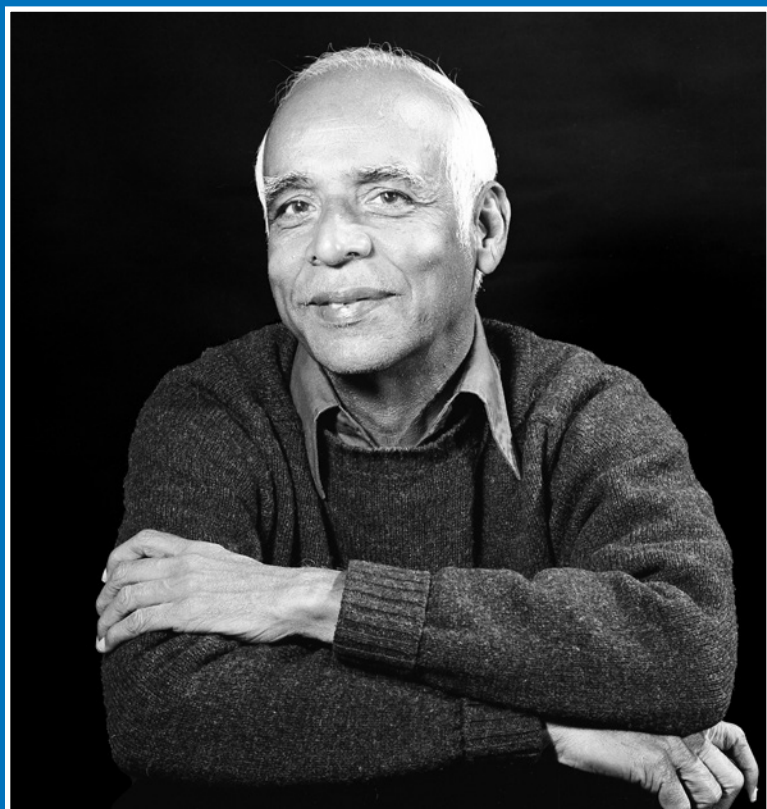


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

FALL / WINTER 2023



Determination  
Harnessing the Will

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## In This Issue

This issue is the third in a series on what Easwaran called the three Ds: detachment, discrimination, and determination.

In the opening article, Easwaran notes that “In any walk of life . . . wherever excellence is achieved, there is one quality we almost always find: the sheer will to overreach oneself, to keep going whatever the odds until the goal is attained. . . . The same determination with which we pursue passing, personal satisfaction can be used for spiritual growth.”

In the second article, Easwaran observes that “Desire is the key to life, because desire is power.” He compares will and desire to two marathon contestants, and explains how the ability to unify our desires determines our destiny.

In the final article, Easwaran reminds us that, as important as it is to develop and focus our will, our own determination can only get us so far. Based on his personal experience, he reveals: “It happened to me, and it can happen to you. Love wells up in your heart if you surrender your self-will, and devotion carries you across the chasm.”

This issue also features community stories, a short piece from Easwaran on technology, ten tips by Easwaran for harnessing the will, and an article from the archive to commemorate Christine Easwaran (1921–2022).

We hope that with Easwaran’s guidance we can all develop our determination, unify our desires, and discover our unity with all life.

– The BMCM Editorial Team

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## Will and Desire

Eknath Easwaran, from *Words to Live By*

What counts most in life is not IQ but WQ, “Will Quotient.” No one can plead that he or she lacks will. There is will in every desire. Every desire carries with it the will to bring that desire to fruition. When it comes to something we like, we have all the will we need. Someone says, “Hey, come on, we’re going skiing!” and that is enough. We will get out of bed at three in the morning, drive for hours, stand cheerfully in the snow waiting for the ski lift, and in general suffer all kinds of discomfort with a will of iron. Yet as small a challenge as a letter to Aunt Gertrude will find the will against us.

To control our destiny, we need to harness our will, to do not what we like, but what is in our long-term best interest. If the will is strong enough, great things can be accomplished; if the will is weak, very little. In every endeavor, it is the man or woman with a firm will who excels.

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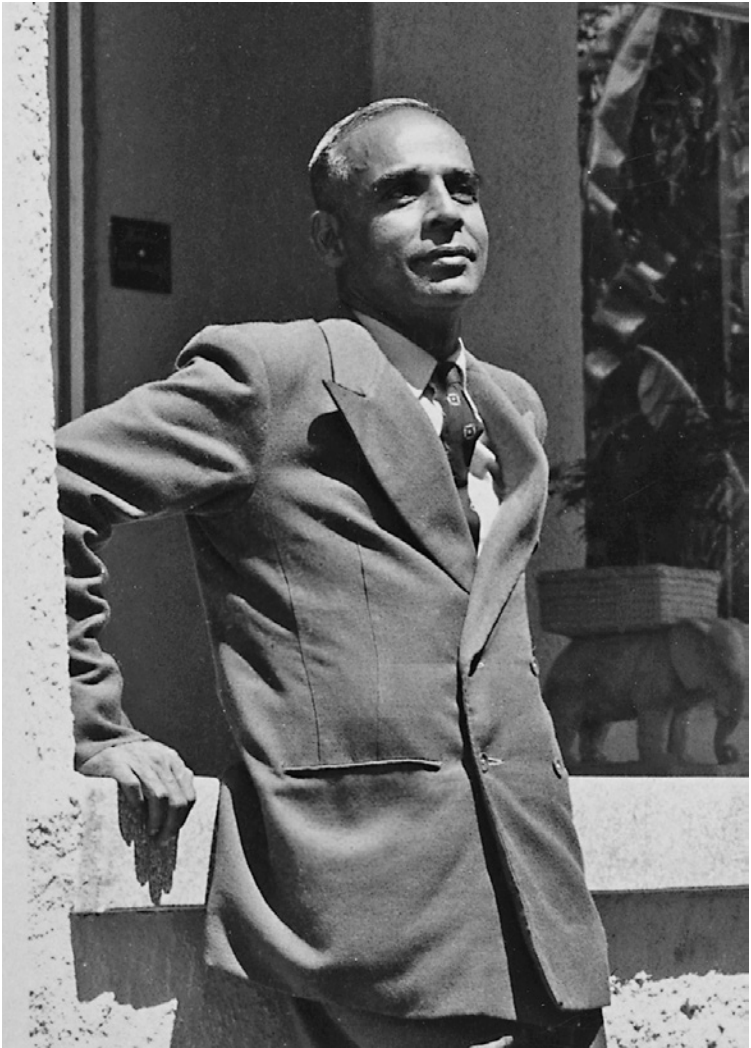
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Easwaran, 1960s

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## Determination

Eknath Easwaran, from *Conquest of Mind*

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, later to become loved around the world as Saint Teresa of Jesus, grew up as a beautiful, high-spirited girl from one of the most distinguished families in the sixteenth-century Spanish town of Ávila. With charm, intelligence, keen artistic sensibilities, and a saving dose of common sense, she seemed to have the world at her feet. Yet while still in her teens, this passionate young woman had already begun to find the attractions of worldly life too small to satisfy her. She felt their pull – would be torn in two by it, in fact, for more than twenty years. But nothing could silence a much deeper appeal within her, a call to a far higher destiny.

Some dim awareness of an infinite promise deep within her must have prompted her to turn inward. In her writings, Teresa describes candidly what was taking place inside. “All the things of God gave me great pleasure,” she recalls, “but I was held captive by the things of this world.” Yet the inward pull would not let her go:

Reason tells the soul how mistaken it is in thinking that all these earthly things are of the slightest value by comparison with what it is seeking. A little recollection reminds it that all these things come to an end. And faith instructs it in what the soul must do to find satisfaction. . . .

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Young Teresa had seen what life offers on the surface, and it was not enough. She longed for much greater challenges, deeper awareness, something more lasting than this world of change. “There is no joy in the finite,” the Upanishads say. “There is joy only in the Infinite.” Teresa’s soul yearned for the Infinite, and nothing less would satisfy her.

### Teresa’s secret

Teresa of Ávila is so appealing a figure, so human and yet so inspiring, that we naturally want to know her secret. How can we be like her? What enabled her to turn herself inward, heart and soul? Is it something that people like you and me can follow?

As it happens, Teresa did leave us her “secret.” In her autobiography, she stresses over and over the one quality she found vital: *determinación* – determination, decision, will. “Those who have this determination,” she declares, “have nothing to fear.”

Determination? Is that all? Surely, we think, some loftier, finer qualities must come before this mundane one. But then we reflect on our own experience. In any walk of life – arts, sciences, sports, entertainment – wherever excellence is achieved, there is one quality we almost always find: the sheer will to overreach oneself, to keep going whatever the odds until the goal is attained. Saint Teresa is simply reminding us that we need this same quality to reach an infinite goal. The same determination with which we pursue passing, personal satisfaction can be used for spiritual growth.

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## Keep on plugging

If we find that we are not making the kind of progress we would like on the spiritual path, Teresa is suggesting, the reason may be simply that we are not trying our hardest. We may have all kinds of other reasons, but often the problem is simple lack of determination.

I often notice delivery trucks with a sign on the back: “Frequent Stops.” One I used to see regularly in Berkeley was Danny’s Diner, which stopped so frequently that it never got more than a block from campus. This can happen in meditation too. There are people who meditate for a few days and then stop to experiment with some old indulgence. When they take up meditation again, their mind is even more rebellious and they fall asleep. So they stop once more. Their mind and senses are offering resistance, meditation is no fun, so they say, “Why not go in for a few healthy distractions?” This approach will take us no farther than Danny’s.

“Many have begun,” Teresa observes, “but never persevere to the end. . . . What His Majesty wants is our acts of will.” In Sanskrit we have a word which means “heroes at the beginning”: people who take up a job with a fanfare of trumpets but soon find that their enthusiasm has tiptoed down the back stair. Those who go far in meditation are the ones who keep on plugging. They may not be very spectacular; they may never hear a trumpet. But they keep on trying day in and day out, giving their best in every situation and relationship, never giving up. Such people are bound to reach their goal.

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## Regular practice

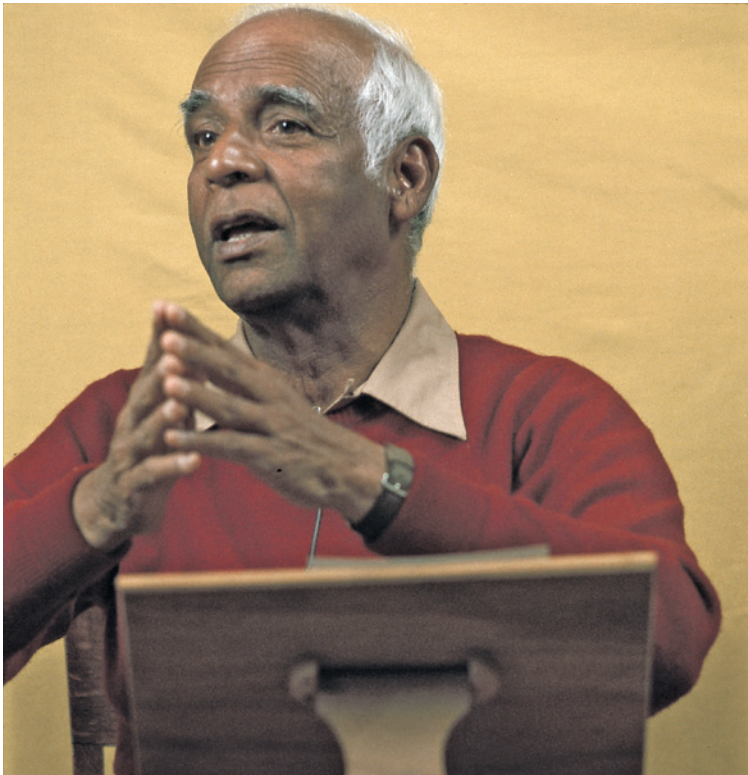
The first challenge to determination, of course, comes up every day. “Shall I meditate today at my regular time and place, for the full length of time? Or shall I fudge a little?” So many things can come in the way!

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.

No one finds this easy or convenient. Everybody faces obstacles: you are traveling, you have a cold, your baby starts crying, you get interrupted by a phone call, you have to wait for a call that never comes . . . The list goes on forever. Some obstacles, I agree, cannot be removed until you change your job circumstances. But most can be dealt with through surprisingly simple measures which never occur to us: unplugging the phone, for example, or getting up early enough to let the baby sleep. Just by meditating regularly, you are deepening your determination immeasurably.

On the other hand, if you neglect your meditation, you can be sure that your mind will take full advantage of it on the following morning. In the Indian spiritual tradition the saying goes, “If you miss one morning’s meditation, it takes seven mornings to make it up.” If you miss seven mornings – well, you can figure it out.





Easwaran, 1970s

### **Put meditation first always**

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.

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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.

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.”

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## The tests went on

That was not the end, either. The tests went on. Eventually our ship reached Port Said, on the Suez Canal. Egypt was not only the land of the pharaohs to me. For hundreds of years it had been a great center of Islamic civilization, and President Nasser had attracted interest throughout the newly independent states of the Third World. The Fulbright commission probably did not share our enthusiasm about Nasser, but it had made extensive arrangements to take us scholars to Cairo, several hours' journey across the desert, and to house us there and show us around.

This news was greeted with great joy. My friends, knowing how keen I was on seeing Cairo at last, brought me the itinerary as soon as it was announced.

"It will be wonderful," I agreed when I saw the schedule. "But I won't be able to come with you."

They were shocked.

"Not come with us? Don't you want to see the Nile, the Pyramids, the mosques, the bazaar? Haven't you been telling us about Al-Azhar University, almost a thousand years old?"

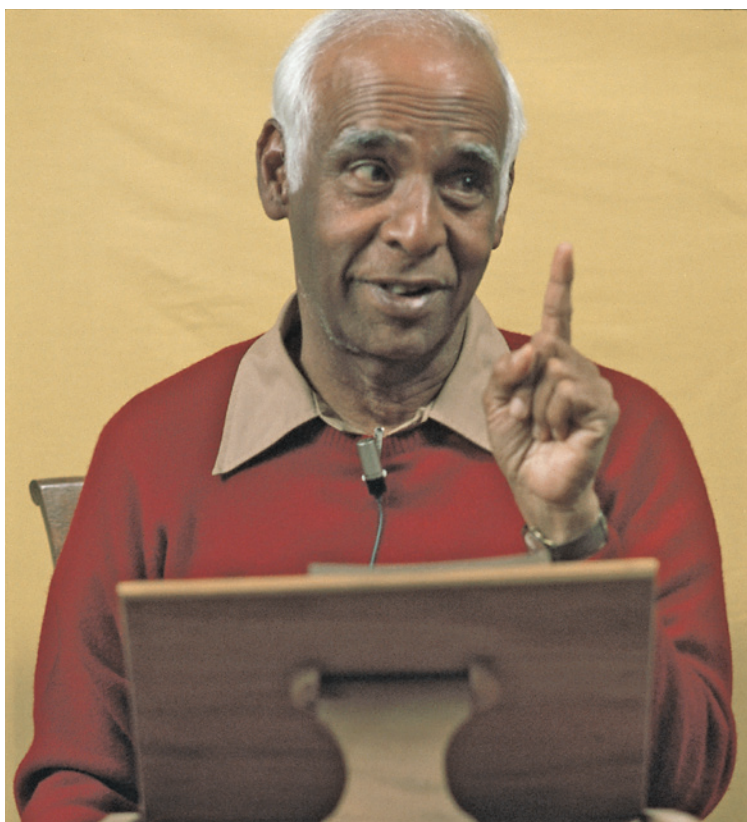
I said simply, "You know how much I want to see them."

"You may never get a chance again."

"I expect I won't. Certainly not as the guest of the government."

"Well, then?"

"If I follow that schedule," I explained, "I won't be able to maintain my meditation." And that, they knew, was that. I never have seen Cairo. But I have seen the Self.



Easwaran, 1970s

## **Renew your determination**

So be regular in your meditation, be systematic in following the instructions, and try to sustain your enthusiasm no matter how you feel. Every morning when you sit down for meditation, renew your determination. If you believe in a personal God, ask for the help of Sri Krishna or Jesus or the Divine Mother

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to make this decision unbreakable. If you do not believe in a personal God, ask for help from your own deeper Self, the Atman. Either way, it is important to remember that you are appealing to a power deep within you, not to anyone outside.

Meditation, of course, is only part of the effort. I cannot say too often that everything we do throughout the day has a direct effect on the mind. I feel perplexed when I see someone put in sincere effort in meditation and then proceed to quarrel at breakfast, stomp out of the office in a huff at lunch, and not go home at all for dinner. I say bluntly: “You have undone all that you did so carefully in meditation.” To keep going forward, we have to go on making our best effort to keep calm and kind throughout the day.

After dinner, too, even if the day has been rough, it does very little good to try to escape to the bowling alley or the dance hall. The desire to escape is natural enough, but there is really no place to run – and you would only be making the next day a little harder, by undoing a day’s work of training. Instead, try to spend time with family or friends, building closer relationships, helping to lighten the burden of their day.

### **A long, tough, terribly challenging battle**

All this requires endless determination, as I am sure you are already aware. The first stages of meditation are rough going, and the only consolation I can offer is that below the surface of consciousness, the going gets even rougher. As you enter the immense, uncharted realm called the unconscious, there are so many imponderables you have to deal with, so many

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indecipherable scripts you have to learn to read. Even the most daring intellect looks around in vain for familiar landmarks and throws up its hands. “I don’t understand this! There is nothing here that I can grasp, touch, see, or think about. I don’t know what to do.” The will lies down and goes to sleep, and every morning you have to try to rouse it again. This is a long, tough, terribly challenging battle.

But the rewards are infinite. If you read the annals of the great mystics, they seem to be having the time of their lives – dealing with intangibles, breaking codes that have never been broken, reading scripts that have never been made out. Every day there is a miracle in meditation. You have to fight against an enemy you cannot see, in a battle in which the lines cannot even be drawn. Yet you know you are learning to face these challenges; you know you are moving forward. That is all the inspiration you need, all the thrill you could ever hope to find. Throughout the day you do everything possible to clear your path into the unknown. And when you go to bed at night, you have a sense of having really lived – an awareness that no achievement in the external world can give.

### How much can I give?

I want you to know that this is just how I learned too. When I took to meditation, I was not living in seclusion in a cave on the Himalayas. I was a busy professor on a large campus in India, deeply interested in my students and in my subject, which was literature. In addition, I wrote a regular column

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for a national newspaper and spoke to sizable audiences over All India Radio. I mention this simply to show that you do not have to drop out of society and go into hiding to pursue your spiritual goals. You do not have to slough your responsibilities so you can learn to meditate at your leisure – in fact, meditation is going to make you even more responsible. Meditation is a skill for *living*. You can draw on its benefits wherever you are – with your family, with your friends, on your campus, in your office, at your clinic, in your home. You can drive a taxi and still explore Infinity.

Most of the difficulties people have in personal relations, at home and at work, arise from one ridiculous attitude: “If you give this much, that’s all I’m going to give. If you are going to try to grab that, I’m going to try to grab it too.” This peculiar stance is written into our human conditioning; that is why so much determination is required to change it. But living in freedom requires a complete reversal of perspective. Instead of asking “How much can I get?” we have to learn to ask, “How much can I give?”

This is far more subtle than it may sound. Most of us need a long, long time to learn to ask this question in every aspect of our lives, even in our thoughts; it entails a complete turnabout in our direction of living. But that simple turnabout transforms our vision. The entire world looks different. Instead of feeling helpless in a world of hostile forces, you live in a world of hope, equal to any challenge; and by that transformation, you help everybody around you.

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## Infinity is right within us

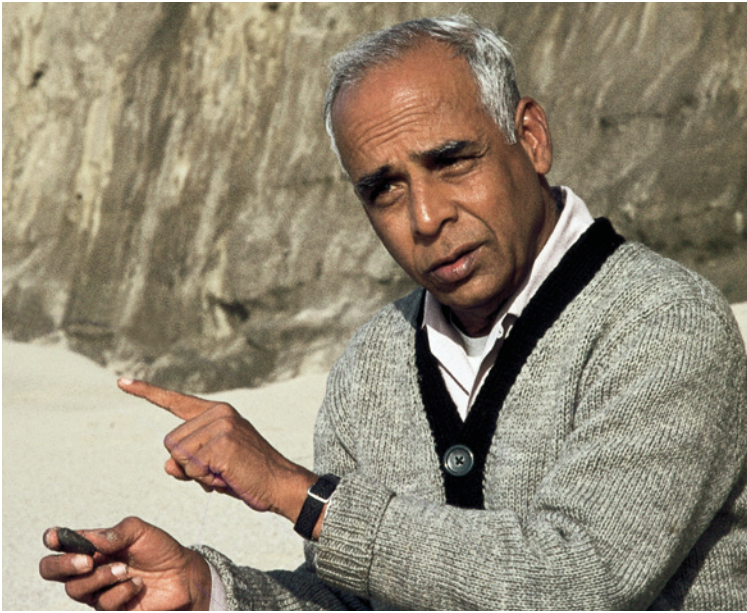
In the perspective of mysticism, most of us are still playing in the world as if we were children in a giant sandbox. We have our rattles, we hold on tightly to our Popsicles; for the vast majority of us, most of life is spent with toys. Figures like Sri Krishna, Christ, and the Buddha come to the edge of the sandbox and remind us gently, “Look, your hair is turning gray. Do you want to play here forever? There are vast worlds to be discovered.” But often we reply, in effect, “Right, Lord. Just let me finish this one sand castle . . .”

I feel very happy now to see so many high school and college students learning to meditate. They are extraordinarily fortunate, for they are getting out of the sandbox early in life. If we keep playing with pleasures and possessions for decades, before we realize it the sandbox becomes our universe. Then we have no thought for what we really are, who is within us, what our destiny is, whether life has any goal.

If this outlook sounds bleak, it is actually full of promise. It implies that we can always grow up. I am an inveterate optimist, and not of the naive variety either. If we take this compassionate view of human motivations, we won't consider the world around us hopeless. Throwing away our toys and growing up requires a great deal of determined effort, yet none of us has any reason to give up hope. That core of Infinity is still there, right within us, shining away just as brightly no matter how hard we try to look the other way.

Saint Teresa, again, put it very personally:





Easwaran, 1960s

Even when we are engaged in our worldly pastimes and businesses and pleasures and haggings, this Lord of ours is so anxious that we should desire him and strive after his companionship that he calls us ceaselessly, time after time, to approach him . . . for His Majesty is quite prepared to wait even for years, especially when he sees we are persevering and have good desires. It is the most necessary thing here; if we have this, we cannot fail to gain greatly.

It should kindle our determination all the more to think how boundless his love for us must be, so anxious is he to draw us closer to him no matter how much we may tarry. 🌸

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## COMMUNITY STORY: Small Steps

I think of myself as someone who can summon the necessary determination to resolve a challenging situation or to reach a clearly defined goal. When I retired from teaching seven years ago, my foremost goal was to deepen my spiritual practice. I did not know exactly what that was going to look like, but I drew upon my ability to persist to move me slowly, I will admit, but consistently forward on my spiritual path.

While maintaining my meditation schedule, I began to intentionally take small steps focused on the other eight points of my practice. I have experimented with new ways of using the mantram, such as including it at the beginning of my meditation and repeating it before meals.

Through one-pointed attention and slowing down, I have come to appreciate the tiny interactions that I experience throughout the day that I might have otherwise overlooked. Whether it is the fox in my backyard, the yellow headed blackbird on a mantram walk around the lake, or a small opportunity for selfless service, I am more likely to notice and appreciate these gifts.

If my progress seems too slow, I just practice diligently and try to take another step forward. If I need a push, I might learn a new passage or attend a BMCM retreat. I do not expect life-changing experiences or insights, but I have

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experienced small, subtle, and encouraging signs that I am making progress. At times, Easwaran's spoken or written words seem as though they are meant directly for me. Because I have made a commitment to this spiritual path, I am determined to make consistent efforts.

I am grateful to Easwaran for emphasizing in his writings and talks the power of strengthening our will as the stimulus for spiritual growth. To make progress on the spiritual path, I try to strengthen my will in little ways. Easwaran talks about not giving in to absurd little self-indulgences, which has inspired me to become more intentional in choosing the kinds of entertainment that I engage in. Similarly, I have realized that my tendency to procrastinate at times is just my self-will wanting to get its way. I have become more vigilant in noticing when I am feeling overwhelmed by a project or just want to have my own way for a moment and put off taking the first step (or the next step) of a project. I do not allow the words, "I don't feel like it," to be a response. My strategy is to just take that next step, "forthwith" as Easwaran might say.

In my determination to continue forward on the spiritual path, I am discovering a new confidence as I take each small step forward. There seems to be a virtuous cycle of small successes followed by growing confidence that as I continue to simplify and focus my life, I will have more energy and creativity to serve the Lord of Love.

– Deb, Colorado

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## Technology and the Will

Eknath Easwaran, from *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 3

I have been watching with fascination a new doctrine: electronic grace. . . . We are fascinated by computer technology and laser magic, and we believe there is nothing more to personality than chemistry and physics; why not produce spiritual awareness, love, insight, imagination, through cerebral engineering?

Perhaps – who knows? – technology will find some way to analyze brain waves so accurately that we will be able to identify waves of patience and impatience, sympathy and resentment, and so on. Engineers may be able to invent electronic controls to carry in your pocket, so that when your partner is making you lose your temper you can set the indicator on Patience, sit back, and listen with a calm mind. They may even find a transformer for likes and dislikes, so that when you sit down for dinner and see something you detest, you can switch over your brain waves and enjoy it.

I am not saying this sort of thing cannot be done. But at what expense? The human being would cease to be a human being. We would lose our sensitiveness, our originality, our tenderness, our creativity, all because we never developed the capacity to use our will. Without the will we have no freedom, and without freedom of choice we become machines. That is the theme of Huxley's *Brave New World*, and I think it tells

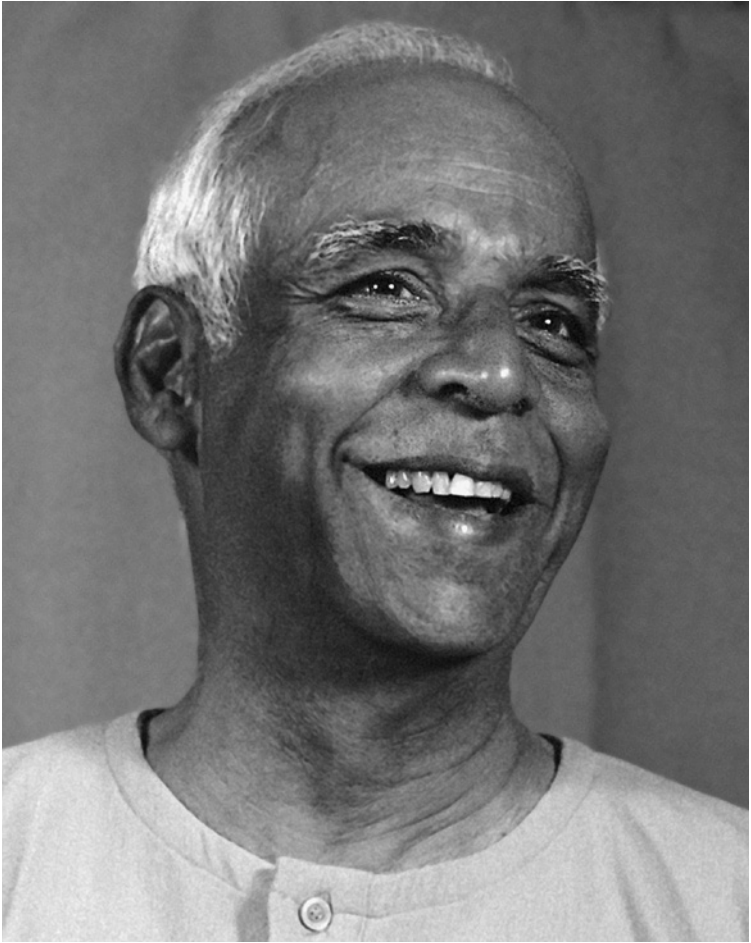
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us why the increase of impersonality we see today has been accompanied by an increasing loss of sensitiveness.

I have seen claims, for example, that “illumination tanks” can bring about the integration of consciousness. You sit inside with light and sound and so on all cut off, and you stay there till you are illumined. This is picking up the stick by the wrong end. It is true that to enter a higher level of consciousness, you have to be able to leave the world of sensory awareness behind. The crucial difference is that in sensory deprivation, some external agent deprives the senses of their stimuli. In such cases, consciousness is not withdrawn from the senses. They are still full of *prana* [vital energy], which means that the eye is still clamoring to see, the ear to hear, and so on. As a result, they may see and hear what is not there.

In meditation, however, consciousness is withdrawn from all the senses by the will. All desires to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell are withdrawn into an immense desire to turn inward toward the Self. The power of these desires is harnessed by the will, which grows huge and strong like Jack’s beanstalk. When the will is that strong, the power of your desires is at your disposal.

When you can withdraw power from your senses at will, you go through life with such economy of personal energy that you scarcely feel stress at all. The Gita calls this “action in inaction.” There is no tension, no friction, no effort. You have gone beyond the *gunas*, beyond all human conditioning. 🌸



Easwaran, 1970s

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## Will and Desire

By Eknath Easwaran, from *Essence of the Upanishads*. This abridged version of the text is from our 2009 journal archive.

Desire is the key to life, because desire is power. The deeper the desire, the more power it contains. The Upanishads say,

You are what your deep, driving desire is.

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

As your will is, so is your deed.

As your deed is, so is your destiny.

Desire can be thought of as a river of prana, flowing along the channels made by *samskaras* [our mental and emotional conditioning]. For the person with many small desires, prana trickles in many different directions. There is not much power in a trickle, and little desires often fail to reach their goal. But then, just because they are little, it does not matter much if many of them get nowhere. What matters is the sense of futility that builds up in a person whose desires are many and trivial. Like rain that falls on a mountain peak, running down the slopes on every side, vitality is dispersed; life itself is fragmented.

On the other hand, there are people whose lives are molded by one all-consuming desire, as overwhelming as a mighty river. If you have seen a great river like the Ganges or the Mississippi in flood, you know what power it can have; anything in its path is swept away. Similarly, the man or woman who has unified desires sweeps all obstacles aside.

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## Shaping your will, shaping your destiny

Wherever you find great success in life, it is due to the intense unification of desires. Some years ago I read an interview with Margot Fonteyn, one of the greatest ballerinas in the world. When the interviewer commented on her effortless grace, she replied in effect, “It is effortless now. Behind the grace and spontaneity you see on the stage, there is the cruelty of the bullring.” Years and years of grueling practice, day in and day out, starting perhaps at the age of ten. I don’t know if you have seen a ballet teacher in action; what I have seen reminded me of a galley slave master, standing in front of these earnest, dedicated children lined up at the practice bar and saying all day, “All right, now, kick! One, two, three, four . . .”

Some of the best ballet schools, I understand, are as rigorous as boot camp. There are no vacations; you can’t afford the lapses. No ice cream after school; you can’t afford the extra pounds. And none of the other little pleasures that teenagers take for granted. Everything is ballet, ballet, ballet. That gives an idea of how deep young Margot Fonteyn’s desire for excellence must have gone. It is not that she didn’t miss having friends and vacations and ice cream; I am sure she did. But much more, she wanted to become a great ballerina. “You are what your deep, driving desire is”: it shapes your will; it shapes your destiny.

It is not always obvious, but we get in life what we deeply desire from it. If our lives are completed with some desires still unfulfilled, it is usually because we have cherished more desires than one lifetime could bring to fruition. Hindu and Buddhist



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mystics would go so far as to say that we have come into this life expressly to fulfill our unfulfilled desires, which as unconscious drives or samskaras shape everything we do. Childhood interests, likes and dislikes in school, choice of work, the person we marry, the way we raise our children – all are molded by these deep, driving desires.

### The key to desire is will

The ancient Greeks had a saying: “When the gods want to punish us, they grant us our desires.” The Buddha would put it differently: we punish ourselves, just as we reward ourselves, by the fruits of our desires. For where our desires are, there our prana is also – our capacity to live, to love, to enjoy.

The Greeks illustrated this with the story of Midas, whose desire for wealth turns even his daughter into gold. The story may be myth, but it is none the less real. A deep money-making samskara conditions even our perception. Show a modern Midas a beautiful landscape and he will see a shopping center – and given the opportunity, he will turn it into a shopping center too. Just as in that experiment with hypnosis, where the idea of a burn creates a real blister on the skin, the shopping center is already there in Midas’s mind, waiting to be turned into reality. He may achieve his desire and amass a fortune, but the same force that fulfills his desire brings also all the fruits of selfish craving: loneliness, alienation, broken relationships, the inability to love. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that we have some control over what we desire, and the key to desire is will.

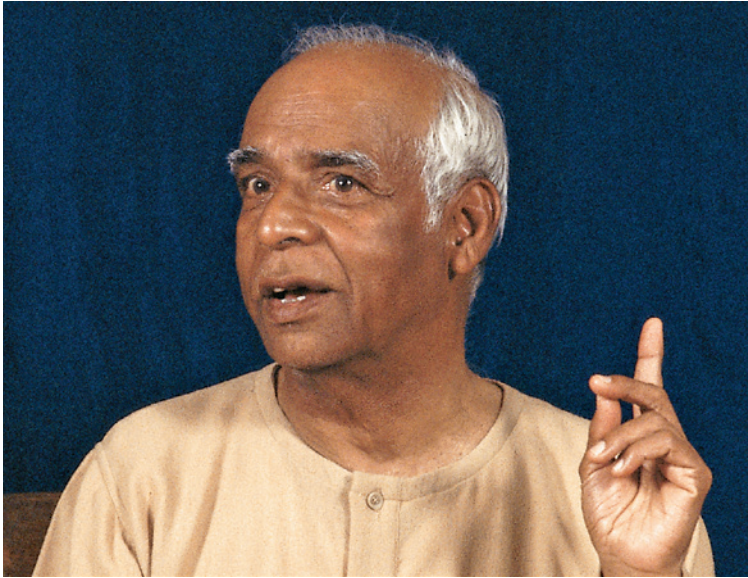
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The power in desire is the power of the will. Every desire carries with it the will to bring that desire to fruition. “Strength,” Mahatma Gandhi said, “does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” If the will is strong enough, anything can be accomplished; if the will is weak, very little. In my opinion, what counts most in life is not IQ but WQ, “Will Quotient.” In every endeavor, it is the man or woman with an unbreakable will who excels.

### A hole in the will

Look at students, for example. I have been a teacher for many years, and I can testify that the difference between an outstanding student and an average one is often not a matter of intelligence but that the former has the capacity of will to come through in an hour of crisis. Even good students, for example, may put things off until the last minute, having a grand old time. But when the clock tolls the eleventh hour they are able to drop everything else and work far into the night, drinking cup after cup of coffee and finally turning in a good job. Because their job depends on it, or their scholarship, or their romance, instead of breaking down under the strain, they are able to fuse all their faculties through an act of will. When I had a student like this I used to say, “If only you could make this kind of concentrated effort part of your daily life, you would be a genius.”

Most students I know, however, are not like this. They too postpone until the eleventh hour, with the same intention to make a big push at the end. “Why waste a good Saturday evening? Let’s go down to the Café Mediterraneo and spend



Easwaran, 1970s

the night there. In the morning we can get up early, clear the desk, and hit the books for all we're worth." But while these fine words are being said, the will is sitting back in his corner and saying, "Not me! You can count me out." And sure enough, when morning comes, such people cannot get the covers off. They look at the pile of papers on their desk and do not know where to begin. After a while, they get dispirited. "What's the use? Maybe a little coffee will help me think better." And down they go to the Mediterranean again. After that it is going to be even more difficult to get to work. When we procrastinate, we are using our will for a dart board: every time something is postponed, it stabs a hole in the will.

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## A particular inner toughness

Many, many failures in daily life are no more than failures of the will. Whenever we become irritated, speak harshly, criticize, belittle, or vacillate, the will is lying down. The implication is surprising: even to be kind, we need a strong will. We do not necessarily mean to hurt people; we simply cannot control what we say and do.

In daily living, a strong will often shows as a particular inner toughness, the endurance to put up with difficulties without breaking or giving up. Without this, we are at life's mercy. I have seen even great tycoons, men used to facing the bulls and bears of Wall Street with a will of iron, suddenly throw a tantrum because a line of traffic was moving too slowly. Where is that iron will then? It is almost as if they open their briefcases, take out a portable crib, climb in, and start to howl.

Here we can draw a surprising conclusion: a rigid personality is not strong; it is weak, because the will is fragile. In one compartment of life, where desires run deep, the will can operate; elsewhere it is paralyzed. On the other hand, those whose will is uniformly strong can always adapt; they can function beautifully no matter what life deals out. Such people are free. They enjoy life, ups and downs.

## The great race

We can think of Will and Desire as competitors in a really long marathon, one that goes on for years. All the bets are on Desire. He has been training for many years, so he is in the

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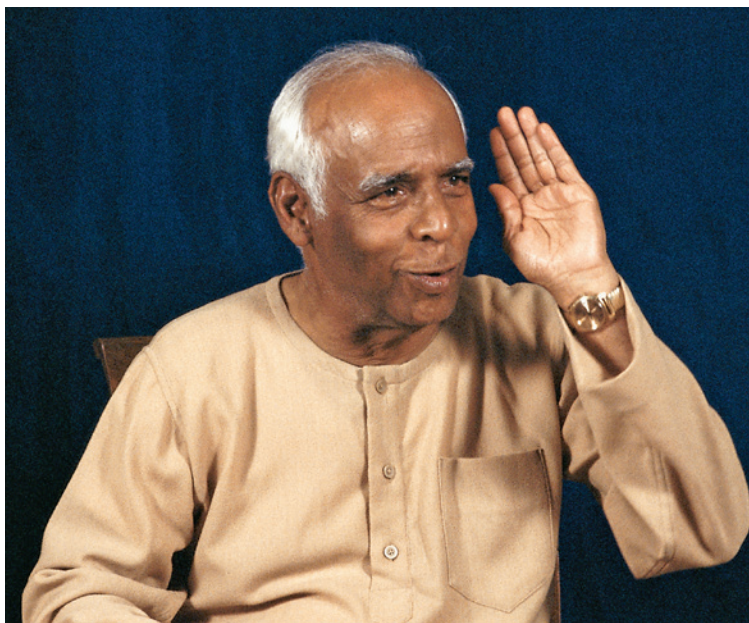
best of shape. He crouches at the starting line like a leopard, lean, lithe, and powerful, bursting with the desire to win. But for most of us, the will is still in bed. I say “most of us” without any deprecation, for this is the conditioning the world shares today: the attitude that pleasure is everything, and the absence of pleasure the worst of fates.

Once we start questioning this attitude, a new desire comes: the desire to master our desires. That is the signal that the race is about to begin. But first we have to wake the will. “Willie! Willie! Your presence is expected at a particular event. Don’t you hear the crowd roaring? Can’t you hear the pom-pom girls?”

“Go away,” Will says. He is as grumpy as a hibernating bear. After all, it is we who lulled him to sleep; is it fair to roust him out of bed again after all these years?

Finally we have to shake the will a little. Probably he will try to hit us. At that time there are people who say, “Who wants to be hit? Why not let sleeping wills lie?” They go back to watch the race between desires, in which no matter who wins, we lose. But the person with determination, who is tired of losing in life, goes to the kitchen, gets a pitcher of cold water, and pours it on Willie’s head.

Will gets up fast, shaking off the cobwebs. “How about a drink?” We give him some black coffee. As he wakes up, he starts to complain: “I haven’t run in years; I’m a marshmallow! Besides, I don’t have any running shoes; I don’t have any shorts. You wouldn’t want me to run in my pajamas, would



Easwaran, 1970s

you?” We have to humor him: get the right apparel, tie his shoes for him, practically carry him to the race. Even then all the spectators look at poor Will and laugh. “He shouldn’t even be here!” And in fact, he scarcely is – yet.

### Strengthening the will

Will slouches at the starting line, all out of shape, while leopard Desire crouches eagerly. Many races have one or two false starts, where everyone has to come back and start again. Here the will is allowed a number of false reverses. “This is too much for me. I’m not meant for competition. You fellows go ahead

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and race each other; I'm going back to bed." He may even try to tiptoe off the track, and we have to keep bringing him back. The will needs constant encouragement, especially at the outset. We have to console him for being so out of condition, reassure him not to be self-conscious about the bulge around his waist, tell him the story of the tortoise and the hare – whatever it takes to keep him in the race.

Off goes the gun; Desire springs from the starting blocks. But Will is all engrossed in his feet. "Look, I've got my shoes on the wrong feet! How did that happen?" He bends over to untie them, and our hearts sink. "Willie, the race has started! Your competitor is already half a mile down the track."

Will lumbers to his feet to the jeers of the crowd. "Hey, Willie, don't go too fast!" "You shouldn't be on a track; you should have stayed in bed!" The voices are our own. There is a certain amount of self-deprecation when we try to master strong desires, but on no account do we need to take this kind of jeering seriously. Even if he appears weak, we should put our money on the will. The miracle is that even the Most Flaccid Will in the *Guinness Book of World Records* can be made immeasurably strong. Just as there are exercises for strengthening different parts of the body, there is a powerful exercise for strengthening the will – resisting any conditioned, self-centered desire. It may be for some sensory pleasure, or it may be more subtle: the demand to have our own way, to have others conform to our expectations. Whatever it is, if we yield to that desire, the will is weakened; if we resist, the will is strengthened.

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## Unsuspected choices

This kind of training has to be practiced with artistry and a sense of proportion. I do not belong to the school of thought that maintains, “If it’s unpleasant, it must be good for you.” Not at all. I would not, for example, suggest you deprive yourself of a glass of fresh orange juice in the morning just because you desire it. There are plenty of positive opportunities for strengthening the will, by resisting urges that benefit nobody.

You can start first thing in the morning, when it is unutterably pleasant to huddle under warm blankets and doze. Do not stop to think; just throw off the blankets and jump out of bed for meditation. That wakes the will up fast. Isn’t there a saying, “He who hesitates is lost”? I would not go to that extent; but hesitation, like procrastination, saps the will. Jesus often says, “Forthwith”: do it now.

The more we look, the more choices we will find, many of them quite unsuspected. Being kind, staying patient, not making a clever remark at someone else’s expense – all these strengthen the will. Go to work a little early, and leave your work in the office when you come home; it will strengthen the will. And if you can give your best to people around you and try to work out differences harmoniously, you are not only making the will stronger, you have him out on the track jogging.

## An unbreakable will

In all fairness, I must say that the will is a plucky fellow at heart. After just a little training he is ready to compete, even if Desire has run so far ahead that he thinks he is unchallenged.



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And once he starts training, be it ever so slowly, the will gains ground every day. Finally Desire looks casually over his shoulder and rubs his eyes in disbelief. There is Will, rounding a far corner. He is not puffing along any more; he is lean, fit, beginning to feel his stride. Soon Desire can hear his footsteps, almost feel him breathing down his neck. At this point, I must warn frankly, Desire may start running for all he is worth.

But finally comes one of the most thrilling moments in spiritual development. This first-rate professional, Desire, suddenly finds himself running neck and neck with the amateur Will. For a while, in fact, we never know who is going to win; just a couple of inches can make the difference between victory and defeat. It makes us vigilant every minute, which is a prerequisite of spiritual progress. If we thought the race was in the bag, effort would slacken; growth would cease.

And at last the will gives one great leap forward, pulls into a strong lead, and breasts the tape. After that, your will is unbreakable. What may be called “right desires” – desires that benefit all, including yourself – can be as strong as they like; when the will runs ahead of desires, nothing can become an obsession. If a desire starts to get a little stronger, the will simply lengthens its stride and pulls out in front.

## **We control our destiny**

No one can plead that he or she lacks will. There is will in every desire. If the desire is self-centered or conditioned, our will is turned against us; we do what it commands. As Spinoza

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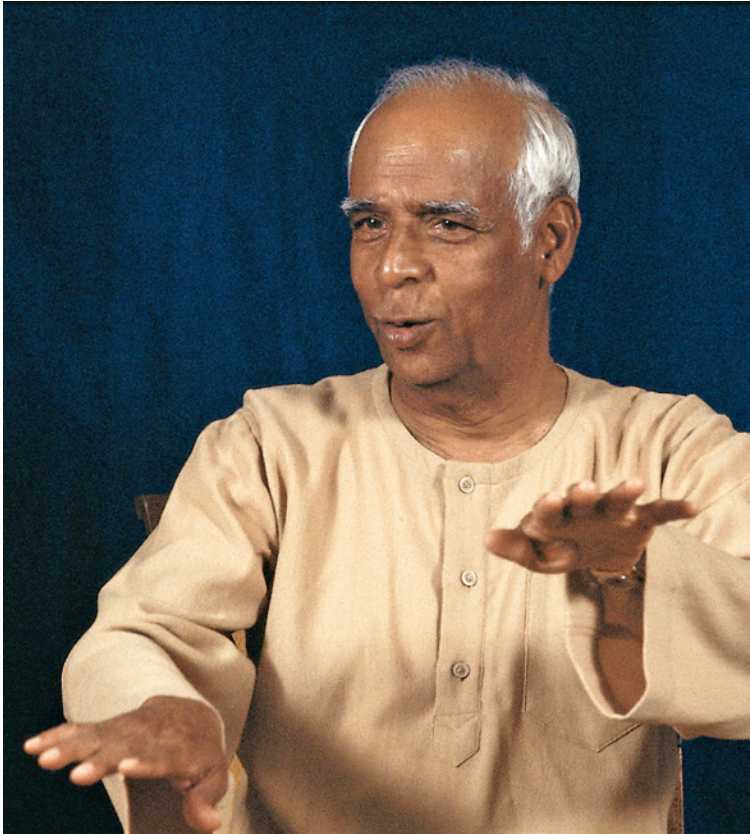
observed, in such a life there are no decisions, only desires. But when the will is in our hands, we control our destiny.

The Bhagavad Gita sums it up concisely: “The will is our only enemy; the will is our only friend.” In Western mysticism, this enemy will is called self-will: the fierce compulsion to please ourselves, get what we want, have our own way, even if it is at the expense of others. This is the immense power behind all selfish desires. In deep meditation we can see self-will flowing through personality like a powerful river, conditioning most of what we think, say, and do.

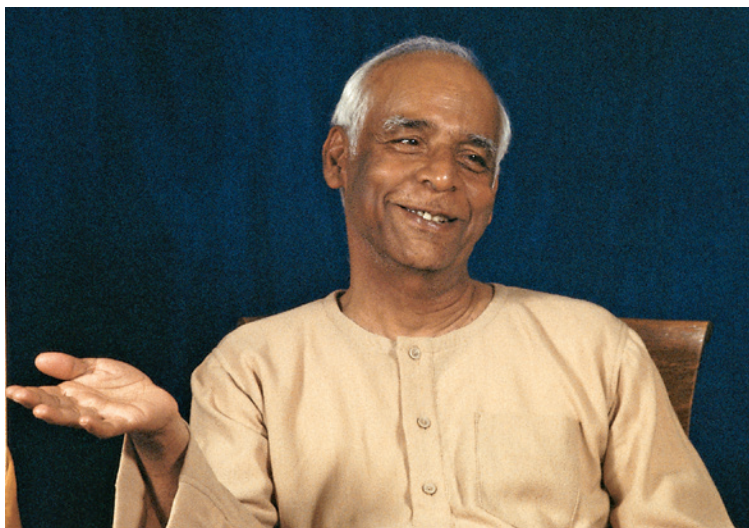
### Swimming upstream

Sometimes in spiritual circles you will find invectives against desire. I have even heard the Buddha misquoted as saying that desire is suffering. Not at all. *Selfish* desire is suffering – in fact, the source of all suffering. But desire itself is simply power, neither good nor bad. Without the tremendous power of desire, there can be no progress on the spiritual path; there can be no progress anywhere. The whole secret of spiritual transformation is turning selfish desire into selfless desire, transforming personal passions into the overwhelming desire to attain life’s highest goal.

In my earlier days, I must confess, I would have agreed with the rest of the world that it is not possible to defy a strong desire without suffering serious consequences. When the river of conditioning came down on me, I too believed that I had no choice except to let the current sweep me away. But as my meditation deepened, I began to suspect that there was a choice. Instead of turning my back, I could turn against the current and try to swim upstream.



Easwaran, 1970s



Easwaran, 1970s

For a long time I did not succeed; the muscles of my will were not yet strong enough. But I went to work on strengthening my will, by resisting all sorts of little, self-centered desires. And gradually a wonderful thing happened. It was like recalling some old strokes I had once learned but long since forgotten – butterfly, breaststroke, Australian crawl. I said to myself with some amazement, “Hey, I can do this! I’m not being swept back any more.” It gave me a whole new perspective. Instead of deprivation, going against desires became a challenge, a new sport. Just as there are people who like nothing more than to ride a turbulent, treacherous river downstream, I began to find a fierce joy in fighting my way against the stream of my conditioning, like a salmon returning to its source.

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## The choice is wholly ours

This is not repression; it is transformation. When I approved of a desire, I still knew how to swim with the current and enjoy it. But when I disapproved, I had a choice. I no longer lived in the everyday world of stimulus and response; I lived in a world of freedom.

In this sense, we can look on the will as a tremendous transformer. The tributaries of desire and self-will flow in; then out comes prana, to be utilized as you choose. If the will is unified from top to bottom, the moment anger rises you can transform it into compassion. The moment disloyalty arises, you can transform it into love. Every negative samskara can be transformed like this, which means that personality can be remade completely in the image of your highest ideal.

Ruysbroeck, a Flemish mystic of the fourteenth century, wrote, “The measure of your holiness is proportionate to the goodness of your will.” As he told some university students, “You are as holy as you want to be.” And, I would add, as happy as we want to be, as loving, as wise. The choice is wholly ours. 🌸



Ramagiri Ashram

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## The Lamp of Wisdom

### *Yoga Vasishtha*

To all who long and strive to realize the Self,  
Illumination comes to them in this very life.  
This divine awareness never leaves them,  
And they work unceasingly for the good of all.  
When the lamp of wisdom is lit within,  
Their face shines, whether life brings weal or woe.  
Even in deep sleep they are aware of the Self,  
For their mind is freed from all conditioning.  
Inwardly they are pure like the cloudless sky,  
But they act as if they too were like us all.  
Free from self-will, with detached intellect,  
They are aware of the Self even with their hands at work.  
Neither afraid of the world, nor making the world afraid,  
They are free from greed, anger, and fear.

When the waves of self-will subside  
Into the sea of peace that is the Self,  
The mind becomes still, the heart pure,  
And illumination comes to us in this very life.  
When this supreme state is attained,  
They neither rise nor fall, change nor die.  
Words cannot describe the supreme state  
For it is fuller than fullness can be.



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## Ten Tips for Harnessing the Will

Eknath Easwaran, from a selection of his books

1. I sometimes receive catalogs advertising special paraphernalia required for meditation. I must have a cosmic mandala cushion, sit in a pyramid, and inhale only Astral Vision brand Illumination Incense. In meditation, the only equipment you really need is the will, and you can't buy that through the mail.
2. Even if you sit for an hour in meditation doing nothing but bringing your mind back to the passage sixty times in sixty minutes, you have made progress on the spiritual path.
3. Every time you turn against a strong desire, it immediately strengthens the will. Often you can see the results the very next time you sit down for meditation.
4. You can begin simply by ceasing to choose foods that don't benefit your health and instead choosing foods that do. With this simple resolution, you'll strengthen your will and deepen your meditation – and please your physician, too.
5. Even more effective, when we are greatly agitated and want to go our own way because our parents, partner, friends, or children differ from us, is to make a painful turnabout and go their way instead of ours.



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6. Angry people are usually quite self-willed. They don't have the strength to be patient or turn back harsh words because self-will eats away the will. If you want to transform anger and harness it, you have to strengthen the will.
  7. All spiritual progress requires the sacrifice of self-will, not so much in one grand gesture as in a thousand and one little acts of thoughtfulness during the day.
  8. Everywhere, in every detail of daily living, it is not a question of quantity or expense that makes our offering acceptable; it is cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and the capacity to forget ourselves completely in helping those around us.
  9. We may not think we have made a conscious decision to pursue a particular object of desire, but on the unconscious level, a desire is a decision. One very effective way to strengthen the will, therefore, is to be extremely vigilant about not letting ourselves be put into situations where we are likely to be swept away by our desire.
  10. Whenever desires threaten to agitate us, we have an opportunity to remain calm and compassionate and repeat the mantram. This is the greatest challenge in life. Every time we push these desires back, we strengthen the will; and gradually we begin to realize that He who made the sea and sun, sky and moon, is within us, giving us the infinite power and immense energy to transform our desires.

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## COMMUNITY STORY: Finding the Truth

It was during a time of questioning in my mid-twenties that I decided to explore a different truth, and left behind the Catholic Church and the Catholic education that had shaped my thinking till then.

From there it took fifty years to find Easwaran.

The two questions on my mind were: what is the “real” truth and how can I find inner peace. What I saw around me did not feel authentic or, worse, it seemed hypocritical. So, I began to seek an answer in books: literature, psychology, history. Every time I opened a new book, I hoped to find between its covers at least one hint that could lead to a more genuine way of life.

I became interested in yoga, hatha yoga at first, then therapeutic yoga, Patanjali’s yoga sutras and meditation. I was getting closer. . . Then, at one retreat I found an issue of the BMCM Journal. I took it home, where it stayed on a shelf for several months. One day I picked it up, read it and signed up for a retreat.

Then I *knew*: this was what I had been looking for all those years. What made Easwaran different? A small bombshell: *the knowledge I searched for had to be obtained experientially*. Not by rote, reading, learning Sanskrit words or foreign rituals. But by a commitment that leads to a gradual

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opening of the heart. And Easwaran even showed the way: an eight-point program to be practiced every day.

The eight-point program made all the difference. For meditation, the guidelines were clear, helpful, and supplemented with creative suggestions from Easwaran's talks and books such as: "it's like training a puppy, you must make it pay attention over and over again."

The other seven points likewise did not let me get away with merely following instructions. For instance: "slowing down" made me examine the quality of my life: how does habitually rushing around make you feel?

With rekindled commitment small changes began to be felt that in turn encouraged me to persist. Inner calm began to replace a sense of loneliness. My own reactions sometimes surprised me.

Easwaran promised that I would be able to "graduate" from mind to heart and find the peace I had coveted for so long by unifying my desires (such a nice word for discipline!). I am beginning to feel what he meant when he said that the goal is to open our hearts. Which is what is making this work so enduringly fascinating: the same words carry more meaning as time goes by.

In the end there really *was* a book that said it all: the Bhagavad Gita. But it needed an interpreter: Easwaran. And there it was: another name for Truth is God.

– A member of our Affiliate Program

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## COMMUNITY STORY: Determination and Living in Freedom

Recently I was driving to a gathering. I'm not good at these. Inside all the words start to fill me up. What will they think of me? What stupid things will I say? Do I look okay? I worry about being embarrassing to others as well as myself with what I might do wrong or say the wrong way. I am filled with this self-talk that I can't seem to control and if it wasn't for my husband really wanting to be there and have me there with him, I would have found an excuse not to go.

But this time I told myself I would fill my time with the mantram so there would be no place for those negative and worrisome ideas. On the drive I filled my thoughts with the mantram and I felt myself relaxing more. It was a forty-five minute drive. By the time we got there I was breathing a bit more easily than I usually do.

It wasn't a perfect evening, but my practice gave me some room inside to just listen and not judge – myself or others. I talked less and listened more. My ego took a little nap, and maybe this was a way to serve others just by listening.

I no longer want to live by demanding my own way or making others conform to my expectations. I simply want to live in freedom to serve others in small actions throughout my day and to ride the current to the Self.

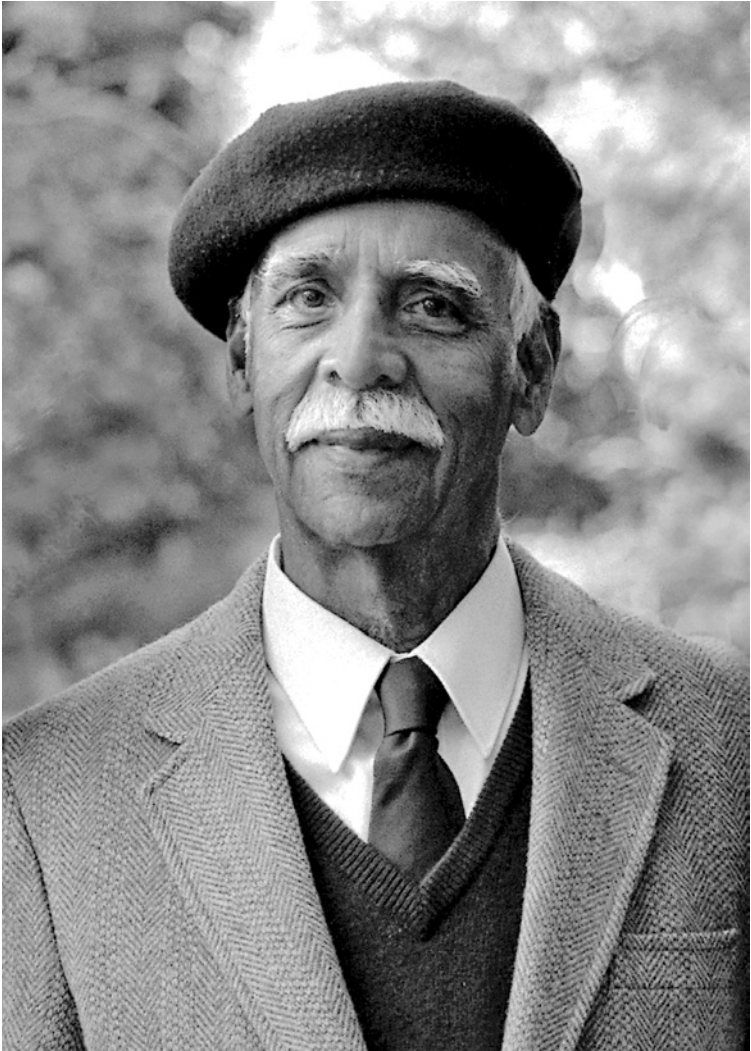


The memorial rock at Ramagiri Ashram

It is in my daily meditation where I get to practice. I am not looking for the “perfect” meditation. Meditation gives me opportunities to wrangle my ego into taking a nap. Here I am building the muscle I need, so when I am out in the world I can begin to make room for possibility.

The overflowing gifts of Easwaran, Christine, and Granny, of daily meditation, the eight points, and this community, all guide me to this freedom. For this I am deeply grateful.

– Lexanne, Colorado



Easwaran, 1980s

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## A Living Faith

Ekknath Easwaran, from *Seeing With the Eyes of Love*

I was always capable of hard, sustained work, and in the early years of my own spiritual practice I drew heavily on that capacity. I changed all my ways, reversing long-standing patterns of living, and I took great joy in doing so. As I worked my way down to the more stubborn attachments, I found it harder going, but I kept at it anyway. Finally, however, I reached a point when I felt I could go no further. What I was attempting to do appeared now to be quite literally impossible. The rest of the journey seemed completely beyond me – beyond any human being. I was plunged into grief.

Since then I have come to understand that every man or woman who has sought God-realization has undergone this anguish, that it comes at a certain stage in the spiritual journey.

For a long time, you see, you are just struggling across the foothills of the spiritual Himalayas, longing for at least a glimpse of one of those snowy peaks. A mantle of early morning frost on a good-sized hill sets your heart racing, and that night you can hardly bear to stop and camp. You forge on, and at last before you beckons a snowcapped peak – the real thing this time – and everything in you is bent on scaling it. You want with all your heart to get there, but right in front of you yawns a chasm that is miles across. “What do I do now?” you ask. “There is no road! There isn’t even a track for a mountain goat. Even if I have tremendous willpower and

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energy, how can I travel if there is no path?” You see the peak and the chasm at just the same moment. Intense restlessness seizes you, and wild optimism alternating with despair.

### **Devotion carries you across the chasm**

People who depend on their own sheer willpower can get into trouble at this stage. But if from the earliest days of your spiritual life you have tried, like Brother Lawrence, to keep yourself in the presence of God through meditation and repetition of the Holy Name, you know what to do. With the trust and affection of a small child, you turn to the Lord of Love within and ask, “Why don’t you just take me up in your arms and deposit me on the other side? I’ll close my eyes and repeat your name, and leave the rest to you!”

And this is what takes place. It happened to me, and it can happen to you. Love wells up in your heart if you surrender your self-will, and devotion carries you across the chasm. You don’t even feel the motion. You think you’re still on the frost-bitten lower slopes; then after a while you open your eyes and find yourself on the snowcapped peak. Finally it dawns on you, “I don’t have to do any leaping. Whenever there is a great leap to be made, the Lord is there to take me in his arms, cradle me against his chest, and deposit me safely.”

Years later, looking back on all this, I have realized that I am a very blessed creature. I am still lost in wonder at what happened to me, for I know that I could never have completed the journey under my own power. It was grace alone that enabled me to continue until the end.



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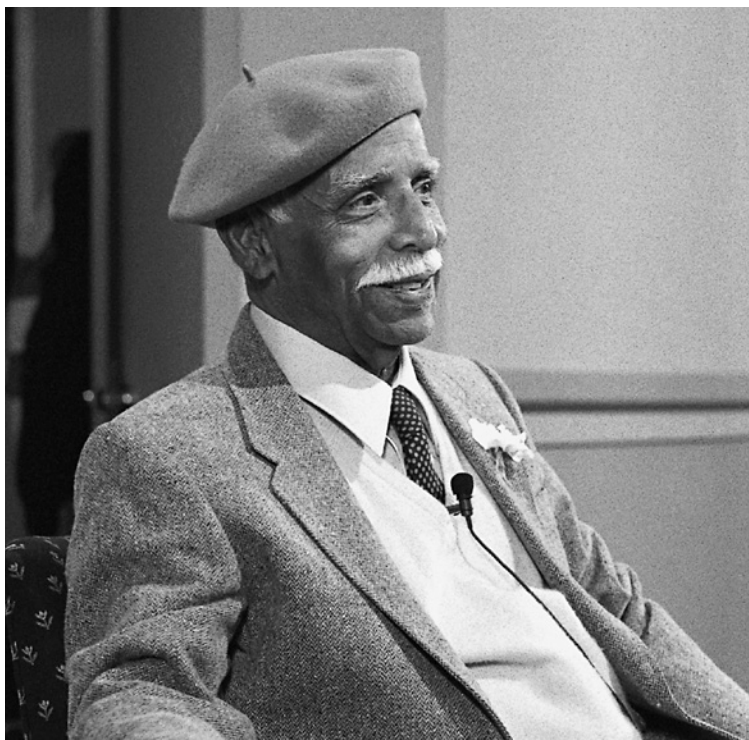
## A mother's protective love

This mystery has been recorded again and again in the lives of the mystics. Teresa of Ávila writes in her commentary on the Song of Songs:

An infant doesn't understand how it grows, nor does it know how it gets its milk; for without its sucking or doing anything, often the milk is put into its mouth. Likewise, here, the soul is completely ignorant. It knows neither how nor from where that great blessing came to it, nor can it understand . . . it sees that it is nourished and made better and doesn't know when it deserved this. It is instructed in great truths without seeing the Master who teaches it; fortified in virtues and favored by One who knows it well. . . . It doesn't know what to compare his grace to, unless to the great love a mother has for her child in nourishing and caressing it.

In playful language we can never forget, Sri Ramakrishna, the great Bengali saint of the nineteenth century, speaks of the same experience. He says that in the first half of our spiritual endeavors, we are like baby monkeys. The little monkey holds on to its mother while she jumps from branch to branch, and he has to hold tight because if he loosens his grip, down he'll fall.

But during the second half, Ramakrishna says, we are like kittens. The mother cat doesn't expect her kitten to hold on to her; she picks him up by the scruff of the neck. You would think she is being cruel to hold him like that; but in fact she is being



Easwaran, 1980s

very protective. The kitten just goes limp and lets the mother cat do the traveling. And when the kitten is set down on his feet again, the mother's protective love continues to surround him. He can be right on the verge of making what the feline world sees as a serious mistake, but the mother won't let him. Have you seen a mother cat reach out and slap the kitten with her paw? It hurts, and the kitten doesn't make that mistake again!

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## A living faith

This is how faith takes root in our heart and grows. Sometimes people speak of faith as something we should cultivate on principle – no matter how the intellect balks, no matter what our own experience has taught us. My own attitude is stubbornly practical. I've never taken anything on faith that I could not test against my own experience. Today, I would say freely that I am a man of profound faith in God. But mine is a living faith. It began as the most tentative proposition: "I shall move in this direction, even when it doesn't look pleasant, and let us see what happens."

As my meditation deepened, great difficulties did come my way, but over and over I have been rescued – sometimes at the eleventh hour. I could never have told you why, but my path would be cleared; courage, insight, and resourcefulness would come to me. Today, after many years of validation in my personal experience, I can claim that my faith in God has become unshakable. But that faith is the fruit of a long period of effort and clear observation – and, I would add, an open mind.

The poet Robert Browning uses a geometrical simile: all the Lord expects us to do is to draw the arc; the Lord himself will complete the circle. Have I done everything possible to train my senses, to subdue my passions, to liquidate my self-will? If I have, even if I have not been completely successful, he will augment my strivings and reward my efforts a hundredfold. 🌸



Easwaran and Christine, 1970s

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## In Loving Memory of Christine Easwaran, 1921–2022

# A Daily Rhythm

By Christine Easwaran, from our journal archive

In our recent articles, Sri Easwaran has dealt with detachment and with discrimination. In this issue, he takes up the topic of determination. He called these the three Ds: traits we need to develop if we are to live in freedom and not be tossed about by life. Here he tells us that in order to train the mind and develop determination we need regularity in meditation.

Whether we live in a community, with family or friends, or alone, a daily pattern for meditation can be a unifying force. I like to think that in subtle ways, in the depths of our being, we can experience some alignment with the larger patterns of the universe (the seasons, the daily rotation of the earth) and gain strength from identifying with this greater dimension.

At Ramagiri Ashram we follow a daily pattern based on checkpoints, or “Touchstones,” for evaluating our course and keeping us on track during the day. These are:

Morning Meditation

Evening Meditation

Sacrament of the Evening Meal

Message from Our Teacher

The last two Touchstones may need an explanation. Easwaran saw the value of spiritual fellowship during the day. Sharing stories, whether serious or lighthearted, at mealtimes can contribute to a balanced life and create a valuable bonding experience.

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At the end of the day, we look forward to a video talk by Easwaran (Message from Our Teacher) for inspiration and for focusing our scattered minds on the purpose of our lives. As we watch thirty-minute segments from his talks, we have the precious opportunity to relive his presence with us and obtain what may be called *darshan* (blessing) from hearing his voice and witnessing his image and gestures. Many of our friends use these published talks at the end of the day just as we do at Ramagiri Ashram.

Writing the mantram together is not one of our Touchstones, but it is on our program every Sunday afternoon. Recently, one of the participants at a retreat suggested that, after the program ended, they could join us in this activity from their homes. This seems to be the most convenient time across the Americas for participating simultaneously in any activity of the Center, whether you are in Hawaii or Brazil. But no matter where you are, or what time it is, your mantrams are encouraged.

The mission of Ramagiri Ashram is to demonstrate the validity of the timeless teachings of our Teacher by living out in daily practice his eight-point program of passage meditation – an awesome assignment we diligently work on. But this is not just the responsibility of the residents at our headquarters. All of us who are earnestly practicing passage meditation, no matter where we are, are part of Easwaran’s growing spiritual network.

May our Teacher’s blessings be with you! 🌸



Christine Easwaran





Ramagiri Ashram

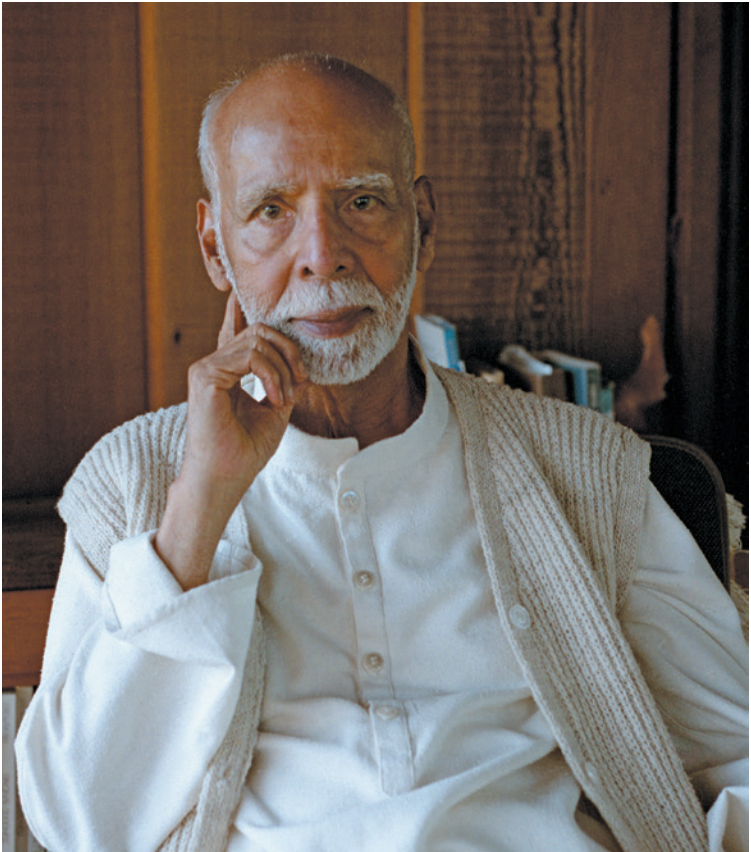




Shanti meditation hall at Ramagiri Ashram



The memorial garden at Ramagiri Ashram



Easwaran, 1990s

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## An Indomitable Will

Eknath Easwaran

from *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 2

“Strength,” Gandhi said, “does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” In times of trial and turmoil, when fortune frowns and friends forsake you, if your will is strong you will never lose heart or feel abandoned. You can look at the life of Gandhi and see what this means: he faced the bitterest opposition, calumny, and betrayal over and over, up to the last moment of his life. So did Teresa of Ávila; so did St. Francis. Where will you find more vibrant, cheerful, hopeful, beneficial lives?

For these reasons, the Gita offers rather surprising advice: if you want to be secure and self-reliant, if you want to become loving, if you want friends who will stand by you, then do everything you can to strengthen your will; don't do anything that undermines it. Even a midnight snack can undermine the will, though you conscientiously work off the calories the very next day. In the early days, of course, training the will requires effort and vigilance. It is not so simple or easy as it may seem. But the rewards will amaze you; and in the end, reassuringly enough, everything you had to work at becomes spontaneous and natural. Then you are free.



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## Easwaran's Eight-Point Program of Passage Meditation

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

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## About Eknath Easwaran

Eknath Easwaran (1910–1999) is the originator of passage meditation and the author of more than 30 books on spiritual living.

Easwaran was a professor of English literature at a leading Indian university when he came to the United States in 1959 on the Fulbright exchange program. A gifted teacher, he moved from education for degrees to education for living, and gave talks on meditation and spiritual living for 40 years.

In 1961 he founded the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, a nonprofit organization that publishes his books, videos, and audio talks, and offers online retreats and programs.

Easwaran lived what he taught, giving him lasting appeal as a spiritual teacher and author of deep insight and warmth.



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

From the BMCM Programs team

### Introductory Webinars

A chance to try out passage meditation.

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

### Introductory Weekend Retreats

Everything you need to get your passage meditation practice started.

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

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

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



### BMCM Satsang Live

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

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

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## Online Retreats and Workshops



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

### Returnee Workshop:

October 7

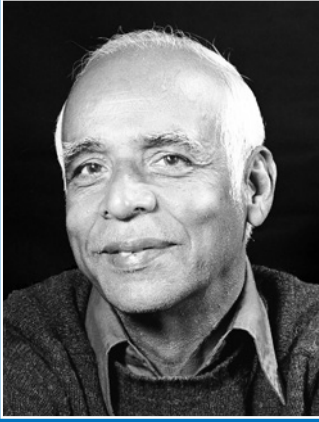
### Weeklong Retreat:

October 13–17

### Returnee Weekend Retreat:

November 3–5

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



All spiritual progress  
requires the sacrifice of  
self-will, not so much in  
one grand gesture as in a  
thousand and one little acts  
of thoughtfulness during  
the day.

— Eknath Easwaran

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