

# Hindu, Hindustan And Swachatta

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## **Hindu, Hindustan And Swachatta**

*Hindu tradition, seen for example in the "Laws of Manu", a Hindu text some 2,000 years old, encourages defecation in the open, far from home to avoid ritual impurity.*

-14 July 2014, The Economist

You'd think that the world's tallest building – a structure that requires amazingly complex engineering and technology to reach its heights – would have an equally impressive sewage system. Unfortunately, that's not the case because it isn't hooked up to a municipal wastewater treatment system – so when you poop in the Burj Khalifa, that waste is actually trucked out of the city. Trucked out of the city! We're frankly flabbergasted by the inefficiency of such a system. One of the world's most advanced buildings relies on an arcane method to transport wastewater to a treatment facility outside of town. So remember, if you happen to visit and use the Burj Khalifa's restroom, **some unfortunate person has to collect your poop** and drive it out of Dubai.....There are a host of tall buildings in Dubai and many of them aren't connected to a municipal sewage system.....use trucks to take the sewage out of individual buildings and then they wait on a queue to put it into a waste water treatment plant. So it's a fairly primitive system." Trucks often wait in line for up to 24 hours before they can offload their payload..... (The Incredible Story Of How The Burj Khalifa's Poop is Trucked Out of Town by Bridgette Meinhold)

One can see the video of poop trucks at the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pQdjwliLMA>

The Economist has published quite a few articles on Burj Khalifa but never mentioned the above facts (to best of my knowledge).

Whom will 'The Economist' blame for this? Christianity!!!

Because, The tower's architecture and engineering was done by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of Chicago, with Adrian Smith as chief architect, and Bill Baker as chief structural engineer.

Or,

'The Economist' will blame Islam for this?

Because, according to Wikipedia "The design of Burj Khalifa is derived from patterning systems embodied in Islamic architecture. According to the structural engineer, Bill Baker of SOM, the building's design incorporates cultural and historical elements particular to the region such as the spiral minaret."

We all know, The Economist will do none of the above. Hindu's and Hindustan are soft targets for everyone around the world to take potshot. The Economist, in its overdrive to malign Hinduism and Hindustan reduced cleanliness to defecation in open. Directly and indirectly The Economist statement makes four points; which are as follows:

1. European/Christian are hygiene conscious
2. Bible preaches cleanliness
3. Hindu Scripture promote unhygienic conditions
4. Hindu and Hindustan are not hygiene conscious

Let's look at each of the points.

### **1. European/Christian are hygiene conscious**

It was a telling moment. During a reenactment, a few years ago, of the British occupation of Williamsburg in 1781, scarlet-clad British soldiers marched up Duke of Gloucester Street with shrilling fifes and thumping drums. And a foppish gentleman, playing the part of a rich Royalist, minced along beside them, but only after daintily plucking a lace handkerchief from the sleeve of his floral frock coat and clapping it to his nose.

The meaning of this little pantomime brought home to twentieth-century watchers the indisputable fact that eighteenth-century troops-American and French as well as British and German-stank. The citizens of Williamsburg would have smelled pretty ripe, too. Even the dandified Tory would have struck modern nostrils as noticeably aromatic. It's safe to assume that we would have found the entire Old Dominion-in fact, all thirteen colonies-afflicted with B.O. And since everyone stank, no one noticed it or recorded it for history. Sensitive souls might bury their faces in nosegays or scented hankies when a long-unwashed regiment tramped past, but most of our forebears remained as blissfully unaware of their stench as we are of the growing foulness of our air.

Ablutions were skimpy in those days. A little dab here and there with a damp cloth would do you, even in the fashionable capital of Virginia.

- To Bathe or Not to Bathe: Coming Clean in Colonial America, Edwards Park

During my stint in Paris, I discovered that most French homes did not have a bathroom. Instead, they used a contraption called a *bidet* on which they sat astride as on a horse and turned on a tap which shot a shower of warm water into their bottoms and genitals. This, repeated after soaping their private parts, did quite a thorough job. The French sponged their armpits and liberally sprinkled them with talcum powder. A proper body wash was a weekend ritual

performed in a public bath. Most Saturdays, girls from the office where I worked spent an hour or more in these public baths and were ready for a prolonged weekend with their boyfriends. When I rented a house in a suburb of Paris I had to have a bathroom installed....

I am reminded of an exchange of words in the British House of Commons in the early years of World War II. A Labour Minister in charge of power was pleading that a lot of coal could be saved if it was not used to heat water for bathing and a bath a week was good enough. Winston Churchill stood up and remarked, "No wonder the Labour Party is in such bad odour."

- The importance of bathing, Khushwant Singh

Let no one, whoever he may be, before, at or after meals, early or late, foul the staircase, corridors, or closets with urine or other filth.

- English Royal Court, 1589

G M Trevelyan's four-volume collection called illustrated "*English Social History*" does not mention the word 'bath'.

- Smelling sahibs learnt to bathe in India, Manohar Malgonkar

All the fashionable products of personal hygiene developed in Europe are byproduct of Europeans effort to hide their stink. During the Renaissance period, perfumes were used primarily by royalty and the wealthy to mask body odors resulting from the sanitary practices of the day.

One thinks of Versailles as the grandest palace in Europe must also have been it most luxurious. 'In actuality Versailles was a vast cesspool, reeking of filth and befouled with ordure...The odor clung to clothes, wigs, even undergarments. Worst of all, beggars,

The Chinese, when they first encountered the White man described him as "the smelly one".

servants, and aristocratic visitors alike used the stairs, the corridors, any out-of-the-way place to relieve themselves..."I shall never get over the dirt of this country," Horace Walpole grumbled, and he had travelled extensively. (C Erickson, *To the scaffold the life of Marie Antoinette* Robson Books 2000 p. 163)

All the natural cleaning process that they have learned is from India. According to 'Hobson Jobson', Shampoo, is derived from the Hindi word, *champi*, for 'massage'. In fact in *White Mughals*, William Dalrymple notes "Indian women, for example, introduced British men in the delights of regular bathing." After all Perfume and

perfumery originated in Indus civilization. One of the earliest distillation of perfume is mentioned in the Hindu Ayurvedic text *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*. In India, cleanliness was linked to nature and culture. Body was clean and Gajra was perfume as well as room freshener. Rangoli was created after all after cleaning the frontage and as a kid one is never allowed to go to school without taking a bath.

## 2. Bible preaches cleanliness

The Bible makes clear that if you wash someone's feet-and, if you're a woman, dry them with your hair-you've humbled yourself in a suitably Christian way.

- To Bathe or Not to Bathe: Coming Clean in Colonial America, Edwards Park

St Margaret never washed herself; Pope Clement III issued an edict forbidding bathing or even wetting one's face on Sundays. ..In 1736 in Baden (Germany), the authorities issued a warning to students against "the vulgar, dangerous and shocking practice of bathing.....

St. Benedict in the 6th century declared that "to those who are well, and especially the young, bathing shall seldom be permitted." In the early 1200s, St. Francis of Assisi declared personal uncleanliness a sign of piety. St Agnes (d. 1077) never took a bath

- The importance of bathing Khushwant Singh

I wonder if "The Economist" is aware of the above facts.

## 3. Hindu Scripture promote unhygienic conditions

Physical purity is looked upon as the first step towards both "laukika saukhyam" and "paramarthika saadhana". The sastras prescribe five forms of purity: Purity of the physical body, action, character, speech and mind. Ramayana points out that all the residents of Ayodhya took cleanliness as a vow. Valmiki even records how bathrooms were with clean toothbrushes and spotless mirrors. .... The vaidika karyams (rituals) have specific sections of mantras and actions for suddhi or cleansing. Punnyahavachanam is done as a precursor to important religious rites. The words with which we do archana invariably include reference to purity and sanctity.

- "Hygiene and the Hindu Religion", Sarma Sastrigal

Nothing in Hinduism promotes filthiness. Verse after verse in Hindu scriptures expound on the link between cleanliness and godliness. The disinformation

campaign about the nexus between Hinduism and poor hygiene needs to be busted.

Sahana Singh in her article 'Hindu texts not to blame for India's sanitation crisis' has clarified the confusion of 'The Economist'. Following is an excerpt from the same: "What the ancient *Vedas, Manusmriti, Kamasutra* (yes, the *Kamasutra* is not merely about sex) highlight is that distance should be maintained between faeces and human habitation. Distance, in other words, no mixing, no contact between human wastes and the places where people live, eat and sleep. Also, it is specifically mentioned that faeces and urine should not be allowed to come in contact with water bodies. Even in agriculture, the use of raw human waste is expressly prohibited. **It has to be borne in mind that this was centuries before the germ theory of disease was formulated in Europe. Which means, long before Europeans realised that diseases could be transmitted by pathogens from feces, Hindu texts had precluded this from happening.**

In the distant past, when populations were low, people would walk long distances away from homes, away from rivers or wells, defecate into pits, cover them with soil and leave them to get absorbed into soil. They would wash their hands thoroughly with cleaning agents which were naturally available."

In Hinduism every ritual is associated with science or economics, need is to understand and appreciate it.

#### 4. Hindu and Hindustan are not hygiene conscious

Almost till the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century in the British records many writers have eulogized cleanliness in India. One British resident commissioner from then Punjab province has even written that one could eat from the floor.

- Swachh Bharath: Hinduism is intrinsically connected to cleanliness, Sanjay Kumargo

British MP, Lucy Ivimy, was reported to have said that Indians did not know how to dispose of their rubbish and are congenital litterbugs,

- Are Indians by nature unhygienic?, B S Raghavan

#### What changed between 19<sup>th</sup> Century and 20<sup>th</sup> century needs to be looked into?

I will go back to the article of Sahana Singh which says: "In the years before British colonisation, India was well-endowed with lakes, tanks and water harvesting structures. Kings financed the maintenance of the water structures while citizens contributed labour.

The problem arose when populations grew. There were fewer "far-off" places to defecate because where the boundaries of one village ended, another started. ..Poverty made it harder for families to pay much attention to hygiene. ..Under British rule, the maintenance of reservoirs and rainwater harvesting structures was perceived as an unnecessary expense and discontinued. Gradually, water tanks fell into disuse. As people migrated to cities in search of education and jobs, indigenous knowledge of water management and sanitation disappeared completely.

Meanwhile, the flush toilet arrived in cities from Europe and this became the cause of even more pollution for the simple reason that its design principle was based on pollution. It envisaged the mixing of clean water with faeces and disposing it somewhere (usually rivers or lakes).

The hallowed Hindu principle of not mixing waste with clean water was discarded and this let loose a plethora of diseases. Had those principles been researched and developed scientifically into a code of best practices, today India could have been full of eco-friendly toilets that produced excellent fertiliser (perhaps bio-energy too) while its rivers, lakes and wells could have been the cleanest in the world. There would have been no need for the country to import fertilisers at nearly \$700 per tonne.

Instead, flush toilets became popular everywhere and the water (sewage) carrying away the waste from homes was dumped into rivers and lakes. Once sewage is generated, there is a need for sewage treatment plants with a whole range of processes to separate the water from the wastes.

Think about it: mixing clean water with faeces just to transport it and then using a whole lot of energy, chemicals and money to separate solids from water. Does this sound intelligent? It takes just one particle of waste to contaminate hundreds of litres of water. And yet, this practice has become the cornerstone of modern sewage treatment.

..The British did not invest in sewage treatment for India other than in some areas where they lived. When India became independent, its politicians had no idea about how big the sanitation problem would become one day."

The above gives a fair idea of what changed from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Sadly this change continues in 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. Burj Khalifa is a prime example of the same. Let us understand this in more detail in the context of Hindustan.

Hindustan has two parts. Bharat and India; i.e. Rural India and Urban India respectively. If one goes to villages one will find that the rural household clean

their surroundings twice, morning and evening. In fact there is clear division of labour also. Womenfolk do the cleaning inside the household. The outside courtyard is done by the man folk. The waste is always collected separately depending on edible or other stuff and treated accordingly.

The filth started with the urbanization i.e. with India. There was no town planning under socialist and secularist governments. And like every mistake of socialist, secularist even the mismanagement of filth was /is being blamed on Hinduism. One may recall calling poor economy as Hindu rate of Growth, which was essential the result of choking of entrepreneurial spirit of Hindus. Similarly by taking over Hindu temples, socialist and secular governments swindled money to build church and mosques while blaming Hindus for the poor upkeep and filth in and around temples.

And yes, blindly aping the west is another reason. The foolishness of adopting things like flush toilets continues and if one has visited the so called newly designed airports in India, one can recall how the UPA government has tried to make animal out of Indians, yes, one can drink water from a fountain from which water will come out. A drinking fountain, also called a water fountain or bubbler, is a fountain designed to provide drinking water. It consists of a basin with either continuously running water or a tap as fountain. The drinker has to bends down on the fountain and swallows water. This is the way how animals drink water not human beings. It is humiliating to struggle to drink water like an animal or remain thirsty or spend big bucks on buying water.

The first drinking fountain was opened on 21 April 1859 at Holborn Hill on the railings of the church of St Sepulchre-without-Newgate on Snow Hill. (Was this the reason for UPA to adopt it in India?)

Wikipedia has to say the following on cleanliness of water fountains: "In recent studies, it has been found that some water fountains have been contaminated with pathogens such as bacteria. In one study, a virus commonly known to cause diarrhea in young children known as the rotavirus has been found on drinking fountains in child day care facilities."

Article titled "Is it Safe to Drink from Public Drinking Water Fountains?" on [www.livehealthy.com](http://www.livehealthy.com) says "A 13-year-old Oregon student did a project in his school to check if the fountain or the toilet would be cleaner. He swabbed both public objects and then grew whatever was in them. He discovered there was more bacteria in the school fountain than in the toilet."

The article "Where Have All the (Public Water) Fountains Gone? by Bruce Bernard says "The winter break period of 2012 was a busy one for the custodial staff of Washoe County, Nevada schools. According to the Reno Gazette-Journal (January 3, 2013), every hard surface in every school was scrubbed down with a

bleach solution in an effort to control a norovirus outbreak that affected every county elementary, middle and high school facility. The task, which included thorough cleaning of the spouts and basins of drinking fountains, was successful in helping to halt the spread of the highly contagious virus.”

So, after the disease spreads from drinking fountain, again Hindu scriptures will be blamed conveniently forgetting the root cause of origin. In the name of secularism no effort has been made to learn from Mohenjodaro. Everyone regards the sewage system of Mohenjodaro as the largest and best-built sanitation system among contemporary urban centres. This indicates the advanced engineering and urban planning of the Indus Valley civilization.

The sewage system of Mohenjodaro was comprised of ducts covered with bricks and draining pipes running the length of the usually unpaved streets connected by small chutes with most of the houses. These ducts, U-shaped in cross-section, opened into the main collecting channel of the avenue wherefrom the waste was disposed of into either a landfill or a lake. The main collecting channel was covered with bricks, and access to the channel was gained by manhole covers when cleaning was required.

Contrast this with 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Burj Khalifa and Dubai’s drainage system.

In the middle of this an Indian has been working on to make the European technology more appropriate and making not only a difference in India but across the world. Dr Bindeshwari Pathak of Sulabh International developed a technology of two-pit pour-flush toilet, popularly known as the Sulabh Shauchalaya System, which is an appropriate, affordable, indigenous, and culturally acceptable technology. This technology has been declared as one of the Global Best Practices by UN-HABITAT/UNCHS (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) and recognized and approved by various other national and international agencies such as WHO, UNICEF, UNEP and WSSCC. The UNDP Human Development Report–2003 has recommended its use to the 2.6 billion people in the world, especially in developing countries, who have no hygienic toilets in their houses.

While Dr Pathak is working on current generation Rishipal Chavan is working on next generation. Rishipal Chavan a passionate educationist who combines modernity to tradition as per requirement, runs Jiva Public School in Faridabad, which has 1600 student from KG to class 12. It is a challenge to locate toilet in his school. Generally it is the easiest task in any institute, because of the stink. This school is different, there is no stink in it’s toilet.

The school trains the student on hygiene. When the new batch joins, following activity takes place:

- Throw it right: throwing garbage in the dustbin
- Making of Dustbin: creation of dustbin with cardboard, which student can use
- Demonstration: How to use toilet, how to flush, how to stand, how to seat

Besides all these, students are taught to draw 'toilets' and are explained how disease can spread through unhygienic toilets. There is competition of clean toilet between the different floors of the school. Skit and Quiz are conducted on the related points. Visual instructions are placed in the school, which are drawn by the kids. There are also marks assigned for personal and collective hygiene.

Even the most expensive schools have not been able to solve the problem of stinking toilet. While JIVA Public School, makes it look so simple and practical. The school has made 'toilet' a part of education. "Sarve bhavanti niramayah" – 'may all be free of physical impurity' – the Vedic prayer is practiced in the school.

There is no doubt about the fact that today Hindustan is unclean. But it's not because of Hinduism but because of not following Hinduism. Mere developing the physical infrastructure will not instill practice of cleanliness. One will have to follow the culture of Hindus. JIVA has demonstrated it successfully.

The filth that one sees in India today is because of blindly aping western practices and renouncing Hindu practices. In Hinduism, human body is a temple, house is a temple, school was also/in a temple, and so is the place of work. In Hindusim and Hindustan there was and is, no place for filth.

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