

# THE TALKS OF EKNATH EASWARAN

## 33

*Patience and Beauty*  
*The Climax of Spiritual Evolution*

### STUDY GUIDE

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This study guide is part of a self-study course called *The Dynamics of the Mind*. Each study guide includes four lessons designed either for a BMCM spiritual fellowship group session or for personal study. If you are using this course on your own, or if you would like to engage in further discussion about the lessons, you are welcome to participate in our e-mail discussion group based on this course. Please e-mail [estudygroup@nilgiri.org](mailto:estudygroup@nilgiri.org) for more information.

The DVD format offers several advantages that you may want to make use of in your study of these talks:

In order to enhance your comprehension of the talk, you can select the option of watching the talks with subtitles. After selecting “Play Talk” from the main menu, choose one of the options on the left-hand side of the screen.

If you prefer to watch the talks in shorter segments, you can watch one half at a time. Each DVD contains two 30-minute talks, each of which is split into two sections. After selecting “Play Talk” in the main menu, choose the section you would like to watch.

If your spiritual fellowship group wishes to watch 15 minutes of a talk per week, you can allot 45 minutes of your meeting to reading and discussion (along the lines suggested below), and watch one section of the DVD before meditation. We recommend that you start meditating directly after watching the segment.

If you are not currently a member of a Fellowship Group and would like information on joining one in your area, please visit [www.nilgiri.org/fellowship](http://www.nilgiri.org/fellowship)

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## LESSON ONE

We have reached the ninth study guide in our *Dynamics of the Mind* series. Over the remaining four months of the course, we'll explore what Sri Easwaran calls "a vast, uncharted ocean" – the deeper regions of consciousness, where abundant stores of spiritual energy lie trapped, waiting to be harnessed and transformed through meditation.

The spiritual life is a long journey. As we swim successfully through the smaller challenges of daily life, we gradually become aware of other, larger obstacles looming ahead. Often we are only dimly aware of these persistent negative tendencies, though we sense how they limit our growth. It's uncomfortable to confront them, but as we grasp the tremendous opportunities they have concealed, we develop a growing confidence and zest for spiritual work.

In this week's reading, Easwaran introduces a helpful concept from the Buddha's teachings: *asavas*, or conditioned cravings that lock us out of deeper consciousness. Sense habits are often very hard to change and our goal here is not to change ourselves overnight, but to gain a perspective on the mental dynamics involved in craving. When you understand these dynamics, it's much easier to make changes.

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### *Reading*

Even after almost thirty years of teaching meditation, I still am amazed at how much more there is to say about it. Words simply cannot communicate some of the marvelous experiences which it is our birthright as human beings to look forward to as contemplation deepens. Until you yourself get into the submarine that is meditation and enter the dark waters of the mind, far below the glittering surface of consciousness, there is no way to fathom these experiences. But even those who meditate sincerely and systematically face serious obstacles which must be overcome before they can penetrate the recesses of this vast, uncharted ocean that is the mind.

The Buddha enumerates five such obstacles: sensuality, ill will, laziness, restlessness, and anxiety or fear. Each of these locks us out of deeper consciousness. Like an inner tube around a swimmer's waist, they keep us from diving below the surface of the mind by entangling us in the thoughts and experiences of the outside world. Let us look at these obstacles one by one.

#### *1. Sensuality*

"Sensuality," in the Buddha's language, is not a term of moral judgment. It refers simply to our human tendency to become entangled in the impressions of our

senses – to become so attached to what brings sensory pleasure or pain that we lose real freedom of choice. This is a normal biological response, but when we are trying to enter and master the world within, it keeps us oriented in just the wrong direction. To turn inward, we have to detach ourselves from the hold the senses have on the mind; there is no other way.

Unfortunately, our whole civilization seems involved in a conspiracy to stimulate the senses more and more. Every day, in the newspapers and magazines I look through, the films I see (or walk out on), I am amazed to what degree this tendency is exploited. Look at the pages of even those prestigious magazines which cater to educated, sophisticated men and women. Every ad is aimed at this singularly low level. The so-called New Wave advertising is expressly designed to stimulate our senses to an extreme degree. I would call it Old Wave, simply less subtle than before.

The Buddha gave us a useful rule of thumb for dealing with the senses: neither asceticism nor overindulgence. Don't do everything your senses tell you, he would say, but don't try to starve them into submission either. Train them to be your friends and allies. That is what the Buddha called the Middle Path, the road to health and happiness for everybody.

When I try to apply this today, I usually begin with the compulsive urge to eat when it is not necessary. When you are hungry, eat what is best for your body. Eating at any other time shows very slight regard for health, and the mind becomes obese and tyrannical when it gets its way like this at the expense of our better judgment.

Simply put, in the matter of food, following the Middle Path means taking a healthy interest in food but not making food the end of life. I enjoy good food when it is time to eat, but until mealtime comes I don't think about food at all.

Advertisers, by contrast, seem to want us to think about eating twenty-four hours a day. Whenever I go to the supermarket, I notice how the covers of many popular magazines display endless varieties of sweets. Under their influence it is very easy to get into the habit of bringing home this little treat and that little tidbit to munch on. Even if you don't have an eating problem, this habit of automatic buying and snacking takes a real toll on the mind. It weakens the will, divides attention, and keeps thoughts turned outward toward the sense-world – just the opposite of what we need to enter the world within.

If you love your children, I would say, don't get them into the "sweets" habit at all – and if you love adults, don't encourage them in it. On a special occasion, I do

sometimes treat my teenage friends to a gooey chocolate confection. They can take it. But it's not a special occasion every time we can find a convenient excuse. If every event is celebrated with chocolate or candy, a lot of calories are going to find a home around somebody's waist.

If I may say so, as spiritual teachers go, I am really very lenient in these matters. The important thing is to remain clear about your goal; then it is easy to keep a reasonable perspective.

Like many Indians, for example, I still enjoy tea – in fact, friends have given me a special blend that was a favorite of the British royal family. (You may compliment me on my good taste.) I enjoy my mid-afternoon cup of “the beverage that cheers but does not inebriate.” On the other hand, the moment I find my mind looking forward to teatime or taking it for granted, I change my routine, which keeps my mind on its toes.

I *am* concerned about caffeine, but my first concern is the mind. Too much tea can injure the nervous system, but anger does much more harm. If you give up anger, you can even drink coffee now and then. These are all matters of common sense.

For most people, this same artistry can be applied with alcohol. When I go to a wedding, I toast the bride and groom with champagne, but on other occasions I simply decline. You may find this awkward at first, but you will be guarding your mind against getting caught in a sensation, which can happen so gradually that you may not even notice. Nobody has ever been offended when I said “No, thank you” at a party where drinks were being served. I don't think anybody ever thought I was a wet blanket. Almost everybody respected my position – partly, I think, because I passed no judgment on others.

I have had many friends who were victims of alcohol but freed themselves from its power through the practice of meditation. One of them paid me a great compliment: “You're a good sport. You never hit below the belt.” I know how hard these habits are to give up; I know that the further they progress, the less power we have to choose. But even the most tenacious, long-standing addiction can be conquered. No matter how deep it has gone, with patient effort in meditation we can always go deeper and uproot it from underneath.

With any addiction, the bonding is very much like a kind of cement my friend Stuart once showed me – Krazy Glue. If you get a drop of Krazy Glue on your fingers and accidentally touch your eyelid, you may need minor surgery to get your fingers free. The mind is like that. It has a tremendous capacity to get attached to anything on earth; it is making Krazy Glue twenty-four hours a day. “Get it while

it's fresh," the mind says brightly. "Take as much as you like. The more you take, the bigger the discount." That is the mind for you. Whether it is an addiction to food or drink or smoking or any other physical indulgence, the dynamics of this bonding are always the same.

Here you can see the enormous practicality of the Buddha's presentation. You don't have to treat each addiction by itself, he says. Simply remember to respect the cementing capacity of the mind, and just as you wouldn't touch Krazy Glue to your eyelids, don't touch these potent sensations to your mind. These are not just moral issues for me, any more than they were for the Buddha. His Middle Path is based purely on a clear understanding of how senses and mind function.

Being a good spiritual scientist, the Buddha divides sensations into three convenient categories for us: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. This is not a fixed classification. Sensations can change places; that is where we have freedom. What is pleasant the first time may be unpleasant the fifth; and, most liberating of all, we can take an unpleasant sensation which is in the interest of others and move it joyfully into the "pleasant" category.

The first few times you indulge your senses in a particular way, the Buddha would explain, there is only a sensation. It has no emotive force behind it. But when you start thinking about pleasant sensations over and over, craving to have them again, then the process the Buddha calls *asava* begins. The word shows his sense of poetry as well as his precision. *Asava* actually means an intoxicant, distilled from fruits, flowers, or trees. When a sensation is fresh and new, the Buddha implies, you look at the pretty bottle it comes in and read, "Only two percent alcohol by volume." In other words, you are only thinking about it once in a while; the alcohol content is low. So you say, "What does it matter? Two percent isn't going to do me any harm. I can still function." But the fermentation has begun; that is the danger. The craving is brewing. Whatever the sensation, whether it is food or drugs or sex, the process is the same.

As long as there is no craving involved, there is no bonding between senses and sense-objects. As long as there is no craving, you won't go and raid the liquor cabinet of that sensation against your will. But once fermentation has brought the alcohol content of the sensation to fifty percent, that craving has come to stay. You can't help thinking about it; it can't help thinking about itself. Then it can no longer be classified honestly as a sensation; it is an obsession.

Any liking or slight attachment is a potential obsession. As long as it remains minor, one can enjoy it. If you like coffee or tea, make it a minor attachment – take it or leave it. The same goes for healthy entertainment of all varieties. But if it

is smoking, do not even flirt with danger; leave it. And if it is alcohol or potent mind-bending drugs, take your money and run.

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### ***Questions for Reflection and Discussion***

In this reading, Easwaran is emphasizing the Middle Path – the practice of steering clear of both indulgence and excessive self-denial to find a comfortable, healthy balance in our sense habits. There's probably no one who hasn't tried to make such changes in their food or entertainment habits. It's hard work, and sometimes seems impossible. But an effective grasp of the mental dynamics at work under the surface can make it much less difficult.

Easwaran mentions three categories of sensation. Let's play with these as a way to observe how *asavas* “ferment” in our mind. List a food or entertainment item for each of the four categories:

1. One which you find very pleasant, but which is not really beneficial.
2. One which is neutral to you, but which is generally unhealthy.
3. One which is neutral to you, but which is generally healthy.
4. One which is unpleasant to you, but which is healthy or beneficial for yourself and others.

As you review this list, reflect on your feelings toward each item. In retrospect, can you observe the bonding process at work? Using the Eight Points, how might you shift these items into the proper categories (disliking the unhealthy and liking the healthy)? What does the Middle Path look like in your life?

Note that the two “neutral” categories may be helpful stepping stones in the transformation process. Moving a craving from category 1 to category 2 (from doughnuts to raisins) will be much easier than trying to leap immediately from 1 to 4 (from doughnuts to Brussels sprouts).

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### ***Watching the Talk***

When it's time for inspiration, please watch 15 minutes of the first talk on the disc, “Patience and Beauty.” For those not using the DVD, please start reading the commentary on verses 54–72 in *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

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***Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.***



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## LESSON TWO

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This week we are continuing our study of Chapter Nine in *Conquest of Mind*, “Obstacles and Opportunities.” In Lesson One, we read the first half of the section focused on the spiritual obstacle called “sensuality” by the Buddha. It introduced the term *asava* – a potent craving or selfish tendency in the mind that locks us out of deeper consciousness.

This week, Sri Easwaran outlines the dynamics of attention that create an *asava*. With this reading, and the exercise that follows it, we have a tool for dismantling *asavas* and harnessing the trapped energy to renew and transform personality.

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### *Reading*

At this juncture, it may help to venture for a moment into the Buddhist theory of cognition. (I promise the tour will be brief!) In the act of seeing, the Buddha would say, there are three separate elements: the eyes, the object, and an act of attention. When all three come together, there is sensation. Right now, for example, I am seated at a beautiful desk given to me by friends. While I am looking at the desk, I can appreciate its beauty. But when I am reading at it, I do not really see it; my attention is completely absorbed in my book.

The application of this abstract idea is highly practical: if you can withdraw your attention, no sensation on earth can have any hold over you. That sensation simply will not be there for you; it will have no connection with your mind.

When attention is under this kind of control, all the senses are your friends. If they wander off into areas where they can get into trouble, you have only to call them back and they will obey. This is what you have been doing in meditation all along, bringing your attention back whenever it strays. Now you can apply the same skill during the day, whenever the mind feels attracted by some old sensory habit.

Without this kind of control, however, the habit itself compels attention. Then you have no choice: if you see something you desire, your mind will not stop thinking about it until it is good and ready. When we have a strong liking or disliking for something, we cannot really see that thing for what it is. A fog comes between us and that object, a fog of potential obsession. Our attention is not really on the thing in question; it is locked onto our liking or disliking.

The next development in sensory obsession is anger. You try to go on satisfying your desires, trying to get what you want either in some relationship or some possession or experience, and things keep getting in your way. That is life. But the



more this happens, the further the fermentation process goes. The desire becomes obsessive. You get frustrated, irritated, resentful, hostile, angry – which means that the alcohol content of the craving is enough to put you under the table.

I once asked a friend just how much alcohol a drink can have. “Well,” he said, “there’s a brand of Puerto Rican rum called ‘151.’” I was impressed. Rum that is one hundred and fifty-one proof is seventy-five percent alcohol. This is a good description of anger: you are drunk and can’t get inside your own consciousness to see what is wrong. On rare occasions, just like someone drunk on alcohol, you get sentimental, but most of the time you are increasingly difficult to get along with. That is how one develops an “angry personality,” a condition that is almost an epidemic today.

When this happens you are continuously angry, constantly hostile – if not overtly, then beneath the surface, where thoughts simmer unaware. You see things that are not there and act on situations that simply do not exist the way you perceive them. It is impossible to reason with people in this advanced condition; they are drunk with anger. And the primary cause is getting involved in sense-stimulations to the point of obsession. Anger is the final development of the Buddha’s first obstacle.

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### *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

Easwaran wrote: “When we have a strong liking or disliking for something, we cannot really see that thing for what it is. A fog comes between us and that object, a fog of potential obsession. Our attention is not really on the thing in question; it is locked onto our liking or disliking.”

Have you noticed this dynamic at work in your consciousness? Are there times in which you aren’t so much aware of the experience itself as the fact that you like it, want it, or crave it? Are there times when your attention is locked on disliking something (or someone) so much that you’re not really present? How might you use the Eight Points to redirect your attention in such circumstances? How might you find a positive focus for your attention – one that is strong enough to compete with the craving?

Some hints: notice how, as your mind dwells on a craving, other things and people tend to seem like obstacles. When experiencing a craving, how might you slow down the mind and your reactions, and pay close attention to the subject at hand? How might you let the thought of the craving recede, like the desk in Easwaran’s example?

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### ***Watching the Talk***

When it's time for inspiration, please watch the second half of the first talk on the DVD, "Patience and Beauty." For those not using the video, please continue reading the commentary on verses 54–72 in *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

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***Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.***

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## LESSON THREE

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This week we are continuing our study of Chapter Nine in *Conquest of Mind*, “Obstacles and Opportunities.” In the first two lessons, we read the first section, which focuses on the spiritual obstacle called “sensuality” by the Buddha. It introduced the term *asava* – a potent craving or selfish tendency in the mind that locks us out of deeper consciousness.

This week, Easwaran examines another sort of *asava* that creates a great deal of stress and discord in our minds: ill will.

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### *Reading*

#### **2. Ill Will**

The second obstacle, ill will, is perhaps the most serious impediment in meditation. According to the Buddha, ill will expresses itself in one hundred and thirty-five forms! Each of us has a regular catalog of them. That is what makes ill will so difficult to recognize at first, leave aside how difficult it is to tackle. If only we could get a catalog of negative mental formations like the ones that come in the mail every other week from L. L. Bean! Fortunately, says the Buddha, tackling ill will does not require becoming familiar with the whole catalog. What we have to do is learn how to undo the underlying habit of mind – again, the *asava*.

Sensations in the mind ferment just the way sensory impressions do. When somebody ignores our predilections or fails to do things our way, we get an unpleasant feeling which is familiar to everyone. At first it may last no longer than writing on water. But when this feeling comes frequently, it starts fermenting. Now, just as with a sensory experience, we don’t have to feel dislike every time life crosses us; we can simply withdraw our attention. But when our attention is riveted on ourselves, every negative experience adds to the alcohol content of our ill will. The diagnosis is penetrating. We develop a tendency to dislike – not just to dislike this or that but simply to dislike, period. Whoever comes in the way of that dislike gets it.

The Buddha uses strong language here, to shake us out of our bad habits. You are not being very bright when you dislike someone, he says. Don’t blame that person; he or she has merely happened to come in your way. Your disliking *asava* is *inside*, fermenting away; that is all that is happening.

On thousands of coconut palms in my native state of Kerala, you will find pots hanging to collect the sweet milk of the trees for brewing toddy. The Buddha must

have been familiar with a similar sight in the villages of northern India. As the liquid sits in these pots, it ferments and becomes so strong that crows who drink it sometimes start cawing at midnight. “It’s not time to get up,” my grandmother used to explain when we heard this. “The crows are just drunk.” This is the attitude behind the Buddha’s compassion. The fellow who flies into a tearing rage is not responsible, he says. He is “under the influence.” Don’t hold it against him; he can’t see straight. That is what ill will does.

Let us take a closer look at this fascinating distilling process in the mind. Take the case of a resentment – over what your boyfriend said to you last weekend at that fancy restaurant, for example; or, more accurately, over what you thought he was saying. While the resentment is fermenting, you are busy thinking to yourself over and over, “Oh, so *that’s* what he meant!” Then you start rehearsing things to say to him when you run into him again.

At times like this, what we are really doing is slowly developing a compulsive tendency to think in negative terms. In fact, we are working on that tendency very hard. The issue is not what that particular person said or did not say, meant or did not mean. The real issue is that we are developing a tendency to dwell compulsively on what *anybody* says to us – which means we are developing a tendency to get upset. We are making ourselves upsettable, emotionally fragile under stress. After enough of this fermenting, our mind will boil at the most harmless little thing. We will be at the mercy of everyone. The Buddha’s final diagnosis: we do not generally suffer from others; we suffer from ourselves.

The cure is to go against that habit. Never accuse others or blame them; try to refrain even in your own thoughts. When the liquor of ill will is ready to flow out of the bottle on the slightest provocation, put the cork back in the bottle and push it down hard with your mantram. After all, there is always going to be a certain amount of unwitting unkindness in life. It is up to us not to become unkind in turn.

A six-year-old friend of mine once provided me with a good illustration of this. He likes dates but does not think much of figs. A few mornings ago, in the hurry of the moment, I gave him a fig I had saved for him from my breakfast. When I realized my mistake, I was a little anxious about what he was going to say. He was wearing his usual very thoughtful expression. It touched me when he turned to his mother and explained, “I don’t think Uncle meant to give me this.” Cultivating a positive attitude, you see. It was true: I forgot he is a date man, which I should have remembered. His courtesy is a lesson from which all of us can learn.

When somebody is curt to us, it is easy to take it personally. But this is a habit which can be unlearned in the same way it was acquired. Pull back from your mind a little and remind yourself, “Why get angry? The poor fellow may not have slept well. Maybe he hurried through his breakfast and tripped on the stairs; he’s probably still getting over all these indignities. Why should I hold it against him?”

Today I don’t even have to work at this response. It has become second nature to do everything I can to cork up a fermenting asava. My mind no longer goes into turmoil; it is always at peace. But I had to learn this the hard way, just as everyone does: by trying to do it over and over and over, even when it hurt.

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### ***Questions for Reflection and Discussion***

In this reading, Easwaran outlines a fascinating approach to conflict in personal interactions: rather than devoting our attention to “sorting things out” with our intellect, trying to decide who’s right and who’s wrong, or “what she really meant,” we can simply work to reduce the ill will in our minds. Such work does not always take the place of “sorting things out.” Occasionally we do need to offer constructive criticism to others. But the more we can reduce the ill will in our mind, the more secure, healthy, and kind we will be, no matter what the details of the situation. Then the criticism is more likely to be truly constructive.

This week we’ll examine an area in which all of us have experienced ill will at various times: taking things personally. Easwaran says that we take things personally because we are *upsettable*.

Where in your life are you upsettable? How might you use the Eight Points to reduce your upsettability?

Reflect a bit on the antidotes to upsettability which Easwaran offers here:

1. Don’t dwell on the incident that upset you.
2. Use the mantram as a substitute for thinking about it.
3. Create a compassionate explanation for what the other person has said or done.

How might you apply these strategies, using the Eight Points?

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### ***Watching the Talk***

When it’s time for inspiration, please read the following introduction and watch 15 minutes of the second talk on the DVD, “The Climax of Spiritual Evolution.” For those not using the

video, please continue reading the commentary on verses 54–72 in *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

In this talk on the Dhammapada, Easwaran focuses on that part of ourselves – the deepest part – that is always striving to evolve towards more wisdom and beauty. He uses a Sanskrit word, *Kala*, which means time, in the context of speaking about a beauty that time cannot touch.

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***Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.***

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## LESSON FOUR

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This week we will delve further into Chapter Nine of *Conquest of Mind*, “Obstacles and Opportunities.” Last week we started reading about the spiritual obstacle called “ill will” by the Buddha, with an emphasis on the Buddhist term *asava*, which signifies a potent craving or selfish tendency in the mind that locks us out of deeper consciousness.

In this reading, Sri Easwaran will be steering us toward the spiritual opportunity hidden in ill will. Kindness, he says, is the antidote to ill will, and can become an entire approach to life, healing our relationships, bringing peace to our hearts, and gradually transforming our home, workplace, and community.

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### *Reading*

In secular psychology the problems of resentment against parents are dealt with in one class; then you go and deal with the problems of competition between partners in another. The mind-catalog has so many varieties of *asava* that you will never have time to take classes for them all. By focusing on the *asava* process, however, we can see that essentially there is only one kind of ill will. A resentful person from Topeka will have much the same *asavas* as a resentful person from Taiwan. The way to protect yourself against any ill-will *asava* is the same: do not let your mind dwell on any unpleasant memory or negative thought. This precious capacity comes as meditation deepens.

When somebody has gone on a drinking binge, my friends tell me, the first thing to do is “dry him out.” This is just what the Buddha recommends for an *asava* too. If you were to go to the Compassionate Buddha and complain, “That person makes me so upset!” he would reply drily, “You’re not being quite accurate. You don’t get upset because he makes you upset; you get upset because your mind is upsettable. Why don’t you make yourself less upsettable?” Use the power you draw from meditation to change the alcoholic *asava* of ill will back into the milk of kindness – not by breaking off your relationships, but by being with people even if they upset you.

This may be hard on you, but if it is any consolation, it is probably hard on them too. Work with them, support them, refrain from unkind remarks and unkind acts. That is the way to develop good will. I am not blind to selfish motives, but I never avoid people. I refuse to allow resentment to cloud my eyes or lessen my love. I can be firm with people; there are occasions when I have to be stern. But I don’t think anybody misunderstands this sternness as lack of love.



I want you to know that I was not born with these capacities. This kind of patience and endurance came only after a lot of practice, working with people who could be quite difficult. All of us have the same capacity for maintaining harmonious relationships. What we need to develop is the will to bear with people when the going gets rough – to stick it out, as you say. And that simply comes with trying.

Here we can see why the Buddha has been called such a supreme psychologist. Those who like to be separate, he says, make a practice of disliking people because the more they dislike, the more separate they become. The opposite, fortunately, is just as true: the more you practice liking people, the more deeply you will feel one with them – and, miraculously, the deeper you will find yourself going in meditation too.

This strategy of doing the opposite of what a compulsion dictates is also the answer to a tragic state of mind I sometimes run into, where someone will tell me in all honesty, “I just don’t like myself.” This is one of the worst possible kinds of ill will, largely because it undercuts one’s capacity to change. If we look on it as the same asava of ill will, however, the treatment becomes simple. When you are always kind to others, kindness becomes an attitude. Your natural response is to be kind. Then you cannot help being kind to yourself as well; you will develop a habit of supporting yourself.

The splendor of the human being – every human being – is our capacity to learn from past mistakes. I never ask anyone, “Why did you make that mistake?” I ask only, “Have you learned from it?” This was always Granny’s emphasis when I was growing up. The Buddha, similarly, is trying gently to warn us about life’s method of teaching us the adverse effects of ill will. “If you do not learn from the harm your ill will causes others,” he tells us point-blank, “life will find ways of hurting you more and more.”

This is where the Buddha uses a term which I translate gently as “slow on the uptake.” The Buddha doesn’t expect us to be saints; he just asks that we use our heads. Our problems are of our own making, he says, and the way out of our problems lies in making wiser choices in how we think and act toward others. This is actually a very hopeful approach, which never dooms any human being as “wicked” or “lost.” It is only when we refuse to learn from our own mistakes that we find we are leading ourselves into despair.

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### ***Questions for Reflection and Discussion***

Here Easwaran is encouraging us to develop an attitude of kindness, so that our natural response is to be kind. Identify one or two places in your life – relationships or situations – in which you could be more kind. How might you use the Eight Points to develop an attitude of kindness in that situation? How might you make it natural, even inevitable, to act kindly?

Easwaran also talks about being more kind to ourselves. Identify an area in which you tend to be unkind to yourself. How might that change if you develop a general attitude of kindness?

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### ***Watching the Talk***

When it's time for inspiration, please read the following introduction and watch the second half of the second talk on the DVD, "The Climax of Spiritual Evolution." For those not using the video, please finish reading the commentary on verses 54–72 in *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

In this talk on the Dhammapada, Easwaran focuses on that part of ourselves – the deepest part – that is always striving to evolve towards more wisdom and beauty. He refers to a pun used by the Indian mystic Sri Ramakrishna. The spiritual life is not the reading of *granthas* (books) but the untying of *granthis* (knots – referring to the knots in our consciousness from which we are released as we move towards the climax of spiritual evolution, called nirvana or *samadhi*).

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***Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.***

*January 5, 1980 Part One*

This is the concluding chapter of the Dhammapada, which is of paramount importance to all of us who are slowly moving into the second half of our *sadhana*. And whenever the Buddha uses the word *brahmana*, I would suggest it as equivalent to the ardent spiritual aspirant, the mature *sadhak*, who is doing his or her level best every day in following all the disciplines.

*akkodhanam vatavantam silavantam anussutam  
dantam antimasariram tam aham brumi brahmanam*

He is the best spiritual aspirant, she is the best spiritual aspirant, *akkodhanam*, who has conquered anger, who is no longer capable of saying angry words or thinking angry thoughts against anyone. That is a stiff test. But I think that's a very practical test by which every one of us can learn to make an assessment of our own *sadhana*.

I notice, for example, in the medical world, you can get your own blood pressure kit, portable, put it in your pocket. Wherever you want to see how you're doing as far as the blood pressure is concerned, you can take it out and do that and read it. There is no need for a doctor or even a nurse practitioner. Similarly, taking one's temperature. Just as you can learn to read your own temperature, similarly, it is possible to read your own temper, and observe how free you are from anger in thought, word, and deed. It's the very clearest of spiritual tests. And it is probably the most difficult of spiritual tests.

The main cause for our minds to get angry, for us to feel that we are angry, the main cause, I would say, is excessive self-will. And it unfortunately happens to be in the climate of the twentieth century that when we are not able to have our way, sometimes in absurdly unimportant things, we get angry, we sulk, we say unkind words and indulge in surly behavior. This is where I think the Buddha, like all the great teachers in the major religions of the world, would go to the cause and that is: do not let your self-will grow.

And particularly where children are concerned, I have been repeating more than once that it is the loving responsibility of parents to encourage even children to become . . . to grow up without self-will. And if we look, for example, at how even parental entanglement, even parental attachment, which sometimes we confuse with love, can make it so difficult for them to say no to their children, can make it difficult for them not even to see that love expresses itself in "no" under such circumstances, we shall see that some of the adult problems often can, as modern psychologists say, be traced to this lack of discriminating love on the part of parents, to be able to say no when the child wants to have his way, or when the child wants to have her way, which may not be conducive either to their health or happiness or growth.

About a fortnight ago, when I had been to Berkeley, I dropped in at my old store to see how they are doing on Shattuck. And I went upstairs to see what were all the activities being carried on at that co-op, where, in the early days, when we were at 1333 Walnut Street, I used to do part of the grocery shopping. And as I was seated on the bench there, a middle-aged lady, a middle-aged Berkeley lady, probably with degrees from the university, holding a very good job, very well-dressed, came and picked up the telephone. And she was talking to her parents. And I got quite interested in the way the conversation was going on. I wish I could imitate what she was doing. In two minutes, she was not a middle-aged lady, she was not an educated lady. She had become a little girl. She was stamping her foot and saying, “No!” And she was behaving exactly as a little girl of five, as a spoiled little girl of five would behave. Her physical gestures, her stamping of her feet, the tone of her voice. You know that particular little whine that a spoiled five-year-old can make? All that came out, you see.

And it is very useful to remember: this is what we connive at our children to grow up into when on certain occasions when we have to say no, when we have to dissuade them from asking for their way, we fail to do so. And most people who cannot listen to criticism are losing a great opportunity to grow. And it’s very interesting that I should hear this from – of all people – my teacher, who did not know anything about educational psychology. She would tell the younger people in my ancestral home, when they would get upset over criticism they had received, either at home or at school or from their friends or from their not-friends, she would say, “That is the time when you can benefit. That is the time when you can really know what is wrong with you. That’s the time when you can know what the problem is.”

And this requires, again, a certain detachment and a certain desire to grow. In other words, the people who are not prepared to listen to criticism are those who do not want to grow. And in my mother tongue, the saying is [Malayalam]. *Changathy*, “friend.” *Kannadi*, “mirror.” [Editor’s note: Easwaran quotes a Malayalam saying, “If you have a good friend, you don’t need a mirror.”] If you have a good friend who cares for you enough to tell you when you are rude, when you are impatient to others, even at your place of work or even at home, if the friend really cares for you, then, at a suitable time, he or she will tell you, because they care for you, they care for your growth. They’ll say, “You know, what you said to that man was not worthy of you. The way you treated this woman does not speak very well of you.” And in our modern world, you know, this is never done, either at home or out in the world, because we do not care enough for others.

And throughout my stay in my village, I don’t think I had anybody who was such a loving critic as my teacher, who knew all my good points, but who also knew all my bad points, which were plenty. And even my mother, I am very glad to say, who was very soft-hearted, very tender in her expressions, I think she imbibed enough of my grandmother’s ways that even she, when I had done something foolish or said something that was reckless, while nobody else in my ancestral home would tell me anything about it, they would tell me. And not spare me because I knew that they wanted me to grow, they wanted me to solve these problems.

But here again, the way it is done. When, I think, we know that this is being done just because the person loves us and the person is concerned that we should solve these problems, the mature person, the person who wants to grow up, will not only not deprecate it, but will appreciate it. And the people who get very angry when you point out some of their foibles, some of their drawbacks, are people who do not want to grow up, do not want to become aware of their problems.

That is why the Buddha says, *akkodhanam*. Keep this . . . this is a kind of kit. And the repetition of the mantram will enable you – when you’re getting angry, when you’re getting upset, in the print shop, in the kitchen, in the schoolhouse, in the office – to realize that these are opportunities of growth. And I think it did not come very easily to me, either, on an academic campus, to be able to keep quiet when the criticism was unjust. It took me a long, long time to understand that, and that’s why I was able to appreciate St. Therese of Lisieux being able to do that at so early an age. It did not come to me very easily at all.

And when we become so secure, when we become aware of the *Atman*, we can listen to criticism, which will come very rarely, either to benefit from it or to be not affected by it if it is not well grounded.

And in answer to the question that Ed asked, here we cannot always be completely detached in the early days of our sadhana. Even in the later days of our sadhana, we cannot always be completely detached. Once in a way, we may lose our temper. Once in a way, we may, even though we do not say it, feel quite resentful in our mind. But what the Buddha says is just what Gandhi would say, what St. Therese of Lisieux would say, have you tried your level best? Have you made the most sustained effort necessary to speak kindly, to act kindly? Then, even if you have a few unkind thoughts, full effort is full victory because, one day, you’ll be able to free yourself from even unkind thoughts.

[Section Two]

The next is *vatavantam*. *Vata* is *vrata*, which literally means “observing one’s vows.” But in my language, it means “observing one’s disciplines.” See, we all know what our eight disciplines are. And we cannot expect perfection in these disciplines for any of us until we become established in the Atman. But what we can all do is try our very best.

Take, for example, meditation. Roberta was asking me at dinner, “What is the difference between the difficulties in meditation during the first half of our sadhana and the difficulties in meditation during the second half of our sadhana?” It’s a very bright question. And during the first half of our sadhana, say about the first ten years – or the first twelve years, if you like to extend it a little more – there is the tendency to fall asleep, there is the tendency to be distracted, there is a tendency not to give our very best, and there is a tendency to wait for the period to be finished.

The difference during the second half is if you fall asleep in meditation, you'll feel terrible afterwards. You will know that you have been remiss. You will know that you haven't been giving your best. You haven't given your best. And you're beginning to see that . . . you're beginning to have some glimpse of the magnificent fruition of sadhana. And when you know that you've fallen asleep instead of meditating, that you have allowed your mind to wander instead of concentrating on the inspirational passage, then it'll hurt terribly. Not only during meditation. Even afterwards, when you're not able to give your very best. And the positive side is that means that your desires are not completely unified. Because when your desires are completely unified, your concentration is complete. When, I think, somebody asked Sri Ramakrishna, "Why is it that I am not going forward on the spiritual path?" he says, "That's because you have too many desires."

And Sumner was asking me a question again, that I had many desires, too, most of them comparatively harmless, but they were personal desires. And it wasn't again easy for me to withdraw my *prana* from these personal desires, to withdraw my attention from these personal avenues and bring them all back to be unified on the spiritual path.

And nowadays, I don't usually answer in that way. In the early days, particularly, I think, when some of you would come and say, "But I find this so painful!" I used to say, "I must have found it jolly good fun." I found it painful too, but I wanted this more and more and more, so I began to do this more and more. And gradually, instead of finding it painful, I found it very gratifying. Today, it's just transformation of guiding forces. My initial response to any desire today is to resist it. This is my teacher's legacy. And my initial response in pre-meditation days was – you all know. Not only go after it, go after it with a vengeance.

And see, it is the same capacity. Instead of running after a desire – as soon as we see a desire, our first response is to run after it. And the response should be to sit back. Just as, in those fashion parades, you know, when Jessica is wearing a very beautiful Paris gown and walking in front, Roberta says, "Turn around, let me see." Or when Julia is wearing her Paris shoes, which, you know, the first time I saw them, they fascinated me so much. I'll tell you the story.

See, this isn't all new for you. You've grown up with it. But when I was a high school student (this is your story, Julia), the governor of Madras, a dyed-in-the-wool Englishman, he was coming to Palghat. And I was a Boy Scout – khaki shirt, khaki shorts, khaki stockings, everything khaki. And green turban. And on my shoulder strap, my patrol ribbon and a little Tenderfoot badge. I must have cut a very natty figure, Julia. So I was selected to go to – what do you call it – to present staves. You know, you do that while they walk through the archway of bamboo staves. And see, I had never been outside my village. I had never seen English people at that time.

And my granny, she always wanted to hear every detail. She would always say, if I started saying . . . see, just when we ask, "What happened?" "Oh, nothing happened at school." My



granny would say, “Then there must have been no school.” And she’ll say, “Start from the time you got out of the house until the time you got back into the house.” So I usually start, “I left the house at such-and-such a time . . .” And she said, “I want to hear everything.”

And when the procession came, the governor and his aides-de-camp, and all those people – it was a very colorful procession. See, I was so fascinated by these high-heeled shoes, you know, about six inches high. And all of them walking like this. And my granny said, “Tell me how the governor looked.” I said, “I didn’t look up, Granny. I was just watching these shoes.” So now, if Julia walks in those high-heeled shoes and JoAnn will say, “Turn round, let us see.” It is very much like that when a desire comes. You just say, “You look very nice in your Paris gown. You look very nice in your Spanish shoes. Now turn round.” And you say, “What’s that tear at the back? In front it’s all right. There is a tear . . .” And shoes, “The back,” you say, “one is longer than the other.”

When you’re able to view your desires with detachment, they don’t look very nice. And we run after desires because they look nice. And when we see the other side, the back side of desire, we lose our capacity to run. Then we are able to judge. If we are able to say, “If this improves my health and security, I will yield to it. If it does not, I will not yield to it.” So that is why the Buddha uses the term *vatawantam*. Look at every desire. Say, “Turn round.” And give yourself time to look at the long consequences. Any desire that can be examined in the light of long consequences gives you liberty, gives you freedom, either to go after it or to go away from it.

The next is *silavantam*. This is one of my favorite topics because where I see beauty is where there is kindness, where there is patience, where there is the capacity to bear with people who are difficult and to help people who are handicapped – not only physically, which is very easy to do, but emotionally. And wherever I see a man or woman having these qualities, I have the same response to them as the majority of people have to Miss America or Miss World. It is not just that they are patient or that they are capable of selfless love. They appeal to my aesthetic sense. They appeal to my sense of beauty. And this is training.

And in one of the beautiful Sanskrit phrases, Sri Krishna is called *Sundaram*, “who is all beauty.” And wherever you see kindness, patience, the capacity to work with others harmoniously, even when they are difficult, the capacity to get up from doing your own thing and say, “I’ll help you,” I find such people really growing in beauty.

And Christine was showing me, a couple of days ago, a photograph of my mother. And a few people have seen it. I think it’s the photo of a very beautiful woman. And it’s not only through my eyes. You can look at it through your own eyes. And the reason why she becomes very beautiful is because she has developed some of the qualities for which my teacher was justly famous for being beautiful. So even where beauty is concerned . . . see, once you enter your twenties, the early, sheer physical beauty, which is good for those who are in their teens, will be slowly dwindling away. This is going to happen to everybody.



And by the time we get into our middle twenties, most of the sheer physical exuberance is already on its way out. But that is no reason why anyone should regard her days of beauty as gone or his days of beauty as gone because the lasting, permanent, beneficial beauty is the one that comes within through kindness, through good will, through the capacity to return love for hatred, towards all.

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## THE CLIMAX OF SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

*January 5, 1980 Part Two*

This is the concluding chapter of the Dhammapada, which is of paramount importance to all of us who are slowly moving into the second half of our *sadhana*. And whenever the Buddha uses the word *brahmana*, I would suggest it as equivalent to the ardent spiritual aspirant, the mature *sadhak*, who is doing his or her level best every day in following all the disciplines.

*akkodhanam vatavantam silavantam anussutam  
dantam antimasariram tam aham brumi brahmanam*

The next is *silavantam*. This is one of my favorite topics because where I see beauty is where there is kindness, where there is patience, where there is the capacity to bear with people who are difficult and to help people who are handicapped – not only physically, which is very easy to do, but emotionally.

*Anussutam. Anussutam. Sru* means “to hear.” *Anu*, “to follow.” Following the teachings of the Dhammapada. The Dhammapada can actually be called “The Path to Beauty.” Oh, yes. Last night I was looking at the *New Yorker* magazine. I enjoy the cartoons very much. And there was one little cartoon that Christine was showing me, where a dog like one of our triumvirate, he’s rolling his eyes at his master and wagging his tail at his master, who is reading the *Wall Street Journal*. So he says, looking very sternly at the dog, he says, “None of this emotional blackmail!”

And there was an advertisement there, full page advertisement, about some very famous Paris prescription for beautifying your neck. I enjoyed it very much. It says, “That is where the *Atman* is.” According to the description, that is where, it says, age touches, age reveals itself. Why not? Let it reveal itself. And see, all kinds of very romantic reasons are given, that if your neck doesn’t reveal that you are still in your twenties, you are going to be unloved, you are going to be uncherished.

And the second – there was also second – it tries to frighten you by saying there are two areas you have got to guard against *Kala*. One is the neck and the other is below your eyes. And see, I am not opposed to people doing some neck exercises. Go on doing that. And try to keep it smooth as long as possible. So don’t think that I am against any of these exercises. But one day, you are going to get tired. And how long can you . . . there is a character in Somerset Maugham who will always keep his head like this [extends his neck] to show a straight neckline and a smooth chin.

There again, do your very best to maintain a straight neckline. Do your very best to have a smooth chin. But when the effort becomes heavier than the result, stop it. And see, I am just

trying to give you my personal response, you know, which is entirely reconditioning. I don't ever look at anybody saying, "Let me see this Brian's neck. Ah, too bad. And that Nick, I think you had better do something about what is below your eyes." See, on my honor, I never look at this at all. Somebody has to point it out to me. "Did you look at Brian's neck?" I said, "No."

And this is what is meant by not being aware of people's . . . not identifying people with their appearance. It is not that I lack appreciation, but I don't identify. And where kind words come through a straight throat and where kind looks come from eyes which do not have bags, believe me, I am all for them. But there are times when the neck sags a little, the eyes bag a little. That's where you can become so secure that, just as in the case of my teacher, people around will say, "I'd rather admire the beauty that time cannot touch than go after the beauty that time touches and touches so soon."

It shows the Buddha – remember the Buddha was a magnificent specimen. And yesterday, I was looking at a picture of Sri Krishna and Radha that tore my heart strings with beauty, the sheer glamour of the relationship really tore at my heart strings. And that's the kind of beauty all of us should aim at every day and cultivate it in every way.

*Dantam*, from the root *dam*, "to be controlled." One of the most beautiful names for a girl in Sanskrit is *Damayanti*, "she who is in complete control of her mind, of her thoughts, of her emotions." And *Damayanti* is considered to be one of the most beautiful heroines in the Hindu scriptures because of this complete mastery of thoughts and emotions. That is where the secret of beauty lies. And that is not limited to one period. See, some people have crossed into their forties. I'd say your days of beauty are yet to come. Some people, when they cross into their fifties, I would still say, your beauty can grow. And this idea that beauty is a plant that withers away when we celebrate our twenty-first birthday is one of the reckless superstitions to which all of us have fallen victim. Don't we always say "sweet seventeen"? My phrase is "sweet seventy."

*Antimasariram*. Now, the Buddha comes to one of the great concepts in Hindu and Buddhist mysticism. I've been looking at the proceedings of some of these scientific conferences that are going on in San Francisco – some of them very useful, some of them not so useful – and one of them is ascribing everything to your genes, to physical processes. You're angry because you got the wrong genes. You are not patient because you got the wrong genes. See, you don't have any motivation. The genes are bad. You just put up with them. And, my answer would be, even if you got the wrong genes, why don't you have right meditation? So, don't let physical factors impede our spiritual growth.

In this matter, I am very traditional, both in the Hindu as well as in the Buddhist tradition, that, whatever genes we have, whatever cells we have, whatever the DNA keeps on writing there, you'll say, "You keep on writing, I'm going to change." And, when you have done this, you will get the colossal confidence when your DNA writes on the blackboard and you say, "That's

all right, you can keep saying this, but I am rewriting.” And don’t ever be limited by physical processes, physiological processes, which is the burden of song in the modern world. And once we learn to change our thoughts, once we learn to change negative emotions into positive, we are free.

[Section Two]

And *antimasarira*. *Sarira* is “body,” *antima*, “end, last.” The Buddha says, when you have obtained complete mastery over your action, over your words, and over your thoughts, when your heart is full of love for everybody, all countries, all creation, all birds, all animals, all creatures, then you’ve received your last body.

The splendid explanation is that we have been making our body, according to the Hindu and Buddhist sages, in every life. Just as Ed has his welding shed, we have our body shed. In every life, that’s what we are doing. We put on our earmuffs and strike sparks off, use the chain saw.

And just as Victor and Ed are making doors, we have been making windows. And, as the Upanishads will put it, in marvelous language which thrilled me when I began to understand, the desire to see, over millions of years, the desire to see grows, grows, grows, and two eyes are formed. The desire to hear grows and grows over a million years, and ears are formed. And the desire to eat grows and grows and grows, we get a big mouth. And that’s where the control is.

And we are talking about disciplines, changing over from eating for taste to eating for nourishment. I come from a state where most of the cooking – I mean, not from a state, from a country – where most of the cooking is greatly spiced. There are so many flavors, so many spices used, that when your palate gets used to them, it is very difficult to change over. That’s why I always sympathize with Indians when they are not able to change over. Because it’s not just giving up one flavor, one spice, it’s giving up a whole smorgasbord of flavors and spices.

And, even now, when I get invitations from Indians, I always try to tell them that I don’t eat anything that . . . I would not be able to eat anything that you’d be cooking with all these highly spiced ingredients. They cannot understand the motivation that enabled me to change all my eating habits completely. The motivation is the desire for *samadhi*. This is the gift the teacher gives. That is the gift my teacher gave. And after I had played in reasonable measure with the toys of life, I found that they were not up to much. I was able to see through them easily, and then this great desire to attain the unitive state began to possess me gradually. It was like, it created a kind of vacuum in my consciousness, and it is entirely my teacher’s gift. And, you know, the ego abhors a vacuum. And the winds of desire for personal satisfaction began to blow inwards from all sides.

And, through the practice of meditation and the allied disciplines, I began to understand that it is possible to recall any desire. Just as Steve is training Ganesha to come back when he calls, we can train every desire to come back when we call. We may think, those who are not leading

the spiritual life may think, what a terrible thing. What we look upon as joy is if we say, "Desire, come along," it should run away. Then we say, "I'm really living it up." And we think that is joy. That is just the opposite of it. We think that is freedom; that is just the opposite of it.

And we don't lose the capacity to enjoy life. We gain the capacity to enjoy life. We should have the freedom, when we do not approve of a desire, which is not for our health, which is not for our happiness, which is not for our love or wisdom, to say, "Come on."

And, when we gain this real living *siddhi*, whatever the desire is – it will come to all of us as long as we are human, there is nothing wrong in that. But, when we know that we can call back any desire, we are free. And some of those desires, some of the old, fierce desires, you have only to look at them, they wag their tail. And you really have to enjoy this mastery to know what joy it gives, what freedom.

And one of the simple similes used by Sri Ramakrishna is: "Nirvana is not the reading of *granthas*, nirvana is the untying of *granthis*." You feel that you have been tied down all the time. You feel just like Muka, that you have been cooped up on a leash all the time.

And in the language, if I were to talk to dogs, for example, this is the language I would use, "Don't you want to break free of these leashes? Don't you want to wander around everywhere? Then you can do so if you learn to recall your desires, at will." Nothing is lost. Everything is gained.

And another question, I think, that was asked by Michael, "How can we get close to people without getting entangled?" That's a really very practical and very pertinent question. See, there are a lot of people who have a flair for entanglement. They are always tying knots. Wherever they go, they must tie a few knots. And such people are likely to be very unhappy in their personal relations. And the answer would be, in very simple language, if you can put others first, you will never get entangled.

And it is when you put yourself first that you cannot escape entanglement. When you are saying, "How much pleasure can I get?" If you use the phrase today, "What a swell time can I have?" you are really going to tie knots. And be entangled with those around. So, always ask this question: "How can I make Bron happy? How can I make Gale happy?" I'll get fonder and fonder of them, and less and less entangled with them. That's the secret. So, talking about this last body, I said, life can easily be looked upon as a kind of a body shop.

In other words, the Buddha lays the responsibility entirely on your shoulders and says, "Do you want a better body next time? This time, make the best of it." That's the Buddha's message. "This time," he says, "don't ask for a different kind of body, but ask for a different kind of mind." He says, "All that you are is a result of what you have thought." You can change your thoughts now. And, even the body, in my opinion, undergoes very beneficial changes, to a limited extent, when the thinking process becomes less selfish, more selfless. Many physical ailments

disappear, many psychosomatic ailments disappear, and I am not ruling out appropriate, experienced physical medicine either.

But, continuing in this unending series of body-building workshops, the Buddha says, finally, when you have come to love everybody, you are concerned about what goes on everywhere in the world. So, when you are able to love everybody, when, as the Gita would say, you can see Krishna in everybody, and everybody in Krishna, then that is the last body you have. My teacher, that is the last body. Sri Ramakrishna, that's the last body. But both Hinduism and Buddhism, they take a magnificent step further. They say, yes, Richard has received his last body, Beth Ann has received her last body, but now their love has become so boundless that they say, "If you want to send me again, I'd like to go again, be born again, live with people again, and, through my own personal life, my love and my service of all of them, I would like to show everyone around me how to end their sorrow and how to realize the Self."

This is why, as the Hindu and Buddhist sages say – remember, I always repeat this. According to them, if we all work together lovingly, harmoniously, not looking upon it as one person's job or as another person's job but as a collective contribution, as a collective offering in the service of the Lord to banish the clouds of war, to banish poverty, sickness, alienation. To that extent, all that becomes an offering unto the Lord. And when we come to love the Lord in every one of us, then according to the Hindu and Buddhist sages, they say we may be born together again to carry on this work from where it is most urgently needed. That's why the Buddha says, you have received the last body, but you can again volunteer to come down in the great tradition of the *bodhisattva*.

The next is – it's a very picturesque verse, which I'll treat in detail next time:

*vari pokkharapatte va araggar iva sasapo*

Just as water cannot wet the lotus leaves, just as a mustard seed cannot be hurt, even if it's placed on the point of a needle, so does a man who is detached, so does a woman who is detached, never get hurt, even when others are angry against them, others are discourteous to them, others do not cooperate with them. They love everybody so much that they can be called by a beautiful name, *Aparananda*. *Apara* means "no other." Such people are always in joy, the joy of seeing no other, *Aparananda*.

And I think this is the highest source of beauty that we can all aim at, where we see everybody as part of ourselves and ourselves as part of everybody, which is what the Gita calls:

*yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati  
tasyaham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranashyati*

And this is what nirvana means: seeing yourself in everybody and everybody in yourself. Or in the language of Christian mysticism, seeing Christ in all and all in Christ.

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## VERSES

akkodhanam vatavantam silavantam anussutam  
dantam antimasariram tam aham brumi brahmanam

That one I call a *brahmin* who is never angry, never goes astray from the path. They are pure and self-controlled. They have received their last body.

*Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-six, verse eighteen*

vari pokkharapatte va aragger iva sasapo  
yo na lippati kamesu tam aham brumi brahmanam

That one I call a *brahmin* who clings not to pleasure, no more than water to a lotus leaf or mustard seed to the tip of a needle.

*Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-six, verse nineteen*

yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati  
tasyaham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranashyati

I am ever present to those who have realized me in every creature. Seeing all life as my manifestation, they are never separated from me.

*Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Six, verse thirty*



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## TERMS & REFERENCES

*atman* The Self; the divine spark in every creature.

*bodhisattva* An illumined man or woman who vows to be reborn to help others achieve liberation.

*Ganesha* The Hindu elephant god; the name of a friend's dog.

*grantha* Book.

*granthi* Knot.

*Julia and Jessica* Young friends of Easwaran's. Their mothers are JoAnn and Roberta.

*Kala* Time; death.

*Muka* Silent one; the name of a friend's dog.

*Palghat* A town not far from Easwaran's village.

*prana* Vital energy.

*Radha* Sri Krishna's companion.

*sadhak* A spiritual aspirant.

*sadhana* One's spiritual practice.

*samadhi* The supreme state of awareness; a state of intense concentration in which consciousness is completely unified.

*siddhi* In traditional yoga, a miraculous power such as reading the thoughts of others. Easwaran interprets it as developing a spiritual quality, such as patience, to an extraordinary degree.

*vrata* Vow.

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