

# Namaste

**Namaste** (/ˈnɑːməsteɪ/, Devanagari: नमस्ते, Hindi pronunciation: [nəməsteː] (listen (help·info))), sometimes spoken as *Namaskar* and *Namaskaram*, is a customary Hindu greeting.<sup>[1]</sup> In the contemporary era, it is found on the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and among the Hindu diaspora worldwide. It is used both for greeting and leave-taking.<sup>[2][3]</sup> *Namaste* is usually 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*.<sup>[4]</sup>

In Hinduism, it means "I bow to the divine in you".<sup>[5][6][1]</sup> Namaste may also be spoken without the gesture or the namaste gesture performed wordlessly.



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

## Contents

**Etymology, meaning and origins**

**Representations**

**Uses**

Regional variations

**See also**

**References**

**External links**

## Etymology, meaning and origins



**Left:** Hindu god Kubera on the left with a person in Namaste pose (13th century Chennakesava Temple, Somanathapura, Karnataka, India). Namaste or Añjali Mudrā are common in historic Hindu temple reliefs.

**Right:** Entrance pillar relief (Thrichittatt Maha Vishnu Temple, Kerala, India).

*Namaste* (*Namah* + *te*, Devanagari: नमः+ ते = नमस्ते) is derived from Sanskrit and is a combination of the word *namah* and the second person dative pronoun in its enclitic form, *te*.<sup>[7]</sup> The word *namah* takes the sandhi form *namas* before the sound *te*.<sup>[8][9]</sup> In Persian language, the word *Namas* is pronounced as *Namaz* (Persian: نماز) and means "Worship".

The term *namas* is found in the Vedic literature. *Namas-krita* and related terms appear in the Hindu scripture *Rigveda* such as in the *Vivaha Sukta*, verse 10.85.22<sup>[10]</sup> in the sense of "worship, adore", while *Namaskara* appears in the sense of "exclamatory adoration, homage, salutation and worship" in the *Atharvaveda*, the *Taittiriya Samhita*, and the *Aitareya Brahmana*. It is an expression of veneration, worship, reverence, an "offering of homage" and "adoration" in the Vedic literature and post-Vedic texts such as the *Mahabharata*.<sup>[11][12]</sup> The phrase *Namas-te* appears with this meaning in *Rigveda* 8.75.10,<sup>[13]</sup> *Atharvaveda* verse 6.13.2, *Taittiriya Samhita* 2.6.11.2 and in numerous other instances in many early Hindu texts.<sup>[14]</sup> It is also found in numerous ancient and medieval era sculpture and *mandapa* relief artwork in Hindu temples.<sup>[15]</sup>

According to the Indologist Stephen Phillips, the terms "*te* and *tvam*" are an informal, familiar form of "you" in Sanskrit (much like thou and thee in archaic English), and it is typically not used for unfamiliar adults. It is reserved for someone familiar, intimate, divine or a child.<sup>[16][17]</sup> By using the dative form of *tvam* in the greeting *Namas-te*, there is an embedded secondary, metaphorical sense in the word. This is the basis of the pragmatic meaning of *Namas-te*, that is "salutations to the (divine) child (in your heart)", states Phillips.<sup>[16]</sup>

In the contemporary era, *Namah* means 'bow', 'obeisance', 'reverential salutation' or 'adoration'<sup>[18]</sup> and *te* means 'to you' (singular dative case of 'tvam'). Therefore, *Namaste* literally means "bowing to you".<sup>[19]</sup> In Hinduism, it also has a spiritual import reflecting the belief that "the divine and self (atman, soul) is same in you and me", and connotes "I bow to the divine in you".<sup>[5][1][20]</sup> According to sociologist Holly Oxhandler, it is a Hindu term which means, "the sacred in me recognizes the sacred in you".<sup>[21]</sup>

A less common variant is used in the case of three or more people being addressed namely *Namo vah* which is a combination of *namah* and the enclitic 2nd person plural pronoun *vah*.<sup>[7]</sup> The word *namah* takes the Sandhi form *namo* before the sound *v*.<sup>[8]</sup> An even less common variant is used in the case of two people being addressed, namely, *Namo vām*, which is a combination of *namah* and the enclitic 2nd person dual pronoun *vām*.<sup>[7]</sup>



Aishwarya Rai making a Namaste gesture.

## Representations

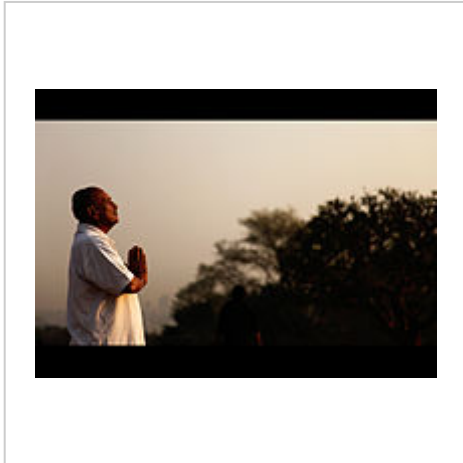
Excavations for Indus Valley Civilization have revealed many male and female terracotta figures in *Namaste* posture.<sup>[22][23]</sup> These archaeological findings are dated to be between 3000 BC to 2000 BC.<sup>[24][25]</sup>

## Uses

The gesture is widely used throughout the Indian subcontinent, parts of Asia and beyond where people of South and Southeast Asian origins have migrated.<sup>[5]</sup> *Namaste* or *namaskar* is used as a respectful form of greeting, acknowledging and welcoming a relative, guest or stranger.<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[26]</sup>

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, scholars conclude,<sup>[27][28]</sup> 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. It is used in goodbyes as well. This is sometimes expressed, in ancient Hindu scriptures such as Taittiriya Upanishad, as Atithi Devo Bhava (literally, treat the guest like a god).<sup>[29][30]</sup>

Namaste is one of the six forms of pranama, and in parts of India these terms are used synonymously.<sup>[31][32]</sup>



A side view of a Hindu man in Namaste pose.



The ninth line from top, last word in the *Rigveda* manuscript above is *namas* in the sense of "reverential worship".



Statue with Namaste pose in a Thai temple.

## Regional variations

In the Hindi and Nepali speaking populations of the Indian subcontinent, Namaste (Hindi: [nəməsteː] listen<sup>ⓘ</sup>), Devanagari: नमस्ते) and Namaskār are used synonymously. In Nepal, people generally use Namaskāra for greeting and respecting their elders. In Odia Namaste is also known as ନମସ୍କାର (namaskār) General greeting. In Kannada, Sharanu (ಶರಣು) is used in Northern Karnataka and Namaskāra (ನಮಸ್ಕಾರ) for singular and Namaskaragalu (ನಮಸ್ಕಾರಗಳು) is widely used in the rest of Karnataka for Namaste. In Telugu, Namaste is also known as Dandamu (దండము) or namaskaram (నమస్కారం) for singular and Dandaalu or namaskaralu for plural form. Pranamamu (ప్రణామము) is also used in formal Telugu. In Bengali, the Namaste gesture is expressed as Nômôshkar (নমস্কার), and as Prônām (Bengali: প্রণাম) informally. In Assamese, Nômôskar (নমস্কাৰ) is used. In Marathi, Namaskār (नमस्कार) is used. In Tamil, Namaste is known as *Vanakkam* (வணக்கம்) which is derived from the root word *vanangu* (வணங்கு) meaning *to bow* or *to greet*. In Malayalam, Namaskāram (നമസ്കാരം) is used. The Sinhalese word *namaskāra* (නමස්කාර) which derived from Pali also has the same meaning as namaskār/namaskāra in Hindi, Nepali, Odia and Kannada languages, or a different greeting word is *āyubōvan* (ආයුබෝවන්) which has the meaning *wishing long life*.

## See also

- Culture of India
- Culture of Nepal
- Añjali Mudrā
- Pranāma
- Sat Sri Akal

- [Gassho](#)
- [Sampeah](#)
- [Wai](#)

## References

1. [a] K V Singh (2015). *Hindu Rites and Rituals: Origins and Meanings* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=uzoHCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT123>). Penguin Books. pp. 123–124. ISBN 978-0143425106.;  
[b] Barbara Bickel (2012), Decolonizing the Divine Through Co-Artographic Praxis in Matrixial Borderspaces, *Visual Arts Research*, Vol. 38, No. 2, University of Illinois Press, pp. 112-125;  
[c] Suzanne Bost (2016), Practicing Yoga, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 191-210;  
[d] Oxhandler, Holly (2017). "Namaste Theory: A Quantitative Grounded Theory on Religion and Spirituality in Mental Health Treatment". *Religions*. 8 (9): 168. doi:10.3390/rel8090168 (<https://doi.org/10.3390%2Frel8090168>)..
2. *Sanskrit English Disctionary* (<http://spokensanskrit.de/index.php?tinput=namaskAra&direction=SE&script=HK&link=yes&beginning=0>) University of Koeln, Germany
3. Constance Jones and James D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, ISBN 978-0-8160-5458-9, p. 302
4. Chatterjee, Gautam (2001), *Sacred Hindu Symbols* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=NQ0XQHEkulcC>), Abhinav Publications, pp. 47–48.
5. Ying, Y. W., Coombs, M., & Lee, P. A. (1999), "Family intergenerational relationship of Asian American adolescents", *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 5(4), pp. 350–363
6. Boopalan, Sunder John (2017). "Introduction: Political and Theological Framework". *Memory, Grief, and Agency*. Springer International. pp. 1–20. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-58958-9\_1 ([https://doi.org/10.1007%2F978-3-319-58958-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007%2F978-3-319-58958-9_1)). ISBN 978-3-319-58957-2.
7. Thomas Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, pp. 263–268
8. Thomas Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, pp. 100–102
9. *Namah* (<http://sanskritdictionary.org/namah>) Sanskrit Dictionary
10. "उदीर्घातो विश्वावसो नमसेळा महे त्वा । अन्त्यामिच्छ प्रफर्च्य सं जायां पत्या सृज ॥२२॥" (<https://sa.wikisource.org/s/139I>), Griffith translates it as, "Rise up from hence, Visvavasu, **with reverence we worship thee**. Seek thou another willing maid, and with her husband leave the bride; RV, Griffith, Wikisource ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Rig\\_Veda/Mandala\\_10/Hymn\\_85](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Rig_Veda/Mandala_10/Hymn_85)); other instances include RV 9.11.6 and many other Vedic texts; for a detailed list, see Maurice Bloomfield, *Vedic Concordance* (<https://archive.org/stream/vedicconcordance00bloouoft#page/532/mode/2up>), Harvard University Press
11. Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary with Etymology Namas* (<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2014/web/webtc/servepdf.php?page=528>), Oxford University Press, p. 528
12. *namas* (<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php?input=HK&output=SktRomanUnicode&citation=caraka>), Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary 1899 edition], Harvard University update (2008)
13. RV 8.75.10, Wikisource (<https://sa.wikisource.org/s/13ky>):  
**नमस्ते** अग्न ओजसे गृणन्ति देव कृष्टयः ।  
Translation: "**Homage to** your power, Agni! The separate peoples hymn you, o god."  
Translators: Stephanie Jamison & Joel Brereton (2014), *The Rigveda*, Volume 2 of 3-set, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-01-99363-780, p. 1172
14. Maurice Bloomfield, *Vedic Concordance* (<https://archive.org/stream/vedicconcordance00bloouoft#page/532/mode/2up>), Harvard University Press, pp. 532-533
15. A. K. Krishna Nambiar (1979). *Namaste: Its Philosophy and Significance in Indian Culture* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=vOwtAAAAMAAJ>). pp. vii–viii with listed pages. OCLC 654838066 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/654838066>).
16. Stephen H. Phillips (2009). *Yoga, Karma, and Rebirth: A Brief History and Philosophy* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=cRg2AAAAQBAJ>). Columbia University Press. pp. 272 note 26. ISBN 978-0-231-51947-2.

17. This is similar to *tu / vous* of French and Romance languages in Europe, states the Indologist Patrick Olivelle, see: Patrick Olivelle (2005). *Manu's Code of Law* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=PnHo02RtONMC>). Oxford University Press. pp. 346 note 11.205. ISBN 978-0-19-517146-4.
18. "Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon", *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Dictionaries* (<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/cgi-bin/tamil/recherche?dictionary=mwd&st=namas&prst=exact&en=&pren=exact&maxhits=50>) (search results), University of Cologne, retrieved March 24, 2012.
19. *Namaste* ([http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=namaste&searchmode=none](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=namaste&searchmode=none)) Douglas Harper, Etymology Dictionary
20. Lawrence, J. D. (2007), "The Boundaries of Faith: A Journey in India", *Homily Service*, 41(2), pp. 1–3
21. Oxhandler, Holly (2017). "Namaste Theory: A Quantitative Grounded Theory on Religion and Spirituality in Mental Health Treatment". *Religions*. 8 (9): 168. doi:10.3390/rel8090168 (<https://doi.org/10.3390%2Frel8090168>).
22. Sharma & Sharma (2004), Panorama of Harappan Civilization, ISBN 978-8174790576, Kaveri Books, page 129
23. *Origins of Hinduism* ([http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/2007/4-6/pdf/Hinduism-Today\\_Apr-May-Jun\\_2007.pdf](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/2007/4-6/pdf/Hinduism-Today_Apr-May-Jun_2007.pdf)) Hinduism Today, Volume 7, Issue 2 (April/May/June), Chapter 1, p. 3
24. *Seated Male in Namaskar pose* (<http://nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/prodCollections.asp?pid=36&id=1&lk=dp1>) National Museum, New Delhi, India (2012)
25. S Kalyanaraman, Indus Script Cipher: Hieroglyphs of Indian Linguistic Area, ISBN 978-0982897102, pp. 234–236
26. Joseph Shaules (2007), Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living, ISBN 978-1847690166, pp. 68–70
27. James Lochtefeld, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume 2, ISBN 0-8239-2287-1, pages 720
28. Fuller, C. J. (2004), *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 66–70, ISBN 978-0-691-12048-5
29. Kelkar (2010), *A Vedic approach to measurement of service quality* (<https://doi.org/10.1080%2F15332969.2010.510722>), *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 31(4), 420-433
30. Roberto De Nobili, Preaching Wisdom to the Wise: Three Treatises, ISBN 978-1880810378, page 132
31. R.R. Mehrotra (1995), How to be polite in Indian English, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. Volume 116, Issue 1, Pages 99–110
32. G. Chatterjee (2003), *Sacred Hindu Symbols*, ISBN 978-8170173977, pp. 47–49

## External links

---

- *The meaning of Namaste* (<http://www.yogajournal.com/article/beginners/the-meaning-of-quot-namaste-quot/>) *Yoga Journal*
  - *Modes of Greetings in Kashmiri* (<http://iils.org/pdf/ModesofGreetings.pdf>), Indian Institute of Language Studies
  - *Ancient Indus Valley Seal print showing Namaste/anjali mudra* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20071226125638/http://www.csuchico.edu/~cheinz/syllabi/asst001/fall97/2chd.htm>), CSU Chico
- 

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Namaste&oldid=903543095>"

**This page was last edited on 26 June 2019, at 08:48 (UTC).**

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.