

The Talks of Eknath Easwaran: Tape 21

Study Guide for *The Buddha on Life and Nirvana*

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The Stages of Life

Introduction

This month's videotape is drawn from one talk given by Sri Eknath Easwaran in April, 1980, close to the end of a long series of talks on the Dhammapada of the Buddha. It is a profound and wide-ranging talk, spanning the cycle of birth and death, and offering a dazzling description of the state of changelessness, or nirvana, to which the Buddha's teachings direct us.

Sri Easwaran begins *The Stages of Life*, the first section of this tape, with the Buddha's description of the free and changeless state of an illumined person, from the 26th chapter of the Dhammapada: "Wanting nothing at all, doubting nothing at all, master of his body and mind, he has gone beyond time and death." He goes on to examine the difficult path of spiritual growth that leads to it. The challenges are daunting but there is something in the human being that responds to such challenges, that delights in the difficulty and danger of surfing high waves. The prize, he says, is the state the mystics call immortality.

What follows is one of the most touching and vivid explanations of immortality in Sri Easwaran's teachings. He tells the story of a human life from the perspective of Hinduism and Buddhism: from childhood through teen-age, then through the twenties, forties, sixties, and into old age, death, and rebirth. If we look deep enough into our consciousness, we will discover that there is a changeless core of our personality that is untouched by these physical changes. Even a little of this awareness can release us from great fears and bring deep peace. As we enter each new stage, we no longer mourn what has passed, but celebrate the opportunities for growth that are to come.

Practical Exercise

In this month's exercises we will attempt to taste for ourselves a little of the changeless state of the mystics, and so get a better understanding of what they mean by "immortality."

In this first exercise we will work in the area of cravings. Go through the meditation passages in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. Choose a passage that speaks to you of a state free from craving. Read it through several times. You may also want to copy it out to carry with you. Then, during the day, when you find yourself craving something unbeneficial – for example, a rich, unnecessary treat, or a movie that will only agitate your mind and bring no benefit – get out the passage and read it through a few times. Then use the mantram to keep your inner balance as you resist the craving.

The purpose of this exercise is not so much to conquer the craving (though that would be a welcome side-effect!) as to start to notice that, while one part of the mind is clamoring to fulfill

the craving, another part of the mind seeks freedom from that craving. In the image Sri Easwaran uses in this talk, you are reminding yourself that the craving is actually a kind of thorn, which is not pleasant but painful, and that letting go of the craving will bring a sense of peace and joy. The passage and the mantram here represent the Atman, the changeless core of our personality. By clinging to them in the midst of a turbulent state of mind, we can begin to taste a small fraction of the mystics' experience of a state "beyond time and death."

Recommended Reading

The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living, Volume One, Chapter Two, commentary on verses 13-30.

Suggested Passage for Meditation

What Is Real Never Ceases.

Transcript

The Stages of Life

April 19, 1980 Part One

We are moving towards the conclusion of the great Buddhist scripture called the Dhammapada, on which I have been commenting here for almost three years. The term "Dhammapada" literally means "the way of the law" or "the path of [dharma](#)." But as I understand it, it means the way of life that leads to complete harmony – in the home, at the place of work, in the country as well as the world. It is very interesting that the Pope should have proclaimed St. Francis the patron saint of ecology, which is one important aspect of harmony, about which we were talking at great length last night.

Next week falls what they call in India [Buddhajayanti](#) - the victory of the Buddha over the forces of disharmony and the forces of violence. This is the world-wide celebration of the Buddha's birthday. And our commentary on the Dhammapada, out of which in due course a book will come, is a very loving offering to one of the greatest spiritual teachers the world has produced. And I hope to complete the Dhammapada next week.

[Yassalaya na vijjanti](#)

[annaya akathamkathi](#)

[Amatogadham anuppattam](#)

[tam aham brumi brahmanam.](#)

The Buddha is asking the question over and over again: Who is the illumined man? Who is the enlightened woman? Who is the healthy, happy man or woman, whose life is a gift to the world, who brings peace wherever he lives, who generates love wherever she lives? And it applies to

every one of us because by virtue of being born as a human being, which has taken billions of years of evolution, every one of us has today the continuing choice: “Shall I live for myself and bring on sorrow on myself as well as those around, or shall I live for the benefit of all, bringing joy not only to myself but to all of those around me?”

This is the choice that our modern civilization does not comprehend at all. In no educational institution is this choice emphasized, and more important, shown how we can make this choice. Even in our little school, from whatever I see, the children are beginning to understand in a small way that there is this choice. And the very best manner in which all the teachers can convey this choice to the children is through their own personal example, which is the real textbook. In this verse, therefore, the Buddha – in answering the question, “Whom do I call illumined? Whom do I call enlightened?” – he is also giving us guidelines as to how we too can solve our problems and become a source of joy and a source of support wherever we live.

Yassalaya na vijjanti - in whom there are no cravings, in whom there are no personal longings. This is the primary condition. When we begin the spiritual life, when we get started in our [sadhana](#), every one of us, including myself, has personal cravings for private satisfaction, personal cravings sometimes which are not the very best for us and certainly not the very best for those around.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of people continue to cling to these cravings, even nourish these cravings, with the result that their health suffers, their happiness is impaired, their personal relations become disrupted and they become a burden to themselves and the community. So the practice of meditation is intended, along with the allied disciplines, to extinguish these personal cravings for petty, private satisfaction.

And nowhere has anybody found it very pleasant or very easy or very enjoyable. This is why the Buddha honestly says, [patishotagami](#). What he is asking us is to swim against the personal cravings. And the world is asking us to swim along with the personal cravings. And that is why there is so much ill health and so much suffering in the world today.

Here the Buddha is appealing to our sense of challenge, appealing to our sense of daring by saying, “If you have bigger cravings, you can become a better swimmer. If you have stronger cravings, you can become like [Mark Spitz](#).”

And everyone can learn to swim against the current. Where physical orientation is concerned, it's very easy to understand why people like to accept challenges. For example, surfing. You wouldn't like to do surfing in the [Petaluma](#) Creek. If you want to become a big surfer, you go to Hawaii. And you don't ask people who are going to Hawaii, “Why are you going to Hawaii?” They say, “That's where the real challenge of surfing comes.” Some of our fellows have been to Hawaii. And here on the spiritual path, you don't have to go to Hawaii. Hawaii comes to you. The sea comes to you.

And what the real surfer does is...that's what he has been waiting for. You know, when we go to San Francisco, I always get a good deal of satisfaction out of watching those surfers below [Cliff](#)

[House](#). They wait for the big waves. And on one occasion, there was such a big crowd of surfers that I wanted to find out why they were all there. Somewhere, there had been an earthquake. Just see, what we call bad news. They were saying, “There has been an earthquake. We got up early morning and we knew that the big waves would come to Cliff House.” And it is very... when there is a big sensual earthquake inside, what you should look forward to is that the big waves are coming. Make sure that your surfboard is in order and that the black suit that you wear doesn’t have any holes. Make sure.

And warm up before you get in, because it’s going to be quite cold. The sense of exhilaration that most young surfers feel is very much like the exhilaration the budding mystics feel. Where we are afraid, they will say, “That’s what we are waiting for.” And, to be without cravings is the perfect state of consciousness. It is then that those who have reached the state of *shanti*, the peace that passeth all understanding, they say these cravings were like hundreds of thorns.

And, what we enjoy are the thorns. In my village, some of you must have seen the kind of background of [Kerala](#) villages in that film, we all play soccer barefoot. And, once in a way, a thorn gets into the heel. And even a little thorn makes it impossible for you to play. It’ll keep on pricking. And, [Sri Ramakrishna](#) will say the way to pull out that thorn is to get a bigger thorn, and use it to pull that thorn out, and throw both the thorns away. So, in order to get over cravings, to get over petty, private, personal longings, which do nobody any good, including ourselves, there is a great deal of endurance that is required, a great deal of inner toughness. And people who have this inner toughness, just as in the external world they are capable of great achievements, in the internal world, also, they are capable of great achievements.

The next is - “[annaya akathamkathi](#)” - [Swami Vivekananda](#) was very fond of repeating that religion is realization. It’s not going to churches. It’s not going to temples. It’s not burning incense. It’s not counting the rosary. What religion is, is realization. And every mystic, that’s what they will say. When we reach the climax of meditation, called samadhi, when the mind is still, when the ego is dissolved, when all separateness is gone, “Hey,” we say, “Sally and me, we are one.” I didn’t know this at all. I always thought Sally was a nurse practitioner.

And, this is a realization that takes your breath away. It is always with you. And, when you realize this, when I realize this with Sally, all barriers fall, with the result that her joy becomes my joy. I’ll do whatever is needed for her joy with joy. It doesn’t matter whether it is pleasant or unpleasant or at my expense. And I’ll do everything possible to ward off her sorrow, because it is my sorrow.

Now, imagine this extended to everybody here. Everybody’s joy becomes my joy. Everybody’s sorrow becomes my sorrow. And the great mystic, he will say, you remember, Sri Ramakrishna will say, when the thief was punished, as the lash fell on his back (the thief’s back), Sri Ramakrishna started to cry out in pain, and when the disciples asked him, “Blessed One, why are you crying?” he said, “Look at my back.” Every time the lash fell on the thief’s back, the weal showed on Sri Ramakrishna’s back.

Then [akathamkathi](#). It is in samadhi that we leave all doubts behind. The intellect is a heckler.

That is its job. And at that time, all doubts leave us, all reservations are left behind. And the beautiful Sanskrit word is, we become, *cinasamshaya*. *Cina* is actually the modern term is, “shredder.” *Cin* means to shred. You know, in most Ten-Cent stores, you can get shredders – his and hers.

And what takes place in samadhi is all these files of doubts that we have accumulated are all shredded and thrown into the fire. Afterwards, the whole world can say “There is no Self.” We will say, “Thank you.” All science can say, “The [Atman](#) is a myth.” We’ll say, “Thank you.” You know – not that you see the Atman; you see the Atman in the man who is telling you it is a myth. That is the humor you know. Here is the scientist coming and saying, “Oh, do you believe in this Atman?” And the mystic just laughs and he says, “What’s so funny?” You say, “What I see in you *is* the Atman.” That’s why you have such complete security that it is beyond being shaken or being challenged.

Most magnificent, [amatogadham anuppattam](#). Immortality comes and embraces you. It is the message of all the great scriptures. It is the message of our [Katha Upanishad](#) (particularly addressed to young people), which will be out very soon. There is a very rare kind of creature on earth who cannot possibly accept that he or she will be dead. I think one of our children said many years ago that he did not want to be dead always, which I thought was a very reasonable request. You see, a temporary death at night between ten and six he could understand and even accept. But to be dead always – that, he thought, was “gross.”

There is a verse in the [Gita](#) which means so much to me when I see young people, whether here or at the Berkeley campus or at the church: [dehino ’smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara tatha dehantarapaptir dhiras tatra na muhyati](#).

It’s a marvelous verse. It’s addressed to Arjuna by Sri Krishna, which can open our eyes. *Dehino ’smin* – in this body; *yatha dehe* – in this body; *kaumaram yauvanam jara* – there is teenage, then there is youth, then there is middle age and old age – all affecting the body.

It is the same person who has become a teenager. You know, if you look at some of our old albums, you’ll see Julia as a little girl concentrating on some kind of little insect on her arm. And it is this little girl who has become a very attractive and accomplished teenager. See, suppose I say, “That’s not Julia. You go and look at the album and see.”

You don’t expect her to concentrate on little insects still. She concentrates on studies; she drives her car; she attends lectures on morality. She is different and this is where the Buddha will say, very, very nicely, “She is different but she is still the same.” And now that she has become a sixteen-year-old sweetheart, we are happy and we are going to celebrate it in our new building with a program that she alone knows. She has drawn it up. See, it is a matter for celebration.

And Jessica, when I knew her on Wild Canyon Street she was riding her little tricycle. And see next year when you are in pain she will be able to comfort you. She’ll be able to give painless injections. She’s very good with her patients. And the Buddha will say, “She is the same but she’s still not the same.” If you say, “Well, we expect her to come out tomorrow on her tricycle and

ride around the sand pit,” how foolish we would be. And when she completes her nursing course next year we are going to celebrate too because it will be an asset to all of us. It will be a comfort to all of us in pain. And she’s been doing good work as a nurse. She’s been even attending upon my mother. So that again is a celebration. “We’ll say, ‘Welcome to the world of the twenties, Jessica.’” We are not going to show the other side. We’ll say, “Twenties!”

And there are some people who are about to enter the forties. I met these people on [Telegraph Avenue](#) – very active, very vigorous, sitting far into the night discussing the mysteries of the subconscious. And they’re all here but they are not the same and yet they are the same. See this is the conundrum. You cannot say that they are the same; you cannot also say they are not the same. And as they come into the forties, I’ll say, “Welcome to the forties. You’ve now had experience. You have the capacity to examine your experience. You have the skill to learn from that experience. This is what will make the forties beautiful and most fulfilling. There may be some, well, ancillary deprivations. There may be less hair. The back may not be as strong, the steps may not be as long, and even the teeth, you know, they may not all be there.

So there are some minor deprivations, but now you’re getting to suspect that you’re not the body. You’ve learned to get your glands under control. Your cravings – now you can turn your back upon them. And you’re becoming aware that it is in living for others that you really become joyful. I would say, forties, fifties, sixties, that’s the best age. The more mature, the more selfless, the more aware of the unity of life, that’s the very best age.

And in India the sixtieth year is a big celebration. Not the sixteenth; the sixtieth, you know. It’s called [shashthyabdapurti](#). People don’t try to put on a wig, or what is it, have a hairpiece and wear young clothes and talk about being laid back. I am saying, if they’ve learned from life, if they’ve learned that to be selfish is to be miserable, that to be selfless is to be jubilant, if they’ve learned this, then you go, they’ll say “Congratulate me on my sixtieth birthday. I’ve learned to live.” And you remember that great Sufi mystic, who was in his seventies and when people would ask him, “Hazrath, you must be in your seventies, you must be getting on in years?” He’ll say, ‘Oh, no, I’m just five years old.’ And they would say, “Really?” And he would say, “All those seventy years I did not live. My self-will lived, my senses lived for me. But in my seventieth year I became united with the Beloved. Now I’m joyful. I can live for the welfare of all.” So we are slowly coming to life. And it is when all self-will dies, all cravings are left behind that we really come to full life.

So [dehino ‘smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara](#) Finally, old age comes to everybody. One day (it sounds absurd), some of our very young people here who are in their teens are going to be senior citizens. And at a restaurant that we used to visit a very young girl who used to wait on us had a little sign saying, “Future Senior Citizen.” I told her not to worry, that her expectation would be fulfilled.

But [tatha dehantarapaptir dhiras tatra na muhyati](#). This is Sri Krishna slowly preparing you and then giving it to you straight. Similarly, he says, when the time comes for this body that you have looked after so well to say, “I cannot function now as your instrument.” It’s so beautifully done.

“You’ve taken good care of me, you’ve given me right food, plenty of exercise, brought my senses under control, turned my negative passions into positive, you have really looked after me wonderfully but now my bones are weak, my arteries have become sluggish, my nerves have lost their elasticity and the organs of perception and the organs of action can function no more.”

And then Sri Krishna says, “Then you take on a new body. You come again as little Ramesh. As Radha.” And Sri Krishna says, “Is this not a matter for congratulation?” You get so happy when you have a new car. Remember? Brookie, I once asked her, “How old are you, Brookie?” It was her birthday. She said, “I am four and my Daddy has a new car.” And it is the same. The profundity of it and the promise of it is, you see, it takes away the fear of death. And when the fear of death is taken away, the death of fear takes place.

And there is again a great verse in the Gita, [*svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat.*](#) It again comforted me very much in my early days. I was not a brave fellow. I had many fears and the bravest, the person most fearless that my mother and I have ever seen in our life is our grandmother, who had continuing awareness of unity with no fear. She did not even understand what fear is.

And that is what Sri Krishna says, *svalpam apy asya dharmasya*: even a little of this, *trayate mahato bhayat*. Even a little awareness of the unity of life, even a little awareness of rising above the body, even a little suspension of the ego will release us from great fears, *trayate mahato bhayat*.

The Other Shore

Introduction

In this second half of the talk, Sri Easwaran begins with a precise examination of the way we usually see the world – divided into the things and people we like and the things and people we don’t like. This duality (often unconscious) determines not only how we act, but how we see life.

It is possible, however, to jump beyond those opposites. “Then you find that you have jumped into a state of consciousness where all is one.” This leap, by which we leave behind the shore of separateness and move toward the other shore of unity, is very demanding, and requires long training.

The fruit of this work – the state of Nirvana or complete freedom from change and impurity – makes all the effort seem a small price. As Sri Easwaran puts it: “The person who is at home with everybody, who loves everybody, who wants the welfare of all, who strives for the welfare of all – for that person sorrow has ended, permanent joy has come. It is this ability to contribute to change war into peace, hatred into love, disunity into unity, that all of us are striving for.”

Practical Exercise

In this exercise we will continue our attempt to get a taste of the changeless state by applying the same method to the mental agitation caused by excitement.

Once again, go through the meditation passages in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow* and choose a passage that speaks to you of a peace that is not troubled by elation and depression, in which you might hope to “go beyond pleasure and pain into a state of permanent joy.”

Then, later, when you find yourself getting elated or excited about something pleasant or fortunate, try to remember the passage. Get it out and read it through. Go for a mantram walk to steady your mind.

As you resist the urge to get excited by dwelling on your good fortune, can you observe the part of your mind that longs for a peace untroubled by such agitation? Try to resist the excitement long enough to see that this longing is there. With regular practice, you can learn to draw upon that longing to re-establish peace in your mind whenever you find yourself off-balance.

Recommended Reading

The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living, Volume One, Chapter Two, commentary on verses 55-72.

Suggested Passage for Meditation

The Illumined Man

Transcript
The Other Shore
April 19, 1980

We are moving towards the conclusion of the great Buddhist scripture called the Dhammapada, on which I have been commenting here for almost three years. The term, “Dhammapada” literally means “the way of the law” or “the path of *dharmā*.” But as I understand it, it means the way of life that leads to complete harmony – in the home, at the place of work, in the country as well as the world.

Then the next verse is:

Yo’ dha punnam ca papam ca
ubho sangam upaccaga
Asokam virajam suddham
tam aham brumi brahmanam.

Yo’ dha punnan ca papan ca – The world that we see is not the real world. It’s the world of duality, in which some people are for you, some people are against you. Some people you like, some people you dislike. Some things you would like to cling to, some things you would like to throw away. This is how all of us see the world.

And even as science is telling us that the solid mechanistic world that we see is neither solid nor mechanistic, if I could have an extraordinarily powerful pair of electron-microscopic spectacles, I wouldn’t see any of you. Where Jim is seated I’ll see a centrifugal force. Everywhere I’ll see forces. This concept that Sumner is solid, Bert is substantial, is all an optical illusion. This is what the scientist himself says.

And most of our perceptions, according to modern science, are very fallible. The Gita says, as long as you like people and dislike people, as long as your mind goes up and down, as long as you like your pleasure and avoid pain, particularly by when doing that which is not very pleasant you can help others – so long you’ll see the world divided. You’ll never see anything as it is. In the camera that I’ve learned to use now (in fact one of these days you may be subjected to a small slide show of how photographs should not be taken), the main difficulty I notice is, there are two images and you have to bring them together. When I look at Golden Gate Bridge I see two. When I look at the campanile I see two. And focusing consists in bringing both together.

Just imagine what will happen if you see two people everywhere, how difficult it would be to communicate, how difficult it would be to establish relationships. And the Buddha is now saying when you realize that the world that you see is distorted by duality, all opposites. When you jump beyond those opposites, beyond like and dislike, pleasure and pain, mine and yours, I and you, then you find that you have jumped into a state of consciousness where all is one, where everybody is one. And it brings with it the love and wisdom to live for all because all are now in

you and you are in all.

And Sri Krishna says again in a tremendous verse, which gives you practical clues. Arjuna, you remember, he's caught in the world of duality and he says, "What do I do? I cannot fight." He throws his bows and arrows down, lies down and cries for help. And Sri Krishna, very compassionately, gives him the guidelines: [Sukhaduhkhe same krtva labhalabhau jayajayau tato yuddhaya yujyasva naivam papam avapsyasi.](#)

He says, if you want to fight this battle, if you want to win this battle, then you have to prepare yourself for it. Just as to play in soccer you have to prepare yourself, just as you learn ballet – imagine your lying in bed and saying, "I'm going to be a great ballet star." And the practice that you do is roll on your bed. It is when you see the training that ballet people undergo that you realize that we are all lucky that we are not ballet stars. Strenuous training, every movement is difficult at first but it has to become natural.

And Sri Krishna says, all these exercises are difficult. Every exercise is fraught with pain. See, people who haven't been running, when they start running, they get cramps in the legs. Muscles they had never suspected they had now become painful. And just the wrong thing to do is to go back and lie down and say, "I will not run again." You keep on running. You want your ten points, you want your forty points, then you want to participate in the Boston Marathon run. That's how it grows. Similarly it's the same story.

[Sukhaduhkhe same krtva,](#) I like the way he puts the hardest thing first. He takes us now to be mature. He doesn't try to make things sound easy. He begins by saying, "You have to make your mind calm in pleasure and pain." That's what we have to practice all the day through. It's almost like when you become established in meditation and you can use the mantram well, when your mind is becoming agitated you can get hold of it and hold it tight, hug it tight and say, "No, I will not let you get agitated." That's a marvelous skill.

Wherever there is excitement there is going to be depression. So when you find that your mind is getting excited, start repeating the mantram. When you find that your mind is getting elated, start repeating the mantram. And it's going to be very painful, but in the long long run your mind will go beyond pleasure and pain into a state of permanent joy. What Sri Krishna is wanting is: he says, "I am not content if you have five minutes of pleasure, nor do I want you to be upset if you have five minutes of pain. What I want you to be is to be in a permanent state of joy." And this is what comes when your mind is still, when your love is boundless, when you're living for the welfare of all.

[Sukhaduhkhe same krtva, labhalabhau.](#) *Labha*, profit; *alabha*, loss. Don't go after your personal profit and don't be afraid of your personal loss. I want every one of you to gain from life. And the way for every one of you to gain from life is to give more and more to life, which is what St. Francis of Assisi also says, "It is in giving that we receive."

Labhalabhau, jayajayau. In success and defeat, be the same. To look back on the story of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation for the last twenty years, we have had so many obstacles, so

many ordeals, and I don't think I lost confidence even once, even for a day, that in the long run everything will work for our work to expand and to reach increasing numbers of people. It is not that there have not been obstacles, it is not that there have not been ordeals, but we learned slowly to remain calm, to become confident. And what Sri Krishna is saying is, "Sometimes ordeals may become opportunities. Sometimes difficulties may become new avenues."

And keep on doing your very best. Use right means. Work hard, work cheerfully, work in harmony. And just as we have done now, we have become a beneficial force in life.

[Tato yuddhaya yujyasva.](#) That is how you come prepared for battle. When in the medieval days they used to go for battle, they didn't go in their dressing gowns, carrying their pillows for fighting. They went in armor from head to foot, even covering their head. And even the lance at rest you know, frightened people. Similarly, for this crusade against our own selfishness, our own self-will, we have to prepare and train ourselves so completely that Sri Krishna says, "Victory is assured for those who are completely trained."

[Candam va vimalam suddham vipasannam anavilam Nandibhavaparikkhinam tam aham brumi brahmanam.](#)

Candam va vimalam suddham. It's a beautiful image, which shows the poet in the Buddha. When the moon comes out from behind the clouds, it looks all the more beautiful. "[The moving moon went up the sky and nowhere did abide. Softly was she going up with a star or two beside](#)" – just holding her train. And if we like to call it, the moon is a symbol of beauty, is a symbol of loveliness. And in Sanskrit many names have [chandra](#) added to it. The crescent moon that you see now, it's one of the most beautiful names in Sanskrit for a girl – *Chandrakala*. I had one of that name in my class.

And we all have the moon in our consciousness, interestingly enough in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad the sages will say that in the profound stages of meditation we can see the sun and the moon shining in the inward sky. But we cannot see the moon because of the clouds, monsoon clouds hiding the moon – clouds of ill will, resentment, dislike, disharmony. These are the clouds that hide the moon from our vision.

And the Buddha says, just as when the clouds are blown away, the moon shines there, we say, "The moon was there, it is just because the clouds were hiding the moon that we couldn't see her." Similarly the moon is shining in Ellen, the moon is shining in Roseanne and when all the clouds are blown away the moon will be shining in all its glory. You remember the last lines of Omar Khayyam, "Ah, moon of my delight that knows no wane. The moon of heaven is rising once again." See the moon of heaven, it will rise and it will set; there is the new moon and the full moon. But the moon that is in Ellen and Roseanne, it will never set because it will always shine.

And the Buddha: [Candam va vimalam suddham,](#) make your heart pure, remove all traces of self-will. And as Jesus says, the pure in heart shall see God.

[Candam va vimalam suddham, vipasannam anavilam](#) – untarnished, without a spot. Even the

moon that is in the sky in Sanskrit we say it has a kalanga, kalanga means it has a blot. It has a blot on the lunar escutcheon. And you call it, what do you call the blot on the moon? The man in the moon.

And we call it the rabbit in the moon. You know we like to respect both men and women, and we have an affection for rabbits and one of the names for moon is *Shashangi*, the moon that has a rabbit on her lap... or his lap. Whatever you like. And girls are called Shashangi, they're called Shashi. In freshman humor they'll say, "Here comes Miss Rabbit." That's not what it means – she who has the rabbit on her lap. And *Shashikala*, that's another beautiful, gorgeous Sanskrit name like *Chandrakala*, *Shashikala*, she whose beauty is like the moon when the clouds have been blown away. And in common language in our village folklore we all say *Chandramama*, Uncle Moon, and we had a friend of ours on the Blue Mountain who was called Chandramama . He used to come to our place and my mother used to say, "There is Uncle Moon coming."

Anavilam. The moon in the sky has some figures, some pictures that take away from her luminosity. But the self, when all self-will has been erased, when all separateness is gone, when you realize your unity with everybody, every night is the full moon, everywhere you shine like the moon. And Purnima is a name for full moon – you become full, everywhere you are full. If people deprecate you, you're still full. If people try to praise you, you're still full. It is all full, [*purnam, eva purnam*](#).

We pass on to the next verse:

[Yo imam palipatham duggam](#)

[samsaram moham accaga](#)

[tinno paragato jhayi](#)

[anejo akathamkathi](#)

[anupadaya nibbuto](#)

[tam aham brumi brahmanam](#).

The Buddha, now he's told you how glorious this tremendous climax of the spiritual life is, how your life becomes like the moon, shining over a dark world and lighting it up. Now, therefore, he doesn't mince matters, he points out that the path is very, very difficult, that it is very dangerous.

Yo imam palipatham duggam. It's a very nostalgic description of village roads in [Kerala](#) after the monsoon. Christine and I have had the rare privilege of walking on those roads. After the monsoons, on most of our village roads, the rain will be, the roads will be knee high in water. And if you say, "Isn't it awful," the children will say, "That's just what we have been waiting for." That's what they like walking in. That's what I used to walk in when I was going to school. And if you asked me "How did you used to feel about it in those days?" I would say, "It was very good." And after the rains the road becomes muddy and all that is part of the fun. Just as our children – after the rains we go around puddles, they go through them. They like to splash water on people. If you don't keep an eye on them, they like to lie down in that water.

And the Buddha says, "When you understand the glory of the goal then all the difficulties you begin to take in your stride." And he doesn't fail in pointing out it is *durga*, *dur*, hard, *ga*, *gam*, to go. It's very difficult to go. Everywhere there are boards saying, "Difficult, Dangerous,

Impossible.” And that’s just what we want because we want our full potentials to be harnessed, we want to strengthen all our muscles by overcoming these obstacles. So we would be surprised if it says, “Easy, Smooth.” We would say there is no opportunity to develop yourself, to grow, to strengthen your muscles, to broaden your horizons.

[Samsaram moham accaga](#). To get over this delusion that it is by going after your personal profit and pleasure that you become happy, it is very, very difficult. I had that delusion. And it is through the infinite love of my teacher that I was able to get over that delusion. And I can say with all the humility at my disposal, I can repeat the words of the Buddha, “I am the happiest mortal in the world. There is none happier than me.” Which is something that every one of us can learn to realize and to repeat for ourselves.

[Tinno paragato jhayi anejo akathamkathi](#). Tinno, you have to cross to the other shore, cross the sea of change called [samsara](#), reach the indivisible unity and then you’ll say, “This is what permanent joy means, this is what the divinity of human nature means.”

And: [Anupadaya nibbuto tam aham brumi brahmanam](#). That person I call completely happy, that person I call completely loving who has gone from this shore of separateness to that shore of indivisible unity.

[Yo dha kame pahatvana anagaro paribbaje Kamabhavaparikkinam tam aham brumi brahmanam](#). He has extinguished *kama*, the desire for personal profit and pleasure. *Anagaro*, which is usually translated by Buddhist scholars as not having a home. I don’t think that is at all what the Buddha meant. Having a home everywhere. I would be at home in Kerala, I’m at home in California, I was at home in Kansas and I can be at home anywhere.

[Yo ‘dha tanham pahatvana
anagaro paribbaje
tanhabhavaparikkhinam
tam aham brumi brahmanam](#).

To the person who is at home with everybody, who loves everybody, who wants the welfare of all, who strives for the welfare of all, for that person sorrow has ended, permanent joy has come. For that person impatience has ended, untiring patience has come. For that person war has ended, all love has come. And it is this ability to contribute to change war into peace, hatred into love, disunity into unity, that all of us are striving for, all of us are looking for.

Weekly Lesson Plan

[A note to BMCM Satsang Coordinators: During this month's lessons, the discussion and exercises often refer to *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. It may be helpful to ask the members of your group to bring their copy with them, or for you to bring extra copies for members to use during the sessions.]

Lesson One

This month's lessons will be focused on gaining an experience of what the Buddha and other mystics call the state of changelessness, or going beyond duality to discover unity.

In this first lesson we will work in the area of cravings. Whenever we experience a craving, the mind is tangled in duality – the thing we want appears very vivid and desirable, while other things seem uninteresting or unattractive. This duality is a sign that our mind is intensely involved in the world of change – we don't have what we want, and we long for a change that will bring it to us. By contrast, says Sri Easwaran, the mystics are free from cravings. They feel contentment, and even joy, whether life brings pain or pleasure. Inwardly they experience unchanging fulfillment, which enables them to act with great effectiveness in the constantly changing outward world.

Go through the meditation passages in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. Choose a passage that speaks to you of a state of complete contentment, free from craving. Read aloud to the group the passage you've chosen.

Then, reflect on the following questions: If this passage were vividly present in your mind when you are faced with a craving for something unbeneficial – such as a rich, unnecessary treat, or a movie that will only agitate your mind and bring no benefit – how would it change the way you relate to that craving? How might you bring this passage to life in your consciousness?

When it's time for inspiration, watch the first talk on the tape, *The Stages of Life*, which is 33 minutes long, or read from the second chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume One. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Lesson Two

We are continuing our focus on changelessness – how we might gain a glimpse of the state the mystics speak of, beyond time and death. This week, we are again exploring the challenge of resisting cravings.

In the talk we watched last week, Sri Easwaran compared cravings to thorns. They actually bring us pain rather than pleasure. He refers to Sri Ramakrishna's advice: "the way to pull out that thorn is to get a bigger thorn, and use it to pull that thorn out, and throw both the thorns away." Then he explains that the second thorn is endurance: "So, in order to get over cravings, to get over petty, private, personal longings, which do nobody any good, including ourselves, there is a great deal of endurance that is required, a great deal of inner toughness."

Go through the meditation passages in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. Choose a passage that speaks to you of a state free from craving, with a special emphasis on building endurance and patience. Some or all of the group can read aloud the passage they've chosen. If you prefer, you can continue using the same passage you chose last week

Questions for reflection: What qualities in the passage would you like to incorporate in your daily life? How might you use the Eight Points to do that? Can you recognize the part of yourself that is drawn to the state of freedom from cravings? How might you stay more deeply rooted in it?

The purpose of this exercise is not so much to conquer the craving (though that would be a happy side-effect!) as to start to notice that, while there is one part of the mind that is clamoring to fulfill the craving, there is another part of the mind that seeks freedom from it. The passage here represents the Atman, the changeless core of our personality. By clinging to it in the midst of a turbulent state of mind, we can begin to taste a small fraction of the mystics' experience of a state "beyond time and death."

When it's time for inspiration, begin (or continue) reading from the second chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume One. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Lesson Three

In this lesson we will continue our attempt to get a taste of the changeless state. This time we will apply the same method to the mental agitation caused by excitement.

Once again, go through the meditation passages in *God Makes the Rivers to Flow* and choose a passage that speaks to you of a peace that is not troubled by elation and depression, in which you might hope to "go beyond pleasure and pain into a state of permanent joy." Read your passage aloud to the group.

Questions for reflection: In your experience, what are the signs of excitement? Have you noticed the connection between excessive excitement and a feeling of "let-down" or disappointment? Sri Easwaran is suggesting that we can avoid that roller-coaster of elation and depression, thereby

gaining a permanent joy. How might you remember the passage you've chosen (or remember to repeat the mantram) when you're feeling excited or elated? How might you use the Eight Points to increase your desire for permanent joy and learn not be swept away by temporary good and bad fortune?

When it's time for inspiration, watch the second talk on the tape, *The Other Shore*, or continue reading from the second chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume One. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Lesson Four

In last week's tape, Sri Easwaran quoted a verse from the Bhagavad Gita, in which the Lord, as Sri Krishna, exhorts his friend and student Arjuna to engage in the battle for self-realization, "Having made yourself alike in pain and pleasure, profit and loss, victory and defeat, engage in this great battle."

Questions for reflection: How might you apply this teaching to your practice of the Eight Point Program? What does it mean to meditate, use the mantram, and practice the allied disciplines without distinguishing between pain and pleasure, profit and loss, victory and defeat? The Gita seems to be implying that the spiritual goal is beyond these dualities, and that when we can keep our minds even we are more effective, more at peace, and more joyful. In your practice of the Eight Points, what has helped you maintain full, unchanging effort? What hinders you? Through this month's lessons, we have tried to glimpse the state of changelessness. Have you gained any insights that you'd like to incorporate in your daily life? How might you use the Eight Points to make those changes permanent?

When it's time for inspiration, watch the second talk on the tape, read from *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume One, Chapter Two, the commentary on verses 55-72. Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

Terms & References

Atman “Self”; the innermost soul in every creature, which is divine.

Buddhajayanti The full moon night in the month of May. Traditionally celebrated as the birthday of the Buddha, as well as the night of his illumination and of his passing away.

Campanile The central bell tower at the University of California, Berkeley.

chandra Moon.

cinasamshaya [Sanskrit] One whose doubts have been cut off or destroyed.

Cliff House A restaurant overlooking Ocean Beach in San Francisco.

dharma Law, duty, justice, righteousness, virtue; the unity of life.

Gita The Bhagavad Gita, a central text of Indian spirituality, a dialogue between the Lord (as Sri Krishna) and his friend and disciple, Arjuna.

Katha Upanishad One of the ten principal Upanishads. Sri Easwaran is referring to his commentary on the Katha Upanishad, *Dialogue with Death*, which was first published in 1981.

Kerala The South Indian state in which Sri Easwaran was born and raised.

patishotagami “Against the current” – the Buddha’s term for spiritual disciplines that are not easy, but which carry us closer to the spiritual goal.

Petaluma A small town near the Blue Mountain Center headquarters in Northern California.

purnam Full.

sadhana A body of disciplines or way of life which leads to the supreme goal of Self-realization.

samsara The world of flux; the round of birth, decay, death, and rebirth.

shashthyabdi The sixtieth birthday, as celebrated in India.

Spitz, Mark Olympic swimmer who won seven gold medals in the 1972 Olympics.

Sri Ramakrishna 19th Century Bengali mystic.

Swami Vivekananda Famous disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Telegraph Avenue A main street in Berkeley, California near the University of California. It became famous in the 1960s as a center of counterculture and bohemian life.

Verses referred to in this talk:

From *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* By Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

The moving Moon went up the sky.
And nowhere did abide;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.

From *the Dhammapada, Chapter 26:*

*Yassalaya na vijjanti
annaya akathamkathi
Amatogadham anuppattam
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

Him I call brahmin who, wanting nothing at all, doubting nothing at all, has gained a firm footing in the Deathless.

*Yo 'dha punnam ca papam ca
ubho sangam upaccaga
Asokam virajam suddham
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

Him I call a brahmin who has gone beyond good and evil and is free from sorrow, passion, and impurity.

*Candam va vimalam suddham
vipasannam anavilam
Nandibhavaparikkhinam
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

He who is spotless as the moon, serene, and free from all sorrow and impurity, and who has ended all desire for future births-- him I call a brahmin.

*Yo imam palipatham duggam
samsaram moham accaga
Tinnno paragato jhayi
anejo akathamkathi
Anupadaya nibbuto
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

He who has crossed over and gone beyond this quagmire, this difficult path, the ocean of samsara and delusion: this meditative person, free from selfish desire and doubt, who clings to nothing and has attained nirvana, him I call a brahmin.

*Yo dha kame pahatvana
anagaro paribbaje
kamabhavaparikkhinam
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

Him I call a brahmin who in this world has turned his back on selfish desire, renounced the life of the world, become a homeless mendicant, and destroyed all selfish desire and yearning for future births.

*Yo 'dha tanham pahatvana
anagaro paribbaje
Tanhabhavaparikkhinam
tam aham brumi brahmanam.*

Translation:

Him I call a brahmin who in this world has given up selfish thirsts, renounced the life of the world, become a homeless mendicant, and destroyed all selfish thirsts and yearning for future births.

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Two, verse 13

dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara tatha dehantarapraptir dhiras tatra na muhyati

dehino 'smin yatha dehe of the embodied as in this body

kaumaram yauvanam jara childhood, youth, and age

tatha dehantarapraptir so also acquisition of another body.

dhiras tatra na muhyati the wise one in this is not deluded.

As the same person inhabits the body through childhood, youth, and old age, so too at the time of death he attains another body. The wise are not deluded by these changes.

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Two, verse 40.

svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat

svalpam apy asya dharmasya a little even of it, of this discipline

trayate mahato bhayat protects from great danger.

Even a little effort toward spiritual awareness will protect you from the greatest fear.

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Two, verse 38

Sukhaduhkhe same kritva labhalabhau jayajayau tato yuddhaya yujyasva naivam papam avapsyasi

Sukhaduhkhe same kritva pleasure and pain alike having made,

labhalabhau jayajayau gain and loss, victory and defeat,

tato yuddhaya yujyasva then to battle yoke thyself!

naivam papam avapsyasi not thus evil thou shalt incur.

Having made yourself alike in pain and pleasure, profit and loss, victory and defeat, engage in this great battle and you will be freed from sin.

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

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