

OUTREACH

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Art of [👑]Communication

In May 1889, Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia and Count Pietro Antonelli of Italy signed a treaty. During this time, European nations were rapidly conquering numerous territories. They would invade and colonize whichever territories they could get their hands on.

In order to avoid chaos from a prolonged war, Ethiopia and Italy agreed to a treaty to give control over the Ethiopian territories of Bogos, Hamasen, and Akale-Guzai to Italy. In exchange, Italy would give money and weapons to Ethiopia. Part of the treaty focused on the use of the Italian embassy. The treaty came to be known as the Treaty of Wuchale.

The treaty was first drafted in Amharic, and thereafter translated to Italian. The treaty agreed to in the Amharic version indicated that the Italian embassy **may** be used for foreign affairs. However, in the Italian translation, the treaty read that the Italian embassy **must** be used for foreign affairs.

The simple, one-word mistake in translating the treaty from Amharic to Italian altered the entire meaning of the treaty. The Italians assumed that Ethiopia wanted to be an Italian colony, when in fact the Ethiopians wanted to remain independent. The controversy led Emperor Menilek II to abandon the treaty, consequently leading to a war.



A **single** word turned a treaty for peace into a declaration of war. In our lives, a simple miscommunication may not result in a war, but it can surely cause mishaps and arguments. Needless to say, effective communication is an essential art worth learning.

Currently, social media and various technological advancements enable us to connect with individuals around the globe. Your uncle half way around the world is just as easily accessible as your next door neighbor. A message can reach our friends and family members within a matter of seconds.




At times, we will even message members of our own household with our phones rather than walking over and speaking with them directly! This has become the norm in this modern age. Communication has become extremely methodical – type a message, send it, and await the response.

For many of us, this may be the extent of our communication. Yet, there is an **art of communication**, an art of connecting with people, which goes well beyond a simple phone call or text message. A study performed by Dr. Albert Merabian at UCLA reveals that only 7% of communication is expressed through words. The other 93% of communication is actually nonverbal, and expressed through facial expressions, gestures, posture and even active listening. Therefore, effective communication goes far beyond



purely speaking. Remember, a single word can change the meaning of the whole message.

What is the technique to becoming an exceptional communicator? Ralph Nichols, the founder of the International Listening Association, stated, "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them." Imagine you are driving and you see a yellow traffic light. Most of us would begin to slow down. The light would then turn red as you come to a complete stop. A little time would pass and the light would turn green. You would speed up and continue toward your destination. An effective communicator treats communication like he or she treats a traffic light. Before engaging with someone the individual should slow down and take a moment to think. The communicator should then stop and listen to the person with whom they are communicating. Finally, the communicator should speak accordingly.

 The traffic light approach and various other forms of effective communication can be learned by taking a closer look at Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji's life. On a daily basis, Swamiji interacts with hundreds of devotees. Each devotee varies in age, race, and socioeconomic status. This diversity requires immense adaptation. Some devotees must be spoken to in one way, while other devotees require an alternative method. Regardless of the person, Swamiji is able to effectively communicate with everyone.



FIRST YOU THEN ME

Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji's daily schedule is unimaginably busy. From the time that He wakes up to when He goes for rest at night, Swamiji engages in countless tasks throughout the day. From the regular morning routines, to delivering discourses in *sabha*, to writing letters and faxes, to traveling far and wide visiting our different centers, His hectic schedule remains the same today even after so many decades.

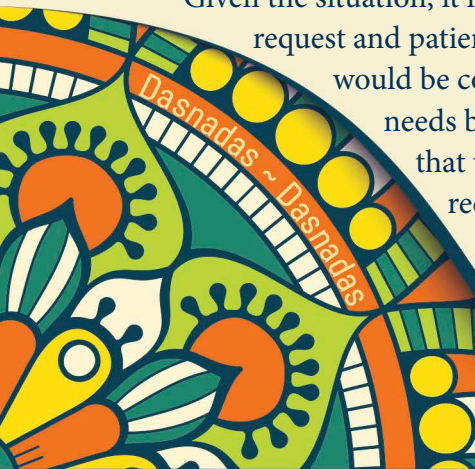
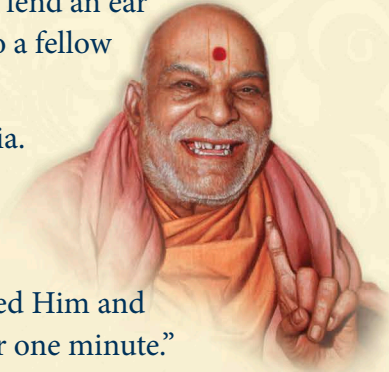
In the midst of all of these activities, Swamiji always gives His undivided attention and personal care to each individual who comes to meet Him. He meets hundreds of individuals each and every day. Yet, regardless of the time of day or any circumstances, He is ever ready to lend an ear and provide His *Atmiya sparsh* (divine touch) to a fellow devotee.

Once, Swamiji was present at a *shibir* in India. After the end of a long *sabha* session, the sevako in Swamiji's personal service proceeded to guide Swamiji to the restroom. Right when Swamiji was about to enter, a devotee approached Him and said, "Swamiji! I would like to meet with you for one minute."

At that moment, one of the sevak's requested the devotee, "Please let Swamiji go to the restroom first. Swamiji has just undergone a piles (hemorrhoids) operation, so extra care must be taken to avoid any delay in going to the bathroom as it may lead to extra pressure and pain. You can surely meet with Swamiji right after."

Given the situation, it is understandable to accept the sevak's request and patiently wait a few extra minutes. In fact, it would be considered our *bhakti* to think of Swamiji's needs before our own. But the devotee insisted that the matter was urgent and he would only require one minute of Swamiji's time.

Before anyone else could respond, Swamiji replied, "Yes, of course! My first priority is always devotees, and only then our personal



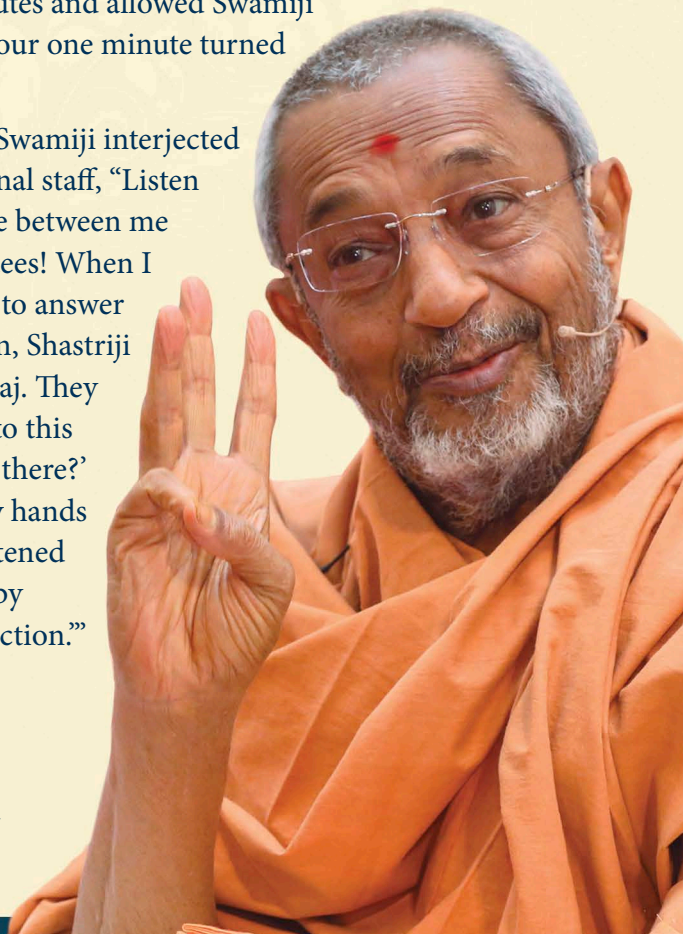
needs. I am free to meet right now.”
Thereafter, Swamiji sat in *khangī*
(personal meeting) with the devotee in
the bedroom.

One minute passed... Two minutes
passed... Ten minutes passed... Thirty minutes
passed... After 45 long minutes, the *khangī* finally
finished! The devotee walked out of the room fresh
and happy, but Swamiji’s personal staff waiting outside was
slightly agitated. This devotee insisted to meet Swamiji for only
one minute, but instead took 45 minutes of Swamiji’s time without sparing
even a few minutes for Him to first visit the bathroom! Who would not be
agitated by such selfishness?

One of the sevako then approached the devotee and said, “Could you not
have waited for a few minutes and allowed Swamiji
to go the restroom first? Your one minute turned
into forty-five minutes!”

At that very moment, Swamiji interjected
and sternly told His personal staff, “Listen
very carefully! Never come between me
and Yogiji Maharaj’s devotees! When I
go to Akshardham, I have to answer
to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Shastriji
Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. They
will ask me, ‘We sent you to this
Earth, so what did you do there?’
At that time, I will fold my hands
and reply, ‘I never disheartened
your devotees in any way by
thought, by speech or by action.’”

The **art of**
communication lies
in actively listening to and





understanding
the other person first, and
Swamiji goes beyond all conceivable boundaries
to do just that for us. He gave His undivided attention (for 45
minutes) and ensured to resolve the devotee's concerns prior to going to
the restroom. Moreover, He did not even accept the sentiments of His own
personal staff when it came to appeasing the needs of a devotee.

In Vachanamarut Gadhada III – 7, Bhagwan Swaminarayan stated,
"I shall now tell you My innermost
principle. For a person who desires
his own salvation, there is no greater
source of joy in this world than
Bhagwan and His saint. Therefore,
just as a person is profoundly
attached to his own body, he
should keep a similar attachment
to Bhagwan and His saint, and also
remain absolutely loyal to the devotee
of Bhagwan...Moreover, one should not have as
much affection towards one's body or bodily relations as
one has towards a devotee of Bhagwan."



Swamiji has truly shown us what it means to live in accordance to
Bhagwan Swaminarayan's principles through His very own life. While we
may tend to find relief and satisfaction in fulfilling our personal needs,
Swamiji is most pleased by personally serving devotees. Likewise, He would
also be pleased with us if we make the conscious effort to do the same.

So let us pray at the lotus feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Guruhari
Swamiji, to bless us with the *buddhi-yog* (divine intellect) through which we
can give your devotees the utmost priority when it comes to wholeheartedly
serving them by thought, speech and action.



COOL FACT

A Harvard Study found that the most important indicator of professional success, more than ambition and education, was the ability to communicate properly, and executives agreed that it was often the most important factor in getting promoted.

Moreover, only 7% of communication is verbal, the other 93% comes from our body language and facial expression. This means that people who are more positive and can communicate more naturally, can get their points across much more effectively than those who are not.



LAUGH OUT

Email from Boss to Employee: "Send me one of your funny jokes."

Employee sends reply email: "I am working at the moment; I will send you one later."

Boss sends reply email: "That was fantastic. Send me another one."



LOUD





LIGHT THE CANDLE WITHIN

Diwali, one of the most important festivals of the Indian calendar. It celebrates the victory of good over evil. It has been going on for countless generations throughout India and across the world. It is an official holiday in Fiji, Guyana, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and many others throughout the world. Many of us will celebrate Diwali with fireworks and by lighting up our homes with lights. We will give each other gifts and do prayer at our respected temples. Mothers will make sweets for the family and we may even invite our extended family for a big dinner. For five days, the individuals celebrating the festival will wear their best clothes, and homes will be decorated with *rangoli*.

One theorized start to this wonderful festival was when Bhagwan Ram returned to the city of Ayodhya after victory over Ravan. The citizens of Ayodhya did not want to miss his return and, therefore, kept waiting for him through night and day. Upon Bhagwan Ram's arrival, it had already been night and so the citizens illuminated each and every street to welcome him.

Now imagine if you were a king who was loved by all your people and returned to them after a long time. You could have gotten away with anything. You could have taken full power and banished all the people that did wrong by you or even had them executed. The first thing Bhagwan Ram did after returning to the city





was bow down reverently to the individual that had banished him to the forest. He told his step mother that through her order of banishment, he was able to truly appreciate the loyalty of his brothers, find new friends like Hanuman, Sugreev, and Angad, conquer the evil that was Ravan, and realize the purity of his wife Sita. Hearing those words made Bhagwan Ram's step mother tear up and she felt a terrible remorse. Her grudges, hate, and jealousy melted away and she felt at peace for the first time in a very long time.

Diwali is the holiday to make a fresh start by forgiving and forgetting the slights done unto us. Swamiji has reminded us to start the New Year with a blank slate by forgiving the wrongs of others and seeing them in a new light. Unclutter our minds of personal slights and become rejuvenated. Forget the past and the prejudices that make us judge others.

Let us enrich our souls by taking up a new rule to be more devout. Whether it is going to mandir regularly, deciding to speak with utmost respect to our elders, doing morning pooja, shunning out bad company, keeping our senses positive, and being sincere in our studies, or striving to live with Atmiyata in the household - let's take one step this Diwali. Moreover, if we introspect every night to identify and correct mistakes, Swamiji has said that there will be an eternal Diwali within us. The bliss of the festival will forever be with us each and every moment of our life. So let us strive for this goal and be forever blessed and happy. **HAPPY DIWALI.**



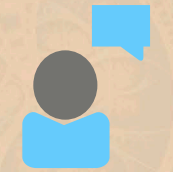
How to Communicate Effectively



Know your audience, whether it is one person or a group, and communicate with them in the best way for them to understand. This involves listening to them beforehand.



Always be respectful with whom you are talking to. Swamiji says that a good habit to get in to is using 'Tame' instead of 'Tu' when referring to someone, as doing so automatically forces you to speak with proper respect.



Keep your words or 'vaani' sweet at all times and avoid speaking in anger as your words will most likely cause offense. Instead, think over a sentence in your head before you say it, and if something seems offensive, say it in private or do not say it at all.



Know the intent of your message and make sure that you get your point across. While you always want to be calm and considerate, confusing someone by speaking in circles is often just as bad as offending them by being too direct.



Never use 100 words to say something that can be said with 10.



Many of our daily mistakes happen through our *vaani*, so doing *svaadhyay* at the end of every day to introspect on our mistakes can help us avoid the same mistakes in the future, and ensure that our communication remains positive.



The shlok, 'Vaani Amrutthi Bhari,' describes Yogiji Maharaj's humble life and how he interacted with devotees. If we recite this shlok every night, then perform bhajan, and then pray from the bottom of our hearts to live according to this shlok, then Bhagwan will gift us ever sweet *vaani*—just like Yogiji Maharaj.

- Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji



DIVINE GLIMPSE

One the auspicious night of Diwali, October 30th, 2016, Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji performed the evening aarti amidst beautifully decorated candles at Haridham mandir in India. It was a wonderful smruti for all, as the year came to a close and devotees and saints offered their prayers. The following day, October 31st, 2016, there was a grand Annakoot and New Year celebration, in which thousands of food items and sweets were offered to Thakorji. Below are excerpts from Swamiji's discourse during this celebration.

- Satsang and mandir are the only ways to have constant positive thoughts and experience true joy, bliss, and happiness.
- As long as there is ego within us, we will not be able to experience the true bliss and joy of Diwali. Ego can only be removed by striving to live by samp, suhradbhav, and ekta at home and with friends. As a result, we will be gifted ever positive thoughts and this will be our last birth.
- A true prayer is always answered by Bhagwan. He hears the words in our hearts and gives us strength to become true noble devotees who can live according to Pratham-16-18.