

# Outreach

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## Go Green - Reduce Mental Pollution

The day was April 20, 1999. A day that is very difficult to forget in American history. This was the day when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold committed one of the largest mass murders in American history. Before walking into the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, they made sure to dress themselves in the black trench coats and sunglasses made popular by Neo, the main character from the science fiction action movie *The Matrix*.

One of the central debates following this tragedy was whether *The Matrix* was partly at fault. Those defending the movie correctly pointed out that millions of other people have watched *The Matrix*, but none have committed such mass murders. Yet, Joanne Cantor, a Professor of Communications at the University of Wisconsin, conducted research that links this single movie as one of the driving influencer of several violent criminals and mass murderers, including Lee Malvo, the man behind the Washington D.C. sniper attacks. It is quite clear that these individuals had other more severe issues, but in each case, they were driven to commit violent acts as a result of watching this one **movie**.

The concept that media influences people's choice and action is not an unusual phenomenon – otherwise, advertisements would not exist! The content of movies and television shows, as well as the lyrics of songs, all influence our thoughts and ultimately our behavior. Just compare the thoughts you got after watching the thriller-action

movie *300* and the romantic movie *Titanic*. After watching such movies, people become either more aggressive or more emotional, which often times impairs our judgment and invites trouble.



Furthermore, the root cause for many disturbing thoughts as well as new habits that people develop can be traced to certain movies they watched. For example, a study conducted by the University of Massachusetts revealed that people who watch R-rate movies were more likely to smoke and commit crime than those who did not. Overall, the negative sensory input we receive by watching movies can ignite a series of negative thoughts, habits, and emotions within our minds and ultimately our actions.

We may not be aware of this due to our youthful ignorance, or simply choose to ignore it. But Guruhari Swamiji, the true caretaker of the youth, pulls us out of this ignorance. It is for this reason that Swamiji strongly advises youths to watch only moralistic movies that contain an inspirational message or highlight the glory of our heritage. Furthermore, Guruhari Swamiji goes so far as to advise youths to not watch movies at all. Given that movies make up a central part of youth social activity in both American and Indian culture, this can be a difficult command to follow.

But sincerely following Swamiji's advice to not watch movies will provide us innumerable benefits including more time for goal-oriented activities, less influence from social media, reduction in disturbing and vulgar thoughts, increasing frequency of pious thoughts, and maybe even more money in our bank account! Moreover, following this one wish of Guruhari Swamiji will earn us His inner blessings, the blessings which can uplift us into a life filled with only pious thoughts.

## Laugh - Out - Loud

Two friends, Chintu and Pintu, enter a chocolate shop. While shopping, Chintu pockets three chocolate bars. When they leave the store, Chintu says, "I am the best thief ever. I stole three chocolate bars without getting caught!"

Pintu replies, "You want to see something better? Let's go back inside and I'll show you the true art of stealing."

Upon entering the shop, Pintu goes to the counter and asks the clerk, "Do you want to see magic?" The clerk agrees.

Pintu requests the clerk, "Give me one chocolate bar." The clerk gives it and Pintu immediately eats it. Pintu asks for a second one, and eats that one as well. He asks for a third chocolate bar and eats that one too.


The confused clerk asks, "But where's the magic?"

Pintu replies, "Check my friend's pocket, you'll find all three chocolate bars!"





## No Garbage In, then No Garbage Out!

Imagine walking on a city street and seeing an overflowing can of garbage.  We would surely stay as far away as possible, but what if someone grabs the garbage can and dumps it on their own head? How gross! We would never imagine ourselves doing this. Unfortunately, watching certain types of movies is just like dumping garbage on the mind and staining it with impure thoughts.

To stop watching movies might seem highly improbable, especially living in a society that so easily brings movies right into our living room TV. But nothing is improbable or impossible if we get inspiration and strength from the life of Guruhari Swamiji!

During His youth, Prabhudasbhai (*childhood name of Guruhari Swamiji*) carried out His schooling in the town of *Anand* under the care and guidance of Manilal, who was the owner of three big movie theaters. It was a time when movie theaters were first introduced and crowds of people enthusiastically flocked to watch the new movie released each week. Manilal would often urge Prabhudasbhai to join His friends for a free viewing. However, Prabhudasbhai would always refuse. In fact, in the 10 years Prabhudasbhai lived with Manilal, He only watched nine movies! And those nine movies were either religious or inspirational.

On one instance, Manilal asked, "All of your friends come to watch movies. Why don't you ever come?" Prabhudasbhai politely, yet resolutely replied, "Those who watch movies are foolish. They are wasting their time." Even at such a young age, Prabhudasbhai recognized movies to be an unneeded source of distraction and negativity. In turn, He refused to watch movies, even at free of cost! Prabhudasbhai always led by example, and is a source of motivation for all of us today.

Swamiji teaches us the importance of channelizing our potential towards more constructive activities. Let's take an example of a youth from *Mumbai* named Aniruddh. After meeting Swamiji, Aniruddh felt he had found a true mentor in his life. Aniruddh was touched by Swamiji's selfless love and felt that 'Swamiji understands me and cares for me'.

Before Aniruddh began his undergraduate degree in Pharmaceutical Science in one of India's premier institutes, Swamiji wrote blessings for him in his diary. In those blessings, Swamiji had specifically asked him to study hard and refrain from watching movies.

Aniruddh realized that Swamiji's advice to forgo movies was exclusively for his benefit. He knew that giving up movies and TV was going to be a challenge, but he decided to follow Swamiji's request. With this firm resolution, Aniruddh did not watch a single movie or TV show for an entire year.

As a result, he experienced an immense increase in focus while studying, his memory became sharper and he found that it was rather easy to think outside the box and be creative. By the end of the college year, he had received the highest grades possible and stood first in his institution. This was a moment

Aniruddh could only dream of in the past. But simply letting go of movies had turned his dream into a reality.

Let us pray at the lotus feet of Swamiji, to bless us with the wisdom to recognize and avoid such distractions like watching movies so we can be more productive in achieving our goals, both in our personal and spiritual lives.

## Cool Fact

Subliminal messages are hidden words or images used in marketing advertisements to unconsciously influence our choices. In an experiment, one group was shown a short film filled with subliminal messages of apples

(images of apples appeared for only 20 milliseconds) while another group saw the same film with subliminal messages of oranges. The participants did not report seeing any images, but when given a choice between apples and oranges, the first group chose more apples while the second chose more oranges. If seeing something for only 20 milliseconds can influence people's fruit preferences, then just imagine what else it can influence!



**Lasting Thought** We all want to live a blissful life with a fresh spirit each day that never diminishes. This is only possible by wholeheartedly praying and doing *bhajan* each night, if we have spoken with disrespect, heard negative words, or seen immoral things throughout the day. – Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji

## Instead of Watching Movies, I Can...

1. Read a motivational book
2. Play a board game with friends
3. Do extra reading to excel in school or work
4. Call a close friend (not just texting!)
5. Spend time with family & friends
6. Volunteer or perform service (*seva*) at *mandir*.
7. Listen to discourses (*katha-varta*) by saints and Guruhari Swamiji.

Scan to view Swamiji's  
Video Blessings  
from AYS 2013



Prabhudasbhai

Scan to view Swamiji's  
Blessings written in diary

