

We can potentially be in contact with hundreds of people, but studies have shown that we spend maximum time with five “core” individuals, or “best friends”. These five people are the ones that have the biggest effect on our behavior. But don’t we all believe that we are immune to the influence of others? Surprisingly, research over the past decade has shown how we unintentionally mimic others with whom we associate. Social psychologists have coined the term ‘the chameleon effect’ to explain the influence of others on our behavior. Chameleons are a specialized class of lizards with the phenomenal ability to change the color of their skin to blend with the surrounding environment. In social psychology, ‘the chameleon effect’ refers to the nonconscious imitation of postures, gestures, facial expression, word usage and other behaviors, such that the individual unintentionally changes to imitate others present in their social environment. These types of psychology studies have shown the behavioral impact of strangers on a participant in a matter of minutes.



Mike Murdock said it best, *“Pay any price to stay in the presence of extraordinary people, because you are the average of the five people that you spend the most time with.”* While the impact of a close group of friends on a person’s behavior and thoughts over years and years is inconceivable, are we only influenced by the company we keep?

What effect does our surrounding environment have on us?

This edition of ‘Outreach’ focuses on The Influence of Our Surroundings.

Lasting Thoughts

“Association with a genuine saint is the gateway to pious thoughts, fearlessness and a worry-free state of mind.”

– Guruhari Swamiji

“It is hard to believe, but in our day-to-day lives the need for a compassionate saint is far more important than oxygen.”

– Guruhari Swamiji

CELEBRATIONS & APPRECIATIONS

A guru plays a vital role for those who seek his refuge, freeing the aspirant from this darkness and blessing him with everlasting tranquility. The Hindu scriptures commend the grandeur of the guru by emphasizing that the enlightened guru is a bridge between man and God, a bridge between the material and spiritual world, a bridge between fleeting pleasures and true happiness. This bridge is built and reinforced through the inner values and discipline inspired and instilled by the guru. The continual guidance the guru provides is the root source of peace, happiness and stability in the lives of those who associate with him.

The key to achieve this eternal bliss begins with associating with and establishing a special bond with a true guru. But how does one establish this bond? This bond is characterized by trust, faith, and compliance. The guru-disciple relationship, originating from times of the *Upanishads*, is a well-renowned and well-celebrated component of Hindu culture. In the *Mahabharat*, the interaction between Lord Krishna and



“In my darkness (of mind) I could have wished for nothing better than a real, live guru, someone possessing superior knowledge and ability.”

– Dr. Carl G. Jung

Gurupoornima: The Significance of A Guru

Arjun is an exemplary portrayal of a true guru-disciple relationship. In order to reclaim their lost kingdom, Arjun and his Pandav brothers were at war against the Kaurav army. While Arjun was a highly skilled warrior and a master archer, the sheer strength and size of the Kaurav army was such that Arjun’s downfall was inevitable. However, since he had accepted Lord Krishna as his guru, Arjun was able to overcome all obstacles. Lord Krishna was Arjun’s personal charioteer on and off of the battlefield, steering Arjun in the right direction, away from both physical and mental miseries.

Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji always says we are all like Arjun, tangled in a web of worldly and spiritual struggles, in need of a true guru. Gurupoornima is a sacred day on which a disciple celebrates his association with his guru. Such an auspicious occasion is a time for the disciple to strengthen the bond with the guru and to truly offer the utmost gratitude to the guru. A million bows of gratefulness to Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji.

A MOMENT OF SELF REFLECTION

Carrots, Eggs or Coffee Beans: Which One Are We?



How often do we complain about life and how things are so hard for us? Each one of us, while trying to achieve some goal, very often reach a point where we feel like giving up, a point where fighting and struggling seems fruitless. At such moments in life, it is important to take a break, to sit back and to think about who we really are. Are we really that weak that situations around us can persuade us to give up? Or, are we strong enough to influence the situation we are faced with and change it? Are we carrots, eggs, or ground coffee beans?

Carrots, eggs, and ground coffee beans, when boiled separately in three different pots filled water, experience the same adversity - boiling water - but each reacts differently. The *carrot* which is initially strong, hard and unrelenting becomes weak and softened on being subjected to the boiling water. The *egg*, which is initially fragile, with its thin outer shell protecting the liquid interior, becomes hardened on the inside with the interior no longer being a liquid. However, the *coffee beans*, unlike the other two, are unique. After sitting in boiling water, they influence the water, resulting in coffee having such a rich aroma.

Which one of these are we?

- Are we like **carrots** that seem strong, but with pain and adversity, become soft, wilt and lose our strength?
- Are we like **eggs** that begin with a fluid spirit, but become hardened and stiff after some hardships?
- Are we like **coffee** beans that influence and change the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain?

When the hours appear the darkest and trials are the greatest, do we elevate to the next level? When adversity knocks on our door, are we carrots, eggs or coffee beans? When circumstances are at their worst, we should be like the coffee beans, gaining the strength to change the situation around us.



INSPIRATION FROM HISTORY

Overcoming All Odds

In 1850s, a creative engineer named John Roebling aspired to build a magnificent bridge. However, bridge building experts throughout the world deemed the task impossible and told Roebling to forget the idea. Roebling could not ignore the vision he had in his mind about this bridge and he thought about it all the time. After much discussion and persuasion, he managed to convince his son Washington, a brilliant engineer, that the bridge in fact could be built. Both father and son developed concepts

of how it could be accomplished and how the obstacles could be overcome. The project started well, but only a few months into the construction, a tragic accident on the site took the life of John Roebling. Washington was later injured at the construction site and was left with a certain amount of brain damage. Everyone had a negative comment to make and felt that the project should be cancelled. Amidst the cloud of negativity, Washington was never discouraged and still had a burning desire to complete the bridge.

After 13 years of construction, the Roebling dream became a reality as the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge opened for public use on May 24, 1883. It was the longest suspension bridge in the world at the time and it was the first steel-wire suspension bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge stands as a tribute to the triumph of John Roebling and Washington Roebling and their indomitable spirit and determination to not be defeated by disheartening circumstances. **Many can cross the river swimming with the current, the bold dare to think of crossing the river swimming against the current, but only the persistent will succeed.**

Invitation



Yogi Divine Society invites you to the Atmiya Youth Shibir from
August 13th - 15th, 2010 at Hudson Valley Resort, NY.

This will be a unique opportunity to learn how to make our life more blissful from inspirational saints and youths, in the presence of our beloved Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji. For more information & registration, please visit www.yds.org.

Cool Fact - Eagle



An eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks. However, the eagle does not escape the storm. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. The eagle simply uses the storm to lift it higher.