



Outreach

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The Virus That Degrades Our Mental Spirit

Ebola is a deadly virus that can destroy a person's physical health. It causes painful symptoms, forces patients to stay in isolated rooms, and can be lethal. Ebola is especially dangerous because it can easily spread from person to person. So, many people and even countries are taking precautionary steps to prevent and stop the spread of this deadly virus.

But there exists yet another type of virus that is just as harmful. This virus is highly infectious, causes isolation, and ultimately brings misery. This virus, however, drains our mental health instead. It is called gossip.

Gossip is a major disease of our age. Gossip may not kill us physically, but it definitely kills our mental spirit. Spreading rumors, talking about others behind their backs, and degrading other people's reputations are all types of gossip. And perhaps the most dangerous thing about gossip is how it can easily multiply. If you hear something about someone, it is almost impossible

to stop yourself from telling others.

There was a boy named Neel who was smart and sincere in his studies, but he had one problem: he talked too much about his classmates. Whenever Neel heard something about his friends, he could not resist the urge to tell others.

One day, Neel came to know that one of his friends, Sam, failed a math exam. Almost instantly, Neel shared this news with all of his friends, who then told their friends and so on. The gossip went around the school, and eventually, it reached Sam. Many students made jokes about Sam in class, and as a result, Sam felt ridiculed and isolated. When the teacher found out that Neel was the person who spread the news, Neel's parents were informed.

Neel was always scared of his father, so that night, Neel apologized to his father and asked for forgiveness. In order to teach Neel a valuable lesson, his father told him, "It is okay this time, but I want you to do two things. First, take the pillow from your room and take a knife from the kitchen. Then go to the terrace, cut the pillow open and release all of the feathers into the air."

Neel completed this task with ease. The following morning, Neel informed his father that the task was complete. The father said, "There is one more thing that you have to do before I dismiss this mistake of yours. I want you to go outside and collect all the feathers that you released last night. Do not come back until you have collected each and every feather."

Not knowing how to respond, Neel froze for a few seconds. He knew that it was impossible to collect all the feathers, which would have long been scattered by the wind. Then, his father explained the purpose of this unique punishment, "Listen son, I hope you learned your lesson to never gossip again. Just as it is impossible for you to recollect all of the feathers that you released last night, it is impossible for you to take back the words you say. Once you spread rumors and gossip about other people, it can never be taken back; the damage is permanent. The pain you have caused Sam is permanent. Go apologize to him and promise me that you will never spread rumors anymore."

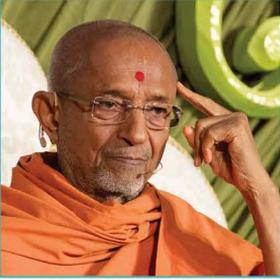


The story above was simple, yet conveys a very powerful message about gossip. Gossiping can have a destructive and permanent effect that can destroy the morale and spirit of others.

Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji is well aware of the damaging effects

gossip can have. Swamiji routinely advises youths to never gossip and to stay away from those who gossip. Swamiji once said, "All sins are forgiven by God, but the sin of speaking and listening to gossip is never forgiven by God. You will have to suffer the consequences." Gossip is a dangerous virus that we should take precautionary actions to prevent and stop. It can damage our mind and soul in countless ways.

So, let's be mindful about gossip and make a firm commitment to never speak ill about anyone anymore.



Cool Fact

Did you know that carrots are actually bad for rabbits? Carrots can cause extensive damage to the teeth and digestive systems of rabbits and should be mostly avoided. The high sugar content in carrots is believed to be the source of this extensive damage. Since 1940, one of the most iconic children's cartoons, Bugs Bunny, has been seen eating carrots. Because of this, over 90% of rabbit owners have been feeding them incorrectly. This just goes to show how even an unintended message can have wide-spread effects on the actions of countless others!



A woman gets on a bus with her baby. The bus driver says, "Ugh, that's the ugliest baby I've ever seen!"

The woman is furious. She walks to the rear of the bus and sits down. She says to a man next to her, "The driver just insulted me!"

The man says, "You go up there and tell him off. Go on, I'll hold your monkey for you."



Laugh-Out-Loud

Be **BOLD** by Stopping Yourself, Then Stop Others

If your friends are talking and suddenly a very interesting rumor is shared, how difficult is it for you to pull yourself away and stop listening? Almost naturally, most people would listen with interest or just fit in with the group. And even if you do listen, it is often very difficult to prevent yourself from further spreading the rumor to others. But how many of us would stop spreading the rumor, and more importantly, how many of us would take a bold step to make sure it does not go any further? There is one incident that exemplifies an ideal reaction in a gossiping environment.

In the mid-1950s, many youths studying in college would routinely visit the *mandir* in Gondal, India. Most of these youths were just as mischievous as other college students, but they had a strong and admirable connection with Yogiji Maharaj. Even though Yogiji Maharaj knew their lifestyle, He showered them with so much love and care, that they enjoyed coming to the *mandir*.

One time, a group of youths came to Gondal *mandir* to meet with Yogiji Maharaj and partake in satsang activities. During this time, a particular youth could not control the urges of his mind and committed one of the five grave sins.

Immediately after committing the sin, he regretted his actions. However, other youths noticed his immoral actions and started spreading the rumor. The situation became tense very rapidly. Just like a wildfire, the rumor spread and almost everyone came to know of his immoral actions. A senior devotee, Manikaka, also came to know of his misdeeds, and was planning to scold the youth, punish him, and kick him out of the temple grounds.

While all these events were unfolding, Prabhudasbhai (the name of Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji before sainthood) found himself in the middle of this chaos. But instead of propagating the rumor or judging the youth's actions, Prabhudasbhai had a completely different train of thought. Prabhudasbhai thought, "The only reason this youth is here is because of Yogiji Maharaj. So Yogiji Maharaj will definitely help him improve his lifestyle and transform him into a *nirdosh* (innocent) and *pavitra* (positive and pure) youth. Yogiji Maharaj is the head of the temple and only He has the authority to deal with this issue, so how can I ever spread the rumor or judge the youth?" With this thought, Prabhudasbhai decided to support the youth and dissolve the situation.

Upon encountering Manikaka, Prabhudasbhai pretended to be angry and told him, "Why are you amplifying someone's

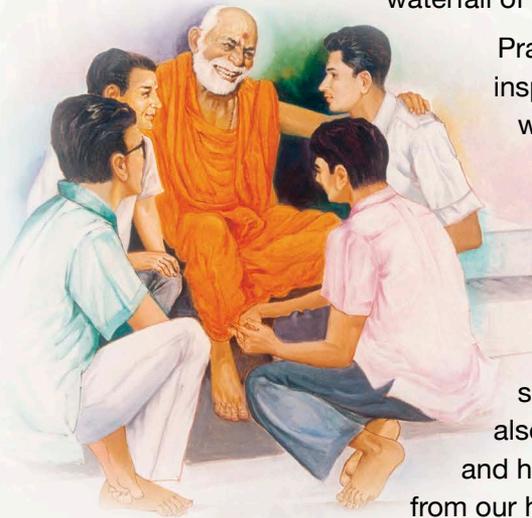


personal mistake into a public mess? You did not even see the youth make the mistake, and yet you are planning to take action against him based only on gossip and rumors; so stop this nuisance immediately. If you keep spreading rumors and take action, it will be an extremely terrible sin for which you will have to suffer.” Because Prabhudasbhai and Manikaka were good friends, he accepted Prabhudasbhai’s advice.

Then, one-by-one, Prabhudasbhai approached each and every youth who had heard this rumor. Prabhudasbhai convinced everyone to stop spreading this rumor. As a result, the entire situation died down. More importantly, word of this situation did not reach the ears of Yogiji Maharaj.

Soon after, Prabhudasbhai personally met with the youth and told him, “If you made a mistake, openly confess to Yogiji Maharaj. He will forgive you and give you blessings to improve your lifestyle. But make sure you do not stray away from Yogiji Maharaj because of fear from others at the *mandir*. I will be on your side throughout and no one will be able to harm you.” In this way, Prabhudasbhai supported and helped the youth overcome this situation.

Later that day, Prabhudasbhai met Yogiji Maharaj. Prabhudasbhai knew that even though no one had told Yogiji Maharaj of all of these events, the *antaryami* (all-knowing) Yogiji Maharaj knew everything that had happened. Yogiji Maharaj was extremely happy with Prabhudasbhai. Yogiji Maharaj hugged Prabhudasbhai and gave Him seven pats on the back! Then Yogiji Maharaj blessed Him by saying, “Continue to keep this type of *suhradbhav* and inspire others to live with *suhradbhav*. You have performed a great *seva* today by doing exactly what Shastriji Maharaj would have wanted!” As these inspiring words poured out of Yogiji Maharaj’s mouth, Prabhudasbhai felt a waterfall of happiness fill His heart!



Prabhudasbhai’s actions are truly an inspiration for all of us! When dealing with gossip, Prabhudasbhai made sure to not only stop spreading the rumor, but He personally inspired others to stop. As a result, He earned Yogiji Maharaj’s inner happiness. In this way, just like Prabhudasbhai, if we decide to take a strong stance against spreading rumors and gossip, we can also earn the inner blessings of Swamiji and have a fountain of positivity bursting from our hearts as well.

LEARNING FROM OUR FRIENDS

One of our good friends, Maheshbhai Oza, is a dedicated devotee who has a strong connection with Swamiji. One day, Swamiji requested Maheshbhai to visit the *mandir* (temple) of another organization and have darshan of *thakorji*. Maheshbhai gladly fulfilled Swamiji's request by touring the *mandir* of another organization.

When Maheshbhai returned, Swamiji was having His evening meal. Swamiji was curious about Maheshbhai's visit, so he enthusiastically shared all of the wonderful things about the *mandir*. He described to Swamiji their *bhakti* (devotion), their magnificently constructed *mandir*, and the inspiring environment. Swamiji's face lit up and He became very happy.

But then, Maheshbhai innocently said, "They may have a big *mandir* and many devotees, but they do not have a divine and inspirational guru like You."

Hearing this, Swamiji's face instantly became serious. Swamiji immediately stopped eating and disappeared into His room. Then at 1:00 AM that night, Swamiji called Maheshbhai into the room. Maheshbhai cried for forgiveness and pleaded with Swamiji to take rest. However, Swamiji did not budge.

Swamiji told him, "Because you have spoken ill about the other *mandir*, you must do heartfelt *bhajan* for 30 minutes with teary eyes. And I will do 30 minutes of *bhajan* with you for having listened to this!"

It is evident that Swamiji does not tolerate even an ounce of negativity. From this incident, we can learn the seriousness of never speaking even mildly-negative things about anyone to anyone. And, if we accidentally speak negatively, the only remedy is doing sincere *bhajan*!





Five Vaccines to Kill the Gossip Virus



Be bold and tell others to stop gossiping, even if they are close friends or family. They may not initially like it, but will eventually appreciate it.

If a person makes a mistake, your first response should be to ask yourself, 'Have I ever made a mistake before?'

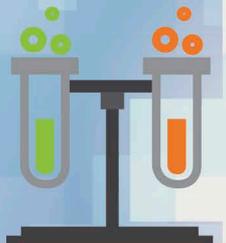


While talking about a particular person to others, pretend as if that person is standing next to you.



Firmly decide that you do not want to be a part of gossip.

Dwell into the ever-positive life of Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji and pray for strength.



Lasting Thought

Bhagwan Swaminarayan is extremely compassionate. If a person commits a sin by seeing or thinking negatively and makes a prayer, Bhagwan Swaminarayan will forgive him. But, if you take notice and tell others about his mistake, you have accumulated a thousand times more *paap* (sin) and Bhagwan Swaminarayan will be reluctant to forgive you!



Vicharan Update November 2014



1. AYM 2015 Khatmurat - Haridham (India)
2. Hon. Chief Minister of Bengaluru
- 3 & 4. Smruti darshan Bengaluru
5. Atmiya Yuva Sabha Vidhyanagar (India)

Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav 2015

Dec 3rd 2014 - Jan 1st 2nd 3rd 2015 - Please register at haridhamnj.org

Almost everything we want can be purchased at a supermarket, a department store, or from online stores. But there are three things that we all desperately want, and unfortunately they cannot be purchased from any store. By attending AYM, you will be gifted with three things: 1) a life without tensions (*nischinta*), 2) a life filled with pious thoughts (*shub-vichar*), and 3) a life filled with true love (*sacho-prem*). As a result, you will be able to live a life truly worth living!



Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav