

[Voices of Sisters](#)



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October 19, 2026

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I love cinema. I can watch films in almost any language, as long as they have English subtitles. I do not know exactly how this passion began, but since childhood, stories on screen have held a quiet power over me.

I still remember watching a Hindi movie for the first time as a young child. I was too young to remember its title. Years later, when I arrived in Delhi, I happened to watch the same movie again and realized it was "Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!"

For me, cinema cannot be reduced to a mere hobby or a way of relaxing. It has taught me to observe and analyze situations, people and society. Through films, I have traveled to places I had never physically visited, encountered people whose lives were vastly different from mine, and learned to look at the world through diverse perspectives.

We could not afford a television set when I was a child. I used to go to our neighbors' houses to watch television.

I still remember one incident vividly. One day, a neighbor switched off the television and told me it had a "fever." I was deeply disappointed. That small, painful incident strengthened my determination for us to have a television of our own.

I pleaded with my parents, and finally, in November 2002, during the Diwali sale, we managed to purchase a television set. I promised my parents that I would not waste my time watching television because I was preparing for my Class 10 board examinations. I kept my word and passed with distinction.

Back then, however, I did not analyze society through cinema. I was simply a frog in a well, fascinated by the colorful world appearing on our small screen, often fighting with my siblings over who would get to hold the remote control.

When I decided to become a religious sister, someone asked me, "How can you live without watching movies? In the convent, they don't allow you to watch movies."

I simply replied, "I can manage." And I did.

During the first three years of religious formation, we had occasional movie sessions, mostly watching American films with English subtitles. One film I watched repeatedly was "The Miracle Worker" about Helen Keller. I must have seen it over 100 times, memorizing most of the dialogue.

There was, however, one small problem. Whenever we watched movies at night, I would often fall asleep! Sitting before the superior the next day, my poor memory was put to the test when asked about the film. Because I naturally hit the pillow sharply at 10 p.m., I was asked to sit in the front row during movie sessions so I could stay awake — and learn English better.

We watched films like "The Story of Louis Pasteur," "Lassie Come Home," "The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima," "Thérèse," "Padre Pio," and "The Reluctant Saint." We were asked to write reviews to improve our English and deepen our spiritual understanding. "The Miracle Worker" left a deep impression on me — not merely as a story of overcoming disability, but as a profound reflection on how a human soul can be transformed through love, patience, education and relationship. Cinema was already teaching me to look beneath the surface of a story.

The film that changed everything

On Aug. 12, 2009, at 20 years old, I traveled to Delhi alone for the first time. It was a monumental journey for someone who had hardly traveled anywhere.

Until that trip, my world was tiny: my family, my village, the church, school and our occasional family trip to Amali Nagar, a small Catholic coastal village in Tamil Nadu. My father was extremely protective of me because I was timid and naïve; whenever we walked, I held his hand.

When I arrived in Delhi, an Indian sister received me at the airport. That night, she played "Beauty and the Beast." Ironically, although I loved cinema, I had never been interested in animated movies, and I fell asleep halfway through. Cinema was proving another truth about me: I could watch almost anything, but I could not guarantee I would stay awake.

When my superior returned from Spain, she asked if I would like to watch a movie set in the 18th century. Immediately, I said, "I'm not interested." She smiled and replied, "You will change your mind after watching it."

She was right. The movie was "Pride and Prejudice," and it became one of my all-time favorite films, sparking a lifelong fascination with Jane Austen.

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As a student of English literature, I grew deeply appreciative of Austen's novels and characters. She sculpted women who were strong yet gentle, vulnerable yet determined, constrained by society yet unwilling to surrender their dignity. In "Persuasion," Anne Elliot's strength is expressed through patience, maturity and quiet determination.

In "Pride and Prejudice," the rain scene between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy stayed with me. Darcy's humble line, "Forgive me, madam, for taking up so much of your time," marks a pivotal shift. Here was a wealthy, proud man humbling himself before a woman of 27 who lacked wealth and social standing. Yet Elizabeth refused to compromise her dignity or tolerate arrogance for the sake of wealth or status.

Austen showed me that a woman does not need wealth or power to stand up to social expectations. This story resonated beyond romance; it was about dignity, equality and self-respect.

This opened a new world. I began reading Austen's complete works — *Persuasion*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* — and watching their adaptations. We held long conversations about them around the dinner table, and I felt confident writing about these rich characters in my master's examinations.

Beyond the screen

Gradually, cinema became far more than entertainment. Every story introduced me to new cultures, geographies, histories, politics and social structures. I began deliberately watching films that promoted social values, women's empowerment, and questioned caste and discrimination.

My relationship with cinema evolved in stages.

As a child, I watched movies simply because I enjoyed them. As a young religious sister, I watched them to learn English and deepen my spirituality. As a student of literature, I watched them to understand stories, characters, language and culture. As an adult, I began watching them to understand society, inequality, women's experiences, human rights and the complexities of human relationships.

Cinema gave me more than language — it gave me confidence, courage, wisdom and curiosity. It encouraged me to become a motivational speaker and to express my thoughts by writing reviews. It taught me to think beyond what was visible on

screen and read between the lines.

Today, when I watch a film, I do not simply ask, "Did I enjoy it?" I ask:

What is this film telling me about people? What does it reveal about society? Whose voice is missing? What does it say about power, dignity, injustice, culture, faith and human relationships?

Cinema has been my companion, my language teacher, my storyteller, my window to the world and one of my greatest teachers. I did not merely watch movies — the movies watched me grow.