is available on the back cover and at www.easwaran.org/retreats. For questions or registration, please contact us at 800 475 2369 or info@easwaran.org

BLUE MOUNTAIN



A JOURNAL FOR
SPIRITUAL LIVING
BASED ON
EKNATH EASWARAN'S
EIGHT-POINT PROGRAM
OF PASSAGE MEDITATION

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation
Nilgiri Press
Box 256, Tomales, California 94971

Nonprofit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Santa Rosa, CA
Permit #191

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In Tomales, California

*March 23–27: Senior Half-Week
March 30–4/1: Returnee Weekend
April 13–15: Introductory Weekend
April 21–27: In-Depth Weeklong
May 19–25: In-Depth Weeklong
June 8–10: Returnee Weekend
July 7–13: In-Depth Weeklong w/YA
August 4–10: In-Depth Weeklong
August 17–21: Senior Half-Week
August 24–26: Introductory Weekend
September 21–23: Returnee Weekend
September 29–10/5: In-Depth Weeklong
October 13–19: In-Depth Weeklong
November 2–4: Young Adult Weekend
November 9–11: Introductory Weekend*

Across the US

*March 16–18: Dallas Weekend
March 17: Dallas One-Day
April 13–15: Oregon (Mt. Angel) Weekend
April 14: Oregon (Mt. Angel) One-Day
June 15–17: New York (Ossining) Weekend
June 16: New York (Ossining) One-Day
September 28–30: Chicago Weekend
September 29: Chicago One-Day
November 10: Sacramento (Auburn) One-Day*

*Colorado – to be announced
San Diego – to be announced*