POINTERS TO ETIQUETTE: PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND OFFICE SPHERE IN INDIAN CONTEXT
A. S. K. Ghori

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
DOI: 10.14260/jadbm/2015/31

ABSTRACT: The concept of Etiquette is one of the most ignored of all the soft skills, which one needs in his/her life. No matter how much of importance has been given to it in service industry, somehow it is lacking in other industries and personal lives of people. The paper has covered the scope of Etiquette in the context of children and adults both at office and home and also with a gender specific view.


INTRODUCTION: The topic of Etiquette is a fast catching concept in the space of training and literature on self-development. This is an often forgotten concept, in day to day interactions between individuals these days. On one side, we are going a big way, in developing job related skills and have all kinds of trainings and certifications available in practically every aspect of behavioural science arena, the topic of etiquette has not somehow got enough due.

On top of this, concepts like Etiquette and Grooming are getting limited to only service industry, roles involving direct customer inter-face/interaction and other leadership roles.

Meaning of Etiquette: As per Wikipedia Etiquette is a code of behavior that delineates expectations for social behavior according to contemporary conventional norms within a society, social class, or group.

Curtis also specifically outlines three categories of Manners- hygiene, courtesy and cultural norms, each of which help to account for the multifaceted role manners play in society

Hygiene Manners: Are any manners which affect disease transmission. They are likely to be taught at an early age, primarily through parental discipline, positive behavioral enforcement of continence with bodily fluids (such as toilet training), and the avoidance or removal of items that pose a disease risk for children. It is expected that, by adulthood, hygiene manners are so entrenched in one's behavior that they become second nature. Violations are likely to elicit disgust responses.

Courtesy Manners: Demonstrate one's ability to put the interests of others before oneself; to display self-control and good intent for the purposes of being trusted in social interactions. Courtesy manners help to maximize the benefits of group living by regulating social interaction. Disease avoidance behavior can sometimes be compromised in the performance of courtesy manners. They may be taught in the same way as hygiene manners but are likely to also be learned through direct, indirect (i.e., observing the interactions of others) or imagined (i.e., through the executive functions of the brain) social interactions. The learning of courtesy manners may take place at an older age than hygiene manners, because individuals must have at least some means of communication and some
awareness of self and social positioning. The violation of courtesy manners most commonly results in 
social disapproval from peers.

**Cultural Norm Manners:** Typically demonstrate one’s identity within a specific socio-cultural group. 
Adherence to cultural norm manners allows for the demarcation of socio-cultural identities and the 
creation of boundaries which inform who is to be trusted or who is to be deemed as ‘other’. Cultural 
norm manners are learnt through the enunciation and routinisation of ‘the familiar’ and through 
exposure to ‘otherness’ or those who are identified as foreign or different. Transgressions and non-
adherence to cultural norm manners commonly result in alienation. Cultural norms, by their very 
nature, have a high level of between-group variability but are likely to be common to all those who 
identify with a given group identity.”

**Review of Literature:** As a part of review of literature, reference has been made to a number of books, 
research papers articles and books related to Etiquette and related Management and Behavioral 
Science concepts.

**Etiquette as it in Today's World:** It would be wrong to assume, people are not exposed to this concept 
and get to know about this, only once they start working or get into social interactions with high 
society alone. In fact in the Indian context, apart from Grooming, Etiquette is a very soft aspect which 
is instilled into children at a young age by parents, grandparents, siblings and elders.

Parents and Grandparents are usually fussing over children on how they eat, dress and behave 
with others. In spite of all the modernisation in the relation front and society in general, most Indian 
elders are still very particular of this concept. How cultured and courteous one is, is associated with 
his family or community he belongs to. People are also quick to judge on one’s background, based 
on one’s conduct and demonstrations of courtesy while day to day interactions.

Though we are lucky to have some articles, books, e-learning modules and training 
programmes on this important aspect of etiquette, there still needs to be more focus on unlearning 
certain aspects on etiquette and relearn many suiting to today’s context. The attempt this paper is 
trying to address is put forward certain aspects of etiquette, which would be good to consider in ones, 
day to day dealings and can serve as literature also.

**With Kids:** Let us start with kids; Children are the often neglected category, when one talks about 
etiquette. The famous words like Please, Thank you and Sorry can be told graciously; whenever you 
address them, in the context of getting them to do things, use words like “Please”, “Thank you” and 
“Sorry” in a lavish manner. Use statements like- Please finish your homework, Thank you for switching 
off the TV and Sorry I forgot to get your chocolate.

A tone that is softer than what is used with other adult audience and avoidance of an 
ordering tone is always advisable, as children are observant and quick to emulate their parents and 
elders. Children of polite parents are normally found to be quiet courteous and soft to others and the 
ingraining of etiquette is already built in with this.

Another word of caution, don’t compare your children with other children and also stop 
bragging about your children to others. It is good to give children an opportunity to exercise options 
on food and clothing, as it not only trains them in becoming independent individual, but also makes 
them happy and in control of things later on also.
CONCEPTUAL ARTICLE

Never scream in front of children! The two possible outcomes are either, they become too timid or start imitating by screaming, when interacting with other kids or scream, when they are angry. This could also go to the extreme of temper tantrums.  

Keep children away from gossip, kitty parties and social parties or too much of shopping or eating out. Though these are perfectly normal things to do among adults, but excessive indulgence in these things especially at a young age makes children view these as their lifestyle and move towards becoming society animals, than concentrating on studies and making themselves better individuals with a successful career in front of them. Also this would take them away from anything to do with etiquette and grooming in their life thereafter.

Etiquette between Men and Women in a Marital or Living in Relation within the same Accommodation: From the day of Adam and Eve, men and women have lived together and have confirmed their living together with either as a concept of “marriage” or as a “living in” relation. A lot of change happens in each individual’s life when he/she has to interact and live together with society’s rules and expectations with a possible, legal entity also added, to the relation. It is always useful to keep in mind a few concepts of etiquette, to have a decent and respectable relation worth talking as a role model.

Now that a relation is in place, it is very normal to take a lot of things granted and ignoring etiquette completely. The partners have stopped trying to impress, each other in their company any more. The man has started losing his chivalry in opening doors, pulling chairs and opening car doors any more. The woman has stopped trying to look her best and being guarded in what she talks. Not that this change is necessarily wrong, but happens as you know each other more.

However it is always good to talk in a friendly manner, as good friends and not as people who are competing to own each other and control the other. It would be good to request and not boss around, as it is very old fashioned and out-dated thing to do the same these days. Remember, if you can control your own talk and body language it is easier to control your life and so is the perception of most people.

It is human nature to love praise, so don't leave a single opportunity to genuinely praise something you find really good in your spouse or partner. The more the merrier! Whether it is praising one on his bargaining ability, in the market outside or the cooking ability at home, any small thing that is observed as worth praising should be praised. Keep the feedback on shortcomings, only limited to weaknesses that are not allowable like spending too much and not maintaining a budget.

Give space in a relation and also the time to adjust to things. Don’t be obsessed with giving or taking an account of what has happened during the day like a daily sunrise or sunset meeting and definitely not making a conversation a review meeting. Don’t be jealous of each other and for God’s sake stop competing. The relation between partners has to always be an example for all aspects of etiquette.

In front of others it is always good to either praise, if required or remain silent. Never make fun of one’s spouse or complain of the wrong attributes in public. These can be done quietly in person with a constructive approach. Your problems are yours and not food for public gossip or public scrutiny.

In case one of the partner is jobless or retired, it is at times a torture for the other as there is more time on ones hand to complain about things and compare and also advise on how things should be and this is not the right thing to do and can sometimes appear rude.
How Men should Treat Women Outside Home: It is always nice for men to remember a few things in the way they behave and in their interactions with women. Especially with more and more interactions, happening between men and women, outside the house in offices and public places it is always good to keep a few things in one’s mind which would help a great deal in using etiquette to one’s advantage.

The way men approach and speak to women, make or mar an impression, irrespective of the age or position one is in. It is always good to address women as “Ladies” when addressing them. Also be careful of what you talk about them in public, any derogatory remarks may label you as a loose talker and would expose you as a not so cultured person who is not aware or the right etiquette.

Women normally expect to be addressed gently and with a lot of politeness and courtesy. Arrogant behaviour, loud voice, shouting, admonishing or disapproving their presence or views is seen with lot of contempt. Given a choice, such men are normally avoided and definitely not respected, not because of who they are, but because of their demonstrated behaviour. Whether you are just an acquaintance or a social contact or a boss or subordinate, the rules are the same and not complying would only show you in poor light.

Opening doors or holding the lift door open or blocking the sensor and stopping the lift door for ladies is not things of the past, they very much still are things of the present and will remain embodiments of etiquette in the future too! In places where, there is too much crowd, a man can walk on the side of a woman, he is familiar with and where there is too much of movement either of people or vehicles.

When Opening a door, when moving in hotels, restaurants and clubs do extend the courtesy to women behind or trying to pass through at the same time. Same courtesy should also be extended at the same time while passing through revolving doors.

A word of caution, some think opening a car door for a lady is not chivalry any more, unless the lady is elderly, this is not true and the right thing would be to open the car door, for a lady and wait for her to get in and get her dress and accessories, she is carrying in place before you take a seat.

If the vehicle is driven by a chauffeur, sit diagonally across the driver. When the car stops the gentlemen should help the lady in alighting, if he is driving himself or ensure the chauffer does it or he does it himself and needs to be quick, once the car stops and before the lady alights.

When men are introduced to women, it is always advisable for a gentleman to shake hands with a Lady only if she, offers her hand for a shake hand and always stand up, if she comes to meet you or approach you in a party or in the office, especially if she is a senior or elderly lady or also when she is a lady coming to meet you for the first time and introducing herself.

How Should Women Treat Men Outside Home?: The complaint of most women about men, of not being very chivalrous or courteous is not a statement that may be true always. The fact that the level of etiquette is not visible, as it was is because the roles of men and women have undergone a lot of change in the last few decades. The male member is not the only bread winner of the family; he has also taken the role of taking care of kids at home very actively, right from changing nappies to babysitting, from teaching children to planning their higher studies etc. and career has also become a female forte.

Plus the lady of the house has started earning and contributing to the running of the house hold. She has also started owning homes and paying EMIs, the lady is all independent both in thought and action, driving to work and being connected with her network like how men are.
Hence in this current context, it might happen that, small gestures like opening office doors and car doors may not be very common as it is a space of gender equality lately. The other reason is women, no more expect this and quite possible, they are too quick these days, to open the door themselves! But you still, do find men doing the same to this day and when a lady sees this happening, she should at least say, thank you in a warm way with a smile and eye contact.

Nothing wrong in helping men around and supporting them and also ensuring they don't remain alone, in the practice of etiquette. You can always help a male colleague with a cup of coffee or tea in the canteen to start with.

There may be lot of changes, which might have happened in the world around but still, it is not a very good thing for a lady to open office doors and car doors for men and get up when men come into the room, unless they are elderly or very senior person. Still the final call should always remain with the lady, as these things have always remained and are still a ladies prerogative and privilege, not worth debating.

CONCLUSION: What has been discussed so far, can definitely not be a comprehensive list, but would definitely contribute as a pointer towards etiquette in the true sense, within the context of today's world, both at home, office and any other social space. All said and done, Man is a social animal and whatever may be the situation, there is no harm in being aware of etiquette in day to day life and follow it at Home, Office and any other private area of social interaction. The more the etiquette demonstrated, by the individual, the easier it would be for him to live life and achieve success in one's life. As the well-known saying goes “the quality of man's life is the quality of his relations” and the awareness and demonstration of ones behaviour in the space of Etiquette and Grooming would definitely help, in bettering the relations and impression in the social sphere. This article only has made a humble attempt in bringing forward, some facets of this otherwise vast subject of etiquette and opening the discussion, once again to this sometimes forgotten area.

REFERENCES:
9. McEwen, How to Instill Values That Count, Chariot Family Pub (1 January 1991)
13. H. M., Be Courteous, Aeterna, 14 February 2011.
CONCEPTUAL ARTICLE


AUTHORS:
1. A. S. K. Ghori

PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:
1. Associate General Manager, Human Resources, GMR Group, Bangalore.

NAME ADDRESS EMAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:
Dr. A. S. K. Ghori,
J-108, Nandi Woods,
Yelanaralli, Begur Hobli,
Off. B. G. Road, Bangalore-76.
E-mail: ask_ghori@rediffmail.com

Date of Submission: 18/09/2015.
Date of Peer Review: 19/09/2015.
Date of Acceptance: 21/09/2015.
Date of Publishing: 24/09/2015.