

**Speeches and Discourses of
Mahatma Gandhi
On
Cleanliness and Sanitation**

Compiled from

'The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi'

**Publications Division
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(1)

**Mahatma Gandhi's Speech At Benares Hindu University, February 4,
1916;**

(The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi -XIII-pp.210-216)

“I have merely removed some of the verbiage which in cold print would make the speech bad reading: Friends, I wish to tender my humble apology for the long delay that took place before I was able to reach this place. And you will readily accept the apology when I tell you that I am not responsible for the delay nor is any human agency responsible for it. (Laughter.) The fact is that I am like an animal on show and my keepers in their over-kindness always manage to neglect a necessary chapter in this life and that is pure accident. In this case, they did not provide for the series of accidents that happened to us-to me, my keepers, and my carriers. Hence this delay. Friends, under the influence of the matchless eloquence of the lady (Mrs. Besant) who has just sat down, pray, do not believe that our University has become a finished product and that all the young men who are to come to the University that has yet to rise and come into existence, have also come and returned from it finished citizens of a great empire. Do not go away with any such impression and if you, the student world to which my remarks are supposed to be addressed this evening, consider for one moment that the spiritual life, for which this country is noted and for which this country has no rival, can be transmitted through the lip, pray, believe me you are wrong. You will never be able merely through the lip to give the message that India, I hope, will one day deliver to the world. I myself have been "fed up" with speeches and lectures.

I except the lectures that have been delivered here during the last two days from this category, because they were necessary. But I do venture to suggest to you that we have now reached almost the end of our resources in speech-making, and it is not enough that our ears are feasted, that our eyes are feasted, but it is necessary that our hearts have got to be touched and that our hands and feet have got to be moved. We have been told during the last two days how necessary it is, if we are to retain our hold upon the simplicity of Indian character, that our hands and feet should move

in unison with our hearts. But this is only by way of preface. I wanted to say it is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening under the shadow of this great college, in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me. I know that if I was appointed an examiner to examine all those who have been attending during these two days this series of lectures, most of those who might be examined upon these lectures would fail. And why? Because they have not been touched. I was present at the sessions of the great Congress in the month of December. There was a much vaster audience, and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge audience in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani? In Bombay, mind you, not in Benares where everybody speaks Hindi. But between the vernaculars of the Bombay Presidency on the one hand, and Hindi on the other, no such great dividing line exists as there does between English and the sister-languages of India; and the Congress audience was better able to follow the speakers in Hindi.

I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (Cries of "Never".) Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad. I had the privilege of a close conversation with some Poona professors. They assured me that every Indian youth, because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by the number of students turned out by our schools and colleges and find out for yourselves how many thousand years have been lost to the nation.

The charge against us is, that we have no initiative. How can we have any if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue? We fail in this attempt also. Was it possible for any speaker yesterday and today to impress his audience as was possible for Mr. Higginbotham? It was not the fault of the previous speakers that they could not engage the audience. They had more than substance enough for us in their addresses. But their addresses could not go home to us. I have heard it

said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing all the things for the nation. It would be monstrous if it were otherwise. The only education we receive is English education. Surely we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving during the past fifty years education through our vernaculars, what should we have had today? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land but speaking to the heart of the nation; they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past 50 years would be a heritage for the nation. (Applause.) To-day even our wives are not the sharers in our best thought. Look at Professor Bose and Professor Ray² and their brilliant researches. Is it not a shame that their researches are not the common property of the masses?

Let us now turn to another subject.

The Congress has passed a resolution about self-government and I have no doubt that the All-India Congress Committee and the Moslem League will do their duty and come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I, for one, must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce as I am interested in anything that the student world is going to produce or the masses are going to produce. No paper contribution will ever give us self-government. No amount of speeches will ever make us fit for self-government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it. (Applause.) And how are we trying to govern ourselves? I want to think audibly this evening. I do not want to make a speech and if you find me this evening speaking without reserve, pray, consider that you are only sharing the thoughts of a man who allows himself to think audibly, and if you think that I seem to transgress the limits that courtesy imposes upon me, pardon me for the liberty I may be taking.

I visited the Viswanath Temple last evening and as I was walking through those lanes, these were the thoughts that touched me. If a stranger dropped from above on to this great temple and he had to consider what we as Hindus were, would he not be justified in condemning us? Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even our temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be? Shall our temples be abodes of holiness, cleanliness and

peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage?

I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self-government, we shall have to do the necessary plodding. In every city there are two divisions, the cantonment and the city proper. The city mostly is a stinking den. But we are a people unused to city life. But if we want city life, we cannot reproduce the easy-going hamlet life. It is not comforting to think that people walk about the streets of Indian Bombay under the perpetual fear of dwellers in the storeyed buildings spitting upon them. I do a great deal of railway travelling. I observe the difficulty of third-class passengers. But the Railway Administration is by no means to blame for all their hard lot. We do not know the elementary laws of cleanliness. We spit anywhere on the carriage floor, irrespective of the thought that it is often used as sleeping space. We do not trouble ourselves as to how we use it; the result is indescribable filth in the compartment.

The so-called better class passengers over-awe their less fortunate brethren. Among them I have seen the student world also. Sometimes they behave no better. They can speak English and they have worn Norfolk Jackets and therefore claim the right to force their way in and command seating accommodation. I have turned the searchlight all over and as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you, I am laying my heart bare. Surely we must set these things right in our progress towards self-government. I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharajah, who presided yesterday over our deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: "There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India." ("Hear, hear" and applause.) I am sure it is not the desire of the King-Emperor or Lord Hardinge that in order to show the truest loyalty to our King Emperor, it is necessary for us to ransack our jewellery-boxes and to appear bedecked from top to toe. I would undertake at the peril of my life to bring to you a message from King George himself that he expects nothing of the kind. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace

rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say: "Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists."

Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higginbotham told us last night in his own felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it. Now, last but not the least, it is my bounden duty to refer to what agitated our minds during these two or three days. All of us have had many anxious moments while the Viceroy was going through the streets of Benares. There were detectives stationed in many places. We were horrified. We asked ourselves: "Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?" But a representative of a mighty Sovereign may not. He might find it necessary even to live a living death. But why was it necessary to impose these detectives on us? We may foam, we may fret, we may resent but let us not forget that India of to-day in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist, but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India if India is to conquer the conqueror. It is a sign of fear. If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maha-rajahs, not Viceroys, not the detectives, not even King George. I honour the anarchist for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him: Is killing honourable? Is the dagger of an assassin a fit precursor of an honourable death? I deny it. There is no warrant for such methods in any scriptures.

If I found it necessary for the salvation of India that the English should retire, that they should be driven out, I would not hesitate to declare that they would have to go, and I hope I would be prepared to die in defence of that belief. That would, in my opinion, be an honourable death. The bomb-thrower creates secret plots, is afraid to come into the open, and when caught pays the penalty of misdirected zeal. I have been told: "Had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the partition movement!" (Mrs. Besant: "Please stop it.") This was what I said in Bengal when Mr. Lyons presided at the meeting. I think what I am saying is necessary. If I am told to stop, I

shall obey. (Turning to the Chairman) I await your orders. If you consider that by my speaking as I am, I am not serving the country and the Empire, I shall certainly stop. (Cries of "Go on".) (The Chairman: "Please explain your object.") I am explaining my object. I am simply (Another interruption.) My friends, please do not resent this interruption. If Mrs. Besant this evening suggests that I should stop, she does so because she loves India so well, and she considers that I am erring in thinking audibly before you young men. But even so, I simply say this that I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side; if we are to reach our goal, we should have an empire which is to be based upon mutual love and mutual trust. Is it not better that we talk under the shadow of this college than that we should be talking irresponsibly in our homes? I consider that it is much better that we talk these things openly. I have done so with excellent results before now. I know that there is nothing that the students are not discussing. There is nothing that the students do not know. I am therefore turning the searchlight towards ourselves. I hold the name of my country so dear to me that I exchange these thoughts with you and submit to you that there is no reason for anarchism in India.

Let us frankly and openly say whatever we want to say to our rulers and face the consequences if what we have to say does not please them. But let us not abuse. I was talking the other day to a member of the much-abused Civil Service. I have not very much in common with the members of that Service, but I could not help admiring the manner in which he was speaking to me. He said: "Mr. Gandhi, do you for one moment suppose that all we, Civil Servants, are a bad lot, that we want to oppress the people whom we have come to govern?" "No", I said. "Then, if you get an opportunity, put in a word for the much-abused Civil Service." And I am here to put in that word. Yes, many members of the Indian Civil Service are most decidedly overbearing, they are tyrannical, at times thoughtless. Many other adjectives may be used. I grant all these things and I grant also that after having lived in India for a certain number of years, some of them become somewhat degraded. But what does that signify? They were gentlemen before they came here, and if they have lost some of the moral fibre, it is a reflection upon ourselves. (Cries of "No".) Just think out for yourselves, if a man who was good yesterday has become bad after having come in contact with me, is he responsible that he has deteriorated or am I? The atmosphere of sycophancy and falsity that surrounds them on their coming to India de-moralises them as it would many of us. It is well to take the blame sometimes. If we are to receive self-government, we shall have to

take it. We shall never be granted self-government. Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom-loving as it is, it will not be a party to give freedom to a people who will not take it themselves. Learn your lesson if you wish to from the Boer War. Those who were enemies of that Empire only a few years ago have now become friends”.

(2)

**Discourse On Hygiene And Education: Speech at Second Gujarat
Educational Conference, Broach, Gujarat on 20.10.1917
(The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-14-XIV-I-6: p.29)**

“As to Hygiene, it is no exaggeration to say that it is not taught at all. We do not know, after 60 years of education, how to protect ourselves against epidemics like cholera and plague. I consider it a very serious blot on the state of our education that our doctors have not found it possible to eradicate these diseases. I have seen hundreds of homes. I cannot say that I have found any evidence in them of knowledge of hygiene. I have the greatest doubt whether our graduates know what one should do in case one is bitten by a snake. If our doctors could have started learning medicine at an earlier age, they would not make such a poor show as they do. This is the disastrous result of the system under which we are educated. People in almost all the parts of the world have managed to eradicate the plague. Here it seems to have made a home and thousands of Indians die untimely deaths. If this is to be attributed to poverty, it would still be up to the Education Department to answer why, even after 60 years of education, there is poverty in India”.

(3)

Speech At Kathiawar Patidar Conference at Marad Village
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-16-XVI-I-109

“What must have been the condition of India's cities when it was a holy land? Men were sincere and frank of heart, and the homes in the country were pure and clean. The men who lived in these homes filled them with their sweet fragrance. What provides shelter to five men is a home and where 50 men live is a village. I saw rain water leaking through the roofs all over! If we are so idle, we should at least arrange for the water leaking through to be collected. I found the lanes here full of dirt. Even when it has been raining, a farmer's house must be clean and the streets such as would not make walking in them quite a task. It should not happen that when it rains a little they become all slush. If the streets in a village are bad, it would be painful for the bullocks to walk on them. We are the Government in the village. We should not be lethargic and wooden. If the subjects are straightforward and truthful, the king cannot be otherwise. If the subjects are unjust and extravagant, the king is bound to be so. The king is the sky over the people. The control of affairs in your village ought to be in your hands. You should look after all the arrangements in your own village.

The Government will not succeed in cleaning seven and a half lakh villages. Marad belongs to the people who live here. If the mistress of the house does not keep it clean, she must be an indolent hussy; in like manner, if the inhabitants of the village do not keep it clean, they must be indolent louts. I am your guest. You have been showering your love on me. Despite Marad's being such a fine village, I have had to say all this about the cleanliness of its lanes. Marad is no different from other villages in this latter. Things are the same in all the seven and a half lakh villages of India. Conditions here are not worse than elsewhere. Since, however, you have put me in this chair, I owe it to you to tell you that others may go to hell, if they will, but you must start cleaning up the village this very day. We should be judged by the state of our lanes. We look after our families, but we have not proceeded from the affairs of the family to those of the village or the town and, finally, of India”.

(4)

Discourse On Our Insanitation: Speech at Mandvi, 19.11.1925
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-28-XXXVIII : I-246 : p. 461

“During my wanderings nothing has been so painful to me as to observe our insanitation throughout the length and breadth of the land. I do not believe in the use of force for carrying out reforms, but when I think of the time that must elapse before the ingrained habits of millions of people can be hanged, I almost reconcile myself to compulsion in this the most important matter of insanitation. Several diseases can be directly traced to insanitation. Hookworm, for instance, is such a direct result. Not a single human being who observes the elementary principles of sanitation need suffer from hookworm. The disease is not even due to poverty. The only reason is gross ignorance of the first principles of sanitation. These reflections arise from the abominations I saw in Mandvi. The people of Mandvi are not poor. They cannot be classed as ignorant. And yet their habits are dirty beyond description. Men and women dirty the streets that they walk on with bare feet. They do this every morning. There is practically no such thing as a closet in that port. It was with the greatest difficulty that I was able to pass through these streets. Let me not be hard on the poor inhabitants of Mandvi. I know that I saw nothing better in many streets of Madras.

The sight of grown-up people lining the river banks and, after the performance, proceeding with criminal thoughtlessness to the river and cleaning themselves in it and injecting into its sacred water typhoid, cholera and dysentery germs has not yet faded from memory. This is the water that is used also for drinking. In the Punjab we violate God's laws by dirtying our roofs and breeding millions of flies. In Bengal the same tank quenches the thirst of man and beast and cleanses him and his pots. But I must not continue this description of our shame. Seeing that it is there, it would be sinful to hide it. But I dare not carry it any further. I know I have underdrawn the picture. I would urge the enterprising people of Mandvi to lead the way in model sanitation. Let them, whether the State help them or not, call in a specialist and spend money in improving their sanitation so as to make it perfect. 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' We can no more gain

God's blessings with an unclean body than with an unclean mind. A clean body cannot reside in an unclean city”.

(5)

**Speech On Rural Education And Hygiene: Translated From Gujarati
Shikshanane Sahitya, 18-8-1929;**

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-41-XLI-I-238 : p.295

“Kakasaheb wishes to serve a number of purposes through this supplement. One of these is that persons who have passed what is ordinarily regarded as the school age, who are householders, are engaged in a profession or otherwise and are employed – the men and women living in about ten thousand villages of Maha Gujarat - should receive some kind of education which it is possible to give them. The term education in this sense should be interpreted in a wider sense. It is something distinct from a knowledge of the alphabet. Villagers today have no practical knowledge in many fields and we find, instead, that often ignorant superstition has established a hold over them. Through this supplement, Kakasaheb intends to rid them of these superstitions and give them some useful knowledge. From the standpoint of health, the condition of villages is deplorable. One of the chief causes of our poverty is the non-availability of this essential knowledge of hygiene. If sanitation in villages can be improved, lakhs of rupees will easily be saved and the condition of people improved to that extent. A sick peasant can never work as hard as a healthy one. Not a little harm is being done because we have a higher death-rate than the average.

It is held that our economically backward condition is responsible for our deplorable insanitation and that if the former is bettered, the latter will improve automatically. Let this be said in order to malign the government or to put all the blame on it, but there is not even fifty per cent truth in that statement. In my opinion based on experience, our poverty plays a very small part in our unsanitary condition. I know what part it plays and where, but I do not wish to go into it here. The purpose of this series of articles is to point out the ways and means of eradicating those diseases for the incidence of which we are responsible and which can be readily eradicated at little or no expense.

Let us examine the state of our villages from this standpoint. Many of these are found to be like heaps of garbage. People urinate and defecate at all places in the villages, not excluding even their own courtyards. Where this is done, no one takes care to cover up the faeces. The village roads are never well maintained and one finds heaps of dust everywhere. We ourselves and our bullocks find it difficult even to walk on them. If there is a pond, people wash their utensils in it, cattle drink, bathe and wallow in it; children and even adults clean themselves in it after evacuation; they even defecate on the ground near it. This same water is used for drinking and cooking purposes. No rules are observed while building houses convenience of neighbours, or residents' facilities for are considered when buildings are put up- neither the light nor air.

Because of a lack of co-operation among villagers, they do not even grow things which are essential to ensure their own hygienic conditions. Villagers do not put their leisure hours to good use, or perhaps they do not know how to do so, as a result of which their physical and mental capacity is depleted. For want of general knowledge of hygiene, when there is an incidence of a disease, instead of employing some home remedies very often the villagers seek the help of magicians or get involved in the web of *mantras* and spend money and in return the disease is merely aggravated. In this series, we shall examine all these reasons and see what can be done in the matter”.

(6)

**Discourse On Physical and Moral Insanitation: Published in Young
India on 31-10-1929;**

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-42-XLII-I-86 : p.75

“There can be no doubt that at one time Hardwar and the other celebrated places of pilgrimage were really holy. Their natural beauty, their ancient popularity would seem to show that at one time they were sanctuaries for the preservation and purification of Hinduism. In spite of my innate love of Hinduism, in spite of my conservatism that ever seeks to respect and justify ancient institutions, these holy places have few man-made attractions for me.

It was in 1915 that I first visited Hardwar, as a volunteer working under Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru who was in charge of the Seva Samiti organized by the Servants of India Society. I was therefore able to come in intimate touch with many men and things which otherwise I would not have done. I had gone there full of hope and reverence. But whilst I realized the grandeur of the holy Ganga and the holier Himalayas, I saw little to inspire me in what man was doing in this holy place. To my great grief I discovered insanitation both moral and physical. I found during the recent visit² not much change for the better. There is the same defilement of the mighty stream even in the name of religion. Thoughtless ignorant men and women use for natural functions the sacred banks of the river where they are supposed to sit in quiet contemplation and find God. They violate religion, science and laws of sanitation.

All the religions in the world prohibit the pollution of streams, their banks, public roads and all thoroughfares. Science teaches us that human evacuations, whether liquid or solid, make most valuable manure if they are properly conserved. Hygienists regard it as a crime against humanity for any person to perform natural functions in the places enumerated by me. This pollution is a sin born of ignorance or laziness. But there goes on deliberate pollution too in the name of religion. I was taken to the river to perform the

usual ceremony. Flowers, yarn, curds, coloured starch, rice and the like were thrown into the river whose waters millions drink in the faith that they are doing a meritorious act. I protested that it was harmful to throw these things into the waters. "It is a tradition handed down from ages," was the priestly reply. Add to this the reported criminal emptying of the drain-pipes into the sacred waters. Although the passenger traffic is very heavy, the station is as primitive as it could be made. There are very few conveniences for the passengers. The streets are narrow and unkempt. The roads are indifferently kept. Thus the authorities have conspired with the people to render Hardwar as little attractive as possible. So much for the physical insanitation of Hardwar. I was reliably informed that moral insanitation was far worse. I have not the heart to narrate here the stories I was told of the horrible vice that went on in Hardwar. There was a naive admission in an address presented to me by the Pandas. They said that in Hardwar perfect sexual restraint was obligatory. They therefore left Hardwar to the pilgrims and not being celibates, were living outside the prohibited boundary. Needless to say there is not the least sign of this form of self-denial in Hardwar. And yet there is no reason why Hardwar should not become an ideal place of pilgrimage.

There are three educational institutions designed to revive the best of ancient tradition. There are rich *mahants* living in and near Hardwar. If any or all of these institutions will it, they can transform insanitary Hardwar within a measurable distance of time into a model sacred place. Acharya Ramdeva, who presided at the public meeting where I disburdened myself of my grief over the physical and moral insanitation of Hardwar, promised to work wholeheartedly through the Kangri Gurukul which has been shifted to Hardwar to bring about the desired reform. There are too some silent workers doing their best to make things look better. Hardwar uses only swadeshi sugar but imports annually seven lakhs of rupees worth of foreign cloth. There is a drink shop and a butcher's shop in Jwalapur. There is no reason why Hardwar should not stop all drink. A butcher's shop in a Hindu place of pilgrimage is an anomaly. The optimistic Acharya hopes to make Hardwar sanitary and to banish foreign cloth, liquor and butcher's meat from Hardwar. It is a worthy ambition. May it be fulfilled. It will be the truest education for the boys of the Gurukul if to their studies they add this service of the country and religion".

(7)

**Speech On Cleanliness, Truthfulness, Purity, Neatness: From a
microfilm of The Gujarati: M.M.U./II on 9-06-1932;
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-049-XLIX- 412**

“Now that I have succeeded today in acquiring over the Magan spinning-wheel brought by Dhiru enough elementary control to satisfy me, I feel sufficiently free in my mind to pay attention to the appearance of the wheel. Vallabhbhai's sharp eyes detected a spider's web on it, and he immediately joked about it. I discovered now the real source of Manibehn's great love of neatness. The envelopes in which I seal the letters for the Ashram are an illustration of this quality of Vallabhbhai's. Anybody who has not seen these envelopes should do so immediately. Along with neatness, they exemplify great economy. The letters which I write from here do not require very long envelopes. It will, therefore, be observed that two envelopes are made out of the original one. The brown paper which comes here in the form of packets, etc., is preserved and then used for making new flaps for the envelopes.

This was by way of introduction. I noted Vallabhbhai's comment, but at the moment I was impatient to try the spinning wheel. The doctor had been advising me not to use the left hand even for turning the wheel. Hence I thought that, if I could rotate the wheel with either foot, probably I would not have to drop spinning for a single day. In my impatience to acquire control in managing the spinning-wheel as soon as possible, I let the web remain where it was. But I felt confident today that I would be able to work with my right hand, and so began observing the poor condition of the spinning-wheel. I saw that there was not only one web, but that there were webs in seven or eight places. And the entire spinning-wheel was covered with dust. The brass spindle-bearers were covered with a sticky layer of grease and dust. There was plenty of dust on the wooden boards too. This should be deemed unpardonable. The spinning-wheel is the divine weapon of *Daridranarayana*. It is the chief means of worship. By neglecting it and allowing it to be covered with dust, we show lack of reverence for Him. Generally, temples, mosques and other places of worship are kept clean. But we believe that every spot on the earth is as sacred as a temple. There is no place anywhere where God is not present. To us, therefore, our bedrooms,

dining rooms, libraries, lavatories-all these are sacred as temples and should be kept clean as such. All the more so a spinning-wheel. If we really believe in its power, none of us, from the very young to the old, would ever let a spinning-wheel remain unclean.

I have already referred once to the cat's love of cleanliness. Recently I observed more evidence of it. She gave birth to two kittens about a month and a half ago. Their ways are wonderful. The three are rarely found separated. The mother cat lets the kitten suck whenever they indicate their desire. The two cling to her and suck at the same time. It is a sublime sight. The mother has no feeling of false shame about the matter. She does not perform all actions in public and anywhere. As soon as the kitten could walk and play, she taught them the procedure to be followed for defecation. She withdrew to a quiet spot where the earth was soft and dug out a small hollow. She put the kitten in position over the hollow, afterwards covered the excreta with earth and made the spot as clean as it was before. The kittens now follow that procedure every day. They are a brother and a sister. Four days ago, one of them was trying to dig a hollow in the earth, but the ground was rather hard. The other one went to its help and the two together dug out a hollow of the required size. After defecation, they covered up the excreta with earth and left the place.

Why should we not willingly do what these creatures-even the little ones-do? The four words in the title are intended to suggest the same meaning. Since we are conscious of ourselves as souls, our cleanliness must be both internal and external. The former means truthfulness. Truthfulness is the essence of purity, and is also another name for neatness. If we are neat and tidy outwardly but have unclean minds, we make a false show or are guilty of pure hypocrisy, or that may be a sign of our lustfulness. Thus, for men and women who strive to lead a life of self-control, outward neatness is of value only if it is a sign of inner purity. Our holiest temple is our body. We should take care not to let it be infected with any impurity from outside. We should not sully the purity of the mind with evil thoughts. Anybody who follows this ideal of cleanliness will display neatness and tidiness in everything he does. That would be his instinctive behaviour”.

(8)

How To Begin? : Speech published in Harijan on 8-2-193;
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-060-LX-I-248

“I have dealt with some chief articles of food and shown what they mean to the villagers in health and wealth. There is, however, the equally important subject of sanitation and hygiene. Proper attention to these means increase in health, energy and wealth, directly and indirectly. Some foreign observers have testified that, of all the nations of the earth, India comes, perhaps, to the top in the observance of personal cleanliness. But I fear that it is not possible to say the same of corporate, in other words, village cleanliness. In yet other words, we have not made much advance beyond the family interest. We would sacrifice everything for the family as distinguished from the village, i.e., in a sense, the nation. Members of a family will keep their own home clean, but they will not be interested in the neighbour's. They will keep their courtyard clean of dirt, insects and reptiles, but will not hesitate to shove all into the neighbour's yard. As a result of this want of corporate responsibility, our villages are dung heaps. Though we are an unshod nation, we so dirty our streets and roads that for a sensitive person it is painful to walk along them barefoot. It is difficult to get clean, drinkable water in village wells, tanks and streams. The approaches to an ordinary village are heaped with muck and rubbish.

Village sanitation is, perhaps, the most difficult task before the All-India Village Industries Association. No Government can change the habits of a people without their hearty co-operation. And if the latter is forthcoming, a Government will have little to do in the matter. The intelligentsia - medical men and students - can deal with the problem successfully if they would conscientiously, intelligently, jealously and regularly *do the work* in the villages. Attention to personal and corporate hygiene is the beginning of all education. The things to attend to in the villages are cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of dung heaps. If the workers will begin the work themselves, working like paid Bhangis from day to day and always letting the villagers know that they

are expected to join them so as ultimately to do the whole work themselves, they may be sure that they will find that the villagers will sooner or later co-operate. At least such is my experience of South Africa and Champaran, and even during the quick walking tour in Orissa last year.

Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug no deeper than one foot at the most. In his book on rural hygiene, Dr. Poore says that excreta should be buried in earth no deeper than nine to twelve inches (I am quoting from memory). The author contends that the superficial earth is charged with minute life, which, together with light and air which easily penetrate it, turn the excreta into good, soft, sweet-smelling soil within a week. Any villager can test this for himself. The way to do it is either to have fixed latrines, with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on to the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. This can only be done by the co-operation of the villagers. At the worst, an enterprising villager can collect the excreta and turn them into wealth for himself.

At present, this rich manure, valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain. Village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that, in spite of this sinful misuse of village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure purity of the water supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers.

This, it will be admitted, is a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India. I hope it is clear from my description of the way in which the problem should be tackled, that, given willing workers who will wield the broom and the shovel with the same ease and pride as the pen and the pencil, the

question of expense is almost wholly eliminated. All the outlay that will be required is confined to a broom, a basket, a shovel and a pickaxe, and possibly some disinfectant. Dry ashes are, perhaps, as effective a disinfectant as any that a chemist can supply. But here let philanthropic chemists tell us what is the most effective and cheap village disinfectant that villagers can improvise in their villages”.

(9)

Gandhiji's Speech to Sanitation Volunteers : Published in Harijan on, 19-2-1938, and in The Hindu on 12-2-1938;

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-66-LXVI-I-457 : p.362-364

“Don't think your work is inferior to that of Rashtrapati Bose or Jawaharlal Nehru. No, not an atom. They serve and you also serve and, in fact, I value your work more. I myself am an experienced Bhangi and a competent Bhangi. Do your work sincerely and earnestly. A large number of delegates will be shortly coming and if there are shortcomings in your work they will complain, though I cannot complain, for I am not a delegate, nor do I intend to become one.³ You know that you are engaged in a work that I like most. The Bhangi has been the most despised of the Harijans, because his work has been regarded as the most degrading. Many forget the important social service rendered by Bhangis.⁴ But we forgot that our mothers did that very work whilst we were babies innocent of all cleanliness. If that work was ignoble the Bhangi's would be ignoble, but if it was noble the Bhangi's work is also noble. But our mothers cleaned our filth because we were their babies, because they could not do otherwise, because they were wrapped up in us and adored their own selves in us. Their work was thus selfish. The volunteer Bhangi's work is unselfish and so nobler than that of mothers. And if I revere my mother and therefore the whole of womankind, is it not clear that I should adore the volunteer Bhangi even more?

I am, therefore, happy that you have taken upon yourselves this noble work. But you must know how to do it. The work has to be done lovingly and intelligently. Lovingly because those who are responsible for dirt and filth know not what they do, and intelligently because we have to help them to reform their habits and improve their health. An ideal Bhangi is one who knows the principles of nutrition and can trace the quality of the excreta to the kind of health that is possessed by the owner. Thus only can you ennoble

the profession. I say this because I am an expert Bhangi, I have been doing this work for over thirty-five years and I have done it in the proper spirit.

I would, therefore, ask you to approach everyone with kindness and respect, especially because you will come across ignorant people, innocent of the principles of sanitation. You will speak to them gently and explain to them that cleanliness demands that they should observe the sanitation rules of the Congress. If you have achieved this art, I shall regard you as better than Congress delegates. This is not to disparage the delegates, but to tell you what exactly is Congress work. It was not for nothing that I retired from the Congress. I am not a delegate nor even an ordinary member but there is some *rahasya*' behind this.² I saw that I needed not to be a delegate of the Congress so much as I needed to do Congress work. And I hope to continue to do so, so long as my silent service is accepted by the people. For me, to turn the wheel, to be engaged in other handicrafts, to do scavenging and sanitation work in the Congress spirit, is to do Congress work and I should be content to bury myself in a village doing this work as long as God wants me to live on this earth.

Proceeding, the Mahatma observed that it was the primary duty of everyone to be clean and also keep his surroundings clean. Those who did the Bhangi's work should first be their own Bhangis. You must know the full technique of the work and do it in a civilized manner. I have done the work of the Bhangi and I have good experience of that work. Your work does not require any degree. Any man with common sense can do it. It requires a pure and tender heart, as it requires clean and stout hands. If you have both, and address yourselves to this task, 1,200 stalwarts like you will be enough to win swaraj. I said this years ago and I do not hesitate to repeat it now. But have you the required pure hearts?! I have got a demand from volunteers for free admission

to the exhibition and I have reserved the last day for them when other members of their community come here to witness the session. My advice is this, that you must concentrate on your work and refrain from going there; and if you are overanxious, borrow money from friends and see the exhibition. I don't think we should open this exhibition free to all; for these two annas benefit crores of people. Those who have money and still don't spend it will be considered thieves”.

(10)

Discourse on the Limit of Insanitation: Published in Harijan, 18-8-1946, Poona

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-85-LXXXV-I-98: p.99

“Panchgani is a fine hill resort. The air itself is like medicine. Rajas and Maharajas do not frequent it like they do Mussoone and yet there has been no place where the poor could stay. Now at last if there is going to be a small haven for them, it would only be a tardy reparation. But if the present insanitary conditions continue, Panchgani will cease to exist as a health resort. I believe the same is true of Mahabaleshwar too. I am of opinion that such conditions are due to our own fault, rather than to that of Government. I have heard doctors say that everyone knows how to observe personal cleanliness up to a point, but our people do not seem to know the A B C of hygiene and sanitation. The truth of this has to be admitted with sorrow. The following is a vivid account of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta’s observations regarding the lack of proper sanitary arrangements in Panchgani. I give it in the fervent hope that this disgraceful state of affairs will be remedied without undue delay”.

Mahatma Gandhi's Speech On General Knowledge About Health
Translated from Gujarati and published in Indian Opinion 8-2-1913;
 (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi-11-XI : I-341 : pp. 458-9)

“We consume air not only with the lungs, but some portion of it is also taken in through the skin. On the skin, there are pores, minute and innumerable, through which we draw air. Everybody ought to know how a thing so essential may be kept clean. Indeed, as soon as a child's understanding is adequate, he should be taught about the importance of air. If the readers of these chapters perform this easy but important task and, having acquired some general knowledge about air, live according to it, pass on the knowledge to their children and make them act in accordance, I shall regard myself as having fulfilled my task. Latrines, open spaces, narrow lanes [dirtied through misuse] and urinals, where these are separate, are the principal agencies for defilement of air. Few are aware of the harm that can be caused by the filth from latrines. When a cat or dog defecates, it generally paws a hole and, having defecated into it, it covers the faeces over with earth. Where modern water-closets do not exist, this method ought to be followed. We should keep a pail full of dry earth or ash in our latrines. Every time the latrine is used, earth or ash should be sprinkled over the faeces so as to cover them over completely. This will stop the smell, and it cannot then happen that flies and winged insects, having sat on the filth, come in contact with our bodies. One whose nose has not become defective or inured to stench can easily realize how much foul odour, filth kept uncovered can spread. If filth from a latrine were mixed in our food in our presence, we should be sick. But there is not an iota of difference between air laden with the stench from a latrine and food mixed with faeces. If there is, it is only that the latter is visible to our naked eye, while the former is not. Seats, etc., in closets should be kept absolutely clean.

We are ashamed to do this kind of work ourselves, or fret at having to do it, instead of which we should feel disgust at having to use dirty latrines. Why should we not ourselves clean up the filth excreted by our own body, which we make another person, take away? There is absolutely nothing bad about doing this work oneself; having learnt this for ourselves, we must teach it to our children as well. When the pail is full, the contents

should be thrown into a pit, a foot or two deep, and should be well covered over with earth. If one is in the habit of going to the fields to defecate one should go far from where people live. There, one should dig a shallow pit with a spade to get one's business over with and should fully cover the faeces with the earth dug.

We urinate any and everywhere and this fouls the air; it is a habit that must be wholly given up. Where no special place is available for urination, we should go far from where people live; having made water on dry ground, we should sprinkle the spot with earth. There are forceful reasons, however, why excreta should not be buried too deep. One is that the heat of the sun cannot then do its work and the second that it may affect the neighboring springs. We spit on the carpet, on the floor, in the courtyard and wheresoever we can. Spittle is often poisonous. The sputum of a tubercular patient is extremely dangerous. Germs rising from it get into the air inhaled by others and do great harm. Over and above that, the house is dirtied, but that is another matter. In this regard our duty is not to spit any and everywhere inside the house, but to keep a spittoon. Outdoors, one should spit, if one has to, on dry ground where there is plenty of dust. The sputum will mix with the dry earth and the damage will be less. Some doctors are of the opinion that tubercular patients should spit only into receptacles containing germicide. Even if a patient spits onto the dust on dry ground, the germs in his sputum are not destroyed. This dust carrying the germs rises into the atmosphere and infects others. Whether this opinion is right or wrong, we can at least learn this much from it : spitting any and everywhere is a dirty and injurious habit.

Some people are in the habit of throwing food, refuse and peelings, etc., all over. If this garbage was buried in the ground near the surface, it would not foul the air; also it would in due course make useful manure. One should never throw out perishables. It has been found from experience that these suggestions are easily put into practice, once they are understood. We have seen how air is fouled through our bad habits and how this can be stopped. We shall now consider how it should be inhaled”.

(12)

Mahatma Gandhi's Discourse to Deck Passengers on Cleanliness
Translated from Gujarati and published in Indian Opinion, 4-1-1913;
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi -11-XI : I-314 : 426-8

“I have already recounted my experience of how the Immigration Officer at Delagoa Bay behaves.' One reason why we must suffer this is the behaviour of deck passengers. By their general deportment they have created an impression that one can with impunity harass Indians in any way one likes. From my few days' experience of deck [travel] I realized that such criticism is not altogether unjust. There seems to be no limit to the filthiness of deck passengers. Even though facilities for bathing are provided on the ship, many of them rarely take a bath. They feel they cannot bathe in brine from the sea. This is only superstition, but they have clung to it. Some of them bathe only once in a week due to sheer laziness. Many Indians on deck do not change at all and look very slovenly. Many spit right where they happen to be sitting. They have no thought for others' convenience. One of them spat over Mr. Kallenbach's head where he sat. The deck is so covered with leavings and spittle that one shrinks from walking barefoot over it, and if one does, there is every danger of slipping. They also quarrel with one another for places. They foul the latrines by using them so carelessly that even those who observe the minimum of cleanliness cannot but feel revulsion. If this is how we live, no wonder the ship's officers treat us with contempt. And that is precisely what happens.

Furthermore, even those Indians who ought not to be traveling deck class, do so. I believe that, when these Indians who are wealthy and well known as businessmen travel deck class, through sheer miserliness, their rivals, the white traders, cease to be friendly and to think well of them. imagine the Manager of the Standard Bank, who draws an annual salary of £1,000 or more traveling first class on a ship. He discovers an Indian client [travelling] on deck in a wretched condition. The Indian keeps a balance of five to seven thousand pounds in his bank and enjoys credit facilities of the order of £25,000. Every Christmas, moreover, he gives the manager gifts worth twice the deck fare. Though the passenger is clearly far better off, as

far as money goes, than the bank manager, he travels deck class. What thoughts must cross the manager's mind when he sees his client in these circumstances! He cannot but despise us and our money. It is not my desire that we should imitate the whites in these matters. Even so, I would certainly say that when we compete with them in trade and the like and demand the same rights that they have, we should, provided we have the means, give them no opportunity to point an accusing finger at us in matters which do not trouble our conscience. It is the duty of well-to-do people to travel first or second class for the sake of their own prestige and that of India as well and to keep the place absolutely clean. In many situations, we forget our honour.

Those who are poor may travel deck class, but they should do their utmost not to leave any scope for complaint. We shall become happy if we end these self-created difficulties; it will then become the officers' duty to provide us further facilities, a duty they can escape only by fulfilling it. If we had acted in this manner right from the outset, the state of deck passengers would never have been what it is. It is no great matter to [have to] observed cleanliness, to wear clean clothes and to keep them tidy. It only calls for a little care. But what I have said should not be construed to mean that we must not protest against harassment by the ship's crew nor that whatever they do is right; this is not the construction that must be put on it. On the other hand, on the ship by which I travelled as a deck passenger, I tried to get the right thing done in every circumstance; this is the duty of every passenger who is in a position to do so by virtue of his knowledge of English, etc. A passenger from the *Purnea* brought a few facts [to our notice J. If these are correct, it is absolutely necessary that some action be taken to correct this state of affairs. All that I mean is that we, for our part, should not be at fault. If we are ourselves blameless, our complaints will receive a better hearing. Bathing arrangements, whether they are inadequate or totally lacking; lavatories, whether they are too few in number or foul and exposed; meager protection against the cold or the heat; inconvenience as regards cooking; the absence of special places for women; and the shepherding about of passengers [by the crew J from one spot to another as though they were cattle—none of these can be an excuse or an answer for our inadequacies or our slovenly living, whatever we are. Passengers must do something about these deficiencies. Shipping agents ought to intervene in this matter and get the right thing done. My only aim in narrating my experience is that

we should do our duty as men and as Indians, and uphold India's honour III
all circumstances”.
