

THE TALKS OF EKNATH EASWARAN

28 *Breaking Chains Fetters & Freedom*

SHORT 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 BMC M 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 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.

LESSON ONE

The topic of this month's study guide is freedom – breaking free from the inner bonds that keep us from living fully and giving our best. In the talks we'll watch, Sri Easwaran refers to these inner bonds as fetters. Though they are not visible to the eye, rigid likes and dislikes are truly manacles that limit our ability to concentrate, to make positive changes, and to feel comfortable and secure with ourselves and others.

But in Easwaran's presentation, the process of freeing ourselves from these fetters is anything but grim. The chapter from *Conquest of Mind* that we'll study, titled "Juggling," is filled with a playful spirit of discovery. The best way to free ourselves from the chains of habit, he says, is to cultivate the confident or even daring approach of an expert juggler: "Hey! Watch this! Just see what I can do with what life has given me."

By the end of the month, we'll all have acquired some new juggling skills.

Reading

Some time ago, while visiting Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, I saw an intelligent, imaginative street performer who billed himself as "one-man vaudeville." Everything he did I enjoyed, because it was so applicable to the training of the mind. Only in this case it was the hands that had been trained, which is much easier to understand.

This man was an excellent showman. He knew how to drum up business and draw in a lot of people who were wandering aimlessly about. Then, when he had a captive crowd, he started juggling – first with only one ball. "Everybody can do this," he assured us. "This is how you start juggling, with one ball."

And all of us said to ourselves, "Yeah, we can do that. Anybody can do that."

Next he started in with two – step by step, without frightening any would-be jugglers. And I said to myself, "Yeah, we can do that too."

Then he started two with one hand. The audience began to get thoughtful.

If I may make a confession, I was particularly interested in all this for a rather personal reason. When I was in high school I was a good student, and I didn't like some of the remarks made by other boys to the effect that

books were all I was good for. So I decided to learn to do something that nobody else could do. I looked about and cudged my brain. “Hey,” I said, “nobody is a juggler!”

I went to my grandmother and asked, “What would you say if I learned to juggle?”

“As long as it doesn’t take time from your studies,” she said, “it’s all right with me.”

So whenever I got a few spare minutes, I would take out a lemon . . . and then, after a while, two lemons. It was difficult. You have to time the toss well and then receive it well; the rhythm has to be just right and your concentration cannot waver. But I went on practicing, and to my amazement I succeeded. It was a great day when I went to Granny and said, “Would you like a surprise?” I started in with my lemons, and her eyes glowed with admiration.

That glow was so precious to me that I added another lemon. Try juggling with three lemons; you’ll see how difficult it is. But through perseverance and nothing more, I succeeded.

This time I called in my mother also. “Both of you sit down,” I announced. “You are about to see a really professional performance.” I don’t know who applauded more enthusiastically, my mother or my grandmother.

Now, it happened that at school gatherings, whenever everybody was hard pressed for entertainment, someone would ask me, “Wouldn’t you like to recite ‘The boy stood on the burning deck’?” This time I was ready for them. The next time the occasion arose I replied, “No, nothing intellectual. Real lowbrow stuff for me.” I took out my lemons and started in, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen a high school crowd so stunned.

That explains one of the reasons why I was so interested in this man’s performance in Ghirardelli Square. But where I had started with A and ended with B, this man went from A to Z. Some of the things I saw him doing I couldn’t believe. He would be juggling and would suddenly pass his hand right through the rain of balls, or pluck one out and toss it up behind his back. Then he would start juggling with an eggplant, a bowling ball, and a fresh egg. If you haven’t juggled, the impossibility of this may escape you. To be able to juggle – or so I had always thought – you have to have objects of equal weight. Only then can your timing be good. Besides, if there is

any kind of collision between a bowling ball and an egg, the result can be humiliating. But though we watched and held our breath, the catastrophe never occurred.

The climax was stupendous. First he brought out four empty beer bottles and placed them carefully on the carpet. Then he balanced an ordinary wooden chair on top of the empty bottles. I thought he was going to say, “Don’t you like the way I can balance this chair?” But instead he climbed onto the chair, stood up precariously, took out two balls and an apple, and started juggling. We all thought that was the limit; but there was more. While juggling he would catch the apple and take a bite – all in rhythm – and then send it back into the fray. He did this until the whole apple had disappeared into his mouth.

Now, if I had asked, “How did you ever learn to do all this?” he might have replied, “You started too. You just didn’t finish.” In other words, if I had dropped out of school and juggled for hours every day instead of reading Shakespeare and Shaw, I too probably could have learned to stand in Ghirardelli Square and do what he was doing. It is essentially a question of practice – and of where you choose to put your time.

What that young man learned to do with his body, you can learn to do with your mind. With diligent practice, you can learn to stand atop old, unwanted habits of conditioned thinking and juggle gracefully with anything life places in your hands. There is no mystery about this, no magic to it. You simply start by practicing with one or two small things.

This kind of juggling begins not with eggs and eggplants but with likes and dislikes. This is only for the adventuresome, but it makes an excellent test of spiritual awareness. Can you change your likes at will? When it benefits someone else, can you turn a dislike into a like? If you can, you have really made progress.

The reason is simple. The basis of conditioned thinking is the pleasure principle: “Do what brings pleasure, avoid what brings pain.” To act in freedom, we have to unlearn this basic reflex. We need to learn to enjoy doing something we dislike, or to enjoy not doing something we like, when it is in the long-term best interests of others or ourselves.

This is not an exotic idea. We set limits to the pleasure principle every day, largely because as human beings, we have the capacity to look beyond immediate gratification to something more important. Every good athlete

understands this; so does a mother staying up to comfort a sick child. This precious capacity is called discrimination, the ability to distinguish between immediate pleasure and real benefit, and I shall have a lot to say about it in the pages to come.

Conditioning, then, comes down to being dictated to by our likes and dislikes. And the first place we encounter likes and dislikes is when the senses are involved: with all the things we love (or hate) to taste, see, listen to, smell, or touch. Highbrow or low, almost everyone holds on tightly to sensory likes and dislikes. But by learning to toss them up and juggle with them freely, turning a like into a dislike or a dislike into a like as the occasion demands, we gain much more than a party skill: we get a precious handhold on the workings of the mind.

When you say no to a calorie-laden treat, or yes to a restaurant you dislike but your partner really enjoys, you are learning to juggle with your likes and dislikes in food. When you say no to music that stirs up old passions, you are juggling with your hearing. You can do this with all the senses. In the films you see, the books and magazines you read, the television shows you look at, the conversations you participate in – everywhere you can learn to say, “No, this doesn’t help anybody, so I won’t do it; yes, this is beneficial, so I’ll do it with enthusiasm.”

This is the way I trained my own mind, and I recommend it to everyone with a sense of adventure. Sometimes you have to grit your teeth, but the fierce thrill of mastery is exhilarating. It is not possible to convey what freedom comes when you can juggle with your likes and dislikes at will.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

In Sri Easwaran’s view, life is filled with opportunities for freeing ourselves from our limitations. During the course of the month we will consider several ways in which we can recognize such opportunities for freedom, and learn to take advantage of them.

The first is the skill of accepting and enjoying what life brings us, whether or not it appeals to us at first. Take a few minutes to reflect on your life. Where are you held back by likes and dislikes? Where is your freedom limited by the feeling that you don’t like what life has placed in front of you? You may want to write down your thoughts privately, and return to them at the end of the month.

Now, let's explore the strategy Easwaran presented in the reading: "When you say no to a calorie-laden treat, or yes to a restaurant you dislike but your partner really enjoys, you are learning to juggle with your likes and dislikes in food. When you say no to music that stirs up old passions, you are juggling with your hearing. You can do this with all the senses. In the films you see, the books and magazines you read, the television shows you look at, the conversations you participate in – everywhere you can learn to say, 'No, this doesn't help anybody, so I won't do it; yes, this is beneficial, so I'll do it with enthusiasm.'"

In this excerpt he's implying that there is a connection between training the senses and thinking of the needs of others. In what way does it benefit others in your life when you become less attached to your likes and dislikes? What opportunities do you have for giving this kind of gift to the people in your life? What one food or entertainment item might you try to juggle with? What would you do to juggle with it? How might the other points help you keep the spirit of play and adventure that Sri Easwaran talks about in this chapter?

Reading for Inspiration

When it's time for inspiration, please read the rest of Chapter Four.

Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

LESSON TWO

This week we continue our study of Chapter Four of *Conquest of Mind*, entitled “Juggling.” In this excerpt Sri Easwaran closely examines the faculty of choice, following Gandhi’s insight that training the palate is a powerful aid in training the mind.

Reading

We can get so caught up in our subtle maze of likes and dislikes that we temporarily lose our sense of direction. As Spinoza says, we mistake our desires for rational decisions. We tell ourselves, “I like this, so I do it. I don’t like that, so I don’t bother with it. What other basis is there for making a decision?” What we really mean is, “I’m in a car that turns of its own accord. I can’t help going after things I like, and I can’t help avoiding things I dislike.” We have only to look at ourselves with detachment to see how much of our daily routine amounts to little more than going round and round in the same old circles.

There is real truth to an old saying: “The immature person does what he likes; the mature person likes what he does.” In the newspaper recently, three or four persons on the street were asked what quality they most admired in a friend. I would have liked to surprise the interviewer by saying, “Flexibility in likes and dislikes.” Its beneficial effects are immediate and wide-ranging: on our health, because it gives us a shield against stress; on our emotional stability, because now we hold the steering wheel in our own hands; on our relationships, because on most issues we can give easily, without rancor.

Flexibility can be practiced everywhere, starting with food. My friend Brian, who wrote the nutrition section of the *New Laurel’s Kitchen*, once told me that the thorniest problem in the whole field of human nutrition is helping people to change their eating habits. Even when they know their health demands it, change is almost impossible, simply because likes and dislikes about food can be so rigid.

Suppose, for example, that you have been looking forward to Belgian waffles for breakfast. When you come to the table and find blueberry pancakes, you feel so disappointed! There is nothing shabby about blueberry pancakes, but you have been dreaming of Belgian waffles smothered with fresh strawberries and gleaming with a crown of whipped cream. Many a breakfast table has been the scene of a small Waterloo over just such an incident. But on the spot you can start practicing flexibility, juggling waffles and pan-

cakes. If you have children, a few scenes like this will convey a great deal. They may not say anything, but they will gradually absorb a precious secret about life: being able to change your likes and dislikes means you are always free to enjoy.

If I may say so, I think this skill is much harder to learn for those of us who grew up in countries where food is very highly spiced. Just as children in this country go to the ice cream parlor after school, we used to go to a mango tree – even when the fruit was not yet ripe. To South Indians, green mangoes have a complex appeal: partly sour, partly sweet, partly pungent. And we had our rituals about how they should be eaten. One, at least for boys in my village, was that you should get your mango without climbing the tree. You have to take a little stone, sharpen it, and knock the fruit from the branch – and it is not supposed to touch the ground, either; you have to catch it as it falls. Then you season your prize liberally with red pepper and salt – everybody brought his own from home – and enjoy it right on the spot. I might add that our red pepper is not the civilized cayenne pepper you get in this country. Kerala peppers are flaming hot.

This is the kind of food South Indians enjoy. It should burn. Just imagine! So when somebody has been eating this way morning, noon, and evening for twenty or thirty years, it is almost impossible to change to milder food. Yet it can be done.

Some years ago a distinguished Indian scholar visiting this country was drawing me out about the life I was leading here. “I hope,” he said earnestly, “that you have made arrangements for getting Indian food.”

“Oh, no,” I said. “Now I eat food without chilies or spices, and with very little salt.”

He shivered visibly. “How horrible!” He couldn’t know that for the passing pleasures of red pepper and green mango, I had bought a lasting joy.

One of the first things I learned from Mahatma Gandhi was that training the palate is a powerful aid in training the mind. The reason is simple: you get at the mind through the senses, and taste is a double sense. Ask a gourmet: when something appeals to the palate, flavor and aroma are combined. So for those who want the taste of freedom, I am going to make a rather unpleasant suggestion. When you have the opportunity to eat some special delicacy which you like very much, choose instead to ask for something nourishing that you don’t particularly enjoy. Try it: you won’t like it. At first

it may make your skin crawl. Then why do I suggest it? Because even two or three experiments like this bring a heady sense of self-mastery. If you get hooked, you will see for yourself how much freer your life becomes.

Every day brings opportunities to practice this, as I can illustrate with another personal example. In India, as you may know, we use many kinds of vegetables in curries, but we generally don't serve vegetables raw. A tossed green salad is just a pile of leaves to us, and the only people in India who eat leaves are characters in our ancient epics who have been exiled to a forest or have taken vows of mortification. When I came to this country, consequently, I had some difficulty in taking to salads. My body needed their nourishment, but my mind did not understand that; I had to teach it. Today I probably eat more salad than half a dozen of you together, and I enjoy it immensely.

But the challenges didn't end there. The first time I tried asparagus, for example, it really tasted like grass to me. I might as well have been eating plankton. My mind objected strenuously. "This isn't food!"

I remember picking up the *San Francisco Chronicle* in those days and seeing a gourmet columnist announce with joy, "The asparagus season has arrived!" It struck fear into my heart. I asked myself, "Will it claim me for its own someday?"

"Asparagus is full of valuable nutrients," the columnist wrote. "So what?" my taste buds demanded. "What about us?" I thought they had a point. To get nutrients into the blood, you first have to get them past the taste buds. Mine stood there like armed sentinels, saying "No!"

Yet now – it is a real tribute to my mind – I eat so much asparagus that at my next physical examination my blood may prove green. Friends buy it for me by the crate. When I went to the store a few days ago, I was introduced to the produce man as "the man who eats all that asparagus!" He was duly impressed.

There is no struggle in this any longer. I don't face a plate of asparagus with a sense of conflict, and I don't force it down either; I enjoy it. With lots of nutrients and so few calories, it is excellent for my body's needs.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Sri Easwaran begins this excerpt with a challenging observation: “We have only to look at ourselves with detachment to see how much of our daily routine amounts to little more than going round and round in the same old circles.”

Take a few minutes to identify one or two food or entertainment habits in your life in which you have little choice, but would like to make changes. These are places where great benefit can come even from small changes, since the “charge” behind the habit is so strong. How might you start getting some choice in that area? How might the other points, like the mantram, slowing down, or putting others first, help you to develop flexibility?

Watching the Talk

When it’s time for inspiration, please read the following introduction and play the first talk on the disc, “Breaking Chains.”

Introduction

“Breaking Chains” is drawn from a talk on Chapter 26 of the Dhammapada, given in October 1978. At the beginning of the talk, Easwaran presents St. Augustine’s analysis of addiction as an illustration of the verse: “Cross the river bravely. Conquer all your passions. Go beyond the world of fragments and know the deathless ground of life.”

Our negative habits, says Augustine, are essentially chains, forged out of our self-will, our desire to have our own way, to have things just the way we want them, no matter how it affects others.

The core of this talk is a penetrating analysis of how we can break the chains of those self-willed habits. Easwaran then moves on to one of his favorite topics: spiritual acting. The point of spiritual acting is not to deny that we have negative reactions, but to have the detachment to act independently of that reaction, until we can reestablish calm in our mind.

It’s a delightful talk that can remind us how to laugh at ourselves when our self-will gets inflated, and how we can act our way out of it.

Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

LESSON THREE

This week we turn our attention to another arena for juggling with likes and dislikes: our work. As Easwaran points out in this week's reading, our predilections regarding work can be as fierce and inflexible as our attachments or aversions to particular foods. For that reason, it can be one of the most fruitful areas for spiritual growth.

Reading

You can juggle with likes and dislikes about work in the same way. Whatever the job, all of us feel a natural desire to work at what we like, in the manner we like, with the people we like, and at the times we like. This happens so quietly that we seldom notice that our little preferences are making choices for us. Only as my meditation deepened did I begin to see that I was drifting toward doing things I liked and away from doing things I didn't like, without my even being aware of what was happening. Discrimination dawned with the insight that I was rarely acting in freedom.

One secret I learned was to try to see myself as someone else would. That enabled me to see with clearer eyes what I was avoiding and why. When you look at your life in this way, you soon find opportunities to work in circumstances that may not be to your liking – perhaps even with people you don't like – but where your help will benefit others. In such situations, most of us not only lose our patience, our concentration, and our good manners; often we lose our skill as well. That is the challenge. If you can only do well at jobs that are fun, what is special about that?

Again, let me illustrate from my own experience. For most of my life I have luxuriated in literature. I fell in love very young with the best from both English and Sanskrit, two of the richest literary traditions in the world, and I must have memorized thousands of lines of poetry; that was the extent of my passion. I carried Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* in my pocket wherever I went, and during the summer I used to go up to a spectacular, secluded spot we called the Glittering Rocks, where mica-sprinkled stones rose above the headwaters of our river, and recite aloud the whole of Gray's "Elegy" or the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*. I mention this just to give an idea of the love I poured into literature, which I haven't lost even today.

Yet today, although I still sit up reading until late at night, the one thing I almost never touch is literature. Everything is medicine, science, political essays, economic analyses – with one or two exceptions, the most forbid-

ding stuff. Sometimes it turns out that the writer has little to say and little interest in saying it well either. At times like these, despite all its training, my mind still complains. “I don’t like this!” it says. “You have a volume of Maugham short stories on your shelf; can’t we read one of those for a while, just for a break?”

“Like it or not,” I tell my mind, “this is part of our work now. So let’s see what we can learn about emotional factors in heart disease.” My mind has learned to accept this answer without groaning. It has become natural, effortless, to ignore my personal preferences when it serves the interests of the whole.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

It can be very uncomfortable to work at jobs we dislike or to set limits to how much we work at the ones we do like. Easwaran is suggesting that the problem lies not in the job, but in our attitude towards it.

Take a few minutes to identify one type of work you avoid because you dislike it, and one that you like and spend more time on than necessary. How might you juggle with these likes and dislikes? How would the other allied disciplines help you gain freedom in these choices?

Reading for Inspiration

When it’s time for inspiration, please read Chapter Six of *The Mantram Handbook*, “Overcoming Likes and Dislikes.”

Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

LESSON FOUR

This week we complete our study of Chapter Four of *Conquest of Mind*, entitled “Juggling.”

At the beginning of the month we reflected on what it means to accept and enjoy what life brings us, whether or not it appeals to us at first. This week we’ll reflect again on the questions: Where are you held back by rigid likes and dislikes? Where is your freedom limited by the feeling that you don’t like what life has placed in front of you?

The final section of this month’s reading gives powerful motivation for learning to juggle with likes and dislikes. The freedom this skill brings will enrich and strengthen every part of our life.

Reading

Even after years of training, I assure you, your mind will keep a few harmless likes and dislikes. That is its nature. The difference is that you no longer get compulsively attached to them. You don’t lose your capacity to enjoy life’s innocent pleasures; you lose the capacity to get caught in them like a fly in amber. In other words, you always have a choice. You can view your predilections with a detached eye, and you can change them, if necessary, as easily as you change your shirt.

Without this flexibility, likes and dislikes can become rigid and ingrained. Strong likes and dislikes lead to strong passions, which are an open gateway to anger. Just contradict someone with rigid opinions and see what happens; you could insert a thermometer into his mind and watch the temperature rise. Don’t you talk about a “hot temper”? A really angry person has a “temp” of one hundred and four. His mind is agitated, so his attention gets scattered: he cannot listen to anybody, and he gets stirred up before he even knows what the subject is.

I have heard some good American advice for such a person: “Keep your cool.” When you keep your cool, the mind does not flutter; it is still. Then you see everybody’s point of view clearly. You have the understanding to help the person who is agitated with you, and if necessary, you can oppose his views without getting overheated or apologetic.

Juggling with likes and dislikes, then, is much more than learning to be flexible about the relative merits of foods or jobs or people. The real issue is freedom. Our habitual responses in small matters reflect the way we respond to life itself: the person with rigid tastes in food is likely to have rigid tastes in other fields as well. All of these hold him hostage. He is happy so long as he gets everything the way he likes it. Otherwise – which may be ninety-nine percent of the time – he is unhappy over something. He might as well be bound hand and foot. My grandmother used to tell me, “Don’t ever beg from life.” Life has only contempt for people who

say, “Please give me two things I like today: one in the morning, preferably just before lunch, and another about midway through the afternoon, when I start to get irritable . . . Oh, and please remember to keep everything I dislike at a convenient distance.” This is panhandling, and we usually get what we deserve – disappointment, with a capital D.

We are not beggars, Granny would say; we are princes and princesses. We can learn to say to life, “It doesn’t matter what you bring today. If you bring something pleasant, I will flourish; if you bring something unpleasant, I will still flourish.” Once we have tasted the freedom of juggling at will with our personal preferences, we can face whatever comes to us calmly and courageously, knowing we have the flexibility to weather any storm gracefully. This is living in freedom, the ultimate goal of training the mind.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. As a boy, Easwaran built up his juggling skills by starting with just one lemon, then two and so on. In the last few weeks, we’ve been practicing with our own lemons – first we juggled our likes and dislikes about food and entertainment, and then we added in likes and dislikes about work. Now Easwaran challenges us to juggle our likes and dislikes regarding opinions. This can be a shocking suggestion for those of us who don’t think of our opinions as “likes and dislikes,” so much as “right vs. wrong,” or “true vs. false.”

But Sri Easwaran points out the grand benefits of loosening up our opinions. “Just contradict someone with rigid opinions and see what happens; you could insert a thermometer into his mind and watch the temperature rise . . . [but] when you keep your cool, the mind does not flutter; it is still. Then you see everybody’s point of view clearly. You have the understanding to help the person who is agitated with you, and if necessary, you can oppose his views without getting overheated or apologetic. . . .”

Let’s venture into this arena, gently and playfully.

In what areas do you have strong opinions? Have you observed that your strong opinions can “hold you hostage?” How could you use the Eight Points to experiment with “keeping your cool,” and “seeing everybody’s point of view clearly?” What might be a playful, gentle first step in juggling with some of your pet opinions?

2. Here is a finale to our month of juggling. In the final section of our reading, Easwaran points out that flexibility is a *skill*. It can be learned. Juggling little likes and dislikes in food, entertainment, work, and opinions turns us into flexible people who can “weather any storm gracefully.”

Remember that we began the month with this challenge:

Where are you held back by rigid likes and dislikes? Where is your freedom limited by the feeling that you don't like what life has placed in front of you?

Has your month of juggling given you any insights into these areas of your life, where you are fettered by rigid likes and dislikes? If you can free yourself from these fetters, how will you and those around you benefit? What specific Eight Point Program strategies could you now use to begin loosening these fetters?

Watching the Talk

When it's time for inspiration, please read the introduction below, and play the second talk on the disc, "Fetters and Freedom."

Introduction

This talk was given on March 3, 1979. Sri Easwaran begins by quoting the Buddha, who tells us that our selfish tendencies are like "fetters" or "manacles" or "chains" around our wrists. Selfish desires – for money and material possessions, for power, or for our own pleasure even, if necessary, at the expense of others – all make us their victims, breaking up our relationships and locking up our ability to love.

Now, in Easwaran's typical way, he softens the Buddha's severe image of fetters. Instead, he shifts the metaphor to the bangles – bracelets – that girls wear in village India. He paints a delightful picture for us of the bangle-seller who is expert at getting tight bangles to slip smoothly and painlessly over a lady's wrist. Our self-will, he tells us, is like a very tight bangle. He says, "when you look at anybody who has self-will you can feel compassion because you know those fetters cannot be taken off. If you try to take them off, they will scream in agony. They'll burst out in pain." But through the practice of the Eight Point Program, we can become like the bangle-seller. We can start slipping the bangle of self-will up and down by reducing our compulsive likes and dislikes, "by doing what is good for others rather than for ourselves." Eventually, through the practice of meditation, we will slip the self-will bangle all the way off, and then we will be free.

In the last part of the talk, Easwaran gives us a strategy for transforming our selfish desires – our tight bangles – into selfless, loose-fitting ones. He compassionately points out that all of us have desires, as desire itself is a form of prana, our vital energy. What he recommends is that we convert our petty, personal, selfish desires into an "over-powering, all-embracing desire to leave the world a little better than we found it." Easwaran then describes the transformation this

will bring: a kind of friendly, detached relationship with our body, because it is our instrument of service; and a joyous love for every creature because we know they are all children of the divine.

Conclude with 30 minutes of meditation.

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