

Indian Namaste Goes Global In COVID-19 Era



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Letter to the Editor

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To the Editor-in-Chief

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic began in China with a bunch of severe pneumonia cases, later identified to be caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 in December 2019. Thailand reported the primary COVID-19 case outside of China on 13th January 2020, Africa reported its first case in Egypt on 14th February 2020 and Nigeria reported its patient of COVID-19 on 27th February 2020. Virtually, all countries within the world are affected.¹

Globally, countries and international organizations are putting efforts to halt the transmission of the disease by preventive measures, management protocols, research activities for definitive treatment and vaccines.¹ The common principles in preventing and controlling infectious diseases are to eradicate the infection source, to cut off the transmission route, and to shield the susceptible population.²

Physical distancing is one of the measures being used to curtail the transmission of the virus. Transmission of COVID-19 by contact can occur when contaminated hands touch the mucosa of the eyes, nose or mouth. It may be transmitted between surfaces via contaminated hands. Also shaking hands or any variety of hand-to-hand contact should be avoided as cross-transmission of organisms occurs through contaminated hands.³

In most of countries, handshake, fist bump, high five and hugs are the various methods of greeting one another, which ends up in physical proximity and get in touch with, facilitating rapid propagation of infections like COVID-19.³ The current era of COVID-19 risk for causing epidemics is more; it's time to re-think this manner of greeting or salutation to avoid unnecessary physical contact and proximity among people.

Unfortunately, even simple gestures of greeting can result in possible contamination. But humans have better adaptability as always, we've come up with better ideas in a difficult situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the way we live. There are few alternatives for greeting one another, which may convey our emotions without the danger of infection.



Other alternatives to handshakes, high fives and hugs during COVID-19.⁴

1. Namaste
2. Wave
3. Hand on heart
4. Hello
5. Head shake or the Indian head bobble
6. Peace sign
7. Bow
8. The east coast wave
9. Elbow-bump
10. Foot tap

Several Indian traditions have got the attention of the world during the period of COVID-19 that promote and sustain good healthy practices for mental, physical, and spiritual. Namaste is foremost among them, worldwide the leaders have universally espoused this greeting. Most countries are urging citizens to use the Indian Namaste, to forestall contact and yet remain convivial. The Namaste is an archetype of Indian tradition, which is used for greeting one person means 'I bow to you'.⁵

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promoted the no-contact way of greeting, saying the world to adopt the Indian Namaste.⁶ Since early March, many global leaders have talked about their decision to shed the handshake and choose the Namaste. From Prince Charles in Britain, French President Macron, to Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, American President Donald Trump, everyone seems to be greeted with a Namaste.⁵

Across the world, the Indian way of greeting Namaste is popular which has a deeper meaning scientifically and spiritually. "Scientifically, 'Namaskar' is an Anjali Mudra, which as pressure points in palms and fingers helps in healing of various health problems when they are pressed together." Spiritually, 'Namaha' removes all egos, and one bows to the God, creator within others,". Today, travelers to India are always greeted with a Namaste.⁵

Hand hygiene is the best single practice that may decrease the spread of infections through multimodal measures.⁷ Therefore, hand hygiene is paramount in preventing the COVID-19 spread. In addition to meticulous hand hygiene, rapid transmission of infections can occur in hospitals and also the community which can be overcome by adopting the no-touch salutation (Namaste).^{8,9,10}

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