

MANIFESTATION OF COURTESY IS PART OF NEW SOCIETY

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In the old society, civility used to be applied only toward the people of high social class, intellectuals or people of high positions. It did not come from sincerity towards each other; instead it was hypocritical and merely empty words. Working people were usually looked down upon and treated badly without any necessary "courtesy."

Nowadays, we have discarded the civility of the capitalist class and have created new principles of courtesy which are in conformity with new social relations and are founded on the principle of friendship between man and man and true equality for everybody.

Our city of Hanoi is a capital of civilization and a political and cultural center for the entire country. The residents of Hanoi must have a new way of living and must show that they have a good cultured and polite personality. So what is civility? The city's general guidelines for a civilized way of life only mentions the main principles, so I would like to discuss a few practical things:

At siesta time, or late at night, everybody needs quiet to rest. One should respect the sleep of others and should not drag wooden clogs on stairways or turn radios on too loud. This is the minimum politeness.

To enter other people's rooms, one should knock to ask permission first and should never just open the door and walk in. This is a very minor thing but should be made a habit.

In theaters, one should dress properly and should not wear hats, smoke cigarettes or eat once inside. During the shows one should not speak loudly or leave in order not to affect the people around and disturb the performers. To keep our places clean is an important requirement of the modern way of living and a polite thing in the collective living. One should not throw garbage into the street or defecate in the wrong place. When there is no ashtray at hand, wrap the ash and cigarette butts in a piece of paper and throw it into a wastebasket later. Only if everybody is that thoughtful, can our streets and collective residences be neat and clean. One person cannot keep up with the cleaning and sweeping for hundreds of people who are sloppy.

When visiting historical sites, some people have the habit of writing or carving their names on walls or stones. If everybody does so, one will deface these places and will sometimes destroy their beauty.

Parks are places for people to relax after hard working hours. A person who has self respect and has respect for others would never walk on the lawns or lie down on the stone benches and especially would never act ridiculously in public places.

The people of Hanoi are well-known for knowing how to dress. We do not object to changes in modes. But the question is, what is beautiful, what is polite? The Vietnamese are accustomed to dressing themselves conservatively with elegant colors and simple styles. This is beautiful. If we imitate foreign styles without thinking about our size, facial features and national tradition, we may ridicule ourselves and show our discourtesy.

To be polite to women, especially to those who have young children or are pregnant, on trains and buses is to show signs of a well-cultured person. With regard to the old and the handicapped, one should help them when necessary.

At home at mealtimes, should the members of the family invite each other to the table? Yes, Vietnamese custom has dictated so, and it is not "feudal" or something like that, just polite. Should children greet guests of their parents? Yes, they should! It shows that they belong to a polite and educated family.

In stores when there are many people, one should stay in line and wait his turn instead of jostling with each other. This is a good habit. Those who come in late but try to squeeze in and push other people out to buy first are impolite and it is a bad habit. In restaurants, one should be gentle and humble and should not talk with one's mouth full or question or tease the people who work there.

With regard to foreign visitors, we should show them our warmth and help them when necessary and should not show excessive curiosity or follow them to watch them. When meeting friends and comrades who come from other countries to visit our country, our localities or our units, we should show them our enthusiasm and sincere friendship.

When someone greets us, we have to return the salutation, even if we are of higher status. It is just our courtesy, which is based on equality.

Courtesy is the manifestation of morality in manners, daily activities, social intercourse and in interpersonal relations instead of being many insignificant things as people have mistakingly thought. Good manners have become habits for many although not for everyone. People should be frequently reminded of courteous manners; they should be taught in schools, in families, in collective residences, and so forth.