



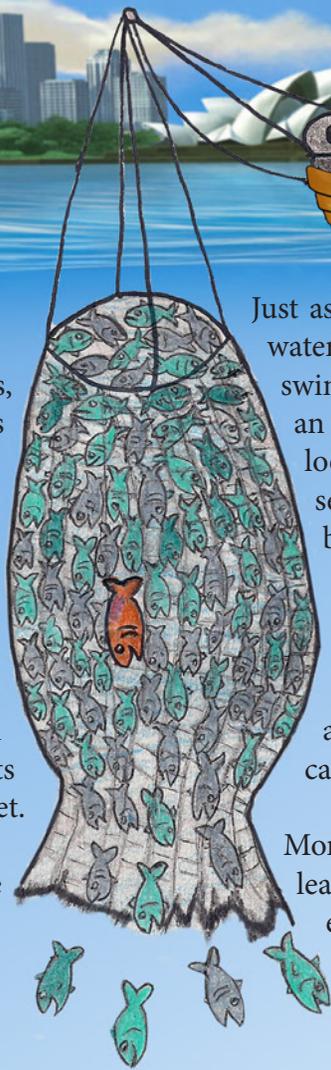
## Editorial *A Unifying Force*

Splashing and thrashing in the great blue seas, a large school of fish enjoyed the cool waters of the open sea. But little did they know of the trouble to come, as their worst enemy lurked in the waters above. A hefty fisherman had released his big fish net, eagerly waiting to catch his precious prey. The poor group of fish was not aware of the big strong net, which now captured them and held them captive. Filled with great fear, the fish swam in every which direction, but their efforts were fruitless in escaping the dreaded net.

The fisherman slowly raised the net towards the surface, dragging the helpless fish along with it. The fish continued to struggle for a way out, but there was little hope left for a happy ending.

Just then, a small orange fish emerged from the horizon. The orange fish was horrified to see its friends captured in the net, struggling for their dear lives. The orange fish instantly developed a strategy to liberate the captured group of fish. Without a moment's waste, the orange fish entered the net through the small openings and instructed all the fish to "swim down". The orange fish kept shouting, instilling confidence and encouraging the captured fish to "swim down".

Having a unified objective, the group of fish became energized and committed all their strength to swim downwards. The collective force created by the fish swimming down together generated a massive tension in the net.



Just as the net was about to reach the surface of the water, the relentless fish gave all their strength to swim down together. This unified effort generated an enormous force, causing the net to snap. The loosened net descended back into the waters, setting the fish free to once again enjoy the cool blue sea.

This short tale shows us the power of working together. When we work together, even a seemingly impossible task can be achieved. When unity prevails, everyone can experience the joy of working together.

Moreover, the orange fish demonstrated tremendous leadership qualities as it risked its own life by entering the net, but instilled confidence and courage in the struggling fish. By listening to and trusting the orange fish, the group was unified as one and was ultimately rescued.

## *Unite to achieve the impossible!*

Similarly, by staying under the guidance of such visionary leaders, the problems we face in our day-to-day lives can also be overcome. Countless youths have put their trust in Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji and rely on His guidance. As a result, these youths are not discouraged by the disheartening situations and tensions of daily life. These youths are not bound by vices, addictions, or bad habits and experience great joy of living in harmony. This type of unity is called *Ekta*.

*Ekta* means "to live as one". The principles of *Ekta* were first introduced by Guruhari Yogiji Maharaj. Through the tireless efforts of Guruhari Swamiji, these principles are prevalent even today. By taking refuge in a leader and following His guidelines with unwavering oneness, success and happiness are sure to prevail.

## Cool Fact

Bacteria are invisible to the human eye, but we are literally covered with them! In fact, the human body consists of 10 trillion bacteria, which is ten times more than the number of cells in our body! While we normally think of them as troublemakers that make us sick, the bacteria in our body actually work together to help us digest food, make essential vitamins and improve our immune system. We should be grateful that the bacteria have found a way to work in unison to keep us healthy and enjoy life as we know it!



## Lasting Thought

"Acting accordingly to the instincts of our mind often brings more misery than peace. But, acting as per the guidelines given by a God-realized Saint will always bring us everlasting peace."

– Gunatitanand Swami, *Swami Ni Vaata*

## Laugh-out-Loud

Two guys are walking down the street when a mugger approaches them and demands their money.

They both pull out their wallets and begin taking out their cash. Just then one guy turns to the other and hands him a bill.

"Here's that \$20 I owe you!" he says.



## Learning From The Great

### Unconditional Support: The Hallmark of Ekta

Once, Bhagwan Swaminarayan was residing in *Gadhada*. Vasta Khachar and his son Joyta Khachar were on their way to have His darshan and receive His blessings. As young Joyta grew restless during the long journey to *Gadhada*, he suddenly spat on a nearby field. Little did he know, he had just spat on a temple ground.

A member of the temple, who was sitting outside happened to notice this. While young Joyta was acting out of pure innocence with no intention of harm, the temple member was deeply enraged. He thought, "Today, this boy spat outside the temple. Tomorrow, he will spit inside. Eventually, he will spit on all of us!"

Deep contemplation on this matter turned an insignificant and trivial act into a matter of great concern! The temple member immediately called for a meeting among the leaders and trustees of the temple to take quick action.

Like a wild fire, word of this little incident spread throughout the village. Traders and businessmen condemned the incident and shut down their business as a sign of protest.

During this time, Bhagwan Swaminarayan was addressing a *sabha* (spiritual assembly) in *Gadhada*. A devotee entered the assembly and narrated the entire incident to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. After listening, Bhagwan Swaminarayan stood up and immediately started walking to the temple.

The saints and devotees present in the assembly started to follow Him, but He said, "Please stay here. There is no need for all of you to come."

Upon seeing Bhagwan Swaminarayan arrive at their temple, the saints, trustees and all members of the temple were shocked! Bhagwan Swaminarayan folded His hands in humility and said, "I am Sahajanand Swami. The young son of my devotee has made a mistake. On his behalf, I have come here to offer my sincere apology to all of you and ask for your forgiveness."

Hearing this, the temple members were speechless. Bhagwan Swaminarayan's politeness and humbleness penetrated deep into their hearts and souls, igniting a newfound respect for Him. At once, the members of temple decided to abandon the protest and in a matter of seconds, peace was restored.

In the above incident, Bhagwan Swaminarayan instantly transformed a tense and chaotic environment into one of peace and calmness through *Ekta*. *Ekta* states that if a family member or even a fellow devotee makes a mistake, we should stand by them. Unconditional support is the hallmark of *Ekta*, and is the true essence of unity.

When a family member or a close friend commits a mistake or behaves in a manner opposite of our expectations, it is very easy to become frustrated, to yell at them and to distance ourselves from them. Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the *Gunatit* saints have taught us how to overcome these human instincts that bring us such misery.

Living with *Ekta* means to fully support our friends and family through positive thoughts, speech and actions. By imbibing this principle in our lives, we, too, can experience the joy of living and growing together.

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