

## Notes about Daily Life in Japan (Cleaning)

Until some time ago in Japan, young unmarried women were often asked if they enjoy doing housework. Housework literally refers to all household chores in general that must be done to lead a comfortable home life, but the term is typically used to mean house cleaning, doing laundry, and cooking. Since it was customary for women to quit their job and become a homemaker when they married, women who could cook and were particular about house cleaning, doing laundry, and keeping things tidy and neat were considered ideal wives.

In modern Japan, however, more and more women are receiving a higher education and advancing into society. They work alongside their male colleagues on equal footing, and live on their own away from their parents. Naturally, this means they do all the necessary housework even as they work outside the home. Though they may choose to dine out instead of cook, they cannot leave the basic chores of house cleaning and doing laundry up to others. The same goes for most men. They leave their parents' homes once they begin working, so they must also clean the house and do laundry by themselves.

To all of you trainees and technical interns as well, house cleaning, doing laundry, and cooking are undoubtedly an important part of your daily life, since you have chosen to live in Japan for a certain amount of time away from your country and family, and probably share a dormitory or apartment room with colleagues.

Now let us take a look at the household chore of house cleaning. There are many ways to clean a house, but typical steps in cleaning a room in a Japanese house is

## — 日常生活での留意点 (掃除) —

日本のひと 昔前の話です。結婚前の女性は「あなたは家事が好きですか」とよく聞かれたそうです。家事とは家庭生活に欠かせない仕事全般をさしていますが、掃除・洗濯・炊事を代表格として言うことが多いようです。女性は結婚すると仕事を辞めて家庭に入り、家事をするのが当たり前のことのように思われていたようで、料理が上手で、掃除や洗濯もきちんとやるきれいな人は、いいお嫁さんとして歓迎されたそうです。

現代では、女性は高学歴や社会進出で、男性と肩を並べて仕事に励み、親を離れて一人暮らしをすることが多くなっています。従って当然、働きながら家事もすることになります。たとえば食事は外食で済ませたとしても、掃除や洗濯は人任せというわけにはいきません。大抵の男性も就職すると親を離れて独立して暮らしますので、やはり、掃除や洗濯は自分でやることになります。

研修生・技能実習生の皆さんは、母国を離れて単身来日され、一定期間日本で暮らすのですが、住居は社員寮やアパート、部屋は仲間達との相部屋の場合が多いと思います。皆さんにとっても、掃除・洗濯・炊事等の家事は欠かせないものになります。

さて、家事のうち掃除についてですが、掃除のやり方についてはいろいろあると思いますが、部屋の掃除について、日本での一般的なやり方を紹介します。

まず、窓を開けて部屋に風を通します。読み終えてそのまま

as follows.

Firstly, open the windows to let fresh air into the room. Then, clear away all the clutter. Put away old newspapers and magazines, fold or hang clothes that are strewn about, and sort and dispose of disused items and rubbish. Next, use a vacuum cleaner to clear food crumbs and hair off the *tatami* and floor and dust from underneath the bed. Wipe away dust that has accumulated on the TV and shelves with a well wrung-out rag, and also wipe down the floor with a damp rag.

Rinse rags in clean water whenever they become dirty. When you finish using them, wash them with soap and hang them out to dry in the sun to prevent them from becoming smelly and to keep them clean. As rags are the main item used to clean the house, they must be clean. Towels are used to wipe faces and hands, but rags are used to wipe dirty feet before stepping inside the house, to avoid tracking dirt inside.

If house cleaning is neglected, food crumbs, hair, dirt, and dust will accumulate. The room will not only become filthy and unsanitary, but it might even provide an ideal habitat for germs that could cause sickness in the room's occupant. Shirking the task of house cleaning by saying that "neglecting to clean the house won't kill you" is complete nonsense.

House cleaning is not a matter of like/dislike or whether you are good/poor at it. Your home is a private place that relieves you from your daily tensions and fatigue and helps you regain your energy for tomorrow. At the same time, if you share a dormitory or apartment room, your home is also a private place for your roommate. Therefore, you need to think about how you go about taking care of housework (cleaning, in this case) from the perspective of communal living. This applies all the more so to you readers who are here in Japan to acquire advanced technologies and working practices from Japan. You are expected to be capable of keeping your surroundings in good order, to have strict policies regarding hygiene, and to possess a spirit of cooperation.

By the way, there are also certain rules for disposing of garbage. Trash in wastebaskets and vacuum cleaners, floor sweepings, and disused items are thrown out on designated garbage collection days. In Japan, household waste items are disposed of as garbage to prevent environmental pollution, according to collection rules established by each municipality to promote the efficient disposal, reuse, and recycling of waste. If you fail to observe these rules, you will offend many people, and find it difficult to establish good relationships with your neighbors. Therefore, be sure to follow the garbage disposal rules in your neighborhood to avoid neighbor problems.

After a good house-cleaning job, your room, the kitchen, bathroom, toilet, hallway, entrance, and home exterior will not only be clean, but their cleanliness will also refresh you and reduce any stress you may have been feeling. You may even feel relaxed enough to go out of your way to display kindness and compassion toward others. It would be ideal if house cleaning becomes a habit. Start by focusing on spending each day in a clean living environment.

にしている新聞や雑誌を片付けたり、脱ぎっぱなしの服は畳んだりハンガーに掛けたり、不用になった物やゴミを区分けするなどして、部屋をきちんと整理整頓します。次に畳や床に落ちた食べ物のくず・髪の毛、ベッドの下の綿埃等を掃除機を使って吸い取ります。テレビや棚の上等の埃は堅く絞った雑巾で拭き取ります。床も雑巾がけをします。

汚れの着いた雑巾は都度、水で洗ってきれいにして使っていきます。拭き掃除が終わった後の雑巾は石鹸で洗い、日光を当てて乾かしておくといやな臭いもせず清潔です。部屋をきれいに掃除道具である雑巾が、まず、きれいでなくてははいけません。洗った顔や手はタオルで拭きますが、帰宅した時等に汚れてしまった足を拭くのも雑巾の役目で、汚れを部屋に持ち込まなくてすみます。

掃除を怠ると、食べ物のくず・髪の毛、埃、塵等が積みもり、不潔・不衛生になり、病原菌の住処となり、そこで生活する人は病気にもなりかねません。“掃除をしなくても死にはしない”などとやって怠けるのは言語道断です。

また、“掃除が嫌いだから”とか“掃除が苦手だから”という話でもないのです。住まいはあなたの日常の緊張や疲れを癒したり、明日へのエネルギーを再生するプライベートな場所です。同時に、寮や相部屋生活であれば、自分以外の人のプライベートの場所でもあります。共同生活上の観点からも家事のあり方(ここでは掃除)を考えなければなりません。日本の進んだ技術や良い労働慣行を学びに来日している皆さんであればなおさら、身の回りの整理整頓のできる人、衛生観念を身につけた人、協調の精神を持った人でなければなりません。

ところで、ゴミの処理方法についてですが、ゴミ箱・掃除機内のゴミ、掃き集めたゴミ、不要になったゴミ等は、決められた日にゴミ回収に出します。日本では環境汚染を防止し、各家庭から出る不用物はゴミとして処分されますが、ゴミ処理の円滑化、再利用・再資源化のために、ほとんどの市区町村で、回収のルールが定められており、市民はそれに従っています。ルールを守らないと多くの人が迷惑を受け、近隣住民との良い関係を築くことが難しくなりますので注意が必要です。

掃除をした後の部屋・台所・風呂場・トイレ・廊下・玄関・家の外回り等は、見た目もきれいで、心も清々しく気持ちよく、ストレスの解消にもなります。さらに、人にやさしく接するゆとりまでできます。掃除をすることが習慣になればしめたものです。日々、清潔な住環境の中で暮らしましょう。