

PARLIAMENTARY DECORUM AND ETIQUETTE

In order to maintain the highest tradition of parliamentary system and proper functioning of parliamentary democracy, it is very essential for the Members of Parliament to observe a certain standard of conduct; both inside the House as well as outside it. Their behaviour should be such as to enhance the dignity of Parliament and its members in general.

2. In the day-to-day functioning of Parliament, the observance by members of certain rules in the nature of personal behaviour and etiquette is very important for smooth conduct of the debates in the House. These rules have gradually evolved from conventions followed and rulings given by the Speaker.

3. The first of these is that a member is to bow to the Chair while entering or leaving the Chamber, and also when taking or leaving her/his seat and be present in the House a few minutes before the scheduled time of commencement of sitting. Members should stop all conversation, return to their seats and rise in their places when the Speaker comes to take the Chair in the House. Members who enter the House at that time should stand silently in the gangway till the Speaker takes the Chair and thereafter they should go to their seats.

4. While the House is sitting, every member when entering and leaving the Chamber should maintain decorum and conduct themselves in such a manner as not to disturb the proceedings in the House. Entering the House with coat hanging on one's arm is improper and against decorum of the House.

Rules to be observed by Members while in the House

5. The following are some of the important rules of parliamentary etiquette, which members have generally to observe while in the House:

- (i) A member should not sit or stand with her/his back to the Chair and read any book or newspaper or letter except when it is quoted in her/his speech. She/he is not to interrupt another member while she/he is speaking, by any disorderly expression, hissing, making a running commentary on her/his speech or other interruptions and noises. She/he should maintain silence when not speaking in the House.
- (ii) A member is not to "cross the floor", *i.e.* pass between the Chair and another member while the latter is speaking. A member is not to leave the Chamber when the Speaker is addressing

the House. Every member has to resume her/his seat as soon as the Speaker rises to speak or calls out "order".

- (iii) It is not permissible to smoke inside the Chamber or carry hats and overcoats, or walking-sticks. A member, if suffering from a disability can carry walking-stick with the permission of the Speaker. It is not considered polite to stand talking in the gangway, etc.
- (iv) Members are forbidden to raise slogans, wear badges, display flags, emblems, exhibits, arms and ammunition in the House. Members are prohibited from knitting inside the Chamber.
- (v) Members should not come to the pit of the House as a measure of protest.

6. It is expected of members who have a personal, pecuniary, or direct interest in matters before the House to indicate the same, particularly at the time of voting, otherwise any member can challenge the vote.

Some guiding principles for participation in the Debate

7. Members who have an intention to speak during any debate should send a written intimation to the Speaker in advance either through the Party/Group leader

or herself/himself. When a member wants to speak, she/he should rise in her/his place to attract attention of the Chair. Waving of hands to attract the attention is not considered to be normal parliamentary practice. No member should speak unless she/he has caught the eye of the Speaker and has been called upon by the Speaker to speak. Two members should not keep standing in the House at the same time. Members should not approach the Chair personally in the House. They may send chits to the officers at the Table, if necessary.

8. A member should speak only from the seat allotted to her/him. However, if a member speaking from her/his place is inaudible to the reporters/interpreters, she/he may be asked to speak from a seat nearer to the microphone.

9. A member while speaking should not:

- (i) refer to any matter of fact on which a judicial decision is pending;
- (ii) use offensive expressions about the conduct or proceedings of Parliament or any State Legislature;
- (iii) reflect on any determination of the House except on a motion for rescinding it;
- (iv) use the President's name for the purpose of influencing the debate;

- (v) utter treasonable, seditious or defamatory words;
- (vi) use her/his right of speech for the purpose of obstructing the business of the House;
- (vii) reflect upon the conduct of persons in high authority unless the discussion is based on a substantive motion drawn in proper terms;
- (viii) read a written speech except with the previous permission from the Chair. Notes may, however, be referred to;
- (ix) raise in the House subject matter of a notice or a communication sent by her/him to the Speaker or Lok Sabha Secretariat, unless she/he is specifically permitted by the Speaker;
- (x) refer to Government officials by name;
- (xi) make a statement by way of personal explanation unless prior permission has been sought and a copy thereof has been approved by the Speaker;
- (xii) resort to personal references by way of making an allegation imputing a motive or questioning the *bona fides* of any other member of the House unless it be imperatively necessary for

the purpose of debate being itself a matter in issue or relevant thereto;

- (xiii) read the speech of another member;
- (xiv) raise matters pertaining to the Lok Sabha Secretariat and the functions of the Speaker on the floor of the House.
- (xv) tear off documents in the House in protest;
- (xvi) bring or play cassette or tape recorder in the House; and
- (xvii) A member should rise in her/his place while speaking. However, a member disabled by sickness may be permitted to speak while seated.

10. It is also to be observed that a member while speaking in the House should not address individual members of the House but should address the Chair and should not leave the House immediately after finishing her/his speech.

11. No speech made in Rajya Sabha may be quoted in the Lok Sabha unless it is a definite statement of policy by a Minister. However, the Speaker may, on a request made to her/him in advance, give permission to a member to quote a speech or make reference to the proceedings in Rajya Sabha, if she/he thinks that such a course is necessary to enable the member to develop a point of privilege or procedure.

12. No member should address the Galleries from inside the House nor should she/he make any reference or appeal to persons sitting there. Except for the visiting foreign dignitaries whose presence in the Special Box is brought to the notice of the House by the Speaker, applause for any person sitting in the Gallery is out of order.

13. The members should avoid the use of words containing insinuations and offensive and unparliamentary expressions. When the Chair holds that a particular word or expression is unparliamentary, it should be immediately withdrawn without any attempt to raise any debate over it. A member should resume her/his seat when she/he is asked by the Chair to stop her/his speech or submission. If a member continues to speak in spite of the Chair asking her/him to discontinue her/his speech, the Chair may order that the speech/remarks made without permission of the Chair need not go on record.

14. The Speaker may direct any member whose conduct is in her/his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately from the House, and any member so ordered to withdraw should do so forthwith and should absent oneself during the remainder of the day's sitting. The Speaker may, if she/he deems it necessary, name a member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully

obstructing the business thereof. If a member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the member (naming her/him) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.

In the event of grave disorder occasioned by a member coming into the well of the House or abusing the Rules of the House persistently and wilfully obstructing its business by shouting slogans or otherwise, such member shall, on being named by the Speaker, stand automatically suspended from the service of the House for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session whichever is less.

On Speaker announcing the suspension, the member should forthwith withdraw from precincts of the House.

The House may, however, at any time on a motion being made, resolve that suspension of a member in the above two eventualities be terminated. When any member offers a criticism of another member or Minister, the latter is entitled to expect that the critic should be present in the House to hear her/his reply. To be absent when the latter is replying is a breach of parliamentary etiquette.

15. Rulings given by the Chair should not be criticised directly or indirectly inside or outside the House.

**Restrictions on the use of Parliament House/
Parliament House Estate**

16. A member is not to resort to hunger strike or any demonstration or dharna, fast or perform any religious function in the precincts of Parliament House.

17. A member can remain within the precincts of the House only for one hour after the House is adjourned. After that she/he cannot remain in any part of the Parliament House Estate unless specific permission of the Speaker has been obtained.

18. A member is not to take shelter within the precincts of Parliament House if she/he knows that she/he is wanted by police authorities in connection with some case against her/him. Parliament House is not to be used as a sanctuary/asylum or a place of protection.

19. Members should not distribute within the precincts of Parliament House any literature, questionnaire, pamphlets, press notes, leaflets etc. unless permission has been obtained from the Speaker in writing in advance.

20. Members when in the lobby should not talk or laugh in high-pitched tone which would result in disturbance of proceedings of the House.

[Rules 349, 350, 351, 352, 354, 357, 371, 373, 374 and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.]

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**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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PREFACE

This Abstract is part of the Parliamentary Procedure Abstracts Series and describes the parliamentary decorum and etiquette to be observed by members. It is based on the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, the Directions issued by the Speaker under the Rules of Procedure and the decisions/ rulings given by the Speaker from time to time. It is intended to serve as a handy guide for ready reference.

The information contained in this Abstract is, however, not exhaustive. It will, therefore, be prudent to refer to and rely on the original sources for full information.

NEW DELHI

Secretary General