

The Talks of Eknath Easwaran : Tape 23

Study Guide for ***Self-Mastery***

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Raja Yoga: The Path to Self-Mastery

Introduction

The two talks on this videotape are filled with insights into the practice of meditation and the spiritual lifestyle that grows out of that practice. In our study and exercises we will concentrate specifically on the key issue of vital energy – how we can conserve and increase it through meditation, and how we can regulate that energy through the course of our day.

In the first talk, Sri Easwaran uses the classic image of Raja Yoga: when we have gained mastery over ourselves through meditation, our thoughts obey us. Sense training becomes natural, he says, when we have trained our thoughts to rest in spiritual ideals.

Such mastery conserves the energy that would otherwise have escaped through the senses, and Sri Easwaran gives an engaging account of one of his days to illustrate how, though he was seventy-eight at the time of this talk, he could spend the entire day teaching and guiding his students in the art of spiritual living, without feeling drained or tired.

Practical Exercise

In this talk, Sri Easwaran says that we can get clues for improving our meditation by observing our energy level through the day. To experiment with this idea, we'll pay some attention to the level of our vital energy through the day. When our vital energy is well regulated, we stay focused, determined, and enthusiastic about practicing spiritual disciplines. Generally, we feel calm, even-minded, and equal to challenges. When we have wasted our vital energy on unbeneficial, distracting pursuits, we may feel scattered, or we may feel nervous or frantic. These latter states sometimes feel energetic in a superficial way, but in terms of spiritual practice they are signs that we lack the capacity for concentration in the face of challenges.

This week, take five to ten minutes every evening to reflect on your day and notice three things:

1. When did you feel drained, depleted of the energy you need to make a good effort in your spiritual practice?
2. When did you feel that you had plenty of energy and were equal to challenges?
3. How and when were you able to replenish your store of vital energy?

Suggested Passage for Meditation

Native American Tradition, "Great Life-Giving Spirit" in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*.

Recommended Reading

Chapter Four, “Finding Balance,” in *Take Your Time*.

Raja Yoga: The Path to Self-Mastery

Transcript

February 11, 1989

Last week, I was talking about meditation as *raja yoga*. *Raja* is “king.” *Yoga* is the coronation that makes us kings of our life, queens of our life. It is a very comprehensible and attainable goal.

In India, for example, even during earlier decades of this century, there were many maharajas. And even in [Kerala](#) or [Mysore](#), we had good maharajas who really valued the welfare of the people. I had friends from the royal family of Cochin and you may remember that one or two of my relatives who are connected with that family were visiting here. When the maharaja walked to the temple, all traffic would stop – not because it was the law; people didn't like to put the maharaja to any inconvenience. The shopkeepers would come out and stand respectfully; not because it was the law but because of the deep gratitude and affection the people had for the Maharaja of Mysore or the Maharaja of Kerala.

Imagine thoughts as people – their number is enormous, sometimes running into hundreds of thousands of thoughts. For a person who is aware of God, who has attained Self-realization, every thought will stand up respectfully to show its gratitude. It is not that I have lost my capacity for thinking, but I can think what I want, which was not the case even when I was functioning successfully at a great university in India. I had a trained intellect because I had excellent teachers – Eastern and Western. (Some of the best teachers who laid the foundation for my education were my uncles.) So, I have a trained intellect and I was not aware at that time that I could not always think my thoughts. My thoughts perhaps succeeded in thinking me, which is a practical paradox. If you are really the king of your life, the king of your mind, no thought should arise in your mind which doesn't have your approval. No word should come out of your mouth which doesn't have your approval. And of course, no action can flow from your life which is detrimental to yourself or to your family or to society or to the environment. That's why I like that term very much – *raja yoga*.

When I am going to present meditation, I would like to repeat over and over again: in a sense it is not just realizing your hidden potential. In its deepest sense, it is becoming a humble instrument in the hands of the Lord, which is the reason why I recommend the Prayer of Francis everywhere. It sums up perfectly what the Gita says. “Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.” Make me an instrument of thy love. Make me an instrument of thy wisdom.

Sri Krishna answers. When my prayer rises from the depths of my consciousness with all the passion I am capable of – my personal ambition, my pursuit of pleasure, my need for fulfillment

– all that has gone into this river, so there is nothing personal left. Everything has flowed in this torrential river of devotion, not because of my capacity but because of my Granny's priceless gift.

Whatever instructions you read in all my books on meditation, they are just a beginning. I have been meditating for half my life and even now, I haven't come to the end of my knowledge about meditation. It is endless! That is why I say to dedicate your whole life to it. All that you will lose is insecurity, impatience, unkindness, resentment, hostility. These are the only things that you lose.

When I say, to beginners particularly, don't meditate for more than half an hour at a time, I usually add half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening. There are a few people in every country who have a great deal of will power, a great deal of determination, which may show in their becoming great tennis champions or skiing champions – which calls for a great deal of discipline. There are people who are – in India particularly – in every place in India there are always one or two people who have a natural vein of devotion. They may not be educated. They may not be rich, but they have that. I have always been on the outlook for such people.

Now such people, when they take to my way of meditation B memorizing an inspirational passage, focusing their attention, letting every word or phrase drop like a pearl in their mind and bringing their attention back every time it wanders away – they can slowly go in, as I went in. I couldn't believe, in the early years of my meditation. I just looked up and I wasn't aware that I had been sitting for half an hour. And, of course, I always had a fear of being late for class. To show you how strong a [*samskara*](#) can be – even after these thirty years, I still have a dream now and then that I am late for my Shakespeare class. They are there. Only I don't get anxious; I don't get troubled. I wake up and say, "Thank God, I don't have to go to Shakespeare class." Where is Claudia?

What happens when people with real concentration (professional people usually have a flare for concentration; surgeons, for example – I have an Indian friend who is a surgeon who can really concentrate for long periods because that is the nature of his work), when your concentration deepens so that consciousness is slowly withdrawn from your ears – that's why when I am meditating, I don't hear easily – then, your eyes, your senses, consciousness is all slowly withdrawn. They are going back into the mind, as Teresa of Avila says – "The bees are slowly going home to the honeycomb". You won't hear the cars very clearly. You won't hear the planes very clearly. You will have lost your sense of touch, so you are not quite aware of your body. That's why I would say to use a chair with arms or better still, sit on the floor. If you fall, you won't get hurt. It shows you the practicality of our sages!

Then, when you go deeper in meditation, you will have a tremendous lot of energy. I come from a very energetic family. My grandmother was very energetic. My mother was very energetic. My

nieces are very energetic. I am full of energy! This is in everybody. Unless you tap these deepest resources, you don't know how much limitless energy there is. There may be an energy crisis in the outer world; there will never be an energy crisis in the inner world if you are devoting your life to the Lord of Love and meditating regularly, systematically, sincerely, and with sustained enthusiasm. That is one of the surest ways to evaluate your meditation – that you have a lot of energy.

As you know, every week I try to go out and take a few friends. It is part of my [sadhana](#). I like traveling with five, just to set an example. That is the way to beat the traffic problem. Not by building more freeways and buying more cars. Nobody talks – they all repeat the mantram. It is a very joyful occasion for us. When we go to San Francisco, we usually walk on the marina. We talk to the birds. If Francis can speak to sparrows, we can speak to seagulls too. We do that and we walk a great deal. I go to a place where I can watch people – [Ghirardelli Square](#). People from all parts of the world, speaking all kinds of languages and my joy is that I know they are all one and the surface contrast of everybody being different – that's the great play I watch. Then we went to [Priestley](#)'s play and we enjoyed it thoroughly. It was a plea for compassion, for not sitting in judgment on people. Even those who make mistakes, they can be helped to overcome those mistakes. Then, we go to a favorite Italian restaurant where people are interested in my work. They give me special consideration and we do ourselves fairly well at the Italian table, too. Sri Krishna says, "If it is not at the expense of anybody." Being together, eating together in harmony. Talking about work – it is all part of sadhana. Then, we come back.

I am just trying to give you an example, after a long day, I haven't been with most of my friends. They want to be with me and I want to be with them, so we stay up and watch an old movie. Often it is midnight by the time we go to bed. So, when they ask me, "Where do you get all this energy from?" I reply, "It is in you, too." When you have an enormous supply of energy and when your nervous system is not upset – when your mind is not upset – you need only a few hours of sleep. That is another test.

Third, and most easily verifiable: the senses. That is why I keep telling you that my senses were not obedient to me. In those days, I was not a king, so when I was passing by, they would put their feet up on the table: "Who cares?" If I said, "Who do you think you are?" I knew that I had no authority. Now, I am a great friend of my senses. This is my buddy. I have only to say, "Please," and every sense will gladly obey me. I have only to say, "Please," and my mind will say, "Whatever you want me not to think, I won't." It is not a question of mortification. This is a question of being the head of the cabinet. I listen to all of them as to what they have to say, but all of them listen to my judgment. That is a relationship that we can all build.

So, you can see how your palate listens to you, how your ears, eyes, and most of all, how your mind listens to you. Those are the tests by which meditation can easily be evaluated.

[Tatraikagram manah kritva yatachittendriyakriyah. Upavishyasane yunjyad yogam atmavishuddhaye.](#) The first word is where you will see I get all my inspiration from – *tatraikagram manah kritva*: make your mind one-pointed. Not just in meditation. That's where all of you can still learn from my personal example, which was not natural to me, but which I have cultivated to an enormous extent. If I try to drink a cup of decaffeinated espresso and listen to Laurel at the same time, I will lose the flavor and I will lose the decaf. You see, all my consciousness travels from here to the ear. If I try to have my attention on the flavor in the decaf, I will lose Laurel's words. It can be cultivated to such an extent. That is why, when I am listening to somebody, it is not just my ears – my eyes, my attention, everything is on them. That's why they respond. It is so with everybody.

So, don't ever try to split your attention. It won't help your meditation. I see it everywhere, all the way. I saw, the other day, a person reading a book and driving. He had it like that [holding the paper before his eyes]. I see people reading a map and driving. I have seen people talking and driving. I don't know, because the traffic department is not aware of this, how many of the 46,000 people killed every year in this country on roads could be prevented by cultivating one-pointed attention. Everywhere – in the kitchen, in the doctor's office, with the surgeon, with the barber – everywhere.

We have a joke in India. Indian folklore is very pungent, but very pleasant. See, barbers use – when I was growing up – what you used to call cut-throat razors – long razor, looking almost like a mini scimitar. I don't remember going to a barber and not getting a little cut at any time. The joke is that when the barber takes his big razor, you say, "May I have one."

"Why?"

"I want to defend myself."

Indian folklore is very good with these stories to tell you the need for personal attention. When I go to the dentist, I tell them, "Turn off the music, please; and don't try to entertain me with the football." What is it? The big game. Super Bowl. "Don't try to entertain me with the Super Bowl." I just repeat my mantram. Because of years of devoted endeavor, sometimes I fall asleep. I don't want you to think I am a stoic. I am not. I don't like pain and I don't stand pain very easily, but I have the supreme panacea for all pain, the mantram.

When you are traveling, cling to the mantram. Don't read all those awful magazines they put in front of you and don't watch those movies. My mother, who has a nice sense of humor (it's hereditary) – I told her, "Mother, why are you taking so much time to get your passport?" She wrote to me, "They send me papers. I send them papers. This is all we do all the time."

Then, when she came here, I said, "How did you do on the plane?"

She said, "Every time I was falling asleep, somebody would say, 'Do you want a drink?' or 'Do you want to see a movie? Don't you want something?'"

Travel is the very best time for repeating the mantram. Whenever a friend goes away, that is the advice I give. You will have ten, twelve hours for repeating the mantram. The driver, yes. Do give the driver a strong cup of coffee, too. See, there is time for a strong cup, you know. At that time, no decaf. The real thing! You see that is how you use discrimination. When we go out, we all drink decaf but, whoever the driver is, I say, "double espresso."

When you are going to sleep, that's the time you hear on the party line the happenings of the day; the mistakes you have committed – everybody commits mistakes. Keep repeating the mantram until you fall asleep in it. It is a very difficult skill to acquire. Just repeat, *Rama, Rama, Rama*, or *Ave Maria, Ave Maria* until you fall asleep in it, and then you can do what now I can humbly claim: Whatever the problems of the day, whatever the challenges of the following day, they don't come to bed with me. My mantram says, "Out!" What is that line from [Macbeth](#)? [*from audience*: "Out, damn spot."] I didn't want to say it, you see, but as a nutritionist, he is allowed. "Out, dash-dash spot."

See, I am telling everybody that you don't need to have nightmares. You don't have to have bad dreams. You don't have to have any kind of ill will, resentment, fear, or greed coming into your sleep, just by learning to use the mantram.

This is to inspire all of you, and is something to be aimed at all the time. You see, the Gita – I am really a Gita kid, from the bald spot here to the tip of my toes, all Gita. At night, in my soundest sleep, I hear the verses. Now the question my intellect asks is, "You are asleep. Who is repeating those verses?" I can hear sometimes the reverberation of tremendous verses going through my consciousness. Our great sages say, that is the [Atman](#) repeating the verse. When the Atman repeats the verses, it heals all wounds. It dispels all fears. The trauma of the past is wiped out. That is what mantra – *man – tara*: That which enables you to cross the stormy sea of the mind.

Tatraikagram manah kritva. Every time your thoughts wander away, bring them back. It is a very dull process. It can lead to marvelous dividends! In order to be afraid, in order to be greedy, in

order to be angry, in order to be resentful, in order to be hostile, you have to change lanes. I may not be much of a driver where automobiles are concerned but where the mind is concerned, I never change lanes. I never invade anybody's lane. I never change lanes. Therefore, no negative emotion can come into my mind. When you are very upset, try to do some logarithms. That's the test. Or try to conduct an experiment to verify $e = mc^2$. When you are angry, when you are greedy, when you are afraid – you won't be able to verify the principle of Archimedes because concentration is gone.

That is why the Gita says that if you become established in concentration, *vita raga bhaya krodha*. I used to have a lot of fears. I was not noted for anger, but I had a lot of fears. Greed also was very minimal, thanks to the great upbringing that I had at home. But I had a tremendous lot of fears, which most of our kids here don't have. The Gita says that when your devotion to the Lord is complete, when your concentration is complete, *vita raga*, I won't get selfishly attached to anybody or anything even if I wanted to.

Bhaya. Here is another joke. This is not from India; this is from England. A soldier, during World War I – it's a grim story with a pleasant ending – was shot through the heart on the battlefield, but he survived. When he came home, everybody asked, "How did you survive when you were shot through the heart?" "My heart was in my mouth!" So, there are some advantages.

Vita raga bhaya krodha. Gandhi was a very angry man, but he learned to harness that anger. Today, particularly, everybody is angry. If you just say some little word, they get angry. That is how it is in the movies. That is how it is on television. I remember, in the early days, I went and saw a play or a movie in which a mother repeated her advice two or three times to her daughter, who left the home. Why?

"Because my mother keeps repeating."

I said, "That's what my mother keeps doing all the time and that's why I stay with her."

When I was going to Petaluma – she used to think that I was going to get lost. She would always say, "Come home by eight o'clock." Every time I used to go to Petaluma, she would say, "Come home by eight o'clock." To me, that's a sign of tenderness. That's a sign of her love for me. Here many, many things that are resented, I would not know why people resent them.

Vita raga bhaya krodha. I am full of anger against the massacre of the elephants, and with the help of a lot of good friends, we are able to do something about them. That's the power of anger. Don't waste it against people. Harness it. That's what you learn to harness in meditation. *Vita raga bhaya krodha*.

When you are without anger, without fear, and without greed, Sri Krishna says, "You live in Me and I live in you," which is what meditation is for.

[Yatachittendriyakriyah upavishyasane yunjyad.](#) *Yunjyat*, practice meditation. *Asane*, in a firm seat, whether on the floor or in a chair. *Yogam atma vishuddhaye*.

Self-Will and Freedom

Introduction

This talk was given in January 1989 in response to a series of questions posed to Sri Easwaran on the topic of self-will and the thinking process. It provides much practical guidance, as well as a fascinating glimpse into Easwaran's mystical experiences.

The talk begins with his careful analysis of the last line of the Prayer of Saint Francis, "It is in dying [to self] that we are born to eternal life." Self-will often expresses itself in compulsive habits of thinking and living. To help us change these habits permanently, Easwaran presents a simple model of the process by which the mind forms habits. When we get free from compulsive thinking, we gain access to much greater reserves of energy.

In the second part of the talk, he goes on to recount in detail how he has learned to replenish his vital energy by absorbing the beauty of nature with a calm, concentrated mind.

And in the final section of the talk, Easwaran draws on one of India's great modern mystics, Sri Ramana Maharshi, to give an inspiring picture of how the conquest of self-will frees us from identification with the body, and therefore from the fear of death. "Once you have become established in this experience," he says, "wherever you look – the animals, the birds, the trees, the rivers, the seas, the skies – in everything you see the signature of the Lord of Love."

Practical Exercise

In this talk, Sri Easwaran speaks of his ability to replenish his energy by absorbing the beauty of nature: "While traveling along this beautiful road in the evening, it gave me such joy to keep repeating my mantram until I got back here. There was no need; there was no agitation in my mind – it was just the very joy of doing it. The joy of seeing the Divine Light everywhere is very different from the poetical experience or the painting experience. Throughout that journey, I used my mind to absorb the beauty of the Divine Light that I saw everywhere. That absorption, I have every reason to believe, brings a lot of energy, a lot of vitality."

This week, try to design some activity, using one of the Eight Points, which enables you to replenish your spiritual energy. What can you do during the day, using the Eight Points, to better harness your vital energy and move from a low energy state to a higher one? What kind of right recreation (an activity that relaxes body and mind without causing agitation) helps you to replenish yourself? Try to leave some time for it regularly in your schedule, and view it as part of your spiritual practice.

Suggested Passage for Meditation

Chief Yellow Lark, “Let Me Walk in Beauty” from *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*.

Recommended Reading

Chapter Five, “Living in Freedom,” in *Take Your Time*.

Self-Will and Freedom

Transcript

January 14, 1989

You have been asking me a number of searching questions about what exactly is meant, for example, by the last line of the Prayer of Saint Francis, "It is dying that we are born to eternal life." It is not an easy statement to explain because, unless we get established in that experience of what is called [moksha](#) in the Gita or nirvana in the language of the Buddha, no amount of verbal explanation is going to make us understand exactly what Saint Francis means: "It is dying [to self] that we are born to eternal life."

So, let me first try to enumerate, as far as words can possibly serve, what are the beneficial consequences that follow from what Francis calls "dying to self" and what the Buddha calls nirvana, which also means the same: *nir*, "out"; *vana*, "to blow."

As you know, I don't use the word "ego" very easily because it is subject to a lot of misinterpretation. I try to use, as far as possible, the words "extinction of self-will," which is what nirvana means; which is what Francis means. If I had been the translator, that is how I would have translated it: "It is in dying to self-will that we are born to eternal life."

In [Patanjali's](#) language (for me, the greatest psychologist to come out of ancient India), he doesn't use the term "mind." Many of the questions that I was asked contain references to the mind, which is why it is very difficult to answer those questions. Patanjali talks about [manas](#), [buddhi](#), and [ahamkara](#). *Manas*, roughly speaking, is mind stuff. *Buddhi* is the discriminating intellect. *Ahamkara* is the operation of self-will.

To give you how Patanjali would approach the subject: The mind is amorphous. It is like shapeless clay. If you keep on hankering, say, after a doughnut, Patanjali doesn't say good or bad. He says [chitta](#), the mind stuff, takes on the shape of a doughnut. After you have satisfied that minor desire, it goes back into mind stuff. It's a very practical explanation to understand how people develop compulsions, not only where eating is concerned, but where smoking, drinking, or drugs are concerned. Every time you satisfy a craving, Patanjali would say, it becomes a little easier for the amorphous clay to take that shape.

So, when you keep on repeating the satisfaction of a smoking urge or a drinking urge or an overeating urge, Patanjali would say that the time may come one day when the image cannot be resolved back into the amorphous clay. To me, it is a very vivid illustration. The cigarette image becomes permanent, and you become a chain smoker. The image of the bottle becomes permanent, and you become an alcoholic. Continuing this simile of clay, when a clay pot is baked, it can't be resolved back into clay.

What the practice of meditation does, particularly in the early days of an addiction, mostly with young people, is it gradually softens the rigid image. It makes it slowly softer, softer, softer until it merges again into amorphous chitta stuff when the habit is given up. This is true not only of articles of food or drink. I think emotional addictions can be equally serious.

Not only where the mind is concerned, but also where the body is concerned. Even when an overeating addiction is continued, it can lead to any number of physical problems. In almost every situation, any experienced physician will say, "Reduce your weight. Eat what is nutritious. Walk more," which is the advice given by the Gita: [Yuktahara viharasya yukta chestasya karmasu yukta svapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati duhkaha](#). Yoga (meditation) *bhavati* (becomes) *duhkha* (is the opposite of *sukha* – *sukha* is health, *duhkha* is sickness or unhappiness) *ha*, brings to an end -- provided that – *yuktahara viharasya* – eating should be done in freedom. Even exercise should be done in freedom. *Vihara*, entertainment should be done in freedom. Sleep should be done in freedom.

This is why it contains the secret of health. I am one of those who try to say it requires a great deal of artistry. There are special occasions where mild indulgence is called for. There are special celebrations where you become a wet blanket if you refrain from due observance of restrained gourmet activity. That's why all this requires a great deal of artistry, but you are always free. Whatever you do will be done in freedom, mostly by wanting to make your body strong so that you can be of service to people for a long time. This is one of the most important benefits of the extinction of self-will. Compulsive addictions are self-will invading the body.

Compulsive emotional ways, such as easily taking offense – in our contemporary culture, people take offense so easily that I get startled as I did in the early days. If you remember, somebody quarreled with her mother just because she repeated her wanting something three or four times. "Oh, don't forget to bring me this. Don't forget to bring me that." She repeated it a few times. My mother used to say it always. I was rather forgetful, so she would say it when I was putting on my jacket, when I was getting out of my home, and then when I was jumping on my bicycle.

If you look at some of the incidents that take place – I am awfully sorry to treat you to some of these because they have become common. The other day, somebody shot another person whose car was going in front, just because he was in a hurry to do a particular thing. I don't want to mention what it was. It was absurd! This is what self-will slowly will develop. You can't tolerate any violation of your self-will. Even if social taboos prevent you from bursting out, it goes on inside. This has become characteristic of millions of people. It affects the lungs. The moment your self-will is violated, your lungs pick up. The heart picks up. Most of the physiological functions are included in this expression of self-will.

That is the reason why, for thirty years, I have been saying that the more self-will you have, the less health you will have. The less self-will you have, the more energy you will have. In order to feed these fires, a great deal of energy has to be used. When self-will dies, you get a tremendous lot of energy, of which Gandhi is the supreme example – energy to free a country; energy to change the world. All of us have this immense source of energy in us, which is consumed all the time through negative emotions. That is the reason why, when self-will dies, you come into an immense wealth of energy.

It is one of the simplest safeguards in meditation. The deeper you meditate, the most active your selfless work must be. The mystics will say, "It is like inhalation and exhalation".

Then the other is the question about the mind being used. Now I shall use the word "mind" in the Western sense – the thinking instrument. I am inclined to confess that in the early days of my career, I used to think a great deal. Part of it was very useful; part of it was necessary for my fulfillment of my responsibilities, but it was only later on when my meditation deepened that I realized a good part of my thinking was about thinking. That is where there was a great deal of wasted energy.

If somebody makes an unkind remark to you, it is not that you are not aware. You are immediately able to stop the process of thinking. It is not that you are not aware. You are aware, but there is no residue left. There is no reaction. All that energy is saved. One unkind phrase can consume a lot of energy. I am talking from the personal experience of people who have confided in me – how many times they dwell on that. How many days they dwell on that. This is all using that energy. That is why Francis says that the person who hasn't learned to forgive has lost the greatest joy in life. I would add, "has lost the greatest source of energy in life." People who consider themselves tired, fatigued, lethargic – often it is the consumption of energy by negative factors.

In the Gita, Sri Krishna will say, [*Yajnanam japayajnosmi. Yajnanam aham asmi japayajna.*](#) Among the simplest ways of conserving energy, of preventing the waste of energy, is to repeat the mantram. There again, I am prepared to admit to you that even when my grandmother used to talk to me about the importance of repeating the mantram, I was sure I was repeating the mantram when I had time. And after many decades, I can tell you I still find more opportunities to repeat the mantram.

Yesterday, I went for a beautiful drive, suggested by Christine, along the coastal route by [Jenner](#), through Forestville to Sebastopol by those green hills with cattle grazing, by the flowing river, which reminded me very much of a verse in the Gita, and by the stately redwood trees where I was inclined to say, "Among trees, I am a redwood tree." See, everything reminds me of the Gita, you know. Here am I looking at the Russian river flowing by and I was not looking at the Russian

river, as I would have looked in the days of my poetry. When I was looking at the Russian river emptying itself into the Pacific Ocean: *yatha nadyas syandamanas samudre astam gacchanti namarupe vihaya, tatha vidvan nama rupad vimuktah parat-param purusham upaiti divyam*. I wasn't looking at the Russian river. *Yatha nadyas* – just as the Russian river starting as a small creek, becomes bigger and joins the sea and gets lost in the sea. No more a river, no more a separate flowing force of water, but part of the sea. Similarly, he who has extinguished his self-will, she who has put an end to her self-will, is no longer a separate person, has become part of the sea of love that is called God.

While traveling along this beautiful road in the evening, it gave me such joy to keep repeating my mantram until I got back here. There was no need, there was no agitation in my mind – it was just the very joy of doing it. The joy of seeing the divine light everywhere is very different from the poetical experience or the painting experience. Throughout that journey, I used my mind to absorb the beauty of the divine light that I saw everywhere. That absorption, I have every reason to believe, brings a lot of energy again, a lot of vitality.

The other question asked was, "What happens when you don't use your mind?" For the vast majority of people, the mind keeps on using itself. It has all kinds of thoughts, memories, impulses, desires flitting across the mind. That doesn't take place. Even all these multiple thoughts and images flitting across the mind, they need gas. They need power. When you rest your mind, it is my submission that that energy – how shall I put it – gives benefit to your body, benefit to your vital organs. Any attempt at resting the mind is of benefit to the body and any agitation of the mind, any turmoil of the mind, is at the expense of the body. When self-will is extinguished, you have so many gas stations – you can pull up everywhere – you're the owner. Self-serve! You just get out – what do you say – what is the first instruction? Take the handle off, turn on the nozzle – make sure it all goes in – then put the cap on. I have seen a few times people who haven't put their cap on. Then, put the handle back and do not smoke under any circumstances. It is not only the body that smokes. The mind smokes too. At these gas stations, it says, "Don't smoke physically. Don't smoke mentally." See, that gives you the key to Gandhiji's extraordinary activity because, in my knowledge, there has never been any human being who has had such endless sources of energy. See, he was a big gas magnate with gas stations everywhere.

In every situation, you will find you have enough to meet any challenge. Every challenge can be met successfully if we have this wealth of energy that we can conserve by training the senses, the mind, and the body.

Now, we are passing on to what the mystics themselves say about this experience. [Sri Ramana Maharshi](#): "It is very difficult to separate with a knife the kernel of a coconut from the shell before the milk has dried up. When the milk dries up, the kernel rattles inside the shell. At that time, it loosens itself from the shell. Then the fruit is called a dry coconut." Sri Ramakrishna also uses this simile. "The sign of a man having realized God is that he has become like a dry coconut. He has become free from the belief that he is the body." Straight talking!

There is no human being that does not believe that. In our contemporary culture, it has almost become obsessive. When self-will dies, the mind is still. When the mind is stilled, you perceive directly that you are the Atman. It is a nonmeditated, nonprocessed experience. Direct perception that you are the Atman, that I am the Atman, who is the same in Jim, Sumner,

Robbie, Rick. With that, the understanding of death comes and the Gita also puts it in very simple language.

[Dehi nityam avadhyo 'yam dehe sarvasya bharata. Tasmāt sarvāni bhūtāni na tvam śhochitum arhasi](#), Deha is the body. Dehi is the Self who lives in the body. Through my teacher's blessing and many, many years of arduous meditation, this is something that I have realized. It is not just reading about it or hearing about it. I am aware of it all the time. It doesn't lead to taking less care of the body, it leads to taking more care of the body. Personally speaking, I don't have any special reason to live but, because of the great love that I have for all, I want to live for many decades.

Sri Ramana Maharshi continues, "As long as the notion of first person exists, the notion of second and third persons also will exist. When, through meditation and realization of one's reality, the notion of first person is destroyed, the notion of second and third person also disappears. The resulting state is alone the true state of the Self."

The curious anomaly of the situation is that everybody wants to be "I." The more you want to be yourself, the more distant you will become from others. That is the central contradiction of modern civilization. Everybody is encouraged by the media, by business schools, by universities, to go after yourself; and the more you try to be yourself, the more distant you will be from others. That is why, when Gandhi was asked, "What is your ambition?" he said, "I want to be zero. Then I will be in everybody. I will be with everybody." It is something for us that is not very easy to understand because it is when your self-will becomes zero that your personality becomes magnified a million times – as in the case of Gandhi. You attract everyone. You appeal to everyone. Even if they don't follow your ways or observe your disciplines, everybody will say, "Here is somebody like whom I want to be."

Particularly for our younger people, there is no ideal. Nobody is ever given a shining ideal, and that is why I quote Gandhiji often. Whenever I would see him, I would say, "How much I want to be like him."

[Eckhart](#): "Up, noble soul, out of thyself. Jump out of thyself so far that thou never comest back again. And enter into God so deep thou never comest out again." These are all marvelous words which can touch the imagination of any daring person.

In the Olympics, what kind of jumps did we have? Some of you – can you prompt me? Long jumps. Triple jumps. Let's take the long jumps. They came – some of those long jumpers – they go a long way off, and we feel that they are quitting. [They are going back] to gain momentum. And they come and jump over twenty feet. Similarly, when we are going into meditation, that's what we are doing. We are going far so that we can gain momentum.

Eckhart says, "Jump so far that you will never come back." It would be pretty dramatic in German. Nobody will be able to measure your jump because, he says, you will have jumped so deep into God that you will never come out again. It means wherever you look, you will see the divine radiance and, as a Western mystic puts it, "After you have stared at the sun for a long time, the image of the sun you will be seeing everywhere." Once you have become established in this experience, wherever you look – the animals, the birds, the trees, the rivers, the seas, the skies – in everything you see the signature of the Lord of Love. That's why you come to respect the environment, respect people, respect differences, and don't get agitated -- because there is no self-will to get agitated at all.

Weekly Lesson Plan

Lesson One

This month our focus is on conserving and increasing vital energy, In the videotaped talk we'll watch this week, Sri Easwaran says that we can get clues for improving our meditation by observing our energy level through the day. The goal is to maintain our energy at a level that allows us to be consistently focused, determined, and enthusiastic about practicing our spiritual disciplines.

When our vital energy is harnessed and remains at a high level, we feel calm, even-minded, and equal to challenges. When we have let our vital energy run low, we may feel scattered, or we may feel nervous or frantic. These latter states sometimes feel energetic in a superficial way, but in terms of spiritual practice they are signs that we have run low on the capacity to face challenges.

Take a few minutes to reflect on how the level of your energy varies during a typical day. When do you feel drained, depleted of the energy you need to make a good effort in your spiritual practice? When do you feel that you have plenty of vital energy and are equal to challenges? How do these states relate to your practice of the Eight Points? What might you do to keep yourself more consistently in a high-energy state?

When it's time for inspiration, please watch the first talk on the videotape, "Raja Yoga: The Path to Self-Mastery," which is 32 minutes long. For those not using the videotapes, please read from Chapter Four of *Take Your Time*. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Lesson Two

We are continuing this month's focus on vital energy – how we can monitor and regulate our vital energy through the day so as to maintain our spiritual practice at its best. When vital energy is harnessed at a high level, we feel calm, even-minded, and equal to challenges. When our vital

energy is low, we may feel scattered, or we may feel nervous or frantic. These latter states sometimes feel energetic in a superficial way, but in terms of spiritual practice they are signs that we have run low on the capacity to face challenges.

Last week we examined the flux of vital energy through the day. This week please reflect on what activities involving the Eight Points help you replenish your vital energy. What can you do during the day, using the Eight Points, to move from a low energy state to a higher one?

When it's time for inspiration, please read from Chapter Four of *Take Your Time*. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Lesson Three

In the talk we'll watch this week, Sri Easwaran speaks of his ability to replenish his energy by absorbing the beauty of nature: "While traveling along this beautiful road in the evening, it gave me such joy to keep repeating my mantram until I got back here. There was no need; there was no agitation in my mind – it was just the very joy of doing it. The joy of seeing the divine light everywhere is very different from the poetical experience or the painting experience. Throughout that journey, I used my mind to absorb the beauty of the divine light that I saw everywhere. That absorption, I have every reason to believe, brings a lot of energy, a lot of vitality."

This is a useful example of what Easwaran has called "right recreation." Take a few minutes to identify (or imagine) some activity using one of the Eight Points that will replenish your spiritual energy. What kind of right recreation (an activity that relaxes body and mind without causing agitation) helps you to replenish yourself? How have you been able to include some of the Eight Points into your recreation? What forms of recreation relax and refresh you without agitating your mind?

When it's time for inspiration, please watch the second of the talks on this videotape, "Self-Will and Freedom," which is 34 minutes long. For those not using the videotapes, please read from Chapter Five of *Take Your Time*.

Lesson Four

This week we'll conclude our series on vital energy by reading and reflecting upon an excerpt from Chapter Four of *Take Your Time*. Please read the following paragraphs (aloud, if you are working with a group):

One fascinating thing about people with a lot of energy is that it's not at their beck and call. When energy is overflowing it tends to drive them; but at other times it just dries up. This is the other pole of our lives: the times when we just can't get going.

Often people have energy only when it comes to doing things they like. We all know people who have boundless motivation when it comes to doing what they want to do. They get absorbed in details that seem excruciating to us and pass hours without noticing how much time has gone by. But when it comes to activities that don't interest them, they may actually seem sluggish and even lacking in energy.

Most of us are like this. We have energy for activities that interest us, but when that energy is blocked it flows elsewhere, to something more attractive. We get busy doing those other, more attractive things and can't find time for what needs doing.

Questions for reflection. Have you noticed this mental dynamic in yourself? Have you experimented with generating enthusiasm for important but unpalatable tasks? How has your practice of the Eight Points changed the way you deal with such situations? What helps you free up the energy trapped in such situations?

When it's time for inspiration, please read from Chapter Five of *Take Your Time*. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Terms & References

ahamkara [Sanskrit] Self-will, the principle in the mind which makes us feel separate from others.

Atman [Sanskrit] The Self, the seed of perfection hidden within all creatures.

buddhi [Sanskrit] Discriminative faculty; wisdom; understanding.

chitta [Sanskrit] Mind-stuff.

Eckhart, Meister (1260-1327) German mystic.

Ghirardelli Square A former chocolate factory made into a gallery of shops in San Francisco.

Jenner A town at the mouth of the Russian River in Northern California.

Kerala The state in South India where Sri Easwaran was born and raised.

manas [Sanskrit] Mind.

mantra – man tara [Sri Easwaran is here giving the etymology of the word *mantram*. *Man* is derived from *manas*, “mind,” and *tram* is derived from the root *tr*, meaning “to cross.”]

moksha [Sanskrit] Liberation from the cycle of birth and death, complete freedom, salvation.

Mysore A state in South India.

AOut, damned spot...@ A joking reference to the famous line in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

party line An arrangement in which two or more telephone lines are connected, so that the conversation is heard by all. Sri Easwaran is referring to the mental “chatter” that can disturb the mind at the end of the day, as the day’s events are rehearsed involuntarily by the mind.

Patanjali Ancient Indian teacher of meditation.

Priestley, J. B. (1894-1984) British author and playwright.

sadhana [Sanskrit] Body of spiritual disciplines which lead to Self-Realization.

samskara [Sanskrit] A deep mental impression produced by past experiences, a mental or behavioral pattern.

Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) Indian mystic.

Verses Referred to in this Tape:

Tatraikagram manah kritva yatachittendriyakriyah upavishyasane yunjyad yogam atmavishuddhaye. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Six, verse 12

Once seated, strive to still your thoughts. Make your mind one-pointed in meditation, and your heart will be purified.

vita raga bhaya krodha. “Free from lust, fear, and anger.” From verse 56 of Chapter Two of the Bhagavad Gita.

Yuktahara viharasya yukta cheshtasya karmasu yukta svapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati duhkaha.
Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Six, verse 17

Those who are temperate in eating and sleeping, work and recreation, will come to the end of sorrow through meditation.

Yajnanam japayajnosmi. “Among sacrifices, I am the repetition of the mantram.” From verse 25 of Chapter Ten of the Bhagavad Gita. [*Yajnanam aham asmi japayajna* is a traditional way of explaining the verse by parsing it.]

yatha nadyas syandamanas samudre astam gacchanti namarupe vihaya, tatha vidvan nama rupa vimuktah parat-param purusham upaiti divyam

Mundaka Upanishad III 2.8

The flowing river is lost in the sea;
The illumined sage is lost in the Self.
The flowing river has become the sea;
The illumined sage has become the Self.

Dehi nityam avadhyo 'yam dehe sarvasya bharata. Tasmad sarvani bhutani na tvam shochitum arhasi

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Two, verse 30

The Self of all beings, living within the body, is eternal and cannot be harmed. Therefore, do not grieve.

How To Use This Course

This video is part of an ongoing monthly series in the teachings of Sri Eknath Easwaran. The talks on this tape, like all of Sri Easwaran’s talks, are rich and deep in content. They shed light on many aspects of life, but their true value emerges as we try to apply their teachings in our daily lives. The *Guide* is meant to be used in conjunction with a daily practice of Sri Easwaran’s Eight Point Program, based on passage meditation. We do not recommend following the Practical Exercises if you are not practicing this program according to the instructions given in Sri Easwaran’s book *Meditation*, which can be found on our Web site, www.nilgiri.org. A brief list of those points can be found at the back of this *Guide*.

The Practical Exercises are suggestions for you to explore as they seem appropriate in your life. If you are already familiar with Sri Easwaran’s books, you will have seen some of these exercises before. But we suggest that you take this opportunity to really put them into practice, and

discover their great power to deepen your spiritual life. Try them in moderation, exercising your common sense and not taking them to extreme lengths. Sri Easwaran always emphasized the importance of the middle path.

Before or after watching each talk, we suggest that you read through the notes and the Practical Exercise. Then, after watching the talk, try to put the exercise into action in your life. A week or so later, you may find it interesting to watch the talk again, with the experience of the exercise fresh in your mind. You may want to note the results in a journal.

A full listing of our fellowship groups (called Satsangs) is available on our Web site. For more information about this series, other publications of Sri Easwaran and Nilgiri Press, and a schedule of retreats based on the Eight Point Program, please contact

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation
Post Office Box 256, Tomales, CA, 94971
800 475 2369
info@nilgiri.org
www.nilgiri.org

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