

Eknath Easwaran's

Blue Mountain Journal

Meditation and Spiritual Living



Fall/Winter 2017

Teacher and Student



In This Issue

Can we have a valid, authentic relationship with Easwaran as our teacher, even though we can't meet him in the body? Years after Mahatma Gandhi's passing, a foremost student, Vinoba

Bhave, wrote of his teacher: "When he was alive I had to walk five miles to meet him; it took me two hours, and I had to make an effort. Now I simply close my eyes and am with him that very second Then, he was confined within a body; now he is free."

Easwaran's own spiritual teacher, his granny, had shed her body before he turned to meditation. Like Vinoba, he had to find his teacher in his heart. For us as students, however, he gives an entirely practical way forward. "I live in my eight-

point program," he says, and in his books and talks, which we're making more and more accessible through our website and the new Easwaran Digital Library.

As for our personal relationships with Easwaran, you'll find a wide range of examples in the stories from our international community. Some contributors have met him personally, but most haven't. For many, the relationship has evolved over the years. Some see him as a loving friend, some as a wise teacher, and a few as their guru. For all, he is a living presence.

But what is the value of having a teacher – and how do we choose one? Easwaran makes two

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points. First, we must have a reliable guide on this path if we're to make any lasting progress, particularly in the latter stages of meditation. Second, the student bears the responsibility for choosing a teacher wisely. The true guru has realized the Self and wants nothing – really nothing – but that we should attain the supreme goal ourselves.

And to do this, in our speeded-up, technology-driven world, we desperately need proof that Self-realization is realistic. Easwaran spoke to this point with his close students:

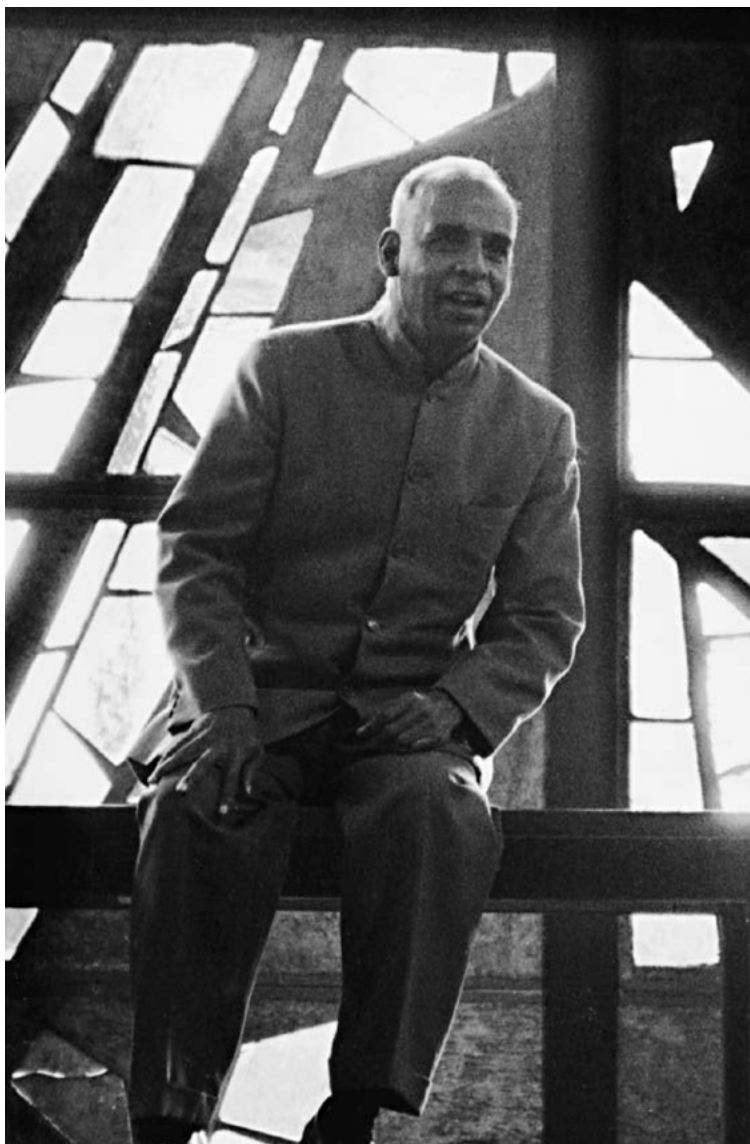
I find that most people don't doubt the existence of a higher Self so much as they doubt the average person's ability to discover it. I can only answer that any person with the same determination as I had can discover the Self. I had my share of problems, and I made my share of mistakes, yet I know it can be done.

Once I began to do well in meditation, I realized how terribly difficult it all was becoming.

Then I decided I would rather lose my life than lose my goal. I don't think I ever could have had that kind of resolution except for my teacher's blessing and inspiration. Most of the people close to me today keep a photograph of me somewhere to remind them. They take it out and say, "If Easwaran can do it, we can do it."

We hope you draw as much inspiration from reading this journal as we did from putting it together.

Sue Craig, and the BMCM Editorial Team



In the Tilden Room at the University of California, Berkeley, 1960s

An Inner Command

Easwaran tells his story

In Sanskrit drama, the curtain opens on a narrator who gives the audience the thread of the story they are about to see.

After the realization of God, you can look back on your life and see there was a thread through all the twists and turns that led eventually to the path of Self-realization. But until then, that thread is hidden – and afterwards, when your life is picked up as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, I don't think anyone can grasp the rest of the drama. The stage is too vast; it may be generations before the story can be filled in.

In India, I should tell you, no one asks to be a spiritual teacher. It is not a job one chooses. Even of those rare men and women who attain the goal, only a handful become teachers. But for some, when the time is right, there comes an inner command.

My grandmother's purpose

My spiritual teacher, my grandmother, must have raised me with a particular job in view that I never even guessed at. She didn't need to practice spiritual disciplines; she came into this life fully aware of God. Her only purpose was to mold me to be her instrument for this work. She had only one student; he was enough of a handful. And she made me into someone with a very different makeup from her own.

My passion for literature and theater, my appreciation of the beauty of nature and the flights of the intellect, my love of people and creatures – none of these were the kind of person she was; but that was the kind of person she felt I needed to be. She had me learn Sanskrit at an early age and no one could

understand why. She encouraged me to dive into English literature and drown myself for years, knowing full well that I was bound to follow the lure of the West and lose sight of my own heritage. She must have seen an inner thread running through it all, and had some dim sense of where it would lead.

Turning deep inwards

For the last five thousand years in India there has been an uninterrupted chain of men and women who have suddenly been touched by the grace of God and drawn to go deep inwards until they reach the very seabed of consciousness.

When this happened to me, halfway through life, I was leading a very successful life by Indian standards. Suddenly all that success turned to ashes. With the earthly loss of my two guiding stars, my grandmother and Mahatma Gandhi, death shattered my life and turned me inwards. I turned instinctively to the Bhagavad Gita, most of which I knew by heart, and the words opened up and took me deep, deep in. They were no longer poetry; they were depth charges that exploded with meaning in the depths of my consciousness.

That was the beginning of the method of meditation I teach today. From the Indian perspective, it must have already been with me in my deeper consciousness; all that I had to do was pick it up. There is no other explanation.

I wasn't on my own

In India's immemorial religious tradition, this is considered to be one of the finest fruits of divine grace. I wasn't really on my own. There was a power, inscrutable, mysterious, but undeniable, that began to guide my footsteps. I went deeper at a pace so rapid that it frightened me, and there was no one to consult.

In one particularly difficult situation, I felt I had left one

shore and couldn't even catch a glimpse of the other side. I had reached a point of no return. That night I dreamt that I was drowning. It wasn't really a dream; it was much more real than waking life. And at the last outburst of agony, Sri Krishna appeared and rescued me. That is why I call him my beloved Boss. After that, though I had to face many difficulties and many challenges, I have never lost my faith.

But it was a long time before I understood what was happening. I don't think I even thought of it as meditation. Only later did it dawn on me that I had embarked on a long journey blazed by India's great sages in a tradition thousands of years old. But I hadn't taken the traditional route, abandoning the world for a monastery or a cave on the Himalayas. My grandmother hadn't turned her back on the world and neither had Mahatma Gandhi. So I struggled forward, following my own star, with no one around to explain to me what was going on inside.

I needed to understand

It helped to make me a good teacher. I was a very modern man, and without a traditional path to follow I went straight to the sources of the perennial philosophy, the Gita and the Upanishads. I had no teacher except my grandmother and I needed no other teacher too. And with my university orientation, I read avidly in the annals of mysticism in all religions to understand what I was going through. Faith and devotion were not enough for me; I needed to understand. It was a combination that appeals to a great many people in the world today.

But for a long time I really felt at sea. Now, though I played the role of a professor during the day, I was increasingly aware that I was cast in a drama where I knew my lines but offstage didn't even know who I was. Late in the evening and long before dawn, while the world slept, I would be alone and awake

in meditation, searching inner realms for a forgotten path that would take me home – some bridge between the world of change and the changeless, the transient and the eternal, the individual and the universal, the human and the divine.

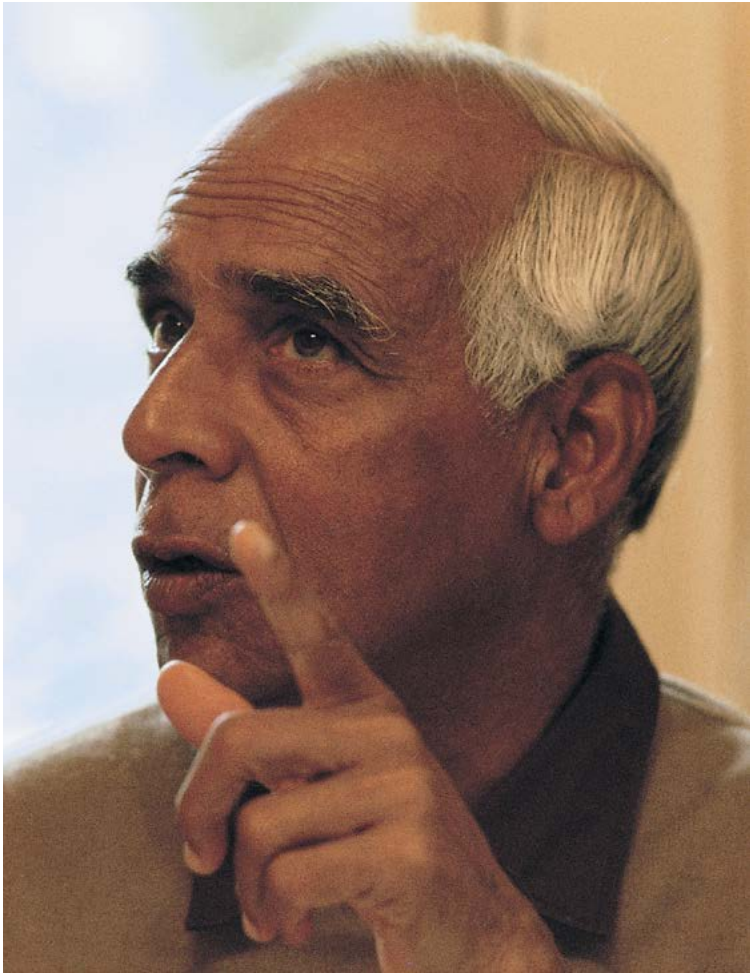
To the West

By the time I became a full professor, I knew that soon I would somehow be teaching not literature but *brahmavidya*, the “supreme science” of meditation. One day, two professors from New York who had come to my university to speak saw that I was at home in Western culture and could interpret the basis of India’s civilization in language that the West could understand. They encouraged me to apply to the Fulbright exchange program, and I was accepted.

Later, on board ship on the long voyage to America, I started trying to explain these timeless truths to Englishmen and Australians and Americans in terms they could understand. The challenge came at a difficult time. I was still learning to function with one eye on time and the other on eternity, as Eckhart puts it.

That is the art I was learning when I reached New York, playing the part of an exchange professor, a mystic in scholar’s clothing, Tom, Dick, and Harry rolled into one. It was a difficult time, but it was also very satisfying. I found that I could function beautifully in the midst of an advanced technological society, and establish very personal relationships everywhere, without ever forgetting God.

Within a semester at the University of Minnesota, I had decided that California would prove more fertile ground. I knew no one there and I had no idea of how I should begin. But almost as I was packing my bags, an Indian student gave me a book called *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Swami



Easwaran, early 1970s

Yogananda, who had come to this country early in this century and founded an organization in Los Angeles.

I read his story with great interest, and when I had finished I wrote a letter to the Self-Realization Fellowship saying how much I appreciated Swamiji's work and mentioning that I would soon be coming to California myself. There came a night letter welcoming me as if I had been a long-lost member of the mystic family. It was just like being back in India: a great ashram where I could spend a week with dedicated spiritual aspirants, surrounded by the books I had come to love.

The week the work began

That was the week this work really began. One of the monks took me to San Diego to meet a very distinguished authority on Tibetan Buddhism, Dr. Evans-Wentz. He had done marvelous work in the West to popularize the teachings of Tibetan mysticism, particularly through a translation known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. After putting me through my paces for a couple of hours, he said, "I want to arrange a press conference." The conference began after luncheon at one o'clock and it didn't end until after ten. The room was packed with people shooting questions, and I didn't have time to think about how to reply; the words just flowed.

Dr. Evans-Wentz arranged for me to return to San Diego and give a lecture at the university. The hall was packed with a very attentive audience. That was my first talk in this country on the spiritual life, and it was there that I laid out my guidelines – the basics of the program I had practiced in my own life and have been presenting ever since.

After that experience I knew my work would start as soon as I reached Berkeley. I spoke to large audiences at the university and to smaller groups around the Bay Area. Many only wanted

to read about the spiritual life, but in every audience I found a few with a window open, and that open window would bring them up after the talk to ask practical questions.

In one such talk, in a bookstore in San Francisco, I met Christine. She had come to the Bay Area in February 1960 just like me; it took till August for us to find each other. I had been speaking on the Katha Upanishad and the conquest of death, my perennial theme, and my words went down so well that in a moment of enthusiasm I gave instructions in meditation and said, “Now let us try it.” We all closed our eyes, and in a short time I went deep, deep in. When I came out, only three people were in that room: myself, Christine, and the owner of the bookstore, who was waiting impatiently to close.

With the arrival of Christine, most of my problems were solved. She was my driver, my secretary, my accountant, everything. At that time I had speaking engagements in at least four places around the Bay Area. We consolidated them all in a little place at 1333 Walnut Street in Berkeley. I didn’t have any money, Christine didn’t have any money, and naturally everyone advised us to levy some fees. It was tempting, but we resolutely set our face against it. For a while we had a difficult time, but little by little, beginning with Mary,* people began to come and help.

Precious years back in India

We had just got the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation incorporated when I was called back to India in January 1962 to fulfill the terms of the Fulbright. Christine joined me two weeks later, leaving Mary in charge.

*Mary Davenport served Easwaran with unwavering commitment for over 50 years, until her passing in August 2017 at the age of 100.



Easwaran and Christine, 1960s

Those were precious years. We had no worldly responsibilities – no income and no responsibilities. My mother was there, my sister was there, we had no household duties, so we could devote ourselves completely to our spiritual disciplines. We had long hours of meditation every morning – I wouldn't recommend those hours to anyone today – and after breakfast we must have walked for hours and hours each day repeating the mantram, with another long meditation together in the evening.

And there were memorable instances of what in India is called *darshan*, the blessing of being in the presence of a man or woman who has realized God. We visited Swami Ramdas and received his blessing, and one glorious week at Vrindavan, where the historic Krishna grew up, we were able to visit one of India's greatest woman saints, Sri Anandamayi Ma, who gave her blessing by taking a garland from her own neck and placing it over Christine's.

Most significant for the future, perhaps, was an encounter with some Franciscan friars who had come up to the Blue Mountain for the summer to escape the heat of the plains. They invited me to their monastery to speak, and I looked upon it as an invitation not so much to address them as to kneel before Saint Francis. I was, in their eyes, neither a Catholic nor even a Christian, let alone a Franciscan. But they were deeply responsive, and one night Saint Francis appeared to me in a vision and his grace entered my heart.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

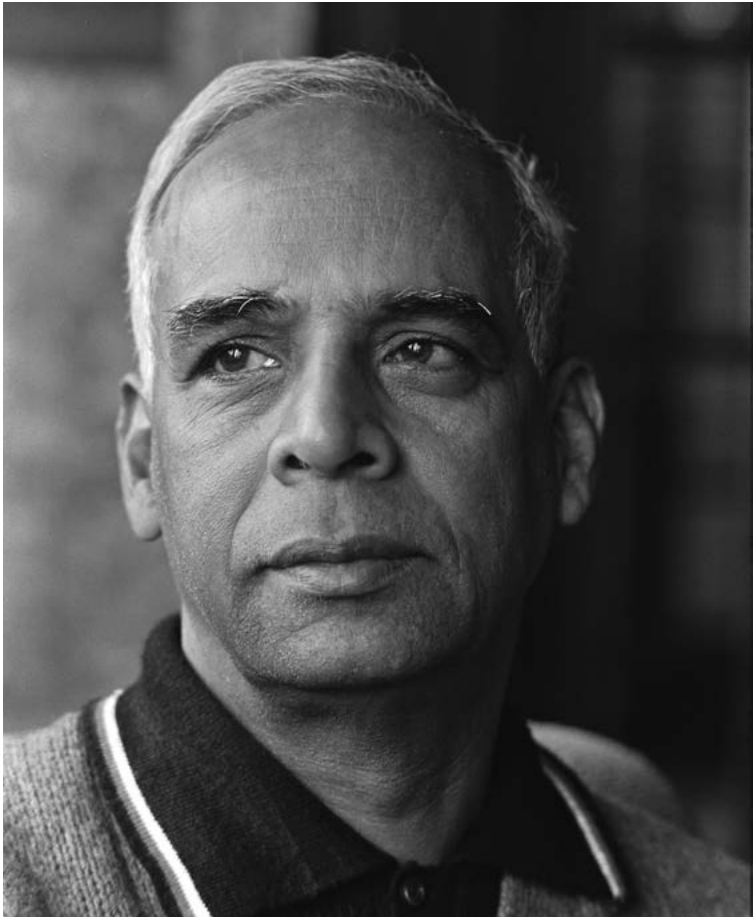
Perhaps that is why I chose the Prayer of Saint Francis among all the thousands of passages to recommend for meditation. If you can see through the words as I do, I see Francis in that prayer. It is not by him; it is him. The proof was that those

words came alive in my consciousness and began to shape my life. When you have driven that prayer deep into your consciousness in meditation, it means that you have become an instrument in the hands of the Lord for peace wherever you live. It is not a little prayer. It's a kind of blessed bomb that bursts in your consciousness. Once you have this tremendous experience, every deed that you do, every word that you speak, every thought that you think, will have this stamp. That's what a little prayer can do.

Perhaps you can see now that it is not just me and Christine doing this work together. There is an indescribable power behind that pushes us on. It has given me a certain limited choice: to use Gandhiji's image, I don't have the wide choice of the sea, just the choice of rooms on a ship. But even within that limited choice we can make great contributions to the welfare of the world.

All in all, we had almost four full years on the Blue Mountain in India to devote completely to meditation and the allied disciplines. It was perfect preparation for what lay ahead. I had never had such an opportunity before and we never had it again. For in December 1965, when Sri Krishna must have decided that we were ready for Berkeley and Berkeley was ready for us, the obstacles to our return fell away and we plunged into the maelstrom of this work with Sri Krishna as our ferryman. And I never looked back.

Read more about Easwaran's life in *With My Love and Blessings*, *The Making of a Teacher*, and *The Mantle of the Mystic*.



Easwaran, 1970s

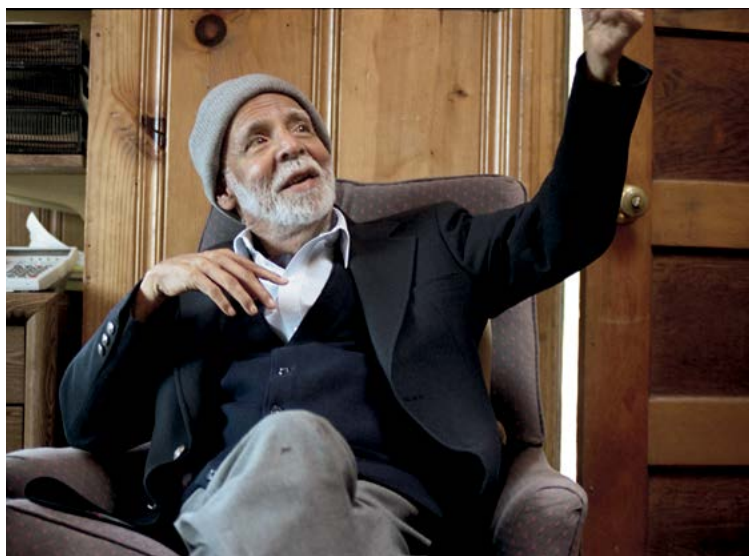
The Need for a Teacher

Ekknath Easwaran

The idea of a spiritual teacher is actually quite simple. Just as you need a guide to scale a mountain peak for the first time – someone who has gone before – you need an experienced guide on the spiritual path. You need someone who can show you the way and help you when you get tied up in your ropes.

The teacher should know every inch of the ascent, from the foothills to the summit. He should be able to warn the students where there are ice fields and crevasses and tell them where they can pitch their tents and rest.

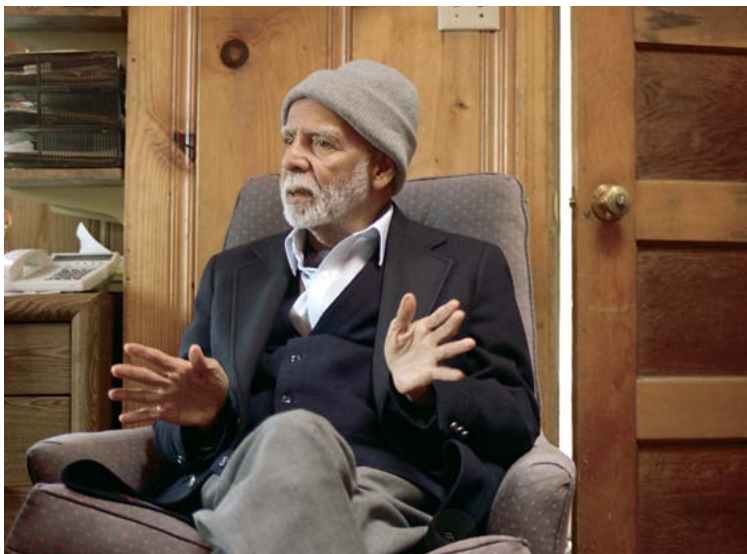
I am talking from my own personal experience of traveling along this path, over many years, and through my teacher's



Teaching in the office at Ramagiri, 1990s

grace reaching journey's end. The path is a gradient. In the early years it's not very steep, and we can climb, but as our muscles get stronger, as our determination and will get stronger, this gradient slowly begins to get steeper. That's why I say go slow, don't try to rush up those steep gradients, because if your body has not been well trained, if your will is not firm and your capacity to act in emergencies is not very good, then there is great danger on this path.

That is why it takes a long, long time to make this climb, and that's why an experienced teacher is always necessary. As the gradient changes, as more challenges come, the teacher will be able to guide you, help you, support you, pull you away from the precipice, not because he has read books, but because he has been along that way, and knows where the avalanches may come.



We have to do the work

But while the teacher is essential for guidance and support, we have to do the work for ourselves. Spiritual awareness is not something that just strikes us one day, like the apple falling on Sir Isaac Newton's head, and there is no shortcut to it such as taking drugs or using alpha-wave gadgets. It must be cultivated by the hard work of eliminating all that is selfish and separate in us, following a body of disciplines that is based on our teacher's own personal experience in realizing the unity of life.

The disciplines in my eight-point program are suited for life in the modern world, and they can be practiced by any man or woman capable of some resolution, some endurance, and some sense of dedication. They do not require you to withdraw into a cave and roll a rock across the entrance behind you; you can follow this program while living in the world among family and friends, while studying on the campus or working at a job.

A wiser way of living

My own approach to the spiritual life appeals to many men and women today, partly because I have not retired from the world – I live very much as a family man, a good husband, son, and friend – but also because I have tried to combine the best of West and East.

But perhaps what appeals most deeply is that I understand the difficulties of living in the modern world. Before taking to meditation, in my ignorance of the unity of life, I too committed most of the mistakes that even sensitive people commit today. As a result, I understand how easy it is to make those mistakes, and I know how to guide and support those who are trying to learn a wiser way of living.

I live in my eight-point program

I have said many times that Saint Francis lives in the words of his prayer. Gandhi may be said to live in the second chapter of the Gita, on which he based his life.

Similarly, you can say that I live in my eight-point program, and I can assure you that I live in my audio and video recordings for those who are practicing my method of meditation to the best of their ability and following the instructions faithfully with an open heart.

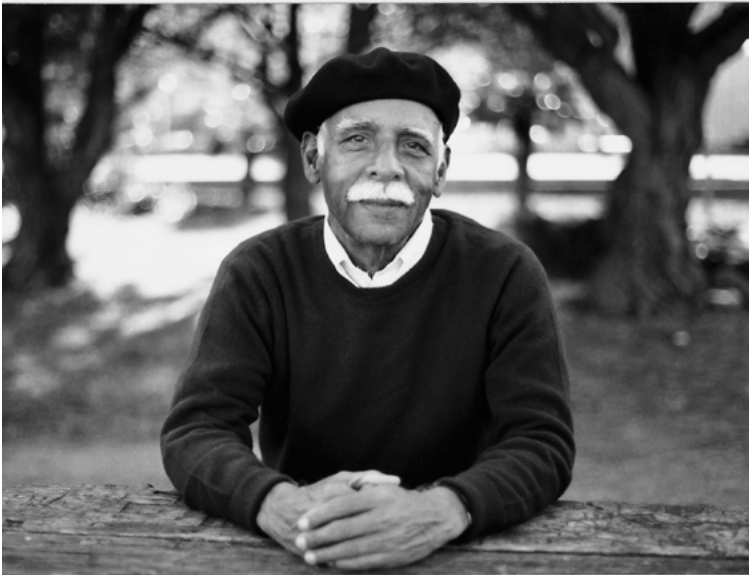
So if you are following this method of meditation, I would encourage you to read my books over and over and follow the instructions very carefully. That is your safeguard.

You have to remember that when I started to meditate, my own spiritual teacher, my grandmother, had already passed away. At first I felt very much on my own, but at every stage, when I turned to her for guidance, I found answers to my questions.

You see, when a person becomes aware of God, he or she is no longer just a person, but a living force. My grandmother did not die; she merely shed her body. She was – she is – very much alive in me. Once I knew that, I knew that I was in her hands and that there was nothing to fear. She has protected and comforted me ever since.

I am not just talking, you know. Jesus continues to guide us. The Buddha continues to guide us. These are eternal forces; their lives are eternal.

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



Easwaran, late 1980s

The Outer Teacher and the Teacher Within

Eknath Easwaran

The word *guru* literally means “heavy” – one so heavy that no storm can uproot him, as heavy as a mountain that withstands the hurricane without flinching. A guru is a person who is so deeply established within himself that no force on earth can affect the complete love he feels for everyone. If you curse him, he will bless you; if you harm him, he will serve you; and if you exploit him, he will become your benefactor.

It is good for us to remember that the supreme teacher or guru is in all of us – call him Krishna or call him Christ – but we need an external teacher who has become aware of the teacher within and will help us make this discovery for ourselves. The outer teacher makes us aware of the teacher within, and to the extent we can be loyal to the outer teacher, we are being loyal to ourselves, to our deepest Self, our Atman.

We are told in the scriptures to select a teacher very carefully. Once we make a decision and select an outer teacher who is suited to our spiritual needs, we must be completely loyal to him.

Caught, not taught

Spiritual awareness is really not taught; it is caught. This is a beautiful way of saying that when we love someone who lives without any thought of his own personal satisfaction, who devotes all his energy, love, and wisdom to help those around him find wisdom, we absorb, through our deep love for him, something of his spiritual awareness. Constant association with people who are spiritually advanced supports us by a process of absorption.

If I may refer to my own small example, I have committed the innumerable mistakes that most of us commit in our modern civilization, but in giving all my love to my grandmother, I was able to attain some spiritual awareness.

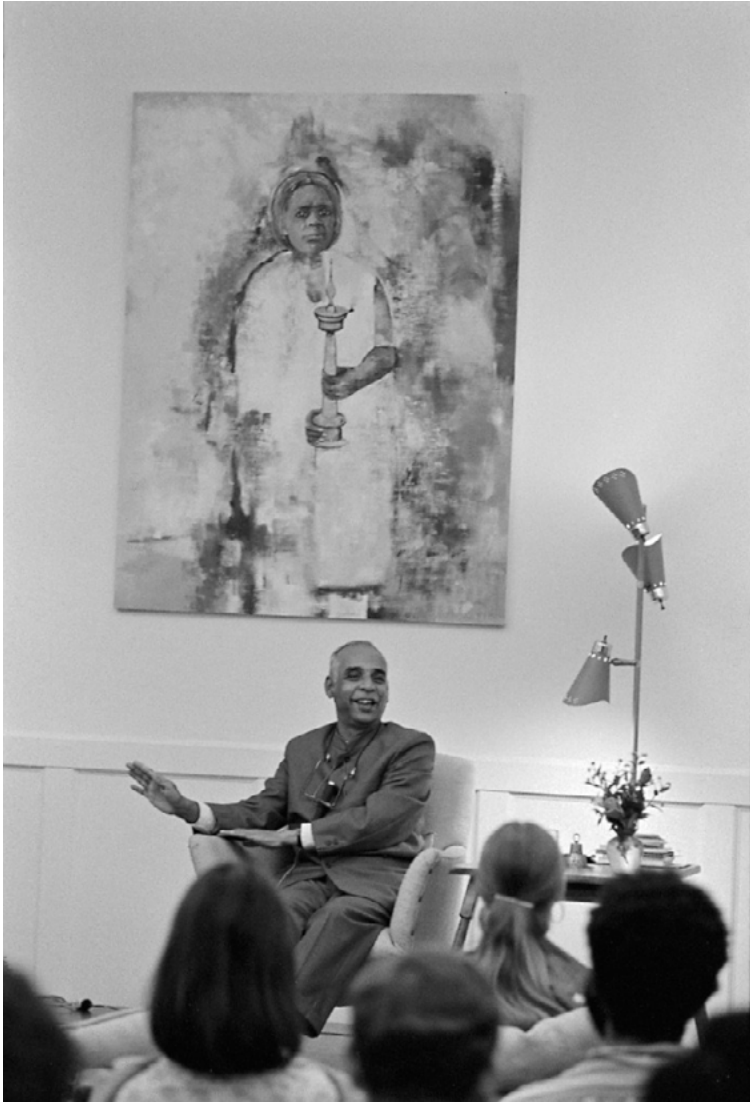
The teacher steps aside

When the disciples love the guru, it is this love that unifies their consciousness. At the time when we are ready for it, the spiritual teacher will step aside to show us that all the love we have been giving him has been directed to our own Atman.

The guru, who has become complete in himself, does not need anyone's love to make him secure; it is in order to unify the consciousness of the disciple that the relationship exists. All the external teacher can do is be a reflection of the student's Atman. He is the symbol of the unity of all life until the student can make the discovery that the Lord is within his own heart.

Ask for blessings

When you begin your meditation, it is very helpful to ask for the blessings of your teacher, who has no selfish attachments and expects nothing from you in return. Your teacher's joy lies solely in enabling you to discover your own real Self and make a great contribution to the world. That is why I always begin my meditation with an expression of my love and gratitude for my teacher, my mother's mother.



Easwaran giving a class in Berkeley in the 1960s, with his grandmother in the painting in the background

My Teacher Was My Real “Me”

Eknath Easwaran

When I was a student at college, every weekend some students would have a holiday by going boating; but my idea of a holiday was to make for my village, about 50 miles from the college, to be reunited with my grandmother.

I used to go by train to the little town of Palghat. From Palghat to my village it was seven miles of beautiful road with big trees on either side, sometimes with monkeys swinging from them. I used to enjoy walking along it, but more than the monkeys, and more than the trees, and more than the brooks, what gave me joy was the knowledge that every step would bring me closer to my granny. At that time I didn't know she was my spiritual teacher; she was just my grandmother.

When I arrived home, she would hold my hands and look and look at me; she didn't need words. The first question she would ask me was, “What did you learn this week?” This gave me just the opportunity I had been waiting for. I would put my hands behind my back and say, “Now, Granny, listen carefully. The professor who teaches me logic has taught me what a syllogism is.”

She just laughed

I really thought my granny was simplistic, though I didn't dare call her so. With the childlike simplicity of the spiritual woman, she would say, “Now, son, give me an example of this great learning that you have absorbed.” So I would quote my logic professor and say, “All men are mortal. I am a man. Therefore, ergo, I am mortal.” She just laughed and laughed and said, “I pay all this money so that you can learn this trash?”

Then this unlettered, untutored woman stated the syllogism

perfectly: “All men, all creatures, are immortal because the Lord lives in them. I am a creature. Therefore I am immortal.”

The secret of absorbing such spiritual wisdom is to open our hearts wide and give all our love to our spiritual teacher, who symbolizes our Atman for the present. When I would run home to see my granny, I did not know I had an Atman. Now that I look back I see that my grandmother was my Atman. That is why I loved her; she was my real “me,” my perfect “me,” my pure “me.” I didn’t know this intellectually, but deep inside, from the very depths of my heart, a little voice was saying, “That’s you.”

Look through the keyhole

This is what happens to us when we see a great saint like Sri Ramana Maharshi. People whose hearts are not open, who have the window of their consciousness bolted and barred, look and see only a dapper, brown little man in a dhoti.

But those whose hearts have opened, who are searching for the answer to the riddle of life and have flung the doors of their consciousness wide open, have only to see Sri Ramana Maharshi seated quietly before them to hear that little voice within them say in its sweet tones, “That’s you.”

Beautiful hymns have been composed to Sri Ramana Maharshi; great singers and poets have described his beauty. But he will quietly say, “There is no Ramana Maharshi here. There is nobody here. It’s all empty. I am just an empty keyhole.” You apply your eye closely and look through this empty keyhole, and in the dim distance, you see the immense glory of the Lord flaming up against the background of the cosmos.

My granny's grace

Much later, when I was attending university in a distant city, my granny would parade about in her best gold-bordered cloth when I was expected home on holiday, telling everyone, “This is my wedding day. My boy is coming home.” Yet when she was ready to leave her body, and all the family were gathering around her from the village and miles around, as is the custom in India, she insisted that I not be called. She knew I would grieve too much.

But grieve I must until she began to come to life in my own consciousness. It was only in the years following her passing, as I experimented for myself with the toys of life – until I discovered dimly the game behind the toys and began to read the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mahatma Gandhi and others – that I found almost hidden here and there a golden thread that tied her life to theirs.

She was an obscure village woman, but by her enormous love she sought to transfer to her boy the great spiritual awareness that was hers. And she has often said, “Anyone who loves my boy, I will carry that person on my head.”

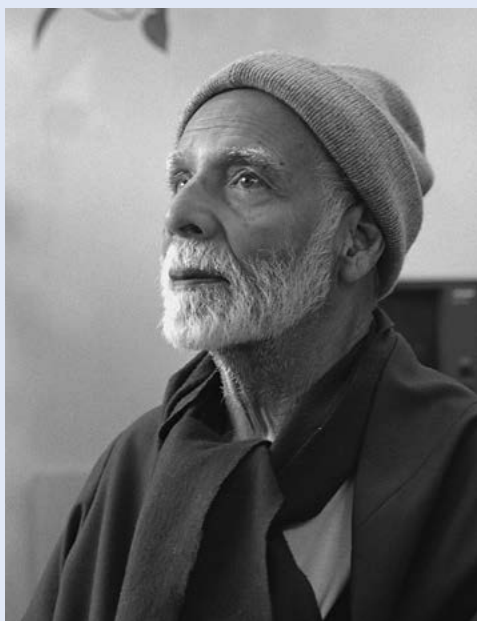
This is the greatness of my granny's love. This is my granny's grace. She is my guru, my spiritual teacher. She taught me that devotion to God is no different from devotion to family, only it doesn't stop with the family. It extends beyond every horizon.



Granny with Easwaran's sister, Leela

How do you see your relationship with Easwaran?

His readers and students reply



A Path for All Seasons

In the fall of 1967 the University of California at Berkeley announced that winter quarter course offerings would include a class on “The Theory and Practice of Meditation” taught by the founder-president of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Oakland, a former Fulbright scholar from India named Eknath Easwaran. The timing was perfect: the Bay Area has always been hospitable to Eastern spirituality, but probably never more so than in the late nineteen-sixties. The class attracted hundreds of students, so many that it had to be relocated to one of the big science lecture halls.

Graduate students at the time, we had the enormous privilege of taking Sri Easwaran’s course. Along with a few dozen others, we always arrived early, filling up the front two rows, because we already knew what the others would soon discover: Sri Eknath Easwaran was a teacher of rare genius, and you wouldn’t want to miss a word. We knew this because that Fall he had been giving free hour-long talks every Tuesday at noon in a quiet room on the top floor of the Student Union, and we were regular attendees. One of his great gifts as a teacher was that he managed to be just as fully and warmly present in this new setting as he’d been in the other.

Each week, Easwaran introduced us to one of the practices that made up his “Eight Point Program.” Meditation on a passage, use of a mantram, one-pointed attention ... He would begin by tracing a discipline back to its source in the classical Indian spiritual tradition – to the Bhagavad Gita, or the Upanishads, or the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and he would recite the relevant verses in sonorous Sanskrit. Then, without missing a beat, he would bring us from ancient India straight to the heady turbulence of Telegraph Avenue.

By the middle of the course it was clear that we had found our path, and our teacher. Steeped in the classical Indian Sanskrit tradition, yet equally at home in the English literary canon, Sri Easwaran was uniquely prepared to bridge the cultural distance between India and America. He had established his own spiritual practice in the midst of a demanding academic and literary career, so he saw no conflict between taking on a rigorous spiritual practice like his eight-point program of passage meditation, and leading active, committed lives in the contemporary world. We could learn not simply to withstand the pressures of contemporary life, he assured us, but to thrive among them and – this was always central to his teaching – help make the world a better place for our children and their children.

Life has become unimaginably faster and more fragmented than we could have imagined during our Berkeley years, and young people face a world that appears far more challenging – a world that is saturated with electronic media, unheard of levels of consumerism, profound economic uncertainties, and the ever-present threat of global terror. It comes as no surprise to us then that Sri Easwaran's eight-point program, unaltered during that half century, continues to resonate so powerfully. The unique fusion of spiritual depth, practicality, wisdom and infectious humor that captivated us during those luminous Berkeley classes of half a century ago continues to inspire, enrich, and support the lives of thousands of seekers today, living and practicing on every continent.

— *Two Ramagiri Ashram residents*

Lighting the Way

In 1969, in my twenties, I attended a course for credit at the University of California, Berkeley called “Theory and Practice of Meditation,” taught by Easwaran. I admired his voice and his calm, easy command of the subject, which left one feeling there was so much more to discover.

I kept meditating for about two years, then stopped, travelled, and ended up in the UK. Over the years I tried TM, Buddhist, and Hindu meditation. Finally, about 25 years ago, I knew I needed one method to stick with and decided to return to Easwaran’s approach because it offers a comprehensive program where each aspect links and supports the others.

My relationship with Easwaran has been a living thing, and is still developing with lulls and bursts, like any dynamic relationship. As a psychotherapist, I know death does not stop relationship. At first I saw him as a conveyor of spiritual wisdom, but not particularly special himself. For a long time I didn’t like the mantram and didn’t like his thoughts on intimate relationships. I had a lot to learn. I found a satsang in London for support, and then started one in Bath 12 years ago.

Now I see that his deceptively simple style belies an ever-deepening source of rescue from patterns of thought and behaviour which impede the realisation of the unity of life. The mantram and selfless relationship are integral to the struggle. Easwaran is there, living and growing in my consciousness, lighting the way. The most wonderful thing is that my daughter has taken to meditation too.

Most recently, I found myself unable to read more than a few pages of any other book, and realize I want to immerse myself in his works.

— *Lin, UK*



A Constant Guide

I clearly remember the day my mother taught me to meditate, sitting in a quiet sunlit room, memorising the Prayer of Saint Francis. I remember the peace as we meditated together and the peace as we continued our day together.

When I moved back in with my mother we would meditate each morning, wrapped snugly in blankets. I'd go to her satsang group and we'd remind each other to use the mantram.

My practice steadied my mind during childbirth and when I had medical news my mantram arrived unbidden, hand in hand with the knowledge that I would be OK.

Easwaran is a constant guide to me, whether I choose to listen to him or not! Whenever I pause I can see his wry, loving smile and cannot help but smile in return. As well as giving me life itself, my mother, through Easwaran, has shown me the way to lead it, and I only hope I can pass this on to my little son.

— Sara, *Lin's daughter, UK*

A “Come as You Are” Party

I take great comfort in Easwaran’s remark that his program is a “come as you are” party. It gives me permission to relate to him however I feel comfortable, and grants me the freedom to follow his teachings no matter how I feel about him.

When I began this practice, I thought Easwaran was primarily an author of self-help books. By the time I realized that he was a spiritual teacher, I’d already become his student. Since then, how I relate to him has varied over time.

Sometimes, Easwaran is a friend, other times a father figure, and still other times a friendly uncle or a mischievous conspirator. A few times, I may feel deeply devotional or prayerful towards him. Still other times, I experience deep skepticism.

But because Easwaran says that he lives in his teachings, I focus on being sincere and systematic in following the eight-point program. I’m also inspired by Easwaran’s own skepticism and discovery of Granny’s spiritual stature.

Through Easwaran, I’ve also become devoted to other teachers – Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, and Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai. I may spend weeks looking to them for guidance or inspiration, while continuing to model my day-to-day life after Easwaran’s eight-point program.

Also thanks to Easwaran, I’ve discovered my own family’s spiritual tradition and developed devotion to a spiritual ideal (similar to Jesus or the Buddha). Almost always, my prayers are to this spiritual ideal. I’m reminded of Easwaran’s statement that it was due to the grace of Granny that he developed devotion to Sri Krishna; similarly, I’ve developed my devotion to my ideal because of Easwaran. I’m also reminded of a quote I heard on this matter: there is no conflict between devotion

to God and guru, because the guru himself is sitting at the feet of God.

Ultimately, no matter where I live, how I pray, whom I pray to, and which Self-realized teachers I seek the comfort of, as long as I'm following the eight-point program with "determined dedication" and "extraordinary enthusiasm," I know that Easwaran is with me, and I am with him.

— *A retreatant, US*

A Gifted, Supremely Good-Natured Teacher

I first came across Easwaran while researching to write about Indian religion and mythology for a book. I was bowled over by his translations of the Upanishads and the Gita and the direct, practical approach outlined in the introductions to those books. I began meditating the same day.



I was too late to meet Easwaran in person, but I have learnt so much through reading his books and watching the DVDs of his talks. His positivity and good humour are an immense help to me and the pictures I have of him above my writing desk show him smiling, his eyes twinkling.

I have come to trust him as a gifted and supremely good-natured teacher and guide who brings the Gita, the Upanishads, the Bible and other books vividly to life – but also an inspiration who generously shares his own experience of enlightenment.

— *Charles, UK*

Here for Me Whenever I Read His Books

I first visited Ramagiri when I was seven years old in 1996. I remember the tangy smell of eucalyptus and sweet dry grass, of lavender and cedar wood. It is a smell I now associate with deep calm.

As children, I remember we stood in line to receive prasad from Easwaran.

We felt blessed all day. He was the kind of man who knew all about you, and loved you for it – no matter what. He also had a reputation for cracking jokes, which as a child I admired very much. But beyond all that, there was a certain something in the way he entered a room that made you want to sit up straighter and listen better. He had a light that you couldn't see, but was nevertheless present and palpable.

As an adult, my practice waxes and wanes. But I am always held somewhat steady by the knowledge that Easwaran is here for me whenever I turn to the mantram or read his books. He is with me in a way he wasn't when I was a child because now his ideas are more understandable to me, and more needed.

During the recent solar eclipse, I read the beginning of *The Undiscovered Country*. It seemed appropriate to read about death while the sun was ever so slowly chipped away, and then miraculously returned. And here was Easwaran returned to me, with all his humor, practicality, and piercing wisdom.

I took a long drink and thought, "Why was I away for so long?"

— Sara, Minnesota



A Connection to the Source of True Wisdom

From the beginning, I was impressed by the depth and breadth of Easwaran’s scriptural knowledge, comforted by the structure of the eight-point program, inspired by his personal example and entertained by his stories. After consistently engaging in daily practice, weekly local satsang, retreats in Tomales, and the Affiliate Internship, I am now completely captivated, just glimpsing the opportunities available to me as his student. At the best moments, I let myself believe “the central truth that God is seated in my own heart.” The brief gaps in my self-will that allow this magical thought to surface are undeniably due to Easwaran’s grace.



My relationship with Sri Easwaran connects me to the source of true wisdom even more deeply than incarnations of the Lord such as Krishna or Jesus. I find his teachings, as a person who lived in the recent past, both potent and fresh. Through watching his videos, reading his books, and practicing the eight points for more than a decade, my devotion to Easwaran continues to deepen.

In my work at a public school, there are limitless chances to “praise him in the way [he] loves best, by shining on those around us.” As I attempt to serve selflessly, I can’t imagine doing so without Easwaran’s guidance. As time goes on, I yearn to find the right balance of effort and surrender. I have no question that I can trust Easwaran to be there for me in every situation. With his help, I will (eventually!) break free from compulsive conditioning and move closer to the unified Self within us all.

— Merritt, Ohio

The Pilot Who Takes Me Across the Ocean of Life

We've brought up our three children with Easwaran's eight points as the tools they (and we as a family) use in every area of our lives. In our family we refer to them specifically, "this is a good time to use the mantram," "we need to be one-pointed," etc., and we also refer directly to what Easwaran says about a specific situation, or we will quote bits of passages from Easwaran's *God Makes the Rivers to Flow* that are pertinent.



For me personally, the words that most strongly describe my relationship with Easwaran are these, from the passage "Life of My Life" by Meera:

"You are my wisdom and my strength ...
Supreme teacher, fountain of wisdom ...
And the pilot who takes me across
The stormy ocean of life."

— Tracey, *New Jersey*

My Guru, My Spiritual Guide

Sri Easwaran is truly my guru, spiritual guide, and a source of strength. Meeting him was one of the most important events in my life. Neither words nor intellect can explain it, but I was just drawn to him when I first saw him. His endless love and compassion filled my heart, and changed my life's direction. That was the beginning of my relationship with Sri Easwaran.



During the last twenty-some years since then, my understanding of his teachings has naturally deepened. Practicing the eight-point program brought me to the clear understanding of the purpose of my life.

Receiving continuous help and support from Sri Easwaran and the BMCM, my sense of responsibility to share his teachings with others grew stronger, and eventually led me to work as a translator of his books into Japanese. It is a real joy and honor to be an instrument of Sri Easwaran to spread his teachings in Japan.

— *Kimiko, Japan*

He Moves My Head and My Heart

“Teacher” sums up my relationship with Easwaran. But the meaning of that word has evolved over the years. When I first met Easwaran through his books, he was an instrumental instructor in meditation. I’d told my sister that any instructions on meditating I’d found were so vague that it made it hard to start. She gave me the meditation and mantram books, and said, “This teacher is very specific.”



Easwaran moved my head with his instructions. He moved my heart with his stories.

Someone once told me that when you tell a story to an acquaintance, you say, “Stop me if you’ve heard this one before.” On the other hand, a friend asks you, “Tell me again, the one about” So I guess that I’ve become a friend of Easwaran. I love hearing or reading the familiar stories that connect at a deeper level with each retelling. And just like a really good friend will every now and then say, “Come on. Just get over yourself,” Easwaran, the loving teacher, actually shows us how.

He creates many paths of entry. I started with his teaching on meditation, but in trying to live the eight points under his guidance, have found a way of living that gives meaning to each moment, and transcends each moment.

He is a connector—connecting us to the unity beneath the superficial differences among the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. He connects us to others sharing this path, and to glimpses of the Self within ourselves and everyone. He

is a motivating, compassionate teacher. For us as Easwaran's students, full effort is full victory. Thank you, Easwaran.

— Kurt, Ohio

He Is Always With Me

I'm from India, Sri Easwaran's home country, but I met him through an American online bookstore. When I began to follow his teachings and to meditate, I didn't know anyone who had heard of him, but it never occurred to me that this was a shortcoming.

I've always been an avid reader, so it was comfortable and natural for me to dive into his teachings. I could see from testing out in my personal life several things he spoke of that what he said was the Truth. He Knew. And I, who had a reputation from childhood for asking a lot of questions, began to get my deep, searching questions answered by him.

I would have liked to meet him in person, but being so far away across the world, maybe I would have felt more distant. Now I feel he is always with me, as I believe he is with all his students who follow his teachings sincerely. He is my daily guide, friend, and teacher. I get to be with him and listen to him through his audio and video talks, and learn from his wisdom and insights through his books. Thanks to him, I was enabled to travel to California for a retreat. I have faith that he will show me the way as long as I hold on to his hand and follow him.

— Hasmita, India



Life of My Life

Meera

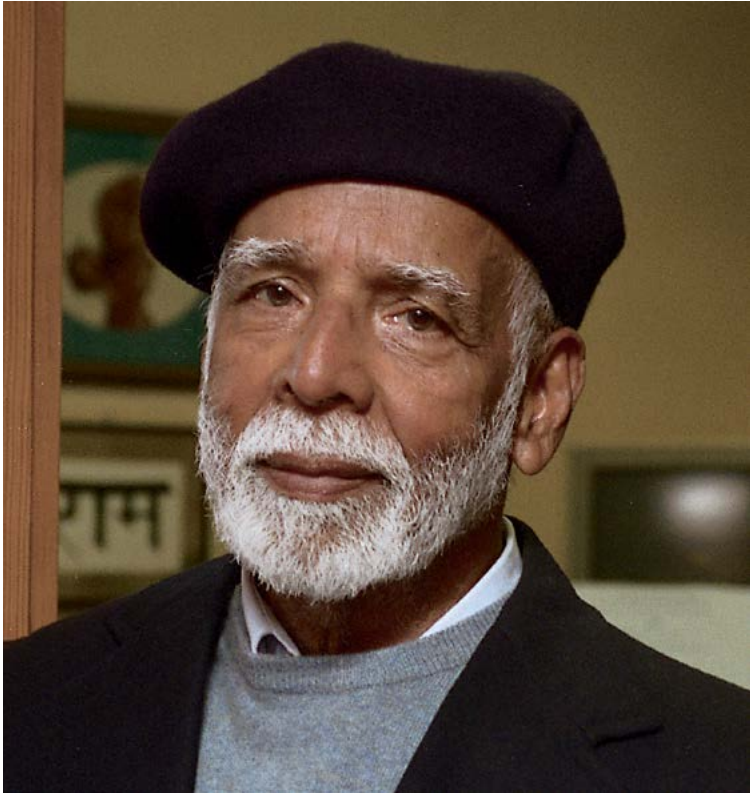
You are the life of my life,
O Krishna, the heart of my heart.
There is none in all the three worlds
Whom I call my own but you.

You are the peace of my mind;
You are the joy of my heart;
You are my beauty and my wealth.

You are my wisdom and my strength;
I call you my home, my friend, my kin.

My present and future are in your hands;
My scriptures and commands come from you.
Supreme teacher, fountain of wisdom,
You are the path and the goal,
Tender mother and stern father too.

You are the creator and protector,
And the pilot who takes me across
The stormy ocean of life.



Easwaran, 1990s

We Are All Teachers

Ekknath Easwaran

All of us, whether we like it or not, are in the role of teacher to those around us every waking hour of the day. This is especially clear in our relationships with children. Anyone who spends much time with children knows that they do not do what we ask them to do but what they see us doing. Education is based on a simple proposition: we teach by what we are.

Like thoughtful people everywhere, I am deeply troubled by the direction in which the world is moving. Just as there was a cultural renaissance in the West several centuries ago, the world needs a spiritual renaissance today. Just as there was an industrial revolution two hundred years ago, the world needs a spiritual revolution here and now.

What we practice, children absorb

For this we need, first and foremost, a higher image of the human being. So far the human being has essentially been looked upon as a separate, physical creature that enters life through one door at birth and disappears through another at death. Every mystic in every great religion has rightly called this an utterly superficial and distorted view.

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

Elevating spiritual values are particularly important for families. A spiritual reawakening is not going to happen in one generation. Our children have a very precious role to play, and

we need to nourish them for that role from today onwards.

Children have wonderful creative faculties which will not come into play if they grow up with interactive video and TV. Some of our children got together and put on a very moving three-act play on a spiritual theme, with roles for all ages, in just six days.

Young people and adults can get together and enact plays like this. You can write your own plays, drawing upon the rich spiritual traditions of all the great religions. The creativity tapped by this kind of spiritual focus, for adults as well as children, releases unsuspected currents of devotion.

Draw on all spiritual traditions

But just as in choosing meditation passages, don't restrict yourself to one religion only. Draw on all the spiritual traditions. A great emperor who lived in India two hundred years before the birth of Christ said that if you don't respect other people's religions, it shows you lack respect for your own. All of us are children of God.

This is the atmosphere our children should grow up in. In such an atmosphere your whole vision changes, and your children will pick it up. Children absorb prejudices first from their parents, and this is how you can give them a firm foundation that nothing on earth will shake.

Don't give up on anybody

Don't think I was born with wings on my shoulders and a halo around my head. Far, far from it. That is why I have so much compassion for people who make mistakes — which means everybody.

When I made mistakes, my granny would take me to task, but she would never give up on me or withdraw her support.

That is why I say never give up on any child. They will commit mistakes. They'll burn their fingers. Take them to task, but stand by them.

When a student teacher came to me for advice when she was starting her career, I put it in two short phrases: "Don't lower your standards for anybody on earth, and don't give up on anybody on earth."

Whatever young people may do, in their own language they are often crying for help. It is the responsibility of all of us older people – not only parents, but all older people – to set them a higher example every day by translating the Prayer of Saint Francis into our lives. When your children see you going into meditation agitated, angry, or afraid and coming out cheerful, calm, and compassionate, it registers in their hearts.

Your personal example

So don't push your children. Push them with your personal example. Teenagers particularly, you know, don't like doing anything under "environmental pressure." But they cannot resist the example of somebody who thinks more about others than about himself or herself.

Similarly, don't put pressure on your partner. When someone close to you sees the deep changes taking place in your own character, conduct, and consciousness, he or she cannot help absorbing the message below the surface of consciousness.

The scriptures say over and over again that any person who moves closer to God every day will gradually carry the family, the community, and even the whole country.



Blackberrying at the Family Program, summer 2017



With Christine Easwaran on the Family Program, summer 2017

The Good Student: Earnestness and Enthusiasm

Ekmath Easwaran

When we set out to cross the river of life, first and foremost we need earnestness, passion, enthusiasm. We must strive.

My little niece once teased me that my initials E.E. stand for “extreme enthusiasm,” and if I can claim any exceptional quality, it would be enthusiasm. If I experienced something, I had to share it. When I was starting out as a professor of English literature, there were many better scholars than I was – it was my gusto for Shakespeare and Shaw and Wordsworth that appealed to my students.

Enthusiasm brings joy

Sustained enthusiasm is a precious quality with a power that cold logic does not have. In any walk of life we can see that the most effective person is not one who is merely learned or the one who has the most experience, but the one who is on fire. It’s the teacher with enthusiasm who can reach her students, the doctor with a passion to heal who often succeeds where others fail.

Most important of all, enthusiasm in and of itself brings joy. If you are on the road to limitless joy and limitless security, right from the outset shouldn’t you have the joy of sincere enthusiasm? This does not mean somber determination – “Even if it kills me, I am going to achieve nirvana!” It is just the opposite. The goal may be far, far distant. We may not even have a glimpse of the final destination. But we are on the road, and this knowledge gives us joy.

Think moment by moment

No matter how strong our dedication, however, we should not undertake this journey under the impression that it can be made in one quick dash. We should be prepared for a long, difficult crossing, and without earnestness we cannot sustain the journey. This means we keep our eyes focused always on the goal, and refrain from doing anything that impedes us while taking care to do everything that helps us.

The secret is not to think in terms of everlasting vigilance, from this day forward, but of this moment. Think in terms of moment-by-moment enthusiasm, and never lack in earnestness.

Put meditation first, always

The first challenge, of course, comes up every day. “Shall I meditate today at my regular time and place, for the full length of time? Or shall I fudge a little?” This one little question is so common, so insidious, that I want to stress just how important it is. Nothing you can do will strengthen your determination more than the regular practice of meditation: at the same time, and for the full length of time, every single day.

One of the first things I learned about training the mind was to put meditation first always, whatever obstacles or temptations come in the way.

When I came to this country, almost thirty years ago, I was on a ship for nearly a full month. The Peninsular and Oriental steamship company apparently never felt motivated to provide meditation facilities, and the cabin I shared with other Fulbright scholars would not serve. Among other things, the only fresh air it ever got was supplied by a little tube not much bigger than my thumb.



In the retreat house, 2017



On a Young Adult retreat, 2017

One of my friends saw the expression on my face and asked what was wrong. I tried to explain, as best I could, about needing to get my full quota of meditation morning and evening. He brightened helpfully. “See here, old boy,” he said, “you’ve been in harness such a long time now. Why not take advantage of the circumstances and enjoy a well-earned vacation? Everybody enjoys a holiday, and here you are getting one free. Why keep talking about meditation? You can do all that when we get to America, where you will need it.”

“I want to be on vacation always,” I objected. “That’s just why I never miss my meditation.”

The next morning I got up very early and went exploring. Soon I discovered the sports deck, absolutely deserted in the early hours of the morning. I wrapped my blanket around my shoulders, sat down, and closed my eyes, and once I began going through the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita I forgot all about where I was. When I finally opened my eyes, I found I had been amusing a small crowd of bystanders. I let them laugh; after all, there is not much to do on board a ship, and I didn’t mind having a reputation for being a colorful character. People laughed, but gradually they came to respect me. “He’s a really earnest chap,” they would say, “whatever that Indian thing is that he’s doing.”

Overcoming self-doubt

When I had started the practice of meditation and made it the foundation of my life, self-doubt would still sometimes upset my mind. I wanted to meet the challenges facing me, yet my old conditioning was a big obstacle. My mind would play a clever card: “You won’t be able to meet the challenge.” This is common in the early days.

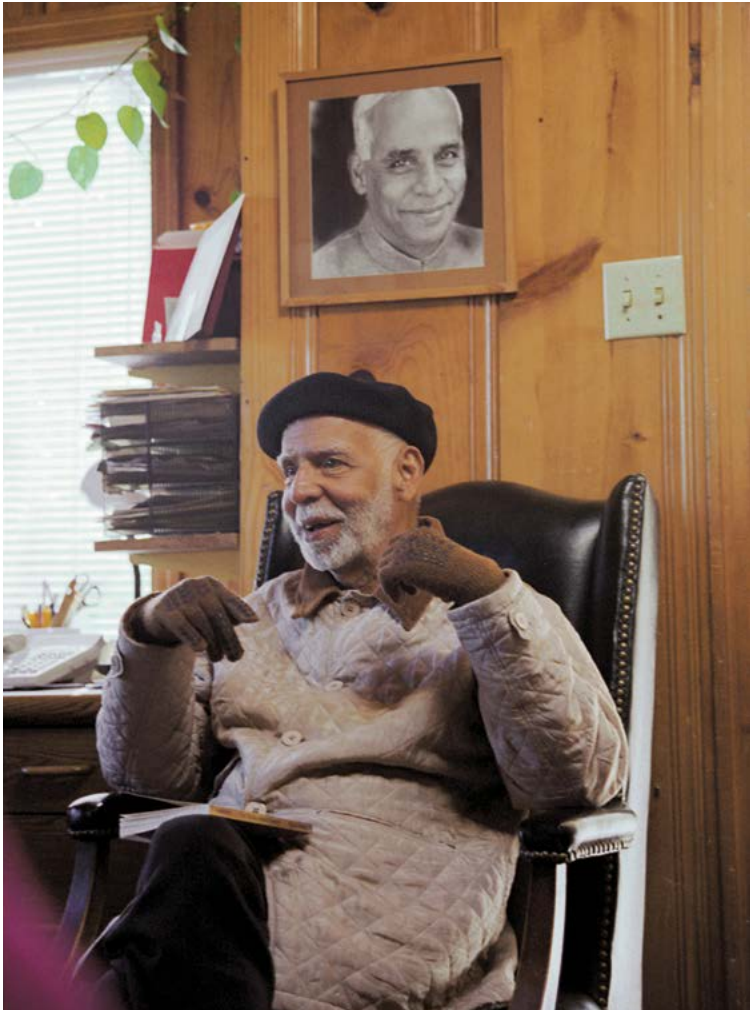
As I began to throw my weight more and more on the spiritual side of the argument, a wonderful transformation came about. One day, instead of feeling inadequate, I realized I was ready to meet the challenge. It was a very encouraging discovery. The temptations were still there, the difficulties were still there, but my belief in myself had changed. Once I reached this state, I was confident that even if it took time I could overcome all those temptations. I could meet the challenge.

For all of us this self-belief changes gradually, due to hard work and continuing vigilance and enthusiasm. With every step forward, you gain in understanding and earnestness. Then you can take the next step. With each step, your security grows; you feel a new energy.

Time and gentleness are required

The progress may seem agonizingly slow, but it is genuine, and its very slowness will protect us from harm. Some have such an all-consuming desire to attain the supreme goal that they may be tempted to force change, and even do violence to themselves through a misguided effort. The scriptures warn us many times that there is no genuine spiritual progress to be found in drugs or in running away from life or in any other violent method. When the Buddhist sutras tell us how many lifetimes the Buddha-to-be practiced spiritual disciplines, it is to show that these changes cannot come about quickly. Time and gentleness are required.

Yet those who keep their eyes focused always on the supreme goal, refraining from doing anything that impedes them and taking care to do everything that helps them, will find their progress is remarkable.



Easwaran, 1990s

“I’ll do my best”

I expect those who meditate with me to do their very best to overcome their problems; if they do not do their best, I am not helping them if I take that problem away. For ordinary people like you and me, the most effective approach to compulsive problems is not to make lifetime vows, as Gandhiji used to, and then suffer terribly if we fall from them, but simply to say, “I’ll do my best,” and then do it. Gandhiji’s way was right for him, but it doesn’t leave much margin.

When you simply promise to do your best, if you have a lapse you don’t collapse under a burden of guilt. You redouble your resoluteness to do better, and you learn every time you make a mistake. This is part of the artistry of spiritual living: aim for the highest every moment, but don’t get dismayed if you fall short. Aim for Self-realization during this lifetime, but don’t allow yourself to become demoralized by brooding on how little progress you have made.

Up against the Great Wall

Later on, you will face great crises when these tricks of the ego can unnerve you and hold you back. Perhaps the most awesome is when you reach the threshold of the collective unconscious and find yourself face up against the Great Wall—not outside, in China, but right there in your consciousness.

Time after time in meditation you descend to that wall and feel your way blindly around, looking for some crack through which you can crawl. But there isn’t any—no way to get through at all. That realization can bring such overwhelming despair that you want to throw up your hands and cry, “I won’t be able to make it!” In fact, there isn’t any way to get through that wall—at least, not for the ego. But how can the ego throw

itself away? It all seems impossible, and there are aspirants who give up here and turn away.

When I reached this point, I used to resolve every night, “Tomorrow morning in meditation I am going to get through, and then I’m going to dance and celebrate all day long.” I would sit down and give my best in meditation, and after a couple of hours I would come out by the same door I went in. This can go on for years and years; that is why Gandhi says you need the patience of someone trying to empty the sea with a cup. But I kept plugging. Every day my limitless love for Sri Krishna reassured me that someday, somehow, a door would open and let me through.

“You see yourself as you are”

Then suddenly the door opened and I was on the other side. I was no longer in the world of space, no longer in the world of time; I had left my body behind and suddenly come face to face with myself—my real Self. “At this stage,” Patanjali, the great teacher of meditation in ancient India, says with magnificent understatement, “you see yourself as you are”: not a physical creature, neither body nor mind, but pure spirit.

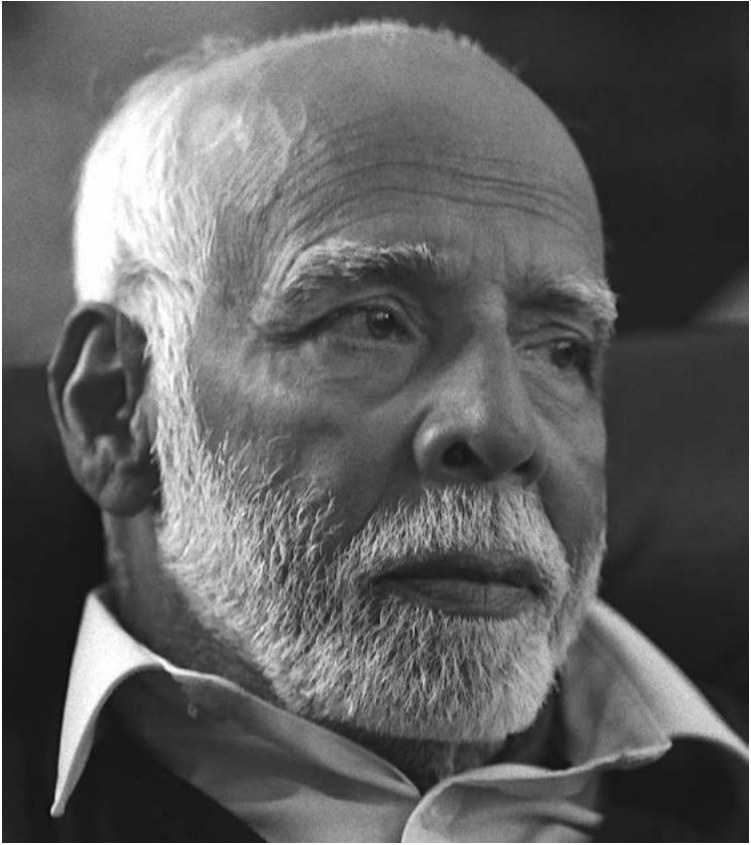
The Upanishads

Invocations

Lead me from the unreal to the real.

Lead me from darkness to light.

Lead me from death to immortality.



Easwaran, 1990s

In the Depths of the Unconscious

Eknath Easwaran

At first we train the mind during meditation and throughout the day, keeping our attention off ourselves and focused on the job at hand. Going through the day with a one-pointed mind is itself quite an achievement. But after many years of effort, imperceptibly, a hole opens in consciousness. We have to work for a long time, like a woodpecker, to open that hole further. Years of peck-peck-pecking away lie ahead.

But when the opening is wide enough, we can shine our attention like a powerful flashlight into deeper realms of consciousness. This is an extraordinary experience, for which nothing in the external world can prepare us. Everywhere you look you see the forces of consciousness at play, surging through the shadow-world of the mind.

There is anger, barreling through like a freight train; don't get in its way! And there is desire, rising nebulous from the deep. You begin to understand that these forces have no intrinsic power to compel your actions. You are not linked inextricably to the thoughts these forces conjure up: in fact, you are not your mind at all. As your concentration deepens, the beam of its searchlight penetrates further into the gloom. It is the power of harnessed passions that gives that light such penetrating power. Slowly, unconscious forces are coming under the control of the conscious mind.

Concentration is not enough

Meditation is the drill we use day by day to widen that opening. Ultimately it enables us to reach deep into the unconscious mind, almost to the seabed of consciousness, and draw all these clamoring forces into one irresistible surge of undeniable

love. “This abyss of wisdom,” says Saint John of the Cross, “now lifts up and enlarges the soul, giving it to drink at the very sources of the science of love.”

This reservoir of energy in the depths of consciousness is available to all human beings, but access is far from easy. Like an exclusive country club surrounded by unscalable walls, the vaults of the unconscious are jealously guarded. There is only one way to get hold of the Gold Card that allows uninhibited admission: we have to live entirely for the benefit of all. Only then will the Lord of Love allow us past the gate.

In other words, concentration alone is not enough. With concentration must flow what in traditional religious language is called devotion, love of God.

The teacher’s role

The spiritual teacher’s role is to embody the virtues that shine like jewels in the depths of consciousness in every human being. Such a person willingly becomes the focus of our devotion. You can see what an immense responsibility a spiritual teacher takes on!

But students have a great responsibility too: to give whole-hearted devotion only to a teacher who is worthy to act as a reflection of the Lord within us, and only to one who can be trusted to help us discover this infinite love for ourselves. Then, through our devotion, they can dissolve the crusty layers of separate selfhood we have built up all our lives.

I was born in a deeply religious family, but although I respected temple-going and rituals, I have to confess to you – without any embarrassment, because it had my grandmother’s approval – that I was not very devoted as a boy. I was more interested in my studies and concentrated on the English language and literature, which I’m sure my grandmother knew

I would have to use later on. I never looked upon myself as even capable of devotion, just as most of you may not.

When I took to meditation and began to go deeper and deeper into consciousness, however, my progress was so rapid that it bewildered me. And today, when I repeat my mantram before dinner, my devotion to Sri Krishna is so great that in two or three minutes I am completely absorbed in the name of the Lord. I have to make a special effort to come out so as not to delay dinner. That is why Patanjali says that samadhi comes easily to those whose hearts are full of devotion to a personal God.

If anyone asks why I should have become so deeply devoted to Sri Krishna, the main reason is my devotion for my teacher. Because of my all-absorbing love for her, she has shared her passionate devotion for the Lord with me. This is an immemorial tradition in Hindu mysticism, where the teacher's devotion is shared by those who love the teacher deeply.

My grandmother's greatest boon

As my grandmother's grandson, I also had a special relationship to death, a relationship I only now understand. She made sure I would not take death for granted by bringing me along when she went to give solace to a dying person or grieving family. In that way I witnessed death many times, even before I had reached my teens, and sometimes in a terrifying form.

My grandmother had seen to it that I would be forced by my knowledge of death's reality to come finally to terms with it. She knew I could never find peace or fulfillment until I had found out her secret: that death is not the end.

This is what finally moved me to look within myself, and it was she who, in her astonishing wisdom, planted the seed of that discovery before I was out of my teens.

There were many precious gifts my grandmother gave me, but of them all, this was the most precious. Only a great soul can grant such a boon.

The beginning, the middle, and the end

In a glorious verse in the Gita, Sri Krishna says, “I am the true Self in the heart of every creature, Arjuna, and the beginning, middle, and end of their existence.” “I am the true Self in every creature”: in every human being, in America, in Europe, in Australia, in Asia, in Africa. It is this realization that brings up enormous inner resources to go to help people in other countries when they are in need.

At this depth in meditation, you see for yourself the truth of what Sri Krishna says: “I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings.” I used to be terribly afraid of death, but today every trace of that fear is gone. It is not through courage that fear of death goes; it is through understanding.

Our teacher stands like a lighthouse

Today I know that all we see in life is just one little act in a vast drama. On one side the drama extends over millions and millions of years, and on the other side the drama extends over millions and millions of years; yet we are preoccupied with this one little episode which we think is the beginning and end of everything. “I am your beginning,” Sri Krishna says. It means you extend from infinity. “And I am in you now.” And, finally, “I am with you always. When your life ends, if you attain samadhi, you will end in me.” With this the fear of death goes and the dawn of immortality comes.

Now I know that in me is a divine source which cannot be touched by time. Death will simply be an entrance to a greater life, an open door to freedom.

Devotion to a spiritual teacher plays an invaluable role when we sink into the collective unconscious, and again at the moment of death. Our teacher stands like a lighthouse at the entry to this most mysterious of worlds, directing us toward the bridge that is the Lord and protecting us as we make the crossing.

The Fruit of the Tree

Kabir

No longer am I
The man I used to be;
For I have plucked the fruit
Of this precious tree of life.

As the river flows down the hills
And becomes one with the sea,
So has this weaver's love flowed
To become one with the Lord of Love.

Go deeper and deeper in meditation
To reach the seabed of consciousness.
Through the blessing of my teacher
I have passed beyond the land of death.

Says Kabir: Listen to me, friends,
And cast away all your doubts.
Make your faith unshakable in the Lord,
And pass beyond the land of death.

From Darkness into Light

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

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

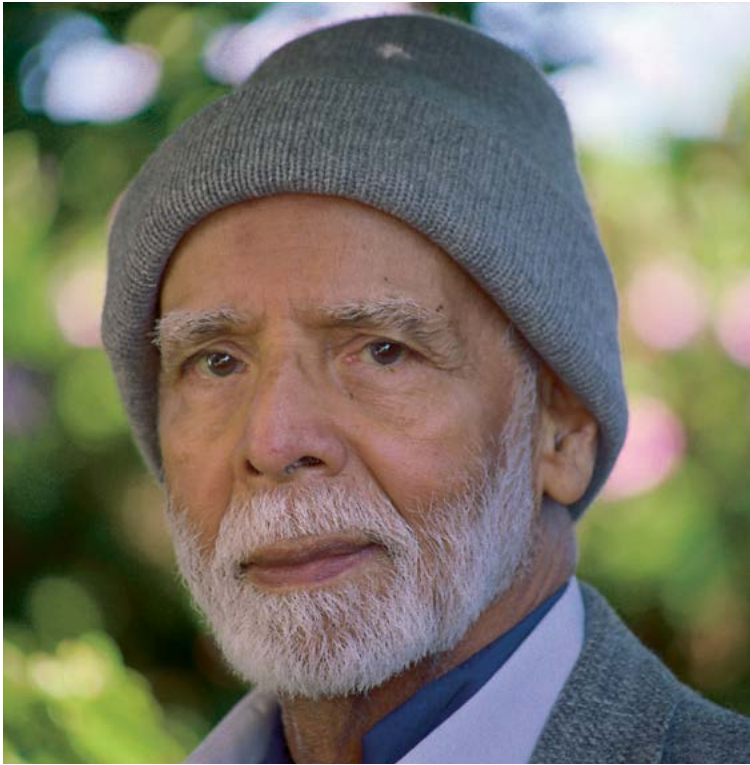
When people are drawn to me, it is not because of any personal magnetism but because my teacher, my grandmother, has lit the lamp in my heart.

You have always to remember that a teacher is as eager to have dedicated pupils as the student is to find an illumined teacher. To such disciples, the wise teacher gives with both hands the greatest of gifts.

To those who have faith in me, I shall continue to guide them because I believe this life that is ending is only a chapter in the saga of my spiritual evolution.

May God bless all of you to find the peace that I have been enabled to find through my grandmother's guidance.






Easwaran, 1990s

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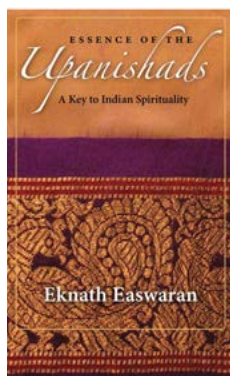
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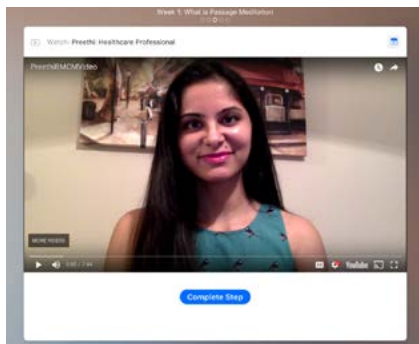
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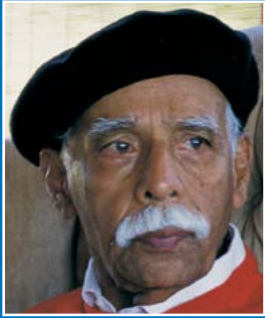
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“Get up! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an
Illumined teacher and realize the Self.
Sharp like a razor’s edge is the path,
The sages say, difficult to traverse.”

From the Katha Upanishad,
translated by Eknath Easwaran



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