

Namaste

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Namaste (/ˈnɑːməsteɪ/, ***NAH**-məs-tay*; Sanskrit: नमस्ते; Hindi: [nəməsteː]), sometimes expressed as *Namaskar* or *Namaskaram*, is a customary greeting when people meet or depart.^{[1][2]} It is commonly found among Hindus of the Indian Subcontinent, in some Southeast Asian countries, and diaspora from these regions.^{[3][4]} *Namaste* is spoken with a slight bow and hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointing upwards, thumbs close to the chest. This gesture is called *Añjali Mudrā* or *Pranamasana*.^[5] In Hinduism it means "I bow to the divine in you".^{[3][6]}

Namaste or *namaskar* is used as a respectful form of greeting, acknowledging and welcoming a relative, guest or stranger. It is used with goodbyes as well. It is typically spoken and simultaneously performed with the palms touching gesture, but it may also be spoken without acting it out or performed wordlessly; all three carry the same meaning. This cultural practice of salutation and valediction originated in the Indian subcontinent.^[7]



A Mohiniattam dancer making a Namaste gesture

Contents

- 1 Etymology, meaning and origins
- 2 Uses
 - 2.1 Regional variations
- 3 See also
- 4 References
- 5 External links

Etymology, meaning and origins

Namaste (Namas + te, Devanagari: नमः + ते = नमस्ते) is derived from Sanskrit and is a combination of the word "*Namaḥa* " and the enclitic 2nd person singular pronoun "*te*".^[8] The word "*Namaḥa* " takes the Sandhi form "*Namas* " before the sound "*t*".^{[9][10]}

Namaḥa means 'bow', 'obeisance', 'reverential salutation' or 'adoration'^[11] and *te* means 'to you' (dative case). Therefore, *Namaste* literally means "bowing to you".^[12]

A less common variant is used in the case of three or more people being addressed namely *Namo vaḥ* which is a combination of "*Namaḥa* " and the enclitic 2nd person plural pronoun "*vaḥ*".^[8] The word "*Namaḥa* " takes the Sandhi form "*Namo* " before the sound "*v*".^[9]

An even less common variant is used in the case of two people being addressed namely *Namo vām* which is a combination of "*Namaḥa* " and the enclitic 2nd person dual pronoun "*vām*".^[8]

Excavations for Indus civilization have revealed many male and female terracotta figures in *Namaste* posture.^{[13][14]} These archeological findings are dated to be between 3000 BC to 2000 BC.^{[15][16]}

Uses

The gesture is widely used throughout Asia and beyond.^[3] Namaste or namaskar is used as a respectful form of greeting, acknowledging and welcoming a relative, guest or stranger. It is used with good byes as well.^[2] In some contexts, namaste is used by one person to express gratitude for assistance offered or given, and to thank the other person for his or her generous kindness.^[17]

Namaskar is also part of the 16 upacharas used inside temples or any place of formal Puja (worship). *Namaste* in the context of deity worship, conclude scholars,^{[18][19]} has the same function as in greeting a guest or anyone else. It expresses politeness, courtesy, honor, and hospitality from one person to the other. This is sometimes expressed, in ancient Hindu scriptures such as Taittiriya Upanishad, as Atithi Devo Bhav (literally, the guest is god).^{[20][21]}

Namaste is one of the six forms of pranama, and in parts of India these terms are used synonymously.^{[22][23]}

Regional variations

In Telugu, Namaste is also known as Dhandamu(singular) and Dhandaalu(plural).But in the contemporary era,Telugus most often use the Sanskrit term Namaskaramu.

In Bengali, the Namaste gesture is expressed as Nōmōshkar (নমস্কার), and said as Prōnām (Bengali: প্রণাম) informally.

In Tamil culture, the gesture is known as *Kumpiṭu* (கும்பிடு),^[24] which is composed of two words *kumpu* (கும்பு) meaning 'to cup hands' and *iṭu* இடு meaning 'to do';^[25] while an equivalent of the salutation would be வணக்கம் (vaṇakkam), which is roughly translated as 'greetings'.

See also

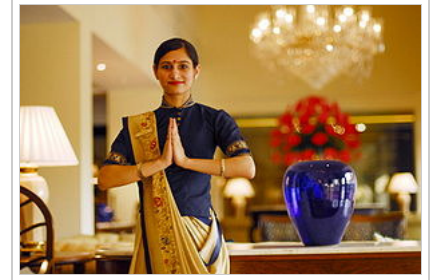
- Pranāma
- Naman
- Gassho
- Sampeah
- Mahalo
- Wai

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A Tamil youth giving a Namaste greeting.



Pressing hands together with a smile to greet Namaste – a common cultural practice in India.

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