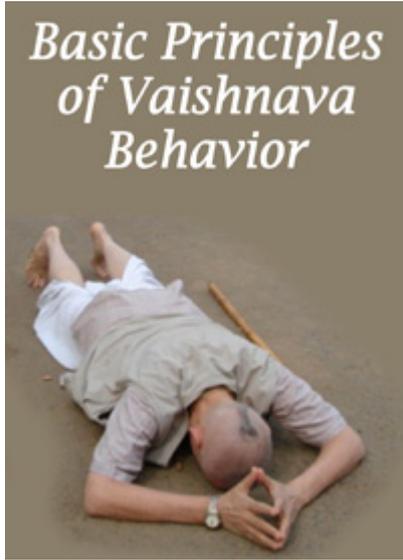


Basic Principles of Vaishnava Behavior



Vaishnava etiquettes are not superficial or un-essential. Having heard all these details, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, greatly pleased, spoke as follows:

**tathapi bhakta-svabhava-maryada-raksana
maryada-palana haya sadhura bhusana**

"My dear Sanatana, although you are the deliverer of the entire universe and although even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and to protect the Vaishnava etiquette. Maintenance of the Vaishnava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee."

(CC Antya 4.128-30)

So it is stated, "*Etiquette is the ornament of a Vaishnava.*" But what does this mean? Is etiquette something only external or optional? We could draw an analogy: Is it possible to be wealthy, but have no riches? Or what is the value of wealth if one uses no costly ornaments? Generally, one will decorate himself according to the degree of his wealth. If one is very rich, he will be adorned with only the finest of raiments and accessories. Similarly, for one who is profound in his Krsna consciousness, the jewels of Vaishnava etiquette will naturally grace all of his dealings and activities. The characteristics of a devotee are always sublimely manifest in all of his actions. The depth of a Vaishnava is judged by his symptoms. The true devotee will therefore adorn himself unsparingly with the decorum of a Vaishnava in all respects.



Etiquette [Dictionary Definition]:

- 1) Conventional requirements as to social behavior;
- 2) The code of ethics of a profession.

Accepting the identity of a Vaishnava necessitates a certain standard of behavior or etiquette. Vaishnava etiquette facilitates Krsna consciousness. It provides the criteria-the protocol-by which a devotee can act properly in every situation. In the **Bhagavad-gita (6.24 purport)**, quoting from verse 3 of the Upadesamrta, Srila Prabhupada roughly paraphrases one of the items favorable for development of devotional service as, "by engaging completely in activities of goodness." Practicing Vaishnava etiquette means always acting in the mode of goodness, which is a stepping-stone to the transcendental plane. The mode of goodness is conducive to self-realization, whereas ignorance and passion are not. Therefore, how one applies the principles of Vaishnava etiquette reflects whether a devotee is Krsna conscious or not: i.e. Is he humble? conscientious? well-mannered? disciplined? cultured? sensitive? Someone who is actually a devotee will be known by how much he displays the good qualities.

Quotes from Srila Prabhupada

A Vaishnava is Better Than a Brahmana.

Brahminical life means cleanliness. Brahminical life means to be very, very clean, inside and out. Inside by chanting and hearing, and outside by bathing three times daily, if not possible at least two times, but never less than once. Bathing after passing stool. The qualifications of the brahmanas are described in the 18th Chapter of Bhagavad-gita verse 42: "Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness-these are the qualities by which the brahmanas work." So see that these instructions are being followed nicely.

SP Letter to Sivarama (December 7, 1975)

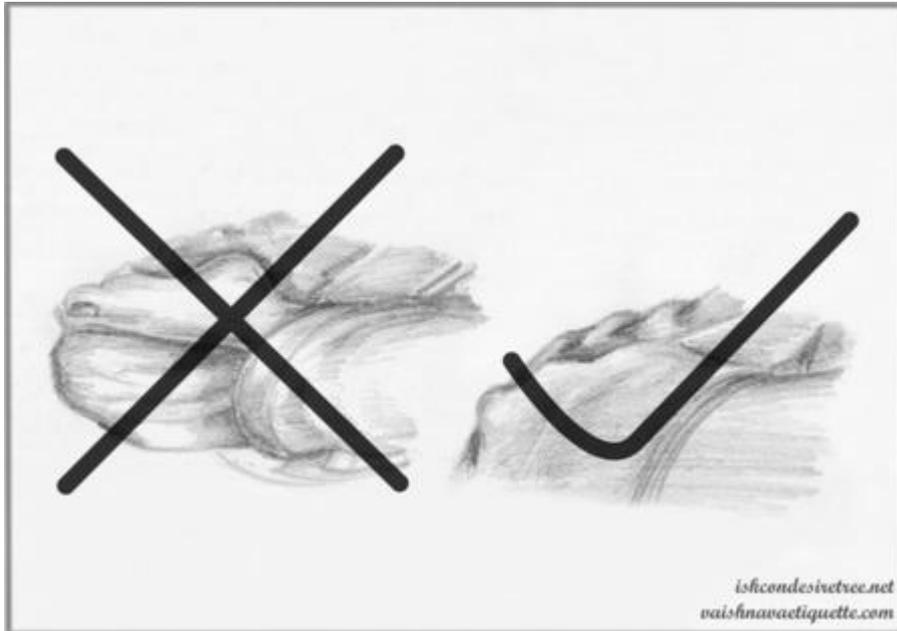
Not Associating with Materialistic Persons

Ramesvara: [In regard to brainwashing] "They claim that our lifestyle tends to take the devotee and isolate him from the world." "Yes," said Prabhupada, "We hate to mix with you. No gentleman tries to mix with loafers. Crows will not like to live with the ducks and white

swans; and white swans will not like to live with the crows. That is natural division. Birds of the same feather flock together." **Lilamrta Volume 6 p. 222**

The Feet

The feet should not touch (or even be exposed to) anyone or anything (especially sacred items). That is offensive. Basically, the feet touch only the floor. Otherwise, they are kept covered.

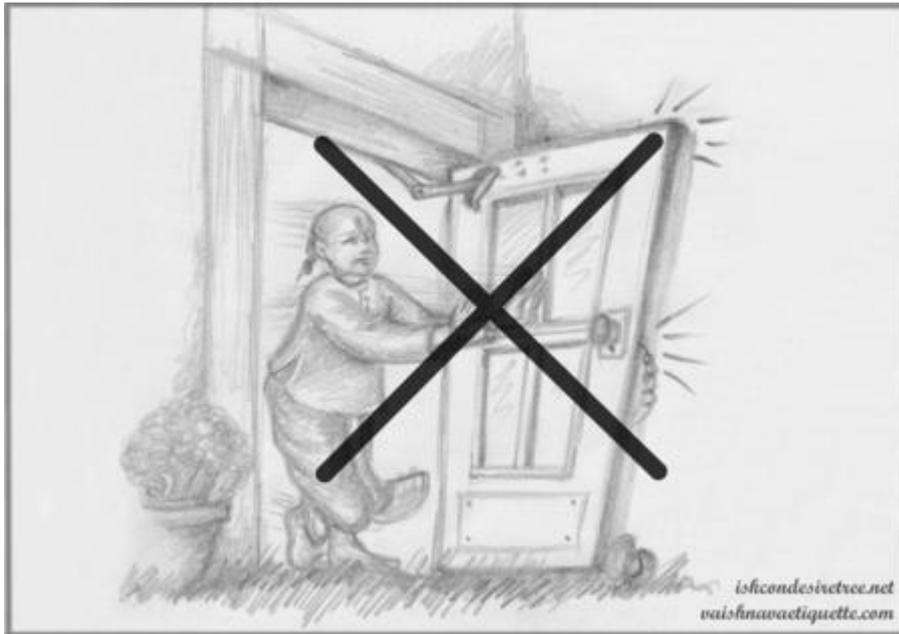


One should not step over (or reach over) anyone.

- a) while they are offering obeisances (e.g., before the vyasasana).
- b) while they are sitting (as in the temple room).

Slamming Doors

The slamming of doors, although seemingly a minor fault, greatly disturbed Srila Prabhupada. It symptomized carelessness and misuse, and Prabhupada said the sound cracked his heart. One time Prabhupada came out of his room and called out, "Who is that slamming the doors? No one knows from where this building has come. You take it for granted that it is here. But no one cares." **Lilamrta V 5 p. 144**



Stealing

But so far as stealing is concerned, one should not steal except in the rarest circumstances. Moral principle is recommended in all scriptures as a prerequisite for spiritual culture.

SP Letter to Pradyumna (January 22, 1968)



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