

Coronavirus fallout: Saying Namaste is new Normal! Goodbye to the handshakes, Kisses & hugs!

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SUMMARY

After the Coronavirus pandemic had started, it became common not to shake hands when meeting with friends, colleagues, clients or other contacts. Instead, people, started to adopt the “Namaste” to greet everyone which is originally a Hindu traditional greeting, but now used throughout the globe.

“Namaste” it’s literal meaning is ‘I bow to you’. The word originally comes from Sanskrit words ‘namas’ (bowing) and ‘te’ (to you). As we can see, it involves putting the palms of our both hands together in front of our chest and bowing our head so slightly in a respectful way while saying Namaste (Geno, R. 2017; & Das, S. 2020).

It is simple, courteous, effective, respectful method of greeting and inherently in which no macho show of strength required. When we put our hands together and hold it close to the heart, it stimulates the heart ‘chakra’. The ‘Namaste Mudra’ benefits the thoracic region, including the immunity of the lungs. The actual motion that accompanies the word “Namaste” is called “Anjali Mudra”. “Anjali” means offering. It’s a way to acknowledge that the divinity in me honors and sees the divinity in you (Outlook India. 2020; & Mudra, A.A. 2020).

With everyone nowadays being more aware of the transmission of Coronavirus, and importance of general hygiene (which includes washing our hands regularly, not touching our eyes, nose or mouth if our hands are dirty, cough etiquette etc.), it is a high time to wave goodbye to the handshake. In addition to any direct effects on transmission, avoidance of handshaking may also have potentially important benefits in terms of promoting and maintaining better hand hygiene habits (World health Organization. 2020a; & World health Organization. 2020b).

As coronavirus continues to spread, health experts are advising against all unnecessary human contact, “Namaste” the non-contact greeting is considered far safer than the western customs of shaking hands, hugging or kissing. Governments all around the globe urging their people to refrain from shaking hands and adopt ‘Namaste’ as a way of greeting instead of shaking hands to check the spread of COVID-19. Alternative greetings which reduce contact time and surface area of contact have been proposed, , such as the open-hand wave, placing the right hand over one’s heart, head bowing, thumbs up, removing the need for physical contact altogether. All these gestures will reduce the risk of contracting the corona virus and prevent them from spreading any further (Canberra times. 2020).

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Even alternative greetings which reduce, but do not totally remove the physical contact may have the potential to reduce transmission compared to handshaking. For example, the fist bump, elbow bumps, foot shake, pats on the back, and giving a high five had been shown to significantly reduce the transfer of germs compared to handshaking. Science says just about anything is better than the handshake (The guardian. 2020; & Aubrey, A. 2020).

Several world leaders and others are now using the simple joining of hands to say “Hello”, “Hi”, “How do you do” or “Namaste”. Newspapers, hoardings have been filled with advice to avoid shaking hands but to join their own hands together in a sign of greeting. While Coronavirus getting terrifying with each passing day and the physical contact being a leading cause of the spread, it comes as no surprise in the coming days that people will totally refuse to greet each other with regular handshakes. I wonder whether it may signal the demise of the common handshake (Financial express. 2020; The Hindu. 2020; & Chawla, M. 2020).

So, how do we greet someone in these times of corona, especially when refusing someone a handshake is sure to give the wrong impression? Simple! A “Namaste!” No physical contact. We won't even appear rude. In fact, the gesture expresses honour & courtesy and most important we are just safe from contracting the corona virus (The Hindu. 2020; & Chawla, M. 2020).

But It will not be easy. Handshakes and hugs are so ingrained in our culture — a movement that is nearly akin to an automatic reflex —especially in encounters with relatives, friends and even colleagues. Sometimes we start reaching for a handshake without even realizing it, and then we have to stop ourselves. But I think this is a positive change. Really we're in such a critical situation, and this is something that's necessary to stop the virus from spreading (Latimes. 2020).

There is no doubt handshaking is deeply embedded in human history. Nevertheless, if the handshake is to be discouraged during the COVID-19 outbreak, clear messaging from public health officials will be required. Leading by example will also be key: politicians and celebrities will need to visibly avoid handshaking and adopt alternative greetings. Just as tuberculosis ended the widespread practice of spitting in public, repeated public health advisories about handshakes could make people think twice about doing that with strangers (Smith, L. E. *et al.*, 2020).

Ultimately, the long-term effects of this pandemic will be far from universal. Some people will become germaphobes, refuse to shake hands, and will carry on with some form of social distancing. The ritual

handshake will definitely lose its grip in the time of coronavirus. The time-honoured practice of shaking hands will suddenly become taboo and may be the first casualty of COVID-19 (Abraham, R. 2020).

This Corona virus will probably be with us for a while — perhaps well into the next few years— so developing the habit to avoid handshake and adopt Namaste is a good long-term strategy for keeping our community healthy. And, don't forget, Corona virus is not the only germ in country. Seasonal influenza, swine flu and many others are still a concern, and even when it's not, there's always something going around. “Namaste” is the very best weapon in any fight between human and this contagious disease (Chawla, M. 2020).

So, friends, Say no to a handshake, refuse kisses on the cheeks and definitely avoid hugging. Now onwards, Namaste and only Namaste!!

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