



To be well adjusted in a wrong situation is a very dubious achievement. To be able to transform your anger or grief into a force for positive change is one of life's most exhilarating challenges.

—Eknath Easwaran

I live in a small community resplendent with hiking trails and where there is a lot of neighborly feeling. This past weekend I was driving up our little road to my home and I encountered a warming sight. One of my neighbors was out on a walk with two bouncing, bubbly, vibrant beautiful black Labradors. The labs actually belonged to a married couple that lived half a block away; they both work a lot and do not have the time to take the dogs on walks. So how is it that their dogs are out wagging their tails, animated and running along the road?

Liisa, who is somewhat one of our two or three neighborhood connectors, engaged our neighbors, the dogs' owners a couple of years ago and offered to take the dogs on a walk one day. One walk became two and then three and now I routinely see Liisa and the dogs out on the trails and Liisa and her husband, Ed, walking into town with the dogs. The dogs look up adoringly to Liisa whenever I am around them, much like the cows looked lovingly into Krishna's eyes, letting their bodies cling as close as they can to soak in the love and seemingly to express their appreciation and admiration.

Eknath Easwaran, through his development of the Eight Point Program, his writing and life, has inspired thousands of people to transform their belief that they cannot solve today's problems. He encourages us in this article to harness our grief and anger about conditions in this world that bother us at large and in particular with the animals. In this way, his teaching and stories tell us, we can bring harmonious solutions to the table, accomplishing positive

acts without backlash, small things with great love. Mother Theresa would agree with Eknath Easwaran in this article and she offer us this: "We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." Let us listen in while Eknath Easwaran invites us to deepen our inner resources to build the world we all want to have, with lasting contribution that make a difference to everyone.

—Karla Boyd

THE COMPASSIONATE UNIVERSE—TRUSTEESHIP OF OURSELVES AND THE EARTH

The tasks facing us today are enormous, but it is the glory of human nature that there will always be those rare individuals who say, "Let there be dangers, let there be difficulties. Whatever it costs, I want to live to the full height of my being, my feet still on the ground but my head crowned with stars."

According to Mahatma Gandhi, this can be done only by facing difficulties that appear almost impossible. If that is so, the 1990s offer an unparalleled opportunity. (As does our present decade!) In this and the following chapters I will comment on this passage, line by line, to draw out some of its practical implications for the life of a trustee.

Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.

—UNESCO

I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.

—Mahatma Gandhi

POLITICS WITHOUT PRINCIPLES—AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 Where there is injury, pardon;
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is despair, hope;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 Where there is sadness, joy.
 O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
 To be consoled as to console,
 To be understood as to understand, !
 To be loved as to love;
 For it is in giving that we receive;
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
 It is in dying [to self] that we are born to eternal life.

—Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

TRANSFORMATION

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Let us start with the first word, Lord. It is important to understand that Francis is not asking to become an instrument in the hands of some white-bearded figure seated on a throne between the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies. He is turning inward. Similarly, when we meditate on this passage, we are not speaking to someone else. We are directing a call to the depths of our unconscious, asking our own deepest self, who lives there unsuspected and unhonored, to make us a blessing to all those we come in contact with. Help me change my life, we are asking; give me clearer eyes; let the thick fog of conditioning clear enough that I can see how to serve humanity.

To find your real self, say the mystics of every religious tradition, look inside, at your deepest resources of love, compassion, and wisdom. Through the practice of meditation you will uncover a figure that outshines your present self-image a millionfold. In my presentation, the aspiration of a trustee is to search for, discover, and serve that spirit, which is alive in the heart of every creature.

Francis's lovely phrase, an instrument of peace, is a perfect description of any man or woman who nourishes that aspiration. When Francis says "peace," he is not just referring to an absence of war. As the Dutch philosopher Spinoza says, peace "is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, and justice." Wherever a trustee goes, he or she tries to bring along that state of mind, inspiring and supporting others as they struggle to live up to their highest ideals.

Some people find it hard to believe they can ever become such a person. Our conditioning tells us that we are born with a particular disposition and that, although we can make small, superficial changes in our personality, we actually have little choice in how we respond to life. The universal claim of the mystics, to which I can add my own testimony based on personal experience, is that it is possible to remake our personality entirely, according to our own chosen specifications; we can become completely independent of our conditioning.

This is not an ethical or moral presentation but a dynamic one. Trusteeship, as I present it, is a process of investigation and transformation. On the one hand, you turn inward to find a higher image of yourself; on the other, you use that image to transform every aspect of your life. Like a sculptor, you set your ideal on your mental easel each morning in meditation, look as clearly at it as you can, and then carry that inspiration with you into the day to chip away all that is not your true self.

The best way to learn about meditation is to try it yourself. To start with, though, I can give you a little idea of what happens in meditation and why it is such a powerful tool for self-transformation. The challenge begins with the very first line. You have closed your eyes and begun repeating the words silently in your mind, as slowly as possible: Lord . . . make me . . . So far, so good. Your mind is focused on the words, you are attentive and alert; but before long you notice that a distraction has popped by to say hello: "What shall we have for breakfast this morning?" By himself he seems harmless, so you invite him in and answer, Belgian waffles. Unfortunately, as he enters he leaves

the door open behind him, and his friends crowd in to check out the scene. One after another, and sometimes all at once, they raise their voices: "What tie shall we wear today? Who won the ball game yesterday? I wish I didn't have to go to work." Before long, you have lost the passage. Perhaps your mind has even left with one of the more attractive thoughts for champagne brunch at a fashionable restaurant. So you take your mind back to the beginning of the passage and start again. This time, you resolve, it will be different. But your mind is not listening to you. It does not leave completely this time, but the words are coming out quite strangely: Lord . . . make me . . . a cup of tea . . . At this point it is not unusual to wonder, as the Catholic mystic Augustine did, just what is going on. "I can tell my hand what to do," he exclaimed once; "Why can't I tell my mind what to do?" With one voice, the mystics of every country respond: "Don't blame your mind; you just haven't yet trained it to do what you want it to."

When you first begin to meditate, your mind may be distracted thirty or forty times in half an hour. After a few years of sustained, enthusiastic practice, the kind of practice that goes into making a great swimmer or musician or mountain climber, perhaps it will wander just ten times; after five years, just four or five times. Eventually it is possible to train your mind to rest completely on the passage.

What is happening is that gradually, day by day, you are acquiring the ability to tell your mind what to think. You are teaching it to rest in the state of mind which Spinoza described as benevolent, confident, and just, regardless of any misfortunes or challenges that may come your way. That is the greatest freedom we can hope for; it means we are gaining control of our lives at the deepest level of consciousness. With that control comes the skill to shape our entire life into an instrument of peaceful change, in our home, our community, our nation, our world.

A BEAR IN A CAGE

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Coming from the Third World, I have often made the plea to Third World audiences, don't dwell on past injustices. Don't bear grudges from the record of colonialism. Those centuries are over, passed into the dustbin of history. As Gandhi would have said, an eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind. Why not begin afresh?

I think many of our troubles, from personal quarrels to global conflicts, can be attributed to our inability to put aside resentments about the past and focus with clarity and common sense on the problem at hand. The Treaty of Versailles, for instance, did little to heal the wounds of World War I and actually sowed the seeds of World War II. If you look at the conclusion of World War II you can see the shape of coming events, as it casts a dark shadow into the future. But, in international affairs as in individual relationships, when we slip and offend one another or say thoughtless things, it helps to remember that making mistakes is all part of living and learning. Meditation can give us the capacity to learn from those mistakes and to put them behind us.

By restoring our sovereignty over the thinking process, meditation helps us develop the precious skill of starting afresh. Ordinarily, a great deal of our mental energy is focused on the past, on what others have done to us or what

we have done to them. Because so much of our attention is absorbed in these fruitless preoccupations, we are often unable to see promising opportunities right in front of us.

Quite often, a person's hostile attitude toward us has little to do with us. That person may be feeling insecure or frightened, and because we too feel insecure or suspicious, we misinterpret the signals and assume he wishes us ill. We get angry, he gets angrier, and the vicious circle begins. Many superpower conflicts are nothing more than this childish misery-go-round: you expelled my ambassador, so I'll expel yours; you are pointing missiles at me, so I'll point missiles at you.

When we learn to slow down the thinking process, we acquire the distinctly human ability to separate stimulus from response. We begin to see that in every situation, we have a choice. To paraphrase the Buddha, when someone tries to offend us, we can say to ourselves, If you are angry at me, why should I be angry at you? What is the connection? With this detachment comes the freedom to choose a response that helps solve the problem rather than compound it. We can walk into the most tense, antagonistic situation with a mind calm and relaxed, and help create a harmonious, creative dialogue between people, between groups, even between nations.

Anyone who develops this skill, as Gandhi did, gains the power to transform his most impassioned enemies into friends. Carrying this to the national level, we can replace a first-strike capacity with a first-trust capacity. If a nation expels our ambassador, we can invite ten more of its ambassadors and have a good discussion of our common interests. Even if a country were to close its borders to our people, we could send a few of our friendliest dogs on an exchange program to help its people remember that their dogs are no different from ours. Slowly, the dogs would help us all remember that we too are the same. In other words, instead of being caught in a vicious circle, we can start a virtuous circle not by closing our eyes to hostility or capitulating to it, but by remaining secure even under attack, and by recognizing that the real opponent is not the other person or the other nation but the conditioning that has convinced us we are enemies.

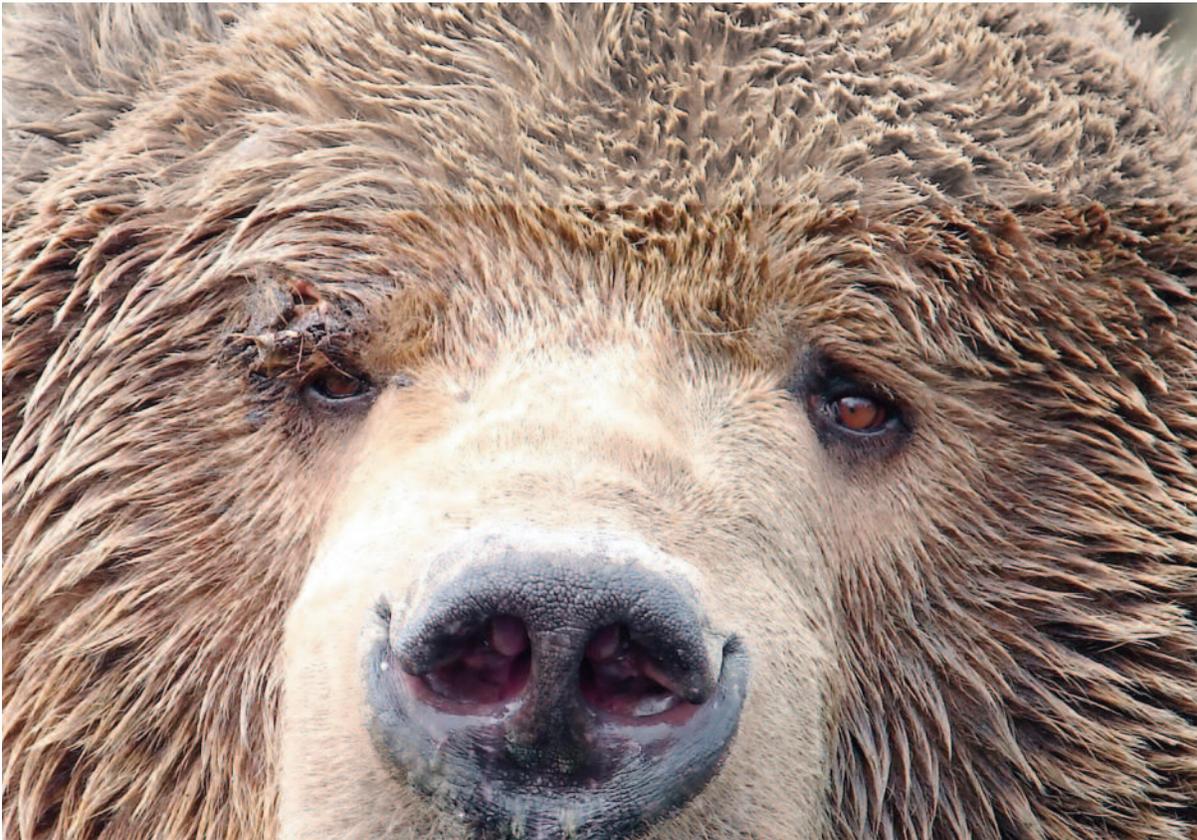
The key to this process is the ability to harness our anger. I do not mean suppressing or repressing anger, nor do I mean releasing anger in the way so often advocated in recent years. I am referring to a third alternative, little understood in the modern world: the deliberate harnessing of anger as a powerful force for change.

Gandhi once wrote, "I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world. Anger, like electricity, is a powerful force. We all know that electricity unharnessed can destroy life; but safely and skillfully directed, it gives us light and heat. The same is true of anger: it can destroy us, or if we can learn to harness its tremendous energy it can light up the world with love, forgiveness, and faith. This is the practical meaning of Francis's lines, Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith.

These are not abstract ideas; they are living realities that we can draw on in any situation. Perhaps I can illustrate with one or two small events from my own life. The first occurred when my wife and I were living on the Blue Mountain in India. One afternoon, we went to visit a friend on the other side of town. As we walked through the bazaar on the way to his place, we saw a large, noisy crowd milling about. In the center of the crowd stood an

awkward, poorly built cage with a thoroughly miserable bear slumped on the floor. His coat was mangy; he seemed not to have eaten for days; and there was so little room in the cage that he could barely turn around. The bear's owner was circulating among the onlookers, collecting money.

Deeply disturbed, we walked on to our friend's house and took him back with us to see the bear. He was a kind man, always sensitive to the suffering of animals; we hoped he might help us find some solution to the problem. When he got there, he could scarcely control his rage. No matter what we said, his grim response was, "I am going to shoot the man who is torturing that bear."



I had never seen him so upset. Our efforts to calm him had no effect; I was beginning to think his threats might be more than just sound and fury. Finally I convinced him to wait until I had given it a try. He was skeptical, but he agreed.

That afternoon, I went to the bazaar and found the bear's owner resting in the shade near the cage. I sat down by his side, and we exchanged a few polite words. He asked me where I came from. His eyes lit up when I told him I was from Kerala, where we are very fond of bears. "That's a nice one you've got there," I remarked. "Had him for very long?" "Oh, he came as a young fellow." "He seems a bit depressed," I said. "Do you suppose he needs some exercise?" "Oh, yes," he said slowly. There was a note of apology in his voice, as if the question were already

weighing heavily on him. Then he fell silent again, perhaps waiting for the inevitable reproach. When I too was silent, he went on. "I wish he had a bigger cage, but I can't afford it. I've got a family to support."

We talked for a while. When I took my leave, I went to see a carpenter who lived nearby. I told this man about the bear and about his owner's predicament, and he agreed to make a nice middle-class bear house, not just an adequate cage, but a comfortable home, for only a nominal fee. Then I went to see a lumber merchant. He seemed a little surprised to see a professorial type like me buying wood for a bear cage, but before long he was on the same bear wavelength. As I left, he said with a grin, "This is probably the only bear in India that will be living in a teak house."

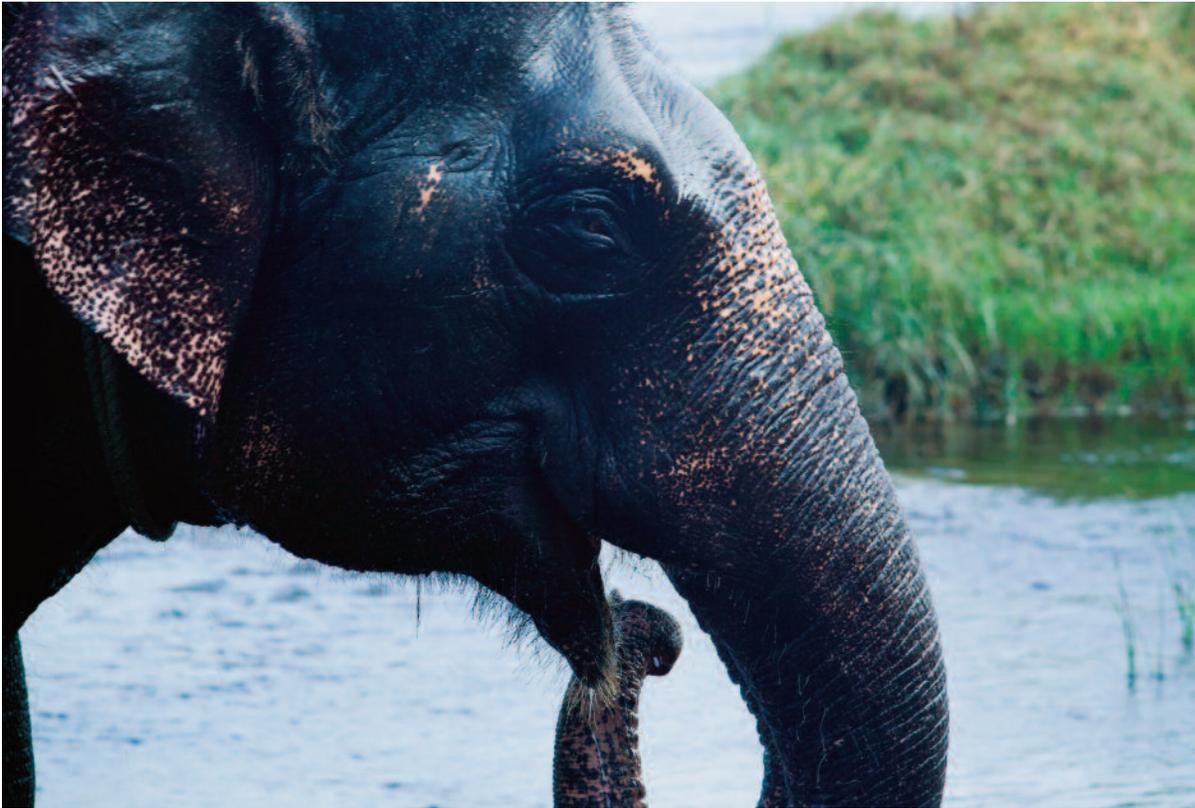
Finally I went back to my friend, who was reasonably well to do, and said, "I have asked you for two days. Well, if you'll provide the financial resources, the bear will have a beautiful, spacious house by the end of the week." My friend was quite surprised. "What happened?" I told him the whole story. I don't think I have ever seen him happier. "How did you do all this," he asked as he wrote out the check. "I was as angry as you that the bear should be treated so cruelly, but I put my anger to work. With the power of my anger, I arranged for a new house for the bear and won over the owner, and I won you over, too." "Touché," he said, laughing.

The carpenter was very skilled, and in his enthusiasm to help the bear, he worked overtime to make a beautiful little teak house, with lots of room to move about. When we took this bear-house to the bazaar, it was hard to tell who was more pleased, the man or his bear. They stayed for a few more days before moving on to another town, and I must confess that I went every day to the bazaar to watch that bear striding back and forth. To my loving eyes he seemed to be saying, "Thank you, how good of you to put your anger to work."

Anger is a tremendous power that can be used either to destroy life or to preserve and enhance it. I was just as angry as my friend. If I had not learned through meditation to conserve and harness my deeper resources, the anger that made the bear a new home could just as easily have led us all to grief.

Recently, I have had the privilege to use this skill again, but in a much larger context. A few years ago I saw a television documentary on the plight of African elephants, who are being killed at a rate of over one hundred thousand each year, and whose total population has been cut in half, from 1.3 million to just 625,000, during the last decade. At present rates, if something is not done to protect them, they could be on the verge of extinction before the end of this century.

The scenes of suffering in that film haunted me all night. I felt terribly angry that such noble, gentle animals, as John Donne called them, "Nature's great masterpiece," should be driven toward extinction, and for no other reason than to provide ivory jewelry and piano keys. But I did not let this wave of anger overwhelm me. Instead, the next morning I plunged deep within myself in meditation, and with the inspiration it brought me I sat down with my friends to do something to help the elephants. On that same day we formed a small organization, and when we came to naming the group, our choice was easy. We call the group by the same name as the gentle elephant on which I learned to ride, which was so dear to my grandmother: Hasti.



Hasti is still a small group; yet it, and its younger counterpart drawn from among my friends' children, Friends of WildLife or FOWL, have already been instrumental in saving many African elephants, by supporting the work of researchers in the field and by influencing stores in this country to stop selling ivory.

The children have been able to help directly, too. A few years ago they got word, through a dedicated friend working in Africa, of a problem that had arisen in Kenya, near Amboseli Park. A Masai village, located along an elephant migratory route, was losing its crops to the hungry elephants. As a result, each year some thirty elephants were killed as the villagers resorted to spears in a desperate attempt to save their food supply. Our friend proposed a solar-powered electric fence to protect the crops. The Masai welcomed the idea: they would gladly put up the fence, but where would the money come from? The children threw themselves heart and soul into fundraising. Before long, the fence was installed, and both the elephants and the crops were saved.

The wider ramifications of our elephant project reach far into the future and touch on several of the pressing political issues of our day. Perhaps most important, the elephant is a vital link in the forest savannah ecosystem of Africa. Its loss would seriously jeopardize the ecological stability of these regions, with grave implications not only for animals but for the developing nations that depend on that forest for cooking fuel and for protection against desertification. By forging a link of compassion between people in the developed world and those in the Third World, we feel we are making a small but significant contribution to world peace, and helping to heal the wounds of Africa's colonial past. This may seem like a small step on a very long journey; but, as I will narrate in the next section, small steps, when taken in the right spirit, and when we keep on taking them, can carry us a long, long way.

INFINITE RESOURCES

Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be fabulously wealthy, to have so much that you could afford to give to any cause or charity you wanted, and change the world with your largesse? This is exactly the fruit of meditation. Meditation allows us to enter the unconscious consciously and unlock the tremendous resources hidden there, trapped in the conditioned habits of thought that have turned our most powerful inner assets into liabilities.

In these three lines, Saint Francis directs us to a tremendous source of energy that, because we have not learned to harness it, is limiting our enjoyment of life and crippling our efforts to make the earth a greener, healthier place: sorrow.

Many people get depressed by the current state of the world. The sheer vastness of the problems we face is daunting, and it is only natural to feel terrible grief when we read about millions of acres of forests being burned, or several species becoming extinct every day, or the atmosphere being dangerously altered.

Yet few people realize what a valuable resource for change this grief is. Quite often, in fact, when I suggest trusteeship as a remedy for the environmental crises that face us, I am told that this is too small a solution, too tiny a drop in the ocean. Me? What can a little person like me do? people ask me again and again. There's so little time left, and there are so many people who don't see the connections. So what if I stop using plastic cups and start planting a few trees? How much can that do? I always appreciate questions like these. They often come from people who care deeply and whose despair arises from a desire to solve the problem rather than just get by until tomorrow. To be well adjusted in a wrong situation is a very dubious achievement.

I am not a theoretical person, and I never answer such questions theoretically. Instead, I usually narrate an incident from my own experience, an incident in which grief at the suffering of other creatures helped make a lasting, positive impact in several areas, affecting the way more than a million people treat the environment, each other, and other living creatures.

One day, as I was walking near our home on the Blue Mountain, I saw a man leading a little black calf to slaughter. To me, the calf's large, dark eyes seemed to be pleading, "Are you going to let this happen to me?" I was deeply upset, not only by my grief for the calf but by the realization that there were countless more like him. Then and there I decided that at every opportunity I would put in a good word for animals. I did not know then where that would lead me.

My ancestral family has been vegetarian for centuries, so I grew up with a natural appreciation for the beauty of a vegetarian way of life. When I first came to this country in 1959, I was sorry to see that vegetarian cooking, while

not altogether unheard of, was extremely rare. It was almost impossible to find a vegetarian meal in any restaurant; to tell the truth, I remember eating quite a bit of ice cream. Before long, though, my friends and I got together and began experimenting with California's abundant variety of vegetables, grains, and fruits; a few of us even specialized in researching the nutritional requirements of a healthy vegetarian diet. The eventual result was one of the first complete vegetarian cookbooks in the United States, *Laurel's Kitchen*. It presents the beauty and healthy common sense of vegetarian eating, and has sold over a million copies.

What we did not realize when we began, but what has become abundantly clear in recent years, is that *Laurel's Kitchen* is also a handbook for the preservation of rain forests and endangered species and for the reduction of the greenhouse effect. Now, in 1989, there are ten million vegetarians in this country; each one of those ten million, by reducing America's demand for imported beef, is saving an acre of rain forest each year. Through the power of meditation, the sorrow I felt at seeing that beautiful calf's life cut short was transformed into a fortune in active compassion, which enabled my friends and me to play a part in saving more than a million acres of rain forest annually: not because we are great people, but because that is the way the compassionate universe works. You do not have to be rich or famous or powerful to make a difference. When you work in cooperation with others, motivated by compassion and using thrifty, artistic means, your actions send ripples of positive change in every direction.

To be able to transform your anger or grief into a force for positive change is one of life's most exhilarating challenges. When I hear about young people surfing the twenty-five-foot waves at Waimea Bay, I often wish I could introduce them to this skill. That's the kind of daring and dedication it takes not to be swept away by anger or fear or greed, but to catch those towering waves that roll across the mind and ride them to a more peaceful, healthier planet.

I am prepared to make a bold claim for the way of life I am presenting here: the person who looks upon his or her entire life as a trust, body, talents, training, compassion, intelligence, and especially the heart's deepest fears, anger, and sorrows, such a person will never burn out, feel defeated, or get depressed or bored.

The Japanese have a little doll called the "daruma doll." If you push it down, it bounces right up again. That is how you can be: nothing will be able to keep you down, no matter how hard the blow, how fierce the storm. In fact, when you get good at it, you will look forward to storms, as Gandhi did, because every crisis will be an opportunity to reach deeper into the bottomless well of compassion and creativity within. You will actually be able to thrive on stress.

This is the challenge we face as we embark on the last decade of the twentieth century: to transform ourselves, each in our own small way, as Ashoka and Francis and Gandhi did; to rebel against the conditioning that keeps us bound in a self-destructive way of life; to take all the immense wealth of our hearts and place it in trust for the welfare of the world. There is no greater challenge than this, nor is there greater satisfaction.

George Bernard Shaw put it beautifully: "This is the true joy in life: the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you're thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

EKNATH EASWARAN ON TRANSFORMING SORROW AND ANGER

When you jump up every morning eager to contribute to life and drop into bed every night deliciously tired because you have given your best without seeking anything in return, you will see love in the eyes of all around you, acknowledging the nobility of human nature they see in you. And even the most confirmed cynic, when he sees you forgiving and even befriending those who strike at you, will not be able to help saying, if only under his breath “How I wish I could be like that.”



Liisa on a walk with the neighbor's Lab

From *The Compassionate Universe*, by Eknath Easwaran, founder of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, copyright 1989; reprinted by permission of Nilgiri Press, P. O. Box 256, Tomales, California, 94971, www.easwaran.org. Photo copyright permission: Eknath Easwaran, 1910-1999, founder of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, Tomales, CA. www.easwaran.org