

Discuss the importance of detailed etiquette

--By discussing the need for receiving things with both hands

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Venerable Shengmiao, Miss Deng good morning. My name is Ruxin Zhang and I would like to share with you the topic on the importance of detailed etiquette. The presentation will be divided into four parts. First of all, I will share with you the introduction. Secondly, I will share with you the analysis. Thirdly, I will share with you my thoughts. And finally, I will share with you the conclusion.

1. Introduction

As the saying that ‘Propriety conforms to human feelings’, and as a scholar said that ‘People have social attributes, and everyone is inseparable from society, so we need to use etiquette to build a bridge of communication’.¹ All the politeness we show is to express our inner respect to others in a silent way, and the Cambridge Dictionary defines that politeness is the behavior that is socially correct and shows an understanding of and care for other people's feelings.² Our purpose in paying attention to etiquette is not to hinder people, but to make others feel happy. However, modern people are often out of social needs or work requirements, they will pay attention to some social etiquette with a utilitarian attitude, and some details of etiquette are usually ignored. But in fact, details are often easy to attract the attention of others, leaving a deep impression on people's minds. Therefore, we have to pay attention to the details of etiquette. For example, as mentioned in *Changli Juyao*: ‘If someone older gives you a gift,

¹ Mi Xiaoli 米曉莉, Liyi tixian xijie, xijie zhanxian suzhi 禮儀體現細節, 細節展現素質, Yishu keji 藝術科技, 5(2013):58

² Cambridge University Press (2020) POLITENESS|meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/politeness>, accessed November 15, 2020

receive it respectfully with both hands.’³ which contains the spirit of receiving things with both hands, for our lives has a very important significance.

2. Analysis

In reality, people's daily life is inseparable from society, as well as the contact between people. In ancient China, Confucianism divided the basic interpersonal relationship into the *Wulun* 五倫 (five cardinal relationships), namely, the relationship between couples, father and son, brothers, friends, emperor and minister. Although people have different roles to play because of the different environments in which they work, the essence of the etiquette is the same. *The Classic of Filial Piety* 孝經 says, ‘The rules of propriety are simply the principle of reverence’⁴ the details of etiquette are also the same.

2.1 Respecting the old and loving the young is a virtue

As far as receiving items with both hands are concerned, no matter whether the elder gives us items with both hands or one hand since he is our elder, we must take them with both hands. Similarly, when we present items to the elderly, we pass them with both hands. Even if the average generation or the younger generation gives us items, we can receive it with both hands. So there is nothing wrong with it, ‘In short, it's good to show respectful’.⁵

So, just receiving things, do we need to be so particular? The answer is yes. First of all, older people always those who have accumulated virtue and good deeds. Because ‘If they don't accumulate virtue, it will be difficult to live long. Or die prematurely, or suffer from a sudden misfortune, or a terminal disease, so it is difficult to become an elderly person’. ‘People

³ Li Bingnan 李炳南 and Xu Xingmin 徐醒民.Changli juyao jiangji 常禮舉要講記(Beijing:Tuanjie chubanshe, 2013),p. 28- 29.

⁴ Li longji 李隆基 and Xingbing 邢昺.Xiaojing zhushu 孝經註疏(Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe,2009),p.64.

⁵ Li Bingnan 李炳南.Changli juyao jianglu 常禮舉要講錄(Taizhong:Yusheng yinshua shiye youxian gongsi, 2019),p. 4.

⁶ Comp.Zeng Qiyun 曾琦雲編著.Taishang ganyingpian huibian baihua jie 太上感應篇彙編白話解 (Lasa:Xizang zangwen guji chubanshe, 2015) ,p.44.

often say ‘The humane live long lives’,⁷ is also the truth. Therefore, if we can respect them, they will be willing to show their life experience and wisdom. As the saying goes, ‘Talking with someone for one moment is much better than reading books for ten years’.⁸ If we can honor these moral people with sincerity, we will certainly concentrate on every word he says. In the process of receiving it in our hearts, we will naturally get infinite benefits.

Secondly, from the point of view of cause and effect, if we can respect the elderly, we will also have a long and healthy life. For example, it is mentioned in the *Ganyingpian huibian* 感應篇彙編 that in ancient times, there was a person named Wang Bin. He was weak and sickly since he was young, and he realized that he would be short-lived. Therefore, whenever he meets an old man, he respects them regardless of the rich or the poor. And when he meets an old man on the road, he will make way for him. As time went on, because of his respectful attitude towards the elderly, he recovered from his illness and became stronger gradually. Finally, he lived to be ninety-three years old.

Thirdly, *The Works of Mencius* 孟子 says, ‘Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated’.⁹ As young people, when we see the elderly, we should think of our grandparents and our parents. In this way, we can understand the hardships of the elderly and try our best to love them. By observing our elders, we can realize that the elderly have not only devoted their lives to their families, but also devoted themselves to the country and society. No matter what kind of work he did before, whether he was a cleaner or a leader, he served the society and the state, and their contributions were equal. Without their efforts, we would not have our current family and society. Therefore, we should repay kindness with gratitude. If we can respect the elderly with this attitude, not only will the elderly feel respect and comfort. The most important thing is that we can set a good example for the public, to promote a good atmosphere of respecting the elderly in the whole society.

⁷ Heyan 何晏 and Xingbing 邢昺. *Lunyu zhushu* 論語註疏 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhigong chubanshe, 2013), p.90.

⁸ Yinyuansheng 因緣生. *Shengxue genzhigen* 聖學根之根 3 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2016), p.11.

⁹ Jiaoxun 焦循. *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), p.72.

Finally, both in China and the West, people all hope that their families will prosper harmoniously and continue to last. Therefore, people generally attach importance to the education of the next generation, especially moral education. If we can receive things with both hands in the face of the average generation or the younger generation, ‘If he is smart or a little conscious, he will be educated’.¹⁰ He would think, this elder's respectful manners are not the same as mine, and I will learn from him. Thus, in the invisible, gradually formed a good family style and tradition, which prospered the entire family.

2.2 Respect for everyone is a moral

What's more, in the process of communicating with people, we not only need to respect the respected elders and cherish the younger ones, but also everyone has something worthy of our respect. The Confucius said, ‘When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities, and avoid them’.¹¹ It is to remind us that there is something to be learned and respected in everyone, even for ordinary people. However, what are the benefits for us?

As mentioned earlier, Confucianism summarizes the relationship between people into five kinds of relationships. In the process of getting along with people in society, we will certainly involve these five relationships. If we can respect a person, his children, brothers, and many other people will naturally feel happy, just as the saying goes, ‘Therefore the reverence paid to a father makes all sons pleased, the reverence paid to an elder brother makes all younger brothers pleased’.¹² In this process of respecting others, we can make good relationships with others. *The Works of Mencius* 孟子 says, ‘He who loves others is constantly loved by them. He who respects others is constantly respected by them’.¹³ It is a certain truth that people who love and respect others will naturally get help from others when they are in trouble.

3. Personal thinking

¹⁰ Li Bingnan, Changli juyao jianglu, p.4-5.

¹¹ Heyan and Xingbing, Lunyu zhushu, p.105.

¹² Li Longji and Xingbing, Xiaojing zhushu, p.64.

¹³ Jiaoxun. Mengzi zhengyi, p.493.

At this point, I reflect on my behavior in daily life and find that I did not do well in detail and etiquette before. For example, during the Spring Festival every year, elders will give me lucky money as encouragement and blessing. Although I will receive it with both hands, and will thank the elders. I reflected that my attitude was not sincere, and I didn't realize the love from my elders. Instead, I cared more about how much money I received. So in terms of external performance, I would behave very perfunctorily, it makes me feel very ashamed to think here.

At the same time, this reminds me that in modern society, many service industries have rigid regulations that require employees to hand over items with both hands. But because they don't have enough sincerity in their hearts, it usually makes people feel uncomfortable. For example, when I was on a plane, I found that although flight attendants are very polite to passengers, this kind of politeness is more like a stylized mode, which makes people feel unpleasant. Therefore, I usually give a sincere smile to the flight attendants, and then I will find that they will naturally show a brilliant smile after receiving my respect. *The great learning* 大學 says 'What truly is within will be manifested without'.¹⁴ When a person has sincerity and respect in the heart, it will naturally be displayed through external expression.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, two-handed receiving is not just an action or etiquette, the spirit and reason behind it are worthy of modern people to imitate and ponder. Moreover, when people implement this principle, they must be clear that the cultivation of sincerity and respect must begin with filial piety, to achieve 'What truly is within will be manifested without'.¹⁵ Otherwise, our behavior is just a formality, and we will eventually become a hypocritical person, which is the opposite of what we want.

¹⁴ Comp. by Jiang Yihua 姜義華註譯, Xinyi liji duben 新譯禮記讀本(Taibei: Sanmin shuju, 1997),p.871.

¹⁵ Zengshen,Daxue,9.

This is my oral presentation, if there is any mistake in the content, please criticize and correct it. Thank you very much!

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