

Path to Siva

A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Lesson 56



What Is the Hindu Way of Greeting?

Two hands pressed together



For Hindus, the greeting of choice is namaste (or namaskar).

The two hands are pressed together and held near the heart with the head gently bowed as one says, "Namaste."

A mantra and a mudra

It is both a spoken greeting and a gesture—a mantra and a mudra.

The prayerful hand position is called anjali, from the root *anj*, “to adorn, honor or celebrate.”

In our Saiva community, we also say, with folded hands, “Vanakkam,”



“Namah Sivaya” or “Aum Sivaya.”

“Namah Sivaya” or “Aum Sivaya.”

The meaning is similar.

The hands held in union signify the oneness of an apparently dual cosmos, the bringing together of spirit and matter, or the self meeting the Self.



Higher and lower nature

It is said that the right hand represents the higher nature or that which is divine in us, while the left hand represents the lower, worldly nature.



Meaning of Namaste

In Sanskrit *namas* means “bow, obeisance, reverential salutation.”

It comes from the root *nam*, which carries meanings of bending, bowing, humbly submitting and becoming silent. *Te* means “to you.” Thus *namaste* means “I bow to you.”



I see the Deity in us both...

The namaste gesture gently reminds us that we can see God everywhere and in every human being we meet.

It is saying, silently, "I see the Deity in us both, and bow before It."

I acknowledge the holiness of even this simple meeting.

I cannot separate that which is spiritual in us from that which is human and ordinary."



We treat the person with respect and love

This beautiful custom opens our heart to see that person's good qualities.

We remember to treat him or her with respect and love.

It would be difficult to offend or feel animosity toward anyone that you greet as God.



Also used to say farewell

Namaste can also be used to say farewell.

An even deeper veneration is expressed by bringing the fingers of the joined palms to the brow, the site of the mystic third eye.



Bringing the palms above the head

A third form of namaste brings the palms above the head.

This salutation is reserved for God and the holiest of satgurus.



Gurudeva says...

The mudra is called anjali. It is a devotional gesture made equally before a Deity, holy person, friend or momentary acquaintance.

Holding the hands together connects the right side of the body with the left, and brings the nerve and nadi currents into poised balance, into a consciousness of the sushumna, awakening the third eye within the greeter to worship God in the greeted.



QUESTIONS for Lesson 56



56.1 As one says “Namaste,” the hands are pressed together and held near the waist with the head gently bowed.

- True
- False

56.2 The prayerful hand position used when speaking “Namaste” in Sanskrit is called
(Check the correct answer)

- A. Mantra
- B. Asana
- C. Anjali

56.3 Enter the letter from below of A - B for the phrase that correctly completes the idea. It is said that
(Check the correct answer)

___ The right hand represents
___ The left hand represents

- (A) The higher nature, or that which is divine in us
- (B) The lower worldly nature

56.4 In Sanskrit namas means “bow, obeisance, reverential salutation and te means “to you.” Thus namaste means
“I bow to you” and reminds us that we can see God in every human being we meet.

- True
- False

56.5 A third form of namaste brings the palms above the head and is reserved for
(Check the incorrect answer)

- A. Family members
- B. God
- C. The holiest of satgurus