

## THE TALKS OF EKNATH EASWARAN

# 34

*Make Your Life a Gift*  
*Building Security*

### 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.

**Note to BMCM Fellowship Group coordinators:** In the last lesson of this curriculum, the practical exercise includes the choice of a meditation passage from *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. You may want to let members of your fellowship group know to bring their copy of that book to those meetings.

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

In this month's curriculum, we continue our study of Chapter Nine in *Conquest of Mind*, "Obstacles and Opportunities." Last month we honed the skill of identifying spiritual opportunities hidden in obstacles like sense cravings or ill will. In particular, we studied the dynamics of attention – how it can get trapped in negative habits of mind (called *asavas* or *samskaras*), and how systematic retraining can free our attention and transform our personality.

This month we examine the role of detachment. In the three remaining obstacles – laziness, restlessness, and fear – it is often difficult to spot any opportunity for growth, because the obstacle itself absorbs our attention and propels us into action. We may feel that there is no alternative but to succumb.

When, for example, we are driven by restlessness, our attention gets locked onto thoughts of things to do, people to see, places to go. The mental "screen" is so packed with information that we can't perceive the real purpose of the energy coursing through our scattered thoughts. Or when we are gripped by laziness, it seems impossible to attend to what is needed – either because our capacity for attention has been depleted through restless activity, or because our attention is locked onto thoughts of disappointment, frustration, or helplessness.

But as we use meditation, the mantram, and other allied disciplines to develop detachment, we gradually learn to spot how attention is trapped in each obstacle, and we start to release it. This week's reading gives practical clues for applying detachment to those areas in our life where we are subject to laziness.

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### *Reading*

#### **3. Laziness**

This third obstacle is easy enough to understand. Just as laziness is our enemy in making money or in gaining prestige or power, it is our enemy in spiritual growth. Hard work is absolutely necessary for excellence in any field, and nothing requires more intense effort than meditation.

This may sound odd, because intense activity is generally motivated toward goals that are just the opposite of spiritual. But over the years I have made a rather surprising observation: the person who is relaxed, easygoing, "laid back," may not be a good candidate for meditation. Such people simply may not be willing to put forth the effort required to make difficult changes in personality, or have the energy and the stamina to keep going when the going gets rough. To go far in meditation, we

need to rouse all the energy we can muster and then channel it all toward one overriding goal.

One of my favorite illustrations of this is the story of James J. Lynn, a prosperous American businessman who had spent immense amounts of time and energy in drilling for oil. Lynn was attracted to an Indian spiritual teacher named Yogananda Paramahansa, who came to this country early in this century to found the Self-Realization Fellowship. Yogananda told him, “You have a lot of energy, but you are wasting it just drilling for oil and making money. Why don’t you drill into your own consciousness and really strike it rich?” Lynn did, and the energy and self-discipline that had made him an oil tycoon took him a long, long way in meditation.

But it is not enough to be full of energy. Many people have plenty of energy and don’t know what to do with it or how to focus it, so they scatter themselves over a hundred and one fascinating projects that do no one any good. We need to be able to gather all our capacity for energetic action and then harness it to the goals of spiritual living.

To do this, we have to learn to be detached from the results of our work. Detachment brings confidence and clarity of vision. When obstacles arise, if you are detached you won’t lose your nerve; you know you can turn obstacles into opportunities. And when opposition comes, you can face it squarely and learn from it without stress or agitation. Detachment means withdrawing your personal energy from secondary activities; discrimination is seeing where to focus that energy, so that all your choices take you closer to your goal.

I must say in appreciation of this country that laziness is not a national weakness. Daring and ingenuity are qualities you seem to possess in abundance. If all this energy and enterprise can be harnessed in spiritual living, I have no doubt that our next generation will grow up in a much better world. When it comes to setting social trends, to inventing whole technologies, to setting world records, the people of this country have no equal.

What amazes me even more, however, is the kind of thing Americans do in their spare time: scaling the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco, riding a pedal-powered glider across the Atlantic, skydiving, or ferreting out a way to tap into the computer system of a big university. You have two weeks of vacation and you can’t think of anything interesting to do, so you break the code of the university’s computer. The human being needs goals worthy of this kind of enterprise and daring; otherwise, at best, they are wasted. I am thinking primarily of young people, for I think they feel this lack of a worthy goal even more keenly than those of us

who are older. It is my fervent hope that gradually we can introduce to them goals worthy of a whole lifetime of daring pursuit.

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

In this section, Sri Easwaran is suggesting that laziness (or the lack of ability to face challenges effectively) is often the result of unwise choices in using our energy.

Reflect on your life and find a few instances in which you are “lazy.” Nearly everyone – even energetic, effective people – have pockets of resistance or dullness in their life, areas in which we just can’t give the effort or attention that is asked of us.

Determine which of these three different diagnoses are applicable:

1. You simply don’t want to put forth effort – perhaps because the task is unpalatable to you, or appears to offer no reward.
2. Your energy has been scattered and depleted due to a lack of clear focus.
3. You’ve been wasting energy in pursuits that do not lead to your true goal in life.

Now, read again Easwaran’s definitions of detachment and discrimination, and ask yourself how you might use the Eight Points to apply those qualities to this situation: “Detachment means withdrawing your personal energy from secondary activities; discrimination is seeing where to focus that energy, so that all your choices take you closer to your goal.”

When it’s time for inspiration, please watch half of the first talk on the disc, “Make Your Life a Gift.” For groups that are not using the DVD, please read this month from Chapter Three of *The End of Sorrow*, the first volume of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*. That chapter focuses on selfless work, a topic that arises frequently in this month’s lessons.

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

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## LESSON TWO

We are continuing our study of Chapter Nine in *Conquest of Mind*, “Obstacles and Opportunities.” This week’s featured obstacle is restlessness. We’ll try to see in it an opportunity to capture, harness, and transform vital energy that can enrich our spiritual life. As we’ll see, this requires detachment – the skill of seeing the opportunity hidden in the obstacle.

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### *Reading*

#### *4. Restlessness*

The fourth obstacle, then, is restlessness. It can take many forms, but essentially restlessness simply reflects the fact that the mind cannot bear to be still. Some people do not like to do a job the same way twice; they have to keep coming up with variations. Others cannot live without something to worry about. All of us know people who have to talk. And when restlessness invades the body, we always have to be up and doing something, going somewhere – what and where do not much matter; the important thing is to keep moving.

Of course, this can invade meditation too. I still have people coming to me with a particular complaint: “After fifteen minutes of meditation I just can’t sit still.” There are all kinds of things to try when this happens, depending on the person. “Before you meditate,” I suggest, “go for a fast walk repeating your mantram. If you’re really restless, go for a short run.” But the mind is not easily conquered. “I tried that,” one fellow told me, “but after I run, I’m so relaxed I fall asleep.” Trying to corner me both ways.

Restlessness can mean different things. Often it signals the rise of energy that is crying out to be harnessed, which is a very promising sign. The person who can’t find a challenge big enough, who roams the globe seeking new places or thrills and can’t manage to settle down to a humdrum job, may be just ripe for meditation: looking for something that can’t be found in the external world, ready to turn inward.

Once you start meditating, restlessness is the same signal, but now it means the time has come to go deeper. When we hit a pocket of resistance in consciousness, a *samskara* that is difficult to face, the mind has two common ploys: either it gets restless and turns to all kinds of irrelevant distractions in the outside world, or it gets lazy and falls asleep. In either case, the strategy during the day is the same: hard, selfless, concentrated work, preferably for the benefit of others.

As long as we recognize it and harness it, restlessness is a positive sign. Restlessness is energy being released, which is bound to happen as meditation deepens. But all this energy has to be harnessed; otherwise it will drive us into irrelevant activities that at best keep us from going deeper, and at worst may get us into a lot of trouble. That is why hard, selfless work is an essential part of spiritual living.

When you feel a restless mood coming on, therefore, treat it as a hopeful sign. But be sure that you stay in the driver's seat. Don't let your mind take the wheel and drive away. This energy comes as a precious resource to enable you to deepen your meditation, expand your circle of compassion, and make a greater contribution to the welfare of others. Deeper reserves of energy are a trust; they are not meant for self-aggrandizement. My advice is to find something useful which helps other people and then throw yourself into it wholeheartedly.

Some people work eleven and a half months just to be able to sun themselves on Copacabana Beach in Rio for the other two weeks of the year. But while they are lying on the sands of Copacabana, the mind can't get out of overdrive: it is back in the office, or worrying about some domestic problem, or – most fascinatingly – off on its own vacation in some other time and place, daydreaming some fantasy or reminiscing about the azure waters of the Greek isles. This is the fatal flaw in restlessness: the mind always has to be somewhere else. The secret of joy lies in being one hundred percent where you are all the time, which means the mind has to learn to be still.

Almost every day I go for a walk on the beach, and every time it is new and fresh. When somebody says, "You must get tired of that same old beach!" I say, "On the contrary. Every day it is a new beach for me. I see it with new eyes." When nothing ever palls, nothing ever gets stale, nothing is taken for granted, then everything becomes a miracle – a miracle full of unending joy.

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### *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

Sri Easwaran writes: "Once you start meditating, restlessness . . . means the time has come to go deeper. When we hit a pocket of resistance in consciousness, a samskara that is difficult to face, the mind has two common ploys: either it gets restless and turns to all kinds of irrelevant distractions in the outside world, or it gets lazy and falls asleep. In either case, the strategy during the day is the same: hard, selfless, concentrated work, preferably for the benefit of others."

Easwaran's all-purpose prescription – hard, selfless, concentrated work – is certainly effective for curing laziness and restlessness, *if* we can bring ourselves to “take the medicine.” Unfortunately, such work does not always seem very attractive!

When you are undertaking hard, selfless work (especially work which you would not have chosen to do for the fun of it), note the resistance that comes up, such as distraction or laziness. What form is typical for you? At what times does it arise? What is your typical response? At such times, we need the detachment to recognize that restlessness and laziness are not simply obstacles, but opportunities to reclaim precious attention and energy. Remember Easwaran's definition of detachment and discrimination: “Detachment means withdrawing your personal energy from secondary activities; discrimination is seeing where to focus that energy, so that all your choices take you closer to your goal.”

How might you use the Eight Points to apply this insight to those “pockets of resistance” that come up in your spiritual practice?

When it's time for inspiration, please watch the second half of the first talk on the disc, “Make Your Life a Gift,” or continue reading the third chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

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



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## LESSON THREE

This week we are studying the last of the five spiritual obstacles covered in Chapter Nine of *Conquest of Mind*. In the past lessons we have been learning to see the opportunities hidden in these obstacles. This week we consider anxiety.

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### *Reading*

#### *5. Fear*

The last obstacle is fear. Actually, the word the Buddha uses is a general term that includes all kinds of apprehensive possibilities: not just being outright fearful that something might happen to you or your family, but also feeling uneasy inside, uncomfortable about the future, vaguely worried, more than a little afraid.

One particularly common form this obstacle takes is anxiety – that vague sense of feeling apprehensive, you know not of what; the nebulous, lurking fear that you are unequal to life, unable to cope, sinking under some unseen pressure. Such sensations have become so pervasive that our times have been characterized as the Age of Anxiety.

As we reflect on this, we find that as usual the Buddha is talking directly to us all. Each of us is granted a certain margin for committing mistakes in life, particularly in our younger years. A certain resilience is built into our physical and mental apparatus. But we cannot expect to go on committing the same mistakes over and over and not suffer for them in time. Anxiety, in this sense, is often a helpful reminder of where we stand on the self-graded scorecard inside. It signals a kind of learning problem that can be easily solved once it is understood.

Anxiety, the Buddha would say, stems essentially from not being able to be what we want to be – which, in turn, comes from not knowing who we really are. These misapprehensions can go deep into consciousness; so please do not be impatient with yourself and expect anxiety to vanish overnight. Yet nothing dispels anxiety more effectively than meditation, because it goes straight to the heart of the problem: not on the surface, but deep within the mind. When you are meditating sincerely and systematically, every day brings you a little closer to your real Self, a little more at home in a world you can deal with. Even if there is a big gap between who you are and what you want to become, you have the tools in your hands and know how to use them. It brings hope, confidence, and the growing sense that you are equal to whatever the day may bring.

There is another secret too, one I have already mentioned. When fears and anxieties stem from low self-esteem, part of the problem is this almost universal *samskara* of judging. As we learn not to pass judgment on others, we cease to apply harsh standards to ourselves. Forgiving others, liking others, is a swift, sure route to forgiving and liking oneself.

Meditation and its allied disciplines – training our senses and passions, training attention, putting the welfare of others first – are learning tools. “Don’t pine over your mistakes,” the Compassionate One is reproaching us gently. “That will only make you more insecure and anxious.” Learn from your mistakes and draw on them to deepen your meditation. Learn from them and enrich your life.

“More than anything,” the Buddha would continue, “I want you to be free of these five obstacles. I want your physical, emotional, and spiritual health to improve, your life to be always fresh, your relationships always rich, your contribution always valued. And I want you to have the good opinion of the person whose approval is most difficult to win: yourself.” Then we can say, as the Buddha did toward the end of his life, “I am the happiest of mortals. No one is happier than I.”

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### *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

Sri Easwaran offers a penetrating diagnosis: “Anxiety, the Buddha would say, stems essentially from not being able to be what we want to be – which, in turn, comes from not knowing who we really are.”

And he gives a practical tip: “Meditation and its allied disciplines – training our senses and passions, training attention, putting the welfare of others first – are learning tools. ‘Don’t pine over your mistakes,’ the Compassionate One is reproaching us gently. ‘That will only make you more insecure and anxious.’ Learn from your mistakes and draw on them to deepen your meditation. Learn from them and enrich your life.”

Reflect a bit on your attitude toward mistakes, both your own and those of others. Can you see the connection between a more forgiving attitude toward others and a gentler, more confident attitude toward yourself? How might you start to see such mistakes not as an obstacle but as an opportunity to dig deeper in meditation? Reflect on a few instances in which mistakes have taught you a valuable lesson, and how your practice of the Eight Points has helped you learn and incorporate that lesson into your life. How might you make such growth more habitual?

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***Watching the Talk***

When it's time for inspiration, please watch the first half of the second talk on the DVD, "Building Security," or continue reading the third chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume 1.

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

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## LESSON FOUR

In this, our final lesson on this chapter, we will undertake an exercise to wrap up our study of Chapter Nine of *Conquest of Mind*. This exercise may take more than one session to complete. Your group (or you personally) may wish to devote two weeks to this lesson, sharing at each meeting the passages you've chosen to help you transform the obstacles into opportunities for growth.

At the end of this week's session, please watch the last part of the talk entitled "Building Security" on the DVD, or continue reading from the first volume of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*. If you carry on to another session, you may go back and reread one or two of the sections in the chapter for inspiration, or watch 15 minutes of an earlier published disc.

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### *Reading Summary and Practical Exercise*

During the past two months, we have explored five spiritual obstacles and looked at ways they can be transformed into opportunities. As you face and struggle with these obstacles, the passages you meditate on will represent the opportunities hidden in them – the peace, vitality, love, and wisdom that await us, just beyond these obstacles.

In this final lesson we'll review those five obstacles and identify inspirational passages that represent the opportunity beckoning to us from behind the impediment. The five obstacles are listed below, along with brief descriptions in the words of Sri Easwaran. For each obstacle, consult your copy of *God Makes the Rivers to Flow* and choose a passage that represents to you the state of mind you might hope to experience when that obstacle arises.

For example, if ill will arises, you might aspire to maintain the state of mind expressed in the prayer of St. Francis: "Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon." If you find your mind beset by sense cravings, you might strive for the state of mind depicted in the passage "The Illumined Man" from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: "But when you move amidst the world of sense, from both attachment and aversion freed, there comes the peace in which all sorrows end, and you live in the wisdom of the Self."

These are just examples. Look for passages that speak directly to your heart, embodying your personal vision of the opportunities hidden in these five spiritual hindrances.

After doing this exercise, you may want to write the results on a small card and keep it with you, or develop a cycle in your meditation practice that ensures that you regularly meditate on

all of them. Or you might use a particular “opportunity” passage persistently for several days in a row if you find yourself especially challenged by one of these obstacles.

A note of caution: When you use the passages in this way in your meditation, be sure to keep your attention focused on the words of the passage. Whenever your mind strays to the obstacle it addresses, or to some other distraction, simply bring your attention back, gently but persistently attending to these words, which will carry you through the obstacle to your goal.

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## *Summary of the Obstacles*

### *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.

### *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.

### ***3. Laziness***

This third obstacle is easy enough to understand. Just as laziness is our enemy in making money or in gaining prestige or power, it is our enemy in spiritual growth. Hard work is absolutely necessary for excellence in any field, and nothing requires more intense effort than meditation.

This may sound odd, because intense activity is generally motivated toward goals that are just the opposite of spiritual. But over the years I have made a rather surprising observation: the person who is relaxed, easygoing, "laid back," may not be a good candidate for meditation. Such people simply may not be willing to put forth the effort required to make difficult changes in personality, or have the energy and the stamina to keep going when the going gets rough. To go far in meditation, we need to rouse all the energy we can muster and then channel it all toward one overriding goal.

### ***4. Restlessness***

The fourth obstacle, then, is restlessness. It can take many forms, but essentially restlessness simply reflects the fact that the mind cannot bear to be still. Some people do not like to do a job the same way twice; they have to keep coming up with variations. Others cannot live without something to worry about. All of us know people who have to talk. And when restlessness invades the body, we always have to be up and doing something, going somewhere – what and where do not much matter; the important thing is to keep moving.

Of course, this can invade meditation too. I still have people coming to me with a particular complaint: "After fifteen minutes of meditation I just can't sit still." There are all kinds of things to try when this happens, depending on the person. "Before you meditate," I suggest, "go for a fast walk repeating your mantram. If you're really restless, go for a short run." But the mind is not easily conquered. "I tried that,"

one fellow told me, “but after I run, I’m so relaxed I fall asleep.” Trying to corner me both ways.

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

*April 12, 1979*

Here is a very brief rendering of these four great verses, which have the same theme: the extinction of self-will, the elimination of separateness, to make the supreme discovery that all life is one, that it is an ever-operative law. And when we flout this law, live in violation of it, we suffer endlessly, causing suffering to all those around us. And when we learn to live in harmony with these laws, we flourish, we help those around us to flourish, we find the lasting joy that comes out of love for all and expressing this love in tireless service of all.

“The selfless man whose desires are unified puts an end to all suffering. This body is his last.” This, as you know, is against the philosophical background of both Hinduism and Buddhism, and as far as I’m concerned, it’s not philosophy. It is what are called “the facts of life.” And I don’t think I have ever been moved so deeply by many verses, even in the Hindu scriptures, than the one that’s constantly in my heart.

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

When I look at my mother every day, for whom I have great love and great respect, I recall the days when we moved to the Blue Mountain, which was more than a quarter of a century ago, and in the first place where we spent a couple of months living next door to the Ramakrishna Ashram, it was at about seven to eight thousand feet. My mother had never attended any mountaineering school, nor done any climbing worth mentioning, and yet when we had to go down to the bazaar, very lively bazaar in the Nilgiris, there was a beautiful roundabout road where the gradient was very gradual. It would have taken a couple of hours going down and coming back, but she always said, “Let’s go down the precipice.”

And going down, as you know, was not too bad. While going up I would say, “Let’s go by the roundabout road,” and she says, “No, let’s go up the same way we came down.” Halfway I used to pant, and one of the nice ways of concealing from my mother that I was getting behind her, I would say, “Let’s admire the scenery.” I’d look and admire the scenery until I had recovered my breath. And she’s a very sagacious person, and sometimes when she saw that I was getting a little behind her, she would always say, “Son, let’s admire the scenery now.” It became quite a joke between us.



And you know, only a quarter of a century has passed, and when I look at her every morning I recite this verse to myself. “Just as childhood gives way to youth, youth to middle age, middle age to old age, so does one life give way to another.” And just as you can all recognize yourself as a child as the same person – and yet not the same person. Just as when we used to see some of the slides, taken about ten years ago, of some of the prominent figures in our spiritual world, I still get a lot of satisfaction after trying to penetrate behind this disguise.

And see, I think it was Sumner who was asking me, “Do you have any inkling of what you were in your previous life?” I would say, “Don’t you have some inkling of what you were when you were about five? You are in a way the same person, and yet today you are in a way not the same person.” And it is possible to trace our *samskaras*, particularly the leading *samskaras*. When we get a certain amount of detachment, as we survey the dramatic situations of turmoil in which we were caught, it would be amazing to trace often the same *samskara*, playing Othello, filled with jealousy; playing Macbeth, filled with ambition; playing Hamlet, vacillating. And it is the same Sir Lawrence Olivier whom Cary Grant while presenting the award called “the ultimate actor.”

And this is how it comes, you know. When we have traced our *samskaras* and made a bonfire of them, cosmic campfire. We all sit around and say how good it is to burn out these *samskaras*. How good to sit at the funeral pyre and put an end once and for all to all our suffering. Then, the Buddha says, you know that this body is the last. You know there is no more suffering in store for you. It’s all being put very negatively, because the Buddha wants us to find out what happens when there is no suffering, what happens when all suffering is put an end to. When the anguish of separateness, when the turmoil of selfishness, when all this is extinguished, the Hindu sages say, it is infinite joy, joy that knows no end, love that flows towards all, love that embraces all.

Through our books, at the health center, in our personal life, we are going to continue to reach a larger and larger number of people so that we too can share with them this boundless joy of loving all. You may remember at the Petaluma church, I was waxing eloquent on patience as the basis of love, and I also added that so far in secular literature, I am not familiar with a great paean sung in praise of patience by secular poets, by worldly poets, shall I say.

This is Book Three of the *Mahabharata* where Yudhishtira, Dharmaputra, *yudhih sthirah*, “who is firm in battle,” who will take on his ego at any time and who will never ask the question, is it time? Who will wait for two thuds – when he hits the ego and the ego hits the floor.

Patience is law and right, Vedas and learning.  
He who knows patience, thus, can bear anything.  
Patience is Brahman, the truth, the past, and the future,  
Austerity and purity. Patience upholds the world.  
Beyond the worlds of the Brahman, wise and ascetic,  
Beyond those of the knowers of rights  
Go the patient to theirs.  
Patience is the might of the mighty.  
The might of the mighty is patience.  
The Brahman of hermits, the truth of the truthful is patience.  
The gift and the glory is patience.

You could easily have a subtitle, just as in *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, Volume One, we have the subtitle, *The End of Sorrow*. Here you can have the subtitle, *The Power of Patience. The Power of Steadfastness in Love. The Power of Love That is Unchanging*.

For those of you who would like to hear Shakespeare on what love is, here is a sonnet:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments; love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds  
Or bends with the removers to remove.  
O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error, and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Or EE ever read this.

Here, I think, Steve has asked me to say a few words about nonattachment, which is again brought out well in the Buddhist tradition, but in the Hindu tradition, its positive aspect is emphasized. And I always like to emphasize what is positive. So, it's really not nonattachment from others, it is nonattachment from one's self. It is not renunciation of things, even; it is sharing all things between all. Renouncing greed. Renouncing personal possession. And in this manner, I don't think we need embrace poverty. All that we need to do is to simplify our life as

we are doing, so that all the vast resources of the earth can be shared between all the peoples of the world, so that nobody is in want, nobody is deprived.

[Section Two]

The next is, “He teaches by his life, his unfailing love, unflinching faith.” This is how teaching is done. When you are leading a selfless life, you are teaching everybody. Wherever you go, it is the campus; wherever you walk, it is the seminar. Where you sit becomes a lab, and where you lie down, it becomes a theater, in which all the great characters from the mystical tradition come up and give what are called command performances. I am trying to describe to you how joyful my night life is.

So everywhere you teach, and you are taught even in your sleep. I think it is Brother Lawrence who will say, “Those who love God go forward in their sleep.” When I first heard this phrase, “sleep learning,” ah ha! I said, they have hit upon it. But from what I learned later, that’s not sleep learning. In sleep learning, when you fall asleep in the mantram, when you are absorbed in reading Sri Ramakrishna, when you go to sleep, Sri Ramakrishna comes into your room, sits by your bedside.

In a very curious movie we saw yesterday, which I hope nobody has revealed to you, there was a song sung in a peculiar manner, where a girl was singing to her lover, “Come into my fantasy.” This is the whole song, come into my fantasy. When you fall asleep in the mantram, Sri Ramakrishna comes into your fantasy and says, give up kama. Mahatma Gandhi comes into your fantasy and says, make yourself zero. Saint Teresa comes into your fantasy and says, *determinación*. Saint Francis comes into your fantasy and says, it is in dying to the self, dying to the ego, that we are born to eternal life.

It sounds terrible, you know. And I put it very pleasantly by saying, do you want to have a paid vacation? Get as far away from the ego as possible. That phrase, “getting away from it all” – when you go there, you are taking everything with you. You can go to Hong Kong, there at the airport will be all your old friends, presenting a guard of honor, “Welcome, welcome, what would we do without you and what will you do without us?” So everyday, the Buddha is saying, don’t think about yourself, don’t brood about yourself, don’t be jealous about others, don’t envy others, don’t compete with others, don’t be malicious towards others, don’t say unkind words to others, don’t try to think unkind thoughts about others. If you don’t feed the ego, it will slowly disappear. Don’t take it meals, don’t pack its lunch, don’t give it pocket money for buying nourishing food. Don’t give the ego even a glass of water, and it will disappear. It is because we feed the ego, three, four times. Even when it says, “I am full,” you say, “Oh no, why don’t you have one more helping, we have got some more left.” And the ego says, “If you insist.”

Look at the Buddha now. This is what I call proud humility or humble pride. “I have conquered myself. I know the unity of life. I have renounced everything. I have nothing to gain from life, and I have everything to give life.”

That’s why the Buddha, in one of his rare moments, will say, “I am the happiest of human beings. There is no one happier than me.” This is what every one of us can learn to say if we follow all these disciplines, put the welfare of all those around first, and strive continuously to extinguish self-will, the source of all separateness.

Today we can say it’s in conquering other countries, conquering other nations that power is said to remain. And the Buddha, the Gita, will say, those who conquer others have only added to more violence. Those who conquer others have only made themselves and others more separate. He or she who conquers himself or who conquers herself, they need laurels. Isn’t that what they used to do in ancient Rome? When somebody who has conquered himself or herself comes, that’s the time to crown them with laurels, to put garlands around their necks. We know that somebody who has nothing to gain, nothing to ask from you, everything to give you, everything to bless you with, there is a fragrance about that person. Just as when we go back now, as we near the lilac, it greets us. It doesn’t have to have a sign saying, “I am fragrant” or in neon lights: “Fragrance is my middle name.” By virtue of its being there, it is fragrant. The selfless man, the selfless woman, to me, they are the beautiful people. By virtue of their being there, they help us. By virtue of their loving us, they teach us to love.

Please remember all the time that this contribution, this gift, which the Buddha will say what kind of gift that is – the most precious that the human being can receive, the most joyful in life, the most prized treasure in life. Jesus calls it “the pearl of infinite price.” This is to be very carefully given to those who are completely dedicated, who are therefore capable of sharing this precious gift with as many as they’ll find worthy in their own life.

So, we now come to the fourth verse, which is a tremendous one. “No gift is greater than the gift of *dharma*. No joy is greater than the joy of *dharma*. And no conquest harder than the conquest of the ego.” We are so used to the idea of gifts, you see. Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Uncle’s Day, Auntie’s Day – for everything it’s gifts. People have been so brought up – for Christmas, for example, the great excitement is about opening the gifts. This is a practice to which millions of people are subject. Just on one particular Christmas morning. What I would say is, “Don’t you want to receive a gift every morning, Richard?” When you open your woolen stocking, early morning, there is the gift to enable you to make a daily contribution. This is the gift, you see. It gives you at the bottom – energy. It gives you next to it – discrimination. On top it gives you detachment. You can receive it every day. Hang up your woolen socks, or nylon socks, or cotton running socks for those who don’t have anything else.

This is what the gift of the Magi – remember the gift of the Magi? Everyday we can receive this gift, and everyday we can give this gift to everybody. One: not using harsh language. Two:

not thinking harsh thoughts, that's very difficult, but keep repeating the mantram. Even when you want to explode, go for a walk or for a run, get your ten points for the day. Second, to everybody, instead of giving some material gift to the children – you know, a little truck here, a little boat there, a little helicopter there, and a little blender here – why not give a little kindness every day? Show the children that when you are provoked by others, that you can be kind. Show the children that all children are yours. Share the same love with all – you are giving a daily gift. The more you give, the more you will receive. The more you win the love of all, the more you will win the respect of all, and the less your turmoil will be, the less your troubles will be. Those who keep giving without thought of themselves, they usually solve their problems very easily. Burdens lie very light on them.

This is a very simple practice. For those who have severe problems or for those who are not going steadily on the spiritual path, my recipe would be: do more for others, think more for the sake of others, think less about your own profit and pleasure, and you will find your burden becoming very light.

Such a person attains the peace that passes all understanding, wins the love and respect of all those who want to lead a joyful, secure, selfless life.

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## BUILDING SECURITY

*February 9, 1980*

We are continuing our practical commentary on some of the finest verses we have in the Dhammapada. And the two that I am going to deal with tonight, we can see how closely they are related to the individual, national, and international problems that confront us. So whenever I make the statement that the Buddha will never be out of date, that he will never cease to be in fashion, we can see, when we try to look at some of the problems facing us today through these verses. We see that the Dhammapada is always relevant, just as the Gita is always relevant, to all people, all over the world.

*Aviruddham viruddhesu attadandesu nibbutam  
Sadanesu anadanam tam aham brumi brahmanam*

I look upon that person as really loving who *viruddhesu aviruddham*. *Viruddha* means “those who are in conflict.” *Aviruddha*, “who can remain detached.” And look at both the sides. Be above the conflict, so to say, and look upon the two, not as adversaries, individual opponents, or as international adversaries, but two parties to be brought together, in goodwill and understanding.

Talking about individuals, families, and friends, the great role played by grandparents in India – particularly in our villages, where eighty percent of the population still live – can be appreciated only by those who live with grandparents who have lost their interest in living for themselves. And who live entirely for their grandchildren, and for the grandchildren of people who live close by. See, when I see grandparents, for example, who are very affluent, and who are very educated, I always feel what a great contribution they could make to their community if they would only use these material resources, great experiences they’ve acquired, great skills and energy for helping those who need help, for supporting those who need support, and for assisting selfless work like ours.

In other words, what the Buddha is saying is it is in doing that kind of work that they will get over that feeling of being not wanted, which haunts most older people in our modern civilization, because when they try to live for themselves – whether it is for art, or science, or whatever it is – I don’t think they can ever get over this feeling of not belonging to the younger world, of not being needed by the younger world. And simple people in my village, or in villages around, by the time they come to what we call in this country the age of retirement, which is very early in India, I think fifty-five used to be the age of retirement when I was teaching at my university, when such people reach that age of retirement, their lives become even more active on behalf of those who can benefit by their experience. And in this country, for example, there are millions of people who have such skills, such experience which younger people do not have.

And one of the finest pieces of spiritual counseling in the Gita is when you feel low, instead of thinking about yourself and sinking lower, just go out and try to help others. That is the real recipe. When you feel despondent, when you feel pessimistic, and are inclined to bask in your pessimism, get out of yourself. Work in the office or work in the school, without ever asking the question, how much can I get? That is what makes for desolation: How much can I get?

That is the second line to which I am coming, but I thought I would take up that first, *sadanesu anadanam*. *Da* means “to give,” from “donor.” And *dana* is “gift.” In life, whenever you try to get, you’re going to be more and more a victim of not being wanted. There is great competition in that field. You know, cutthroat competition in the field of getting – everybody. And you can always see people who try to get – get from life, get something from people, get something from others. You’ll always find them likely to be in turmoil more and more, likely to be desolate more and more. That’s why Saint Francis of Assisi says, “It is in giving that we receive.” If you want to receive, there is only one way: give. And if you do not want to receive, to use a kind of Zen phrase, receive.

It is all topsy-turvy, and that’s what the Sanskrit word *maya* means. The secret of life is standing on its head. And it says, wherever you can go out and help others, you’ll find your mind at peace. Wherever you can assist others, without thinking of what you will get, you’ll find your mind secure. And when you are in the doldrums (I’m going to make a pun that appeals to Mary), indulge in do-drums. Do something for others, you see. (I find that there are others who appreciate that kind of pun.) And in this very act of giving to others, you are out of the doldrums. This is a habit that can be cultivated. When you find that depression is slowly knocking on the door, it’s a signal. Come out. Do something for others. Offer to give more time, more energy, without thought of profit or pleasure. And if you say, “What is the return?” I say, “Don’t ask that question.” But I’d confide, your depression is gone.

And the Buddha is giving the simplest of advice: *adanesu*. In a world where everybody wants to get, in a world, not only today, in ancient India too, there were go-getters, often for themselves. In a world where everybody wants to get pleasure and profit for himself or herself, be *anadana*. *Adanesu*, be *sadana*. In a world where there are no givers, keep giving, because that is what the world is crying for. In meeting the need of the world, your need, I would say, in the language of Hinduism, is met by the Lord. And in the Krishna tradition these are all beautifully personified.

As Jesus puts it very succinctly, “From those who do not give, even the little they have shall be taken away.” I don’t think anybody can improve upon that. You have at least half a cent’s worth of security hidden somewhere. And when you do not give, the Self ferrets out even that half a cent, and throws it out from your wallet. And, “To him who giveth, more shall be given.” This is the contradiction, which is called *maya* in Sanskrit, which Saint Francis sums up into those beautiful words, “It is in giving that we receive.” In the very act of Jessica giving, the Lord is pouring security into her heart. In the very act of Julia giving, the Lord is pouring fulfillment

into her heart. But, if we try to say, I need some security, even the little we have is siphoned out. Is that the correct phrase?

And we can test this every time we feel low, we feel depressed, we feel frustrated. To me, that's the signal, that's the special delivery letter, saying, "Get out and help others." It is because you haven't been doing that that you are feeling low. If you start doing that, you'll feel high. *Sadanesu anadanam tam aham brumi brahmanam*. Do you want to see a mature man? Do you want to see a beautiful woman? In that case, just look at those who are always eager to give. And let us, therefore, remember that whenever we get a longer opportunity for service, sometimes under difficult circumstances, the pleasure is ours, the privilege is ours, because we'll become more healthy, more happy, more secure, more loved, and more respected.

*Aviruddham viruddhesu attadandesu nibbutam*. These go together. It's remarkable how topical the words of the Buddha can become. *Atta danda*. *Danda*, to be freely translated as "big stick." You remember one of the presidents often recommended that. And that is not the Buddha's advice. He says, wherever there are people carrying big sticks behind them, that's the time for you to carry no stick at all. For the simple reason, if you carry a big stick, somebody, your opponent is going to carry a bigger stick. It will be a competition, bigger and bigger and bigger, until, if two people carry long, long sticks here, we won't be able to live. They'll be using, it's only two people who are necessary: Bob, there, Tom, here, two big sticks. When they try to use these two big sticks at each other, we are all in danger. It is not only those two.

[Section Two]

And in personal quarrels, let us begin, where in the home, there is tension, there is friction, even if there is one person – it need not necessarily be the man or the woman, even a teenager – if only they'll play this part of seeing the point of view of both, and trying to bring them together, it's a great contribution they can make. In fact, here, I think, we have one teenager who is halfway, another teenager who is trying, slowly, to get out of it, their two perspectives, they often can play a very important part, where they find differences in the kitchen, as to what kind of spices should be used in a particular curry. Instead of taking sides and saying, "I like asafetida." There's the asafetida school of thought. Another person says, "I like garlic." Very down to earth. Instead of taking sides, you see, the person can say, "Why not avoid both?" Asafetida is strong. Garlic is pretty strong too. They've risen above likes and dislikes.

There are very few people who do this. Somehow, we are so much enmeshed in the world of likes and dislikes that as soon as we see a quarrel, we have to take sides. I have very seldom come across people who will not take sides. And we have a story, as usual from Kerala. There is a particular type there that likes to take sides. Even where both sides are equally balanced, they'll find some impossible reason to tilt the balance in favor of the other. And this took place in a railway train. In our railway trains, usually minor arguments often come up because of lack of space. Somebody puts his bed on your shoulder, and then tries gradually to lean against



it. So words are exchanged. Usually – this is one of the nicest things in India, you know – you don't get afraid when words are being exchanged. There will be no action. After a while, they'll subside. And a little later, you'll find them asking, "What's your salary?" The friendliest terms possible, and the fellow who is getting only about a hundred rupees will say, "All told, I get about five hundred."

See, Brian and Steve will tell you that this is very common on trains. And nobody takes sides. Now, this particular type that I talk about – I don't want to be more detailed. Once this kind of argument was going on between Steve and Brian. They were both traveling by the same train. And see, they are after all brothers who are entitled to certain differences of opinion. And after a while, they are going to get over that opinion. So, this particular type, when they two, both of them were arguing rather hotly, he got up, and said, "I cannot bear this. I have to join one person." It seems to be so evenly balanced. And he said, "If this continues, it doesn't matter to me who is right or wrong, I am going to join with somebody."

That is very much our case, I notice from the papers. Except one very fine article that we read last evening by George Kennan, former ambassador to Moscow from this country, I haven't even come across one article or editorial where you try to rise above personal entanglement and look at the issue with detachment, from a global point of view. So, even in politics, you have to remember, as McCabe says, we don't hear news on TV. We don't see news or hear news on TV. We see a particular version of the news. We hear a particular version of the news. And most people who keep on reading papers finally forget that there is an angle to each paper, there is a policy behind each paper.

And when the British were ruling over India, I used to show my students in class, freshmen students – this was educating them. I'd give them an editorial from a Madras British paper called *Madras Mail*. And their slogan was, "Latest news and trenchant views" – trenchant views against us, you see. Put them down. So I used to say, "Now read that." The same incident will be represented by the *Madras Mail*, and then I would say, "Read the *Indian Express*." The *Indian Express* also is a big newspaper. It has a number of editions all over India now. In those days, just as a counterbalance to *Madras Mail*, the *Indian Express* also would say, "Latest news and trenchant views." Anything that the British did was wrong. If the British government laid a special railway line, which was beneficial to the people, according to the *Indian Express*, there was some sinister strategy behind it. So both I and the students, they all used to say, "They are both alike." I said, "That's exactly what I am trying to say. I am very glad that I have such a bright class!" That was education for them.

Then, quietly, I would take the *Hindu* – and the *Hindu* is still considered to be one of the greatest papers in the world – and place it before them. And the *Hindu*, particularly in those days, under a very famous editor called Kasturiranga Iyengar, who would look at it both with – rise above the British point of view and rise above the Indian point of view and talk about

what was good, in the interests of all. This is how even papers should be read. And this is how papers should be written. This is how a good editorial helps people.

And McCabe was particularly strong against most of these media for preventing us from getting at the news. This was his thesis, that if you keep on listening to some of these newscasts, he said, you will be incapable of knowing what exactly takes place really in the world. So the Buddha says, wherever there is opposition, be doubly careful to be detached. Wherever there is interest focused only on one side, be doubly careful. So you see how far this goes.

*Aviruddham viruddhesu attadandesu nibbutam.* And now, this is not a political presentation at all. What we are saying is how even international conduct can be based upon the immortal words of the Buddha, on the immortal words of the Gita. Wherever there are differences, wherever there are serious altercations, we know from the family context, from the individual context, that's the time we all should say, "Keep our lines of communication open." Don't ever give the silent treatment unless your heart is full of love. Then it becomes silent therapy. But see, here you are. Two people are at loggerheads. One comes in through that door and the other immediately goes out through that door, slams the door, and goes out. The Buddha says, that is making it impossible for two people to understand each other, to solve the problem. In order to solve the problem, you have to talk. In order to solve the problem, you have to listen.

And even between nations, all over the world – I am not talking about two nations only. Even India and Pakistan, I would say, just as major Western powers or minor Eastern powers, it doesn't matter. It is when there is suspicion, when there is mistrust, that they should talk more and more. It is when two – just as when two people are beginning to suspect each other, move away from each other, that's the time you become a chatterbox. You sit down at breakfast. The fellow doesn't even come from behind the *Chronicle*. You just say, "What's the editorial?" "Oh," he says, "you wouldn't be interested." "Oh, yes. I am interested." He lowers the paper and says, "Would you like me to read?" "Of course!" You know that he doesn't read very well. See, anything to keep the lines of communication open.

And similarly, between nations, when there are difficulties and differences, that's the time to have more meetings, to have more contacts. Let scientists meet, let artists meet, let belly dancers meet. I mean, let gamblers meet, you see. Let us have an international conference of gamblers. And this is all opening lines of communication. So, the Buddha now says, keep the lines of communication open. Listen to what the other person has to say.

And the Buddha concludes by saying, *tam aham brumi brahmanam*. If you live for the benefit of all, none of these problems will there be. You will always be thinking in terms of not fear, of not violence, but always how to give, not how to get.

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**VERSES**

*vitatanho anadano niruttipadakovido  
akkharanam sannipatam janna pubbaparani cha  
sa ve antimasariro mahapanno mahapuriso ti vucchati*

He or she is supremely wise who is free from compulsive urges and attachments, and who understands what words really stand for. This body is his last, her last.

Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-four, verse nineteen

*sabbabhibhu sabbavidu 'ham asmi sabbesu dhammesu anupalitto  
sabbamjaho tanhakkhaye vimutto sayam abhinnaya kam uddiseyyam*

I have conquered myself and live in purity. I know all. I have left everything behind, and live in freedom. Having taught myself, to whom shall I point as teacher?

Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-four, verse twenty

*sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati sabbam rasam dhammaraso jinati  
sabbam ratim dhammarati jinati tanhakkhayo sabbadukkham jinati*

There is no gift better than the gift of the dharma, no gift more sweet, no gift more joyful. It puts an end to cravings and the sorrow they bring.

Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-four, verse twenty-one

*aviruddham viruddhesu attadandesu nibbutam  
sadesu anadanam tam aham brumi brahmanam*

That one I call a brahmin who is never hostile to those who are hostile toward him, who is detached among those who are selfish, and at peace among those at war.

Dhammapada, Chapter Twenty-six, verse twenty-four

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

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

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter Two, verse thirteen

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## TERMS

**Blue Mountain** The Nilgiris, a range of mountains in South India where Easwaran lived for many years.

**Brahman** The Supreme Reality underlying life; the divine ground of existence; the transcendent, impersonal Godhead.

**Brother Lawrence** Born Nicholas Herman, Brother Lawrence lived almost sixty years as an obscure lay brother among the Carmelites in seventeenth-century Paris. The little collection of his letters and conversations known as *The Practice of the Presence of God* is an underground classic of Christian devotion.

**dharma** [from Sanskrit *dhri*, “to support”] Truth; duty; virtue; the universal spiritual Law that holds all things together in a unity; in Buddhism, the Buddha’s teaching as a whole.

**Dharmaputra** “Son of Dharma,” another name for Yudhishtira.

**kama** Selfish desire. The god of desire or passion is called *Kama*.

**Kerala** Easwaran’s home state in South India.

**Mahabharata** An epic of ancient India.

**maya** Illusion; appearance, as contrasted with Reality.

**McCabe, Charles** A journalist who had a long-running column in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**Nilgiris** A range of mountains in South India where Easwaran lived for many years.

**Petaluma church** A church in a town near the Blue Mountain Center where Easwaran regularly gave talks.

**Ramakrishna Sri** (1836–1886) Born in a small village in Bengal, North India, Sri Ramakrishna lived out his days as a simple priest of the temple to the Divine Mother at Dakshineswar, near Calcutta. Yet he encompassed the spiritual practices of various Hindu paths, Islam, and Christianity. One of his disciples kept a detailed diary, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942).

**samskara** A firmly established habit of thought and action, usually negative.

**Veda** The Vedas are a collection of the most ancient Sanskrit scriptures.

**Yudhishtira** Name of a hero in the *Mahabharata*. He is the oldest of the Pandava brothers.

*Blue Mountain Center of Meditation*  
*Post Office Box 256, Tomales, CA 94971*  
*800.475.2369*  
*info@nilgiri.org*  
*www.nilgiri.org*

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