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## **Gandhi on Health: A Comprehensive Sketch (with quotations)**

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This sketch of Gandhi's documentable thoughts and practices will neither praise nor criticize<sup>1</sup> and will not analyze connections between his concerns about health and his other concerns. Its 22 sections correspond to the 22 chapters in my book on the same topic;<sup>2</sup> context for what is said in each section is in the corresponding chapter of the book and in its endnotes.

### **1. GANDHI'S YEARNING TO PRACTICE HEALTHCARE**

When the idea that he study in England was mooted in 1888, he wanted to study medicine, but family members said that to study law would be “eco-

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1. FINANCIAL SUPPORT & SPONSORSHIP: None. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

2. Lindley 2019. I will refer to this as LGH, and to Gandhi's *Collected Works* as CWMG.

nomically wiser” and that he must “have nothing to do with dissection of dead bodies”.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi decided, in 1908, that he could serve people better by practicing medicine than by practicing law, but his plan to earn an English MD degree was dropped when he learned that the studies would entail dissecting live frogs and when he decided that it would be sinful “to take part in the abominations that go on in the hospitals. If there were no hospitals for venereal diseases, or even for consumptives, we should have less consumption and less sexual vice amongst us.”<sup>4</sup> Yet healing remained a top concern. Gandhi's secretary said in 1940 that:

“Nursing those who are ailing mentally and physically has been a passion with him throughout his life. Though he chose public law as his profession and then public life has claimed the bulk of his time, the passion has remained and developed from what it once was – a hobby – to a sort of spiritual need.”<sup>5</sup>

## 2. EXAMPLES OF HIS HEALING

When he was assaulted and battered in 1908, he was cared for in the home of a friend whose son recalled, years later:

“The healing of the wounds was slow, and he got impatient. He told my father that if he could get a plaster of ‘clean mud’ on his face, he was sure it would help.... We made the mud plasters, and my mother applied them. Well do we remember the consternation of the doctor when he found out what had been done.... But in two days Mr Gandhi was sitting out on the verandah, in the study armchair, and eating fruit.”<sup>6</sup>

Here are excerpts from three accounts of Gandhi healing other people:

“Mrs Gandhi ... had consulted a doctor, who treated her, but she grew worse.... Gandhi stopped all medicines and refused to allow the doctor to

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3. LGH, pp. 11 and 106. Gandhi 1929, Part I, Chapter xi. CWMG, vol. ix, pp. 395 and 482, and vol. xxvi, pp. 299-300.

4. LGH, pp. 11-12 and 106. Guha 2013, pp. 60 and 288-289.

5. LGH, pp. 12-24 and 107. Desai, Mahadev 1940.

6. LGH, pp. 16-17 and 108. Doke, Clement M. 1920s, “Recollections of Mahatma Gandhi”, in *SI*, 40-41 (republished in *VA*, 97- 98).

try and force his patient to take meat extracts.... He fed her at intervals with pure lemon juice, and no other food or drink of any kind was given to her. He poured his calm energy into her, and did for her all the little delicate duties that a very sick woman required.

“For ... two weeks Mrs Gandhi semi-consciously struggled for life, but by the end of that time ... [her] conscious periods were much longer, sleep became more natural, the dropsical swellings became less, and the eyes began to look clearer. Then by slow degrees, a little fruit and milk were given, and lastly vegetables without condiments, and cereals. And without a single relapse, Mrs Gandhi slowly but surely returned to health.”<sup>7</sup>

“Mr C----- had been under medical treatment on and off for some months, and at last the doctors had ordered an immediate operation for appendicitis, much to the concern of our friends, the D-----s.

"Mr D----- came to Mr Gandhi and talked the matter over with him.... Mr D----- went straight from Mr Gandhi ... to the lodgings of his friend [Mr C] and carried him on his back to his own house ... [where] Mr C----- was put to bed, douched, made to fast, and nursed largely according to Mr Gandhi's directions, and he made a speedy recovery from the acute attack. As soon as Mr Gandhi thought him fit, the patient was put on a light, non-flesh diet, and his strength was gradually built up. I knew of him for many years after that, but he stuck to the diet and internal cleanliness and never once had a relapse or a recurrence of the trouble.”<sup>8</sup>

“I was rheumatic since childhood. The doctors had tried numerous treatments, but the symptoms kept erupting.... The soul-filling experience [of how Gandhi treated me] is fresh in my mind even after twenty years. I was cured of rheumatism for good.”<sup>9</sup>

### **3. HIS SHARPEST CRITIQUE OF WESTERN MEDICAL PRACTICES**

He said, in 1909:

“Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies and immorality increases. European doctors are the worst.... [T]hey kill annually thousands of animals.... Most of their medical prepara-

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7. LGH, pp. 17-18 and 108. Polak 1931, pp. 105-107.

8. LGH, pp. 16 and 108. Polak 1931, pp. 104-105.

9. LGH, pp. 19-20 and 108. Patel 1990, Part 2, Chapter 9.

tions contain either animal fat or spirituous liquors; both of these are tabooed by Hindus and Mohammedans.... To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery.

"[T]he profession of medicine ... is ... [often] not taken up for the purpose of serving humanity. We become doctors so that we may obtain honours and riches.... Doctors make a show of their knowledge, and charge exorbitant fees. The populace, in its credulity and in the hope of ridding itself of some disease, allows itself to be cheated."<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH MODERN CHEMISTRY

His chemistry teacher in secondary school had been wretched. Gandhi said, in 1925:

"I well remember the classes that I used to attend on chemistry. It seemed to me then to be one of the dullest subjects.... [M]y teacher ... asked me to learn by heart all those awful-sounding names without knowing what they [the chemicals] were. He never agreed to place even the different metals before me. I had simply to learn things by heart. He brought frightful notes carefully written by him, read those notes to us; we had to copy those notes and memorize them. I revolted and failed in that one subject."<sup>11</sup>

The following books were among the *ca.*5000 he owned in 1933 (when he gave them all to Ahmedabad's municipal library): Samuel Cooke, *First Principles of Chemistry: An Introduction to Modern Chemistry for Schools and Colleges* (1875); J.E. Reynolds, *Experimental Chemistry for Junior Students* (1887-88); W.A. Tilden, *Introduction to the Study of Chemical Philosophy: The Principles of Theoretical and Systematic Chemistry* (1888); H.E. Roscoe, *Chemistry* (1897); J.B. Chapman, *Biochemistry: A Domestic Treatise* (1900). H.E. Roscoe, *Inorganic Chemistry for Beginners* (1913); R.A. Gregory, *Elementary Physics and Chemistry: First Stage ... Second Stage ... Third Stage* (1911-14); R.A. Gregory, *Introductory Chemistry* (1914); H.E.H. Pratt, *Chemistry and First Aid* (1914); G.H. Bailey, *The Tutorial Chemistry* (1919).<sup>12</sup>

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10. LGH, pp. 23-25 and 111. CWMG, vol. x, p.63.

11. LGH, pp. 27 and 111. CWMG, vol. xxvi, pp. 301-302.

12. LGH, pp. 26 and 111. Bhavsar *et al.* 2011, pp. 1-2, 5 and 117-146.

## 5. HOW HE USED THE WORDS “QUACK” AND “QUACKERY”

These examples are from before the 1920s:

“[Western] medical science is based on inconclusive experiments. Most of it is quackery.”<sup>13</sup>

“Quackery is infinitely preferable to what passes for high medical skill.”<sup>14</sup>

“One word from the quack physician [Gandhi himself]....”<sup>15</sup>

These are from the 1920s:

“My quarrel with the professors of the Ayurvedic system is that many of them... are mere quacks.”<sup>16</sup>

“I have nothing but praise for the zeal, industry and sacrifice that have animated the modern [Western] scientists in the pursuit after truth.... [O]ur [Indian] *hakims* and *vaids* do not exhibit that spirit in any mentionable degree. They follow without question formulas. They carry on little investigation. The condition of indigenous medicine is truly deplorable. Not having kept abreast of modern research, their profession has fallen largely into disrepute. I am hoping that this [Indian medical] ... college will set its face absolutely against all quackery, Western or Eastern.”<sup>17</sup>

## 6. TEN WESTERN-TYPE DOCTORS – AND A WESTERN-TYPE PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMIST – WHOSE EXPERTISE HE ESTEEMED

The MDs included Thomas Allinson (1858-1918),<sup>18</sup> Pranjivan Mehta (1864-1932)<sup>19</sup> and Josiah Oldfield (1863-1953)<sup>20</sup> in England, Lancelot Parker Booth

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13. LGH, pp. 29 and 112. CWMG, vol. xii, p. 164.

14. LGH, pp. 28 and 112. CWMG, vol. ix, pp. 477-482.

15. LGH, pp. 28 and 112. CWMG, vol. xi, p. 352.

16. LGH, pp. 30 and 112. CWMG, vol. xxvii, p. 222.

17. LGH, pp. 29 and 112c. xix, pp. 356-358. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 16 and 31.

18. LGH, pp. 33-34, 62 and 111. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 7-8 and 21. CWMG, vol. i, pp. 40 and 120; vol. xi, p. 501; vol. xii, pp. 558 and 561; vol. xxxiii, p. 379; vol. xxxix, pp. 43, 54-55, 166 and 285-296; and vol. xlvi, p. 327. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Allinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Allinson) and the accounts of Allinson that are listed in the "Reference" and "Further Reading" sections of that article.

(1851-1925)<sup>21</sup> in Africa, and Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882-1962),<sup>22</sup> Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari (1880-1936),<sup>23</sup> A.K. Dalal (18??-19??),<sup>24</sup> Jivraj Mehta (1887-1978),<sup>25</sup> M.D.D. Gilder (1882-1979)<sup>26</sup> and Sushila Nayyar (1914-2001)<sup>27</sup> in India. He respected likewise Khwaja Abdul Hamied (1898-1972), who founded CIPLA and who had “learned the lesson of truth and ahimsa at Mahatma’s feet”.<sup>28</sup>

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19. LGH, pp. 31 and 112-114. Guha 2013, pp. 149 and 420. Mehrotra 2014. Pal 2017. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 5, 7, 21 and 58. CWMG, vol. iii, pp. 57, 130, 271 and 310, and more than 200 pages in other volumes.
20. LGH, pp. 33 and 112. Dellar 2008. See Oldfield's anonymous obituary in *The Glasgow Herald*, 3 February 1953, and [www.ordergoldenage.co.uk/dr-josiah-oldfield/publications/](http://www.ordergoldenage.co.uk/dr-josiah-oldfield/publications/). Bhargava *et al.* 2019, p. 21. CWMG, vol. i, pp. 41, 49 and 160; vol. vi, pp. 23, 32, 33, 56, 58, 84, 90, 99, 136, 157, 158, 170, 224, 229, 269 and 379; vol. ix, p. 286; vol. xxxvii, p. 37; vol. xxxviii, p. 199; vol. xxxix, pp. 53-54; vol. xlvi, p. 326; vol. xlix, p. 508; vol. lx, p. 357; and vol. lxx, p. 355.
21. LGH, pp. 34, 46 and 113. Pelteret 2008. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, p. 21, 27, 57 and 59. CWMG, CWMG, vol. i, p. 98; vol. iii, pp. 96, 126, 131, 151-154, 158, 166, 172-173, 216 and 261-262; vol. v, p.311; vol. viii, p. 89; vol. xii, pp. 464-465; vol. xiii, p. 63; vol. xxix, p. 66; vol. xxxix, pp. 141, 164, 173-174 and 252; and vol. xlvi, p. 386. Baxter 2017, p.12.
22. LGH, pp. 35-36, 40, 39, 95, 120 and 123. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 16, 20 and 31. CWMG, vol. 21, pp. 225, 440 and 441 and 150 pages in other volumes. See [https:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Bidhan\\_Chandra\\_Roy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bidhan_Chandra_Roy) and the biographical essays listed in the "Reference" section of that article.
23. LGH, pp. 35-37 and 113. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 16, 23 and 31. CWMG, vol. lxiii, pp. 272-273 and more than 200 other pages in various volumes, but often in reference to non-medical issues. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Mukhtar\\_Ahmed\\_Ansari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mukhtar_Ahmed_Ansari).
24. Balram Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 6, 11, 13-14, 16, 21, 31 and 59. Guha 2016. Although it is not known when Dr Dalal was born and died, he belongs in this "top ten" list because some of his interactions with Gandhi were peculiar and were remarkably educative for Gandhi (see [www.icmr.gov.in/icmrobject/custom\\_data/e-books/gandhi-ebook/index.html#p=24](http://www.icmr.gov.in/icmrobject/custom_data/e-books/gandhi-ebook/index.html#p=24)) and because Gandhi remembered him: see CWMG, vol. xv, p. 77; vol. xxiii, pp. 191, 352-353 and 371; vol. xxiv, p. 37; vol. xxv, p. 112; vol. xxx, pp. 457, 485 and 566; vol. xxxi, pp. 28, 55 and 128; vol. xxxiii, p. 261; vol. xxxiv, pp. 145, 275 and 532; vol. xxxix, p. 362; vol. xl, p. 403; vol. xliii, p. 223; vol. l, p. 462; vol. li, pp. 441, 443, and 448-449.
25. LGH, pp. 38 and 113. CWMG, vol. xv, p. 47 and more than 100 pages in other volumes. See the section entitled "Doctor of Mahatma Gandhi" at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jivraj\\_Narayan\\_Mehta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jivraj_Narayan_Mehta) and [www.veethi.com/india-people/jivraj\\_narayan\\_mehta-profile-8811-19.htm](http://www.veethi.com/india-people/jivraj_narayan_mehta-profile-8811-19.htm).
26. LGH, pp. 38-39 and 113-114. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 16, 21 and 31. CWMG, vol. li, p. 261; vol. lii, pp. 176 and 294; vol. lv, p. 370; vol. lxi, p. 327; vol. lxii, p. 171; vol. lxiii, pp. 315-316, 326 and 368; vol. lxxv, p. 398; vol. lxxvii, p. 357; vol. lxxviii, pp. 111, 305 and 417; vol. lxxix, pp. 82, 310, 338, 387 and 431; vol. lxx, pp. 24, 60 and 163; vol. lxxiv, p. 240; vol. lxxv, p. 135; vol. lxxvii, pp. 205, 209, 213, 227, 230, 234, 242, 253-254, 257 and 295; vol. lxxx, pp. 247 and 251; vol. lxxxi, pp. 17 and 414; vol. lxxxiv, p. 55; vol. lxxxv, pp. 61, 214 and 457-458; vol. lxxxvi, p. 169; vol. lxxxvii, pp. 238, 497 and 516; and vol. lxxxix, pp. 3 and 506.
27. LGH, 40-44 and 114-116. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, pp. 16 and 31. CWMG, vol. xliv, pp. 62, 97 and 272, and hundreds of pages in other volumes. Nayyar 1960. Nayyar 1991, Chapters 5 and 19.
28. LGH, 45 and 116. Hamied 1972, pp. vi and 145. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, p. 152.

## 7. WHAT HE EXPECTED MILITARY FIRST-AID WORKERS TO KNOW

“General anatomy, including description of the internal subdivisions in the abdomen, the prominent bones, the arteries and the veins.

“Descriptions of the ordinary wounds such as are sustained on the battlefield and the various types of bandages for them: on the skull, the abdomen, the fingers, the legs and so on.

“Tourniquet, for arresting bleeding, ... and also extra-curricular improvised techniques, such as with a pebble.

“The method of treatment in the absence of medical apparatus, e.g., warm ashes in the absence of boiled water, paper and cotton ashes; newspaper, etc.... in the absence of dry cloth or flannel....

“‘Primitive’ remedies in the absence of medical aid for drowning, snakebite and scorpion-sting.

“Stretcher drill for carrying the wounded or sick persons and making an emergency stretcher with a gun or a stick and a jacket....

“It may be that something is being omitted [in this list which Gandhi prepared from recollections of his military service rendered many years before]. Most of it [the topic] is covered by the book written by Kettle. Many things are also to be found in ‘St. John’s Ambulance’.”<sup>29</sup>

Here is how he treated scorpion-sting when an illiterate African “came howling to Babu”:

“Without wasting a moment he washed that part of the Negro’s hand thoroughly clean with water, dried it, and then started sucking the poison out of the sting ... with such vim and gusto that much of the poison was drawn out, and the poor man began to feel better. Then Babu applied various other treatments, and the Negro got rid of his pain.”<sup>30</sup>

## 8. HIS PRECEPTS RE: PHYSICAL EXERCISE

In London in the early 1890s, he

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29. LGH, pp. 46-47 and 116. CWMG, vol. lxxviii, pp.168-169.

30. LGH, pp. 47 and 116. Kalelkar 1950, p. 61.

“...used to walk about eight miles ... in ... three walks daily.... I never suffered from ill health except once when I suffered from bronchitis owing to overwork [as a student] and neglect of exercise.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1913 he said:

“Just as food is necessary for the mind as much as for bones and flesh, so also is exercise necessary both for body and mind. If the body has no exercise, it is sickly, and if the mind has none, it is dull.

“The exercise obtained from sports such as cricket leaves much to be desired in one way and another. We must, therefore, think of a form of exercise something like what the farmer gets. Businessmen and others similarly placed can make a garden round their house and regularly spend two to four hours a day digging there. If we are living in a rented room, we should not raise any difficulty about working in another’s land, for that would indicate a small mind. We would derive nothing but benefit from working on land, no matter to whom it belongs.

“Apart from working on land, the best form of exercise is walking. Our fakirs and sadhus are very healthy. One reason for this is that ... their journeys are always performed on foot.

“Walking results in rapid circulation of blood in all the parts of the body, promotes movements in every organ, and strengthens it. One should remember that the arms move during walking. A walk, to be worth the name, should cover ten or twelve miles. Those who cannot do this regularly can take long walks on Sundays.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1947 he said that for a person engaged in intellectual work, to do daily physical work as well would improve “the quality of his intellectual output”.<sup>33</sup>

## **9. HIS BOOK, *KEY TO HEALTH* (1942)**

Here are some excerpts (without indications of elision) from his list of topics covered in that book:

*“PART I.”*

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31. LGH, pp. 48 and 116. CWMG, vol. i, p.120.

32. LGH, pp. 48-49 and 116. CWMG, vol. xii, p. 22.

33. Lindley 2119, p. 49 and 116. CWMG, vol. lxxxvi, p. 437.



“THE HUMAN BODY: The human body in health. Prize fighters and health. Human activity and the ten senses. The human body is the universe in miniature. Happy working of the human machine. [A] temple for the spirit to live in. Human body for service.

“AIR: Oxygen. [V]entilation. Breathing through the mouth ... through the nose. Cleaning the nose. Sleeping in the open. How to cover the body. Night clothes.

“WATER: How much water or liquid food during 24 hours? Drinking water must be pure. Water from wells, rivers and tanks. Boiled water. Water and religion.

“FOOD: Nourishment of the body. Flesh foods. Milk – animal food. Milk and sterile eggs same kind of food. Man – a vegetarian. Fruits – fresh and dry. Consequences of exclusion of milk from my diet. Goat’s milk. The letter and spirit of the vow. Necessity of milk in diet. Drawbacks of milk. Domesticated animals hardly perfectly healthy. Apparently healthy animals in fact diseased. Boiled milk for safety. Cattle slaughtered for meat. Balanced diet. Tissue-building substances. Wheat, rice, *juwar* and other cereals. One cereal at a time. Wheat – king among cereals. Flour with *bhusi* or pericarp. Food value of *bhusi*. Pericarp of the rice grain. Limit of pounding rice. Polishing – why popular. Advantages of proper mastication. Pulses. Food without pulses. Milk and pulses for whom. Varieties of pulses – difficult and easy to digest. Flesh food and pulses. Vegetables and fruits. A slur on the administration of India. Green vegetables for villagers. Land legislation bad from villagers’ standpoint. Leafy vegetables. Starch-supplying vegetables. Certain vegetables to be eaten raw. Best time for taking fruit. Banana. Milk and banana make a perfect meal. Amount of *ghee* to be taken per day. Sweet oil, groundnut oil and cocoa-nut oil. Oil and *ghee* sold in the bazar generally useless. Brown and white sugar. Proper proportion of daily intake of sugar. Sweet foods. Taking sweets equivalent to robbery. Fried foods. *Puris* and *laddus* etc. Englishmen and our customary food. Hunger and relish. How often and how much to eat. Parents and children. Mother’s food during pregnancy.

“CONDIMENTS: Salt. Salts destroyed by cooking. Several condiments not required for the human body. Condiments as medicines. A vitiated palate. Death by chillies. Negroes will not touch condiments. Englishmen and condiments.

“TEA, COFFEE AND COCOA: Use of tea started as a test of boiled water. How to prepare tea. Effect of tannin on the stomach and intestines. Tea

drinking and ailments resulting from it. Boiled hot water mixed with milk and sugar. Vegetable soup in place of tea. Hot water, honey and lemon make a healthy drink.

“INTOXICANTS: [A]lcohol, *bhang*, *ganja*, and opium. Country-made liquor and *arak*. Alcohol makes a man forget himself. Limited and regulated consumption of alcohol useful? *Tadi* and the Parsis. *Nira* a laxative. Palm jaggery can well replace sugarcane jaggery. Jaggery and refined sugar. Foodstuffs richer in their natural states. Indentured labourers and drinking. The law regarding liquor in South Africa. Liquor and African Negroes. Princes and the rich youth.

“OPIUM: Devastating effects in Assam and Orissa. Opium and China. Opium addict will stoop to anything to procure it. The Opium War. English agitation against the immoral trade. Place of opium in the *materia medica*.

“TOBACCO: Tobacco has worked havoc among mankind. Smokers callous of others’ feelings. Tobacco and the dirty habit of spitting. Tobacco kills finer feelings. All smokers not bad men. [S]nuffing. Sensible chewers. Vast majority unabashedly soil all places.

“BRAHMACHARYA: Self-restraint and realization of the self. *Brahmacharya* and control over the sexual instinct. A *brahmachari* should be free from anger. True control over the sexual organ. *Brahmacharya* bespeaks of possession of vital force. *Brahmacharya* and company of women. *Brahmacharya* and conception of beauty. How a *brahmachari* behaves. *Brahmachari* and impotence. An impotent man not free from sexual desire. Sublimation. The author’s experiments. *Brahmacharya* and conservation of sexual secretions. The power of the vital fluid [semen]. True use of the vital fluid. Marriage and sexual intercourse. Married *brahmacharis*. [I]nter-course performed as a duty. Common experience and progress. What is true of things physical also true of things spiritual. Men and women in the early days mated promiscuously like animals. Discovery of the law of self-restraint. Investigation of the possibilities of the law of self-restraint. Conservation of the vital fluid natural. Food and the vital fluid. A *brahmachari*’s intellectual capacities. Conservation of vital energy, key to health. Rules of conservation of vital force. Root of sexual desire in thought. *Japa* and conservation of vital force. Thoughts, reading and talking. Control over speaking. Avoid erotic literature. Refreshing sleep. Brisk walking in the open. Laziness enemy of self-restraint. Keep hands and feet, eyes and ears healthily occupied. A man becomes what he eats. Control the palate and the senses are controlled. Realization of God. How man should look upon

woman. How woman should look upon man. The effort for *brahmacharya* a joy in itself. A few words about contraceptives. The practice of preventing progeny not new. Avoid contraceptives as poison. True conjugal love.

“PART II.”

“EARTH: Science of natural therapeutics. Just’s *Return to Nature*. Use of earth. Constipation and mud poultice. How to make a mud poultice. Mud can cure snake bite. Mud poultice relieves headache in most cases. Mud poultice cures ordinary boils. Mud poultice prepared in potassium permanganate lotion. Use of earth on a wasp sting. Use of earth on scorpion bite. Scorpion a nuisance in Sewagram. Application of mud poultice in high fever. Use of earth in typhoid fever. Experience of typhoid in Sewagram. Mud poultice a substitute for antiphlogistine. A little oil and salt with mud serves as antiphlogistine. Kinds of clay. Clean earth emits a delicate smell. Problem of getting earth in cities. Sticky earth no good. Gritty earth equally bad. Never use earth from manured soil. Heat earth to sterilize it. Same poultice can be used often. How to obtain clean clay. Eating earth to help relieve constipation.

“WATER: Hydrotherapy. Kuhne’s hip bath. Kuhne’s sitz bath. Proper size of the tub. Rigorous fanning to cool water. Tub kept against the bathroom wall. How to sit in the tub. How to apply friction. Hip bath brings down temperature. [R]educes constipation. Bath should not be given on a full stomach. A brisk walk after bath. Bath efficacious in hyperpyrexia. Kuhne on the real cause of fever. Hip bath and fever. Medical profession and naturopathy. Nature-cure methods can be safely practiced by laymen. Cold water and headache. Friction bath and the organ of reproduction. Cleansing the sexual organ makes the seminal emission less likely. Wet sheet pack very useful in pyrexia and insomnia. The method of giving wet sheet packs. The results of wet sheet pack: sleep, fall in temperature. Wet sheet pack and pneumonia and typhoid. Wet sheet packs also useful in the treatment of prickly heat, urticaria, skin irritation, measles, smallpox etc. The sheet used should be sterilized and washed with soap and water. Ice-massage and circulation of blood. Therapeutics of hot water. Hot water as effective as iodine in cases of earache and other injuries. Use of iodine attended with risks. Hot water relieves pain to a certain extent in cases of scorpion bite. Hot boiling water subsides a shivering fit or rigour. Steam baths most useful in rheumatism and other joint pains. Method of taking steam bath. Steam and *angithi*. *Neem* leaves or other herbs and steam. Steam gives relief in cases of aching of legs, common cold and sore throat.

“AKASH: a difficult word to translate. *Akash* and God. Should not put any partition between ourselves and the sky. *Akash* and cleanliness and health. Sleeping in the open. *Akash* and food. Nature and fasting.

“SUN. Man cannot do without sunlight. Sunbath. Morning sun an all-round tonic. Sunbath and diseases. Mud poultice, banana or other leaves used to protect the head from the strong sunlight during sunbath.

“AIR.... See Chapter II, Part I.”<sup>34</sup>

(Gandhi's use of the headings, “Earth”, “Water”, “*Akash*”, “Sun” (medieval Western writers would have said “Fire”) and “Air” was due to the heritage of Islamic chemical and medical theory.)

## 10. HIS VEGETARIANISM

Gandhi's parents were vegetarian. When he was 13 years old, he and a Muslim schoolmate secretly ate some goat meat, and he decided that a carnivorous diet would be healthier but that he would remain vegetarian for the rest of his childhood to avoid strife or (further) deception at home.<sup>35</sup> But then in London he read (at the age of 19) a book entitled *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, became active in the London Vegetarian Society, and in due time read several other books (described in *Gandhi and Health*) on vegetarian nutrition.<sup>36</sup>

For a while in 1918 he believed that “a dozen or two oranges [daily, and no other food whatever] were enough to maintain his nutrition”.<sup>37</sup>

In 1934 he said that:

“Juicy fruit is the most faultless diet. Milk products are most essential for energy. Fresh, unboiled milk is best. Too many articles of food should not be eaten in a day. Each article should be eaten separately. Among the

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34. LGH, pp. 50-60 and 116. The "Subject Index" in Gandhi 1948.

35. LGH, pp. 61 and 117. Gandhi 1927, Part I, Chapters vi and vii.

36. LGH, pp. 61-63 and 117. Gandhi 1927, Part I, Chapter xiv. Guha 2013, pp. 52-53 and 83-84. CWMG, vol. i, pp. 91, 98-99 and 199; vol. xii, p. 271; vol. xxxiii, p. 398, vol xxxiv, pp. 13-14; vol. liii, pp. 36 and 179; and vol. lxii, pp. 101 and 170. (See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Harvey\\_Kellogg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Harvey_Kellogg).)

37. Bhargava *et al.* 2019, p. 13. (See [www.icmr.gov.in/icmrobject/custom\\_data/e-books/gandhi-ebook/index.html#p=24](http://www.icmr.gov.in/icmrobject/custom_data/e-books/gandhi-ebook/index.html#p=24)).

cereals wheat is good. (Rice is unnecessary. Pulses [i.e. peas and beans] are unnecessary. This much in brief.”<sup>38</sup>

In 1942 he estimated as follows the foods required daily by adults “of sedentary habits”: fresh fruit “according to one’s taste and purse”, but preferably including the juice of 2 lemons or limes; 2 pounds of cow’s milk; 6 ounces (as measured when raw) of cereal grain (wheat, rice, bajri); 3 ounces (measured when raw) of leafy vegetables; 5 ounces (measured when raw) of other cooked vegetables; 1 ounce of raw vegetables (i.e. salad); some salt “added afterwards according to taste”; 1½ ounce of ghee (liquid clarified butter) or else 2 ounces of butter; and 1½ ounce of gur (an Indian equivalent to molasses) or sugar.<sup>39</sup>

The rice served at his ashrams was whole-grain.<sup>40, 41</sup>

## **11. HIS DENTAL PROBLEMS**

The last two of his teeth were extracted in 1936, so then he used artificial dentures (which he would keep in a little oval box when not taking a meal, and would clean properly with water).<sup>42</sup>

## **12. HIS CRITIQUE OF MEDICAL METHODS CRUEL TO ANIMALS OR OTHERWISE CONTRARY TO HIS SENSE OF VEGETARIANISM**

After avoiding vivisection by deciding in 1909 not to become an MD, he maintained his opposition in the 1920s:<sup>43</sup>

“Vivisection in my opinion is the blackest of ... crimes that man is at present committing.”

“I abhor vivisection with my whole soul.”

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38. LGH, pp. 63 and 118. CWMG, vol. lvii, p. 390.

39. LGH, pp. 64-65 and 118. CWMG, vol. lxxvii, p. 12.

40. LGH, pp. 64 and 118. Kalelkar 1950, pp.136-137.

41. See also Gavaravarapu and Hemalata 2019, and Slate 2019.

42. LGH, pp. 66 and 118. The last two of Gandhi's natural teeth are on display in the National Gandhi Museum (in New Delhi), together with his equipment for storing and cleaning his artificial teeth.

43. LGH, pp. 67 and 118. CWMG, vol. xix, p. 357 and vol. xxxii, p. 494.

“To kill living animals for medicinal purposes ... is the work of the devil.”

Despair is apparent in the following remarks he made in 1937:

“I have before me nearly fifty letters from America asking me to do what I can to prevent the export of ... monkeys from India to America for purposes of vivisection.... If I had the power, I would not send a single monkey abroad for vivisection or slaughter. My advice to my correspondents is that they should promote representations to the Government of India which, if they are well supported, are bound to be listened to by them. The other way obviously is a strong public agitation in India against the practice of sending monkeys abroad. Of this, so far as I can see, there is not much prospect. The public hardly know that there is any export of monkeys. And I do not know how to prevent private persons from carrying on what must be to them a lucrative trade. All, therefore, that I can do is to express the pious wish that India will be no party to what is undoubtedly an inhuman practice.”<sup>44</sup>

He considered it cruel to derive smallpox vaccine from cows. Here are three snippets from the chapters on smallpox in a long essay which he published in 1913:

“Vaccination [is] a savage custom.... Taking vaccine from a cow’s udder is an act of extreme cruelty to thousands of living creatures.... This cruelty is no credit to man’s sense of pity, and it behoves him, therefore, to forego any benefit that may accrue from it.”<sup>45</sup>

In 1926 he told a friend, “I do not think that the vaccine is obtained by killing cows. But I believe that it requires torturing them.”<sup>46</sup> During the six weeks just before the 1930 Salt March, children of three senior members of his commune died of smallpox, and one of his most trusted assistants pleaded with him, “I know that you do not stop anyone from vaccination. However, I wish you would advocate its use.” Gandhi said:

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44. LGH, pp. 67 and 118. CWMG, vol. lxvi, pp. 139-140.

45. LGH, pp. 68 and 118. CWMG, vol. xii, pp. 110-112 and 115-117.

46. LGH, pp. 68 and 118. CWMG, vol. CW, xxx, p. 418.

“I have no doubt in my mind that vaccination is harmful in the end. I may be entirely mistaken. But holding the views that I do, how can I recant? What would my love of truth and my adherence to principle mean if they were to vanish at the slightest [adverse] touch of reality?”<sup>47</sup>

### **13. HIS BELIEF IN “NATURE CURE” (FEATURING HYDROTHERAPY AND MUD-CURES AS WELL AS VEGETARIAN DIET)**

He admired the following two originally German books: *The New Science of Healing ... Without Medicines and Without Operations*, by Louis Kuhne (who had established a hydrotherapy clinic in Leipzig in 1883) and *Return to Nature: Paradise Regained*, by Adolf Just (who had begun in 1895 to establish commercially profitable rural mud-cure clinics in Germany). Gandhi recalled in 1947 that those books had, “over forty years ago”, made him “a confirmed convert to nature-cure”.<sup>48</sup> But he meanwhile (in 1937) said that

“Those who purchase Just’s book ... should not take everything in it to be gospel truth. A writer almost always presents one aspect of a case, whereas every case can be seen from no less than seven points of view, all of which are probably correct by themselves, but not correct at the same time and in the same circumstances. And then many books are written with a view to gaining customers and earning name and fame. Let those, therefore, who read such books as these do so with discernment, and take advice of some experienced man before trying any of the experiments set forth, or let them read the books with patience and digest them thoroughly before acting upon them.”

Chapter 13 of *Gandhi on Health* (LGH) includes a lot of information about his relevant views in the mid-1940s, including his view that “most naturopaths ... do not agree [with one another] and they are obstinate and even lazy”.<sup>49</sup>

### **14. HIS ADVOCACY OF FASTING AS A CURATIVE TECHNIQUE**

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47. LGH, pp. 69 and 119. Desai 2009, vol. ii (*Satyagraha* (1915-1930)), pp. 584-585.

48. LGH, pp. 71-72 and 120. CWMG, vol. lxxxviii, p. 23.

49. LGH, pp. 74 and 121. CWMG, vol. lxxix, pp. 51-52.

His 1913 essay on health and healthcare includes remarks to the effect that treatment for certain diseases “should begin with a 36-hour fast” and that

“Fever has its origin generally in some stomach trouble. The first step to be taken therefore is fasting. The notion that a weak person or one suffering from fever will be weakened by fasting is entirely mistaken. By stopping all intake of food, we give the stomach a chance to do its work. The fast, therefore, must be continued for at least a day or longer.”<sup>50</sup>

In 1925 he said it would be good to

“fast if you are constipated, if you are anaemic, if you are feverish, if you have indigestion, if you have a headache, if you are rheumatic, if you are gouty, if you are fretting and fuming, if you are depressed, [or] if you are overjoyed; and you will [thus] avoid medical prescriptions and patent medicines.”<sup>51</sup>

## **15. HIS FINDING THAT OVERWORK AND GETTING TOO LITTLE SLEEP ARE UNHEALTHY HABITS**

According to personal disciple of Gandhi’s,

“In 1936-37, Bapu ...used to get up at two or three in the morning to write his letters. ‘Bapuji,’ I said, ‘you wrote a book about health, did you not? You have dealt with everything there ranging from food and digestion to sexual continence; but ... you have left out one most important matter.’ ‘Which?’ asked Bapu, his interest quickened at last. ‘Sleep’, I said. ‘You are careful regarding everything but sleep! If your work increases, it’s your poor sleep that is invariably sacrificed. How long can this go on, Bapu?...’

“Some time passed; [then, one day,] Mahadev said to me, ‘Bapu is not feeling well today. He is sleeping. The moment he awoke this morning he said, “I am feeling rather ill today. My blood-pressure must have increased. Better send for the doctor.” An unheard-of thing, as you know, for Bapu to talk of sending for a doctor for himself.’

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50. LGH, pp. 80 and 121. CWMG, vol. xii, pp. 97 and 103.

51. LGH, pp. 81 and 122. CWMG, vol. xxix, pp. 315-318.



“...After that, Bapu made it a rule to pay his debt to sleep as punctiliously as he paid all his other debts.”<sup>52</sup>

## 16. HIS FOCUS ON HYGIENE AND SANITATION

Gandhi said in 1907 that the charge that Indians in Africa were dirty was

“...by and large justified.... We should so behave that the Whites’ prejudices against us are weakened....

“Avoid, as far as possible, blowing your nose or spitting on swept or paved walks or in the presence of others....

“If you want to cough, hold your handkerchief against your mouth.

“In many men, even after a bath some dirt remains in the ears or under the nails. It is necessary to pare one’s nails and keep them as well as the ears clean.

“Those who do not grow a regular beard should, if necessary, shave every day.

“One should not let mucus accumulate in the corners of the eyes.

“Every act of cleaning the body should be done in privacy.

“The turban or cap and the shoes should be clean.

“Those who chew betel-leaf and nut should do so at fixed hours, as with other kinds of food, so as to avoid giving the impression that we are eating all the time. Those who chew tobacco have a lot to think about. They disfigure every spot by spitting. Addicts to tobacco spoil the corner of the house where they chew tobacco, the whole house if they smoke, and their clothes if they take snuff.”<sup>53</sup>

At the outset (in 1908) of his first jail term he was glad that the prison latrines and bathing were washed and disinfected daily, but still he was worried that he might contract scabies. That was why he had his mustache and the hair on his head shaved off.<sup>54</sup>

Visva-Bharati-University students and staff celebrate, annually on March 10th, a clean-up which Gandhi during a visit there instigated on that day in

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52. LGH, pp. 82-83 and 121. Kalelkar 1950, pp. 148-149.

53. LGH, pp. 85 and 122. CWMG, vol. vi, pp. 293-294 and 308-309. See also Guha 2013, pp. 229-230.

54. LGH, pp. 84 and 121-122. Guha 2013, pp. 168-169.

1915 after he and a “Sanitary Committee” of his choosing had made a tour of the place and found “no end of filth”.<sup>55</sup>

From the 1920s on, he took guidance from George Vivian Poore’s books on rural sanitation.<sup>56, 57</sup>

## **17. HIS TEACHING THAT CHASTITY IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD HEALTH**

In 1926 he said that chastity is “necessary for the promotion of health and [is] perfectly possible”.<sup>58</sup> In 1935 he told Margaret Sanger that her evidence – from her experience for many years as a nurse – of nervous breakdown due to such moral restriction was “all based on examination of imbeciles” and was “not drawn from the practice of healthy-minded people”; according to Sanger's biographer, “He acknowledged [nevertheless] the possibility of using some form of the rhythm method” (of contraception).<sup>59</sup>

## **18. HE WOULD SOMETIMES SET ASIDE HIS GENERAL PRECEPTS**

The following two examples are among the several described in Chapter 18 of *Gandhi on Health* (LGH):

In 1945, a social worker who had earned a degree in biology and for whose moral stature Gandhi had extraordinarily high regard,<sup>60</sup> was invited to teach a class to the nurses in the medical clinic at Sewagram. During the class he undertook to let them see a frog’s beating heart.

“The nurses objected. The matter was referred to Bapuji and he replied, ‘Dissect the frog if that is the only way to explain the heartbeat.’ And [so] I dissected the frog.”<sup>61</sup>

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55. LGH, pp. 84 and 121. CWMG, vol. xiii, p. 161. Kalelkar 1950, pp. 7-12.

56. LGH, pp. 102 and 127. Bhavsar *et al.* 2011, p. 7. CWMG, vol. liv, p. 322.

57. See also Anand 2015 and Iyengar 2016.

58. LGH, pp. 89 and 122. CWMG, vol. xxxi, p. 183.

59. LGH, pp. 89 and 122. CWMG, vol. lxii, pp. 156-160. See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret-Sanger>.

60. LGH, pp. 94 and 124. CWMG, vol. lxxxiii, p. 390. Gora 1951, pp. 35, 41-42 and 44.

61. LGH, pp. 94 and 124. Gora 1951, p. 37.

In 1946, there was a marriage at Sewagram between two friends with many years of experience as Gandhian social activists, and they vowed to remain chaste even though married. The wife's emotional health was damaged by their attempts to keep the vow; she became pregnant; and Gandhi advised the husband:

“During the ... pregnancy and for two years after the birth of the baby, you should not cohabit with her. Doctors advise the same thing. It is for this reason that people adopt artificial methods of birth-control. I don't think, however, that your craving for indulgence is so strong as to make that necessary. But if it is, you should humbly admit the fact. There are numerous men and women who adopt artificial methods. Society does not boycott them; on the contrary, it even commends them. Sin is what we believe to be sin and virtue what we believe to be virtue. There are but few things which are sinful or virtuous in themselves. And in the last analysis even these are so because we think them so.”<sup>62</sup>

## **19. HIS APPROVAL OF EUTHANASIA**

In 1928, he applied euthanasia to a calf and approved of its use for humans:

“Would I like it to be applied in my own case? My reply is ‘Yes.’ [And,] supposing that in the case of an ailing friend I am unable to render any aid and recovery is out of the question and the patient is ... in ... agony, then I would not see any violence in putting an end, by death, to his suffering.”<sup>63</sup>

Years later he had “no sense of shame or repentance over the taking of the life of the dying calf, whose agony I could see but could not alleviate in any other manner” .<sup>64</sup>

## **20. THE CHOICE OF PALLIATIVE CARE FOR HIS DYING WIFE**

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62. LGH, pp. 93-94 and 123-124. CWMG, vol. lxxxviii, p. 11.

63. LGH, pp. 99 and 126. Kalelkar 1950, pp. 77-78. Varma 2001, pp. 108-110.

64. LGH, p. 124. CWMG, vol. lix, p. 92.

It was 1944. She was weak and caught pneumonia. The British sent penicillin to be injected every three hours, but he would not let the doctors “drug” her in that painful way “on her deathbed”. She died with her head on his lap.<sup>65</sup>

## 21. HIS COMMENTS ON MISCELLANEOUS RELEVANT BOOKS

To serve as midwife for the birth of his last child, he studied, in Tribhuvandas Motichand Shah's *Ma-ne Shikhaman*, “the things necessary for safe labour”, and he also “nursed both my [other] children according to the instructions given in the book, tempered ... by such experiences as I had gained elsewhere.”<sup>66</sup>

David C. Muthu's *The Antiquity of Hindu Medicine and Civilisation* was, he said, an “excellent book”.<sup>67</sup>

In 1934 he wanted “a good guide for village workers” to be written – “a book after Moore's *Family Medicine or Everybody His Own Doctor*”.<sup>68</sup>

He found Johann Caspar Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* “scarcely interesting”.<sup>69</sup>

## 22. A BROAD GUIDING PRECEPT

“In the matter of improving one's health, lethargy is a sin. The human body is both a *kurukshetra* [field of conflict] and a *dharmakshetra* [field of dutiful obligations]. Insofar as it is a *dharmakshetra*, it is one's duty to keep it in good shape.”<sup>70</sup>

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65. LGH, pp. 101 and 126-127. Nayyar 1960, p. 96.

66. LGH, pp. 101 and 126-127. Gandhi 1927, Part III, Chapter vi. Arun Gandhi 1998, Chapter 10, 16th paragraph.

67. LGH, pp. 101 and 127. CWMG, vol. xlix, p. 228.

68. LGH, pp. 101 and 127. CWMG, vol. liv, p. 322.

69. LGH, pp. 101 and 126. Gandhi 1927, Part I, Chapter xxv.

70. LGH, pp. 104 and 127. CWMG, vol. lxiv, p. 414.

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