

OUTREACH

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Editorial

Charisma: The Invisible Magnet

Have you ever considered the number of people we interact with in a single day? Whether at work, at school or anywhere else, we all associate with a variety of people on a daily basis. However, the majority of these people do not exert much influence on our minds, or in other words, are not capable of changing our views. In fact, after a certain point in our lives, even our parents or close friends are unable to change our thoughts and opinions. Yet, there are certain people who we are naturally attracted to, who we are inspired by and who have that “special something” which draws us to them. Many refer to this “special something” as charisma.

Take a moment and think: who comes to your mind when you hear the word charisma?

Although it is difficult to define charisma, we can generally agree on who has it. Some popular names which may come to mind include John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., Steve Jobs, Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. People are drawn to charismatic figures due to their unique ability to make strong personal connections with others. They cast a vast influence on our minds and are capable of transforming our thoughts and actions. Take Sardar Vallabhai Patel for example. Known as the ‘Iron Man of India’, he had a special charm that both invigorated and united an entire nation as one to seize freedom from the British. Another example is Ramkrishna Paramhansa, who was able to transform the super genius Narendra into the charismatic Swami Vivekanand, who went on to put Hinduism on the world platform.

This ‘Outreach’ edition will highlight attributes of a charismatic personality and how it can transform even the most ignorant and villainous soul into a virtuous human being.

The Virtues of a True Saint

A SCORPION'S STING

Once there lived a saint. Every morning, the saint would inspect the temple grounds to ensure that everything was well and good. One day, while walking past a nearby pond, he noticed something peculiar: a small scorpion floundering in the water, struggling to escape from the shallow pond. Out of sympathy, the saint decided to save the helpless scorpion. But when he stretched out his finger, the scorpion stung him! After a few minutes, he again reached out to help the scorpion, but it stung him again!

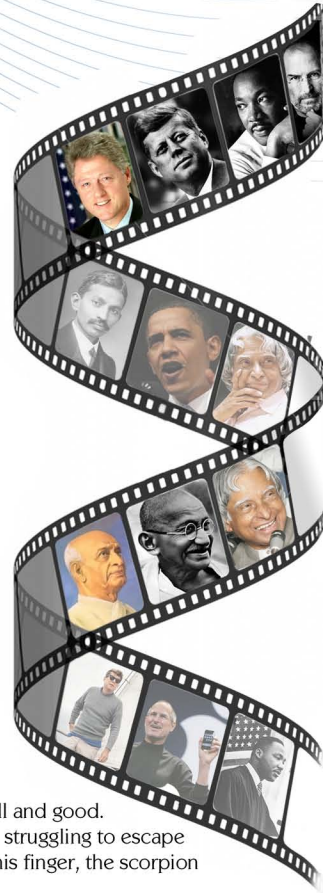
Upon seeing this, a man nearby called out to the saint and said, “Stop trying to save the stubborn scorpion! No matter what you do, it will always sting you!”

With a gentle smile, the saint responded, ***“It is in the nature of the scorpion to sting, but it is in my nature to love. Why should I give up my nature to love just because it is in the nature of the scorpion to sting?”***

Quite a thought-provoking tale, don't you agree? ***While it may seem difficult to find such an altruistic personality, a Gunatit sadhu (saint) is truly one who never gives up his compassionate nature at any cost.*** Due to this compassionate nature, even the smallest interaction with such a Gunatit sadhu can transform any human being.

Let's take a moment to introspect and ask ourselves:

- 1) *Do I give up my kindness when the people around me sting?*
- 2) *Do I ever sting the people around me?*
- 3) *Have I accepted the refuge of a Gunatit sadhu in my life?*



Inspiration From The Great *The Transformative Touch*

Gunatitanand Swami and a group of devotees were once on their way to a town in Gujarat called Una. Led by Swami, the small group walked through the desolate Gir jungle when suddenly, a gang of armed men emerged from the bushes. One of the bandits pointed his gun and shouted, "Listen up! Follow us now, Valera Varu is waiting for you!" Upon hearing just the name Valera Varu, the devotees trembled in horror.

How can a single name strike so much fear? Well-known throughout the Surat district of Babariyawad, Valera Varu was a notorious dacoit who wreaked havoc on anyone and everyone. From destorying crops to killing innocent villagers, Varu's acts of terror knew no bounds. With such a cruel and heartless brute on the loose, who would *not* tremble in fear?

While the frightened devotees stood helpless, Swami consoled them and boldly asserted, "Why should we be scared? What do we have that they can take? Let's go, Lord Swaminarayan is with us." Varu's men led Swami and the devotees to their hideout; Swami walked in the front, with his rosary in hand, while the devotees followed behind.

As they neared the hideout, Valera became alert and prepared his rifle. But upon seeing Swami, the rifle dropped out of his hand and he immediately stood up. Swami approached Varu and gently put a hand on his shoulders and said, "You must be Valera Varu..."

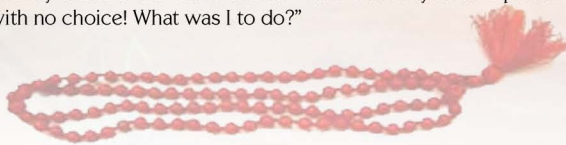
Swami's soothing speech, his radiant divinity and his compassionate personality penetrated Valera's mind. Valera then asked, "Who are you and where are you from?" Swami responded, "We are devotees of Lord Swaminarayan. We worship God, and inspire others to worship God. We have a temple in Junagadh, and we got lost on our way to Una."

As Valera stood in complete awe, he felt an eruption of emotions he had never before experienced. After a long silence, Swami kindly enquired, "Valera, why are you harassing innocent people?" Valera replied, "Swami, my step-brother refused to give me my share of our father's land. With no money and no place to stay, I was left with no choice! What was I to do?"

Seeing Varu's dilemma, Swami replied, "You have a personal conflict with your brother, and you take your vengeance out on the public? What type of justice is this? Will making innocent people suffer bring back your land?" Never before was Valera troubled by his atrocities, but this one interaction with Swami invoked a new found realization. Swami continues, "By harassing and looting others, you are committing grave sins, which will lead you no where." With tears gushing down his cheeks, Valera fell to Swami's feet and cried, "Swami, I have committed tremendous sins! But get my fair share of land back, then I can give up my evil ways."

Smiling, Swami showered him with blessings and said, "Valera, you will get your share of land in seven days. Your brother will come to return it, and all will be well." True to Swami's word, his brother returned his share of property and wealth within seven days and Valera was overcome with joy. Thereafter, Valera became an ardent devotee and lived a pious life.

Gunatitanand Swami traveled far and wide throughout Gujarat, building temples of moral peace in the hearts of all who came in his contact. In this day and age, we are also quite fortunate to have such a true sadhu in our lives. Today, Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji's unconditional love is the source of joy and inspiration for countless youths. By accepting the refuge of such a God-realized sadhu in our life, we too can savor the sweet nectar of true bliss!



Lasting Thought

By seeking the refuge of God and His Sadhu, even the most ominous miseries that are to come can be averted. Without that, even if one exhausts oneself through countless endeavors, the miseries cannot be averted.

~ Gunatitanand Swami, Swami Ni Vaato

laugh out loud

Don't tell me you climbed all the way up here before trying Google??



Cool Fact

Ever think about losing those extra pounds? Consider this, every pound of fat in your body contains an average of 200 miles of blood vessels. This means that for every pound of fat you gain, your heart must pump blood through an additional 200 miles of blood vessels. That is a lot of extra work for your heart!