



Reengineeing Our Patterns, by Eknath Easwaran

When I recommend to someone that they slow down, they often raise a legitimate question: “There is so much that I have to do; how can I go through it slowly and get it all done?” I usually answer by referring to my own experience as a teacher in India. As chairman of the Department of English at a large university I had heavy responsibilities. But I wanted very much to train myself to do things slowly and without tension because I knew it would be a help on the spiritual path.

I began by making a list of all the activities I engaged in on the campus, the things I was expected to do and the things I liked doing. It turned out to be a long list. I said at the time what people tell me today: I simply cannot go slowly and take care of all these vital matters.

Then I remembered my spiritual teacher, my Grand-mother, who had great responsibilities in our extended family of over a hundred people and in our village. She always fulfilled those responsibilities splendidly, and I recalled that she had an unerring sense of what was central and what was peripheral. So using her example, I started striking from my list activities not absolutely essential.

I was amazed at the number that could go. I began to avoid those functions that I could not justify to myself. Putting aside my likes and dislikes, keeping an eye on what was necessary, using as much detachment as I could, I struck more and more from the list. Soon half of it was gone, and I found I had more time to give to what seemed likely to be of permanent value.

Re-engineering our patterns in the way I have mentioned will not be easy or painless. It will require persistent efforts for a long time. But the benefits are magnificent and we begin to receive them from the very first day we try to make a change.