

Eknath Easwaran

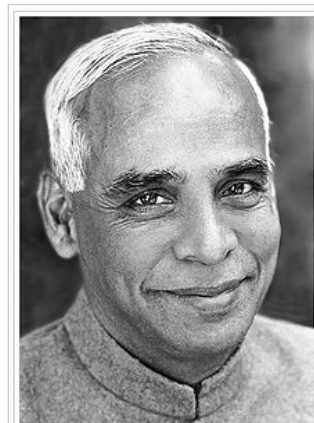
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Eknath Easwaran (December 17, 1910 – October 26, 1999)^[1] is known as a spiritual teacher and the author of books on meditation and how to lead a fulfilling life, as well as a translator and interpreter of [Indian literature](#).

In 1961 Easwaran founded the **Blue Mountain Center of Meditation** and **Nilgiri Press**, based in [northern California](#). Nilgiri Press publishes over two dozen books he authored.

Eknath Easwaran was influenced by [Gandhi](#), whom Easwaran met when he was a young man. Easwaran developed a method of [meditation](#) — silent repetition in the mind of memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions^[2] — which later came to be known as [Passage Meditation](#).

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Eknath Easwaran, photo courtesy of Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

Biography

[[edit](#)]

Eknath Easwaran was born in 1910 in a village in [Kerala, British India](#).^[1] *Eknath* is his surname, *Easwaran* his given name.^[3] Brought up by his mother, and by his maternal grandmother whom he honored as his spiritual teacher, he was schooled in his native village until the age of sixteen, when he went to attend a Catholic college fifty miles away. Here he acquired a deep appreciation of the Christian tradition. He graduated at the [University of Nagpur](#) in English and law. He served as Professor of English literature at the [University of Nagpur](#).

In 1959, he came to the [United States](#) as a [Fulbright Scholar](#) at the [University of California, Berkeley](#).^[4]^[5]

From 1960 he gave classes on meditation in the [San Francisco Bay Area](#). He met his wife Christine at one of these talks. Together with his wife, he founded the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in 1961. After a four-year stay in India, he returned to the Bay Area in 1965

In 1970 he founded *Ramagiri Ashram* as a community of dedicated followers in [Marin County](#).^[6]

He set up a publishing activity, Nilgiri Press, which printed his first book *Gandhi The Man*, telling the story of Gandhi as a spiritual as well as a political leader. His first major work was his 3-volume commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, the *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*, the first volume of which was printed in 1975 and the last in 1984. His book *Meditation* on the program of meditation and allied disciplines that he developed first appeared in 1978.



Eknath Easwaran teaching what is thought to be the first credit course on meditation offered at a major university in the U.S. at U.C. Berkeley in 1968, photo courtesy of Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

Written works

[[edit](#)]

Easwaran's writings may be grouped into several major categories—primarily books, but also articles in newspapers and other periodicals. Most of his books have been reviewed by spiritually oriented publications or websites, or by nationally known media such as *The New Yorker*,^[7] or the *New York Post*.^[8]

Translations

[[edit](#)]

His translations of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Dhammapada* have been critically acclaimed. Religion scholar [Huston Smith](#) is cited by the publisher as writing: "No one in modern times is more qualified - no, make that 'as qualified' - to translate the epochal Classics of Indian Spirituality than Eknath Easwaran. And the reason is clear. It is impossible to get to the heart of those classics unless you live them, and he did live them. My admiration of the man and his works is boundless."^[9] In *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction*^[10] Smith and his coauthor Philip Novak wrote that "Our favorite translation is Eknath Easwaran's *The Dhammapada*. His Indian heritage, literary gifts, and spiritual sensibilities... here

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produce a sublime rendering of the words of the Buddha. Verse after verse shimmers with quiet, confident authority. A bonus is the sparkling 70-page introduction to the Buddha's life and teachings."

Commentaries

[edit]

Essence of the Upanishads (see [article](#)), originally entitled *Dialogue with death: The spiritual psychology of the Katha Upanishad*, and explains how the *Katha Upanishad* embraces the key ideas of Indian spirituality within the context of a powerful mythic quest – the story of a young hero who ventures into the land of death in search of immortality. "*Essence of the Upanishads* is a westerner's guide to this vitally important Indian text and its modern relevance to the Indian mindset and spirituality."^[11]

Books on meditation

[edit]

Main articles: [Passage Meditation](#) and [Mantram Handbook](#)

His book *Passage Meditation* (original title *Meditation*) describes the Eight Point Program that Easwaran developed, while his book *Conquest of Mind* goes further into the practice of these disciplines in daily life. *Timeless Wisdom* is a companion book to *Passage Meditation* and contains passages for meditation drawn from across the world's spiritual traditions. His book *Mantram Handbook: a practical guide to choosing your mantram and calming your mind* addresses The Mantram, the second point in the program.

His book *Strength in the Storm*^[12] is an introduction to The Mantram, containing many stories and practical examples to help the reader learn how to harness the inner resources for dealing with challenges in daily living. His book *Take Your Time*^[13] explores "Slowing Down" and "One-Pointed Attention" in daily lives. *Renewal*^{[14][15]} is a pocket book of short readings on themes such as loving relationships, raising children, living simply, and aging wisely; *Patience*, the second in the pocket book series, shows how to cultivate Patience - "the ornament of the brave" - at any age. Other (older) books describe various aspects of leading a spiritual life: *Climbing the Blue Mountain*, *Compassionate Universe*, and *Undiscovered Country*.

Daily readers and reference

[edit]

God Makes the Rivers to Flow^[16] is an anthology of writings from the sacred literature of the world, selected by Easwaran as useful for meditation. A larger (and earlier) version of *Timeless Wisdom*, it contains dozens of passages from diverse traditions, and identifies passages for particular stages in life, such as caregiving, families with small children, death and dying, grief and loss, and for building positive qualities such as patience, courage, devotion to God, and putting others first. *Words to Live By*^[17] is a set of daily readings with Easwaran's commentary on applying the reading to daily life.

The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living

[edit]

The 3 volumes of the *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* are conceived as handbooks for applying the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* to lives today. *End of Sorrow*^[18] concentrates on the individual – how one can discover one's innermost nature, and transform one's life through self-realization, selfless service, and meditation. *Like a Thousand Suns*^[19] addresses relationships – how one can heal divisions in society, within one's relationships, and within oneself, and realize the unity governing all creation. *To Love is To Know Me*^[20] gives a global view, describing what individual readers can do to make a difference in the world today, and ends with a description of bhakti yoga, the path of devotion.

Spiritual biographies

[edit]

Main articles: [Gandhi the Man](#) and [Nonviolent Soldier of Islam](#)

Gandhi the Man^[21] traces how [Mohandas Gandhi](#) transformed himself into one of the world's great spiritual leaders.

Nonviolent Soldier of Islam is the life story of [Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan](#), a [Pathan](#) (or Pushtun) of Afghanistan and a devout Muslim, who raised the first nonviolent army in history to free his people from British imperial rule. This book was favorably discussed in *The New Yorker*.^[7] The book also inspired ^[22] filmmaker and writer T.C. McLuhan, daughter of Canadian media theorist [Marshall McLuhan](#), to make the film *The Frontier Gandhi: Badshah Khan, a Torch for Peace*, which won the 2009 Black Pearl Award for Best Documentary Film.^[23]

Commentaries on Christian literature

[edit]

Love Never Filleth is a commentary on the writings of [St Francis](#), [St Paul](#), [St Augustine](#), and [Mother Teresa](#). *Original Goodness* is a commentary on the [Beatitudes](#), and *Seeing with the Eyes of Love* is a commentary on *The Imitation of Christ*.

Newspapers and other periodicals

[edit]

In the 1980s and 1990s, Easwaran published a variety of commentaries on public events in prominent periodicals, especially the *Christian Science Monitor*,^{[24][25][26][27][28][29][30][31][32]} and also in the *New York Times*,^[33] elsewhere in the US,^[34] and internationally.^[33] He also wrote numerous commentaries that appeared in the *Little Lamp* (1961–1995), and in *Blue Mountain* (1990–present), quarterly journals published by the meditation center that he founded.^[35]

Eight-point program

[edit]

Easwaran's program for spiritual growth consists of eight points was introduced with his 1978 book *Meditation*. Each point had a dedicated chapter:^[36]

- Meditation*: Silent repetition upon memorized inspirational passages from one of the world's great religions. Practiced for one-half hour each morning.
- The Mantram*: silent repetition of a *mantram*, holy name or hallowed phrase from one of the world's great religions.
- Slowing Down*: set priorities to reduce stress and hurry
- One-Pointed Attention*: give full concentration to whatever matter is currently at hand
- Training the Senses*: enjoy simple pleasures in order to avoid craving for unhealthy excess
- Putting Others First*: denounce selfishness and cultivating [altruism](#)
- Spiritual Companionship*: practice meditation in the company of others
- Reading the Mystics*: draw inspiration from the writings of the scriptures of all religions.

Other Influence

[edit]

A variety of influences of Easwaran's life and work have been documented. Easwaran's students, inspired in part by his teachings about compassion and stewardship for the [environment](#), published a well-known [vegetarian](#) cookbook entitled *Laurel's Kitchen* (1976), later republished in revised form as *The New Laurel's Kitchen* (1996). The book contained extensive nutritional information from a scientific point of view, and sold more

revised form as *The New Laurels Kitchen* (1966). The book contained extensive nutritional information from a scientific point of view, and sold more than a million copies.^[37]

Outside of the US, Easwaran's life and teachings were profiled, along with those of a variety of other spiritual teachers, in a book published in India entitled *Meditation Masters and their Insights*.^[38]

Easwaran's words have been included in collections of wisdom teachings, such as one recently published by Chang (2006).^[39] Quotations from Easwaran's translations have been used many times by both scholarly and popular writers.^{[40][41][42]} Easwaran's other writings have also been quoted by various types of authors, including writers of novels and short stories,^[43] popular spirituality,^[44] and articles on management theory.^[45] Psychiatrist **Aaron Beck** and his colleagues quoted from Easwaran's commentary on the *Katha Upanishad*.^[46]

Easwaran has been listed in reference works on spiritual and religious leaders.^{[47][48][1]}

Bibliography

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Easwaran's books, initially written in English, have also been translated into more than 20 other languages, and published in non-US editions by indigenous (non-US) publishers. Languages in which his books are currently in print include **Bahasa Indonesian**, Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian, Spanish, and **Telugu**.^[49] His books have also been translated into **Chinese (PRC)**.^[50] (Some non-English translations are not currently in print—for example, the German biography of Gandhi.^[51])

- *Passage Meditation: Bringing the Deep Wisdom of the Heart into Daily Life* (see [article](#)), 2008 (ISBN 978-1-58638-026-7), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380304), a republication of
 - *Meditation: Commonsense Directions for an Uncommon Life*, 1978 (ISBN 0-915132-66-4) (also a 2nd edition, 1991)
- *Conquest of Mind: Take charge of your thoughts & reshape your life through meditation*, 3rd ed. 2010 (ISBN 9781586380472), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380489)
- *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* (3 vols.):
 - *The End of Sorrow (The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living, Vol. 1)*, 1975 (ISBN 0-915132-17-6), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380519)
 - *Like a Thousand Suns (The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living, Vol. 2)*, 1979 (ISBN 0-915132-18-4), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380526)
 - *To Love Is to Know Me (Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living, Vol. 3)*, 1984 (ISBN 0-915132-19-2), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380533)
- *The Bhagavad Gita* (Translator), 2007 (ISBN 978-1-58638-019-9), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380236)
- *The Dhammapada* (Translator), 2007 (ISBN 978-1-58638-020-5), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380243)
- *The Upanishads* (Translator), 2007 (ISBN 978-1-58638-021-2), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380250)
- *Essence of the Upanishads: A Key to Indian Spirituality* (see [article](#)), 2009 (ISBN 978-1-58638-036-6), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380373), originally published as:
 - *Dialogue With Death: A Journey Through Consciousness*, 1992
- *God Makes the Rivers to Flow: An anthology of the world's sacred poetry & prose*, 2009 (ISBN 9781586380380), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380397), a larger version of:
 - *Timeless Wisdom: Passages for meditation from the world's saints & sages*, 2008 (ISBN 978-1-58638-027-4), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380311)
- *Climbing the Blue Mountain: A Guide for the Spiritual Journey*, 1992 (ISBN 9780915132706), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380588), previously published as:
 - *Supreme Ambition: Life's Goals and How to Reach It*
- *Love Never Faleth: The Inspiration of Saint Francis, Saint Augustine, Saint Paul, Mother Teresa*, with introductions by Carol L. Flinders, 1993 (ISBN 9780915132898), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380618)
- *Seeing With the Eyes of Love: Reflections on a Classic of Christian Mysticism*, 1993 (ISBN 9780915132874), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380649)
- *Original Goodness: On the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount*, 1996 (ISBN 9780915132911), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380632)
- *Seeing With the Eyes of Love: Eknath Easwaran on the Imitation of Christ*, 1996 (ISBN 9780915132874), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380649)
- *The Undiscovered Country: Exploring the Promise of Death*, 1996 (ISBN 9780915132836), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380656)
- *Words to Live By: Inspiration for Every Day*, 1996 (ISBN 9781586380168), reissued as *Words to Live By: Short Readings of Daily Wisdom*, 2010 (ISBN 9781586380496), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380502)
- *Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation* (see [article](#)), 1997 (ISBN 9780915132966), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380427)
- *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains* (see [article](#)) (ISBN 9781888314007), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380625), previously published as
 - *A man to match his mountains: Badshah Khan, nonviolent soldier of Islam* (1984)
- *A Higher Image*, 2002
- *Love Alters Not*, 2002
- *The Compassionate Universe*, 1989 (ISBN 9780915132584), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380595)
- *Patience: A Little Book of Inner Strength*, 2010 (ISBN 9781586380458), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380465)
- *Renewal: A Little Book of Courage and Hope*, 2009 (ISBN 9781586380342), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380359), a re-edited and republished version of:
 - *Your Life Is Your Message: Finding Harmony With Yourself, Others, and the Earth*
- *Strength in the Storm: Creating Calm in Difficult Times*, 2005 (ISBN 9781586380175), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380434)
- *Take Your Time: Finding Balance in a Hurried World* (ISBN 9781586380182), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380441)
- *The Constant Companion* (ISBN 9781586380038), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380601), previously published as:
 - *Thousand Names of Vishnu*
- *The Mantram Handbook* (see [article](#)) (ISBN 9781586380281), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380328), previously issued as:
 - *The Unstruck Bell: Powerful New Strategies for Using a Mantram*
- *A More Ardent Fire: From Everyday Love to Love of God* (ISBN 9781888314021), e-book: (ISBN 9781586380571)
- *Kabir: Stages of Desire*
- *Saint Francis: Becoming an Instrument of Peace*

- *With My Love and Blessings: The Teaching Years, 1966–1999, in Photographs & His Own Words*
- *The Monkey and the Mango: Stories of My Granny* (Illustrated by Ilka Jerabek), 1996 (ISBN 9780915132829)

Contributions to works by others include:

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- [^] Bill McKibben (1989, May 21). "A guru who offers no guarantees: Easwaran teaches a practical method of self-mastery." *New York Post*, pp. 4-5. Review of *Gandhi the Man, A Man to Match His Mountains, Meditation, The Mantram Handbook, and Conquest of Mind*.
- [^] Huston Smith, quoted on back cover and on page 383 of Eknath Easwaran (2007). [*The Upanishads*] (2nd, rev. ed.). Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. ISBN 9781586380212
- [^] Huston Smith and Philip Novak (2003). *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. ISBN 0060506962 (p. 222: "Our favorite translation is Eknath Easwaran's *The Dhammapada*. His Indian heritage, literary gifts, and spiritual sensibilities (which have given us excellent translations of Hinduism's *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*) here produce a sublime rendering of the words of the Buddha. Verse after verse shimmers with quiet, confident authority. A bonus is the sparkling 70-page introduction to the Buddha's life and teachings that precedes the translation.")
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- [^] Spirituality and Practice, review of *Take Your Time*
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- [^] Several articles that Easwaran published in the *Little Lamp* (ISSN 0460-1297, LCCN: 83641607 sn 80000451) appeared later in revised form in his books; most copies of *Blue Mountain* (LCCN sf92093327) that appeared after 2000 can be downloaded from the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation website. Although primarily quarterly, each of these journals appeared at times on other schedules.
- [^] *The Eight Point Program of Passage Meditation - A Complete Approach to Spiritual Growth* (easwaran.org)
- [^] Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders, & Brian Ruppenthal (1986). *The new Laurel's kitchen*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press. ISBN 0898151678. The 1986 edition is dedicated to "our teacher, Eknath Easwaran" (p. 13), and the back cover states "over a million copies sold" (see link [1]). In an introduction to the 1986 edition, Flinders wrote of "the collection of friends who helped produce *Laurel's Kitchen* ten years ago," that "we share a commitment to meditation" (p. 20).
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51. ↑ Eknath Easwaran (1997) *Der Mensch Gandhi. Sein Leben ist eine Botschaft*. Freiburg:Herder ISBN 978-3451045646

External links

[edit]

- Blue Mountain Center of Meditation and Nilgiri Press
- Easwaran biography

v . d . e	Modern Dharma/Dhamma writers (1875 to date)
Buddhist	Rahul Sankrityayan · B. R. Ambedkar · Stephen Batchelor · Stephan Bodian · Lokesh Chandra · Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche · Pema Chödrön · Edward Conze · Lama Surya Das · Alexandra David-Néel · Henepola Gunaratana · Kelsang Gyatso · Dalai Lama · Thrangu Rinpoche · Walpola Rahula · C.A.F. Rhys Davids · T.W. Rhys Davids · Seongcheol · Sogyal Rinpoche · Chogyal Namkhai Norbu · Robert Thurman · Richard Gombrich · Chah Subhatto · Nanavira Thera · Thanissaro Bhikkhu · Bhikkhu Bodhi · Nyanaponika Thera · Jack Kornfield · Gil Fronsdal · Seung Sahn · Kitaro Nishida · Khyentse Norbu · D.T. Suzuki · Paul Reps · Scott Shaw · Thich Nhat Hanh · Yin Shun · Hsuan Hua · Hsing Yun · Philip Kapleau · Shunryu Suzuki · Taizan Maezumi · Han Yong-un · Ole Nydahl · Matthieu Ricard · Lama Anagarika Govinda · Daisaku Ikeda
Hindu	A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada · Aurobindo · Satsvarupa dasa Goswami · A. Coomaraswamy · Bankim · Alain Daniéjou · Dayananda · Sita Ram Goel · Ramana Maharshi · The Mother · Swami Ramdas · Sivananda · Ram Swarup · Tilak · Vivekananda · Yogananda
Jain	Satish Kumar · Claudia Pastorino · Yashodev Suri · Jayantsain Suri
Sikh	Bhai Vir Singh · Harjot Oberoi · G.S. Talib · Khushwant Singh
Syncretic and others	Annie Besant · Ram Dass · Eknath Easwaran · Sathya Sai Baba · Georg Feuerstein · H.S. Olcott · Meher Baba · Osho · Alan Watts · Ken Wilber · David Frawley

Categories: 1910 births | 1999 deaths | Indian immigrants to the United States | American Hindus | People from Kerala | Malayali people | Hindu writers | Hindu religious figures

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