



Why do we do this in Indian Culture?

Part 1



Why do we say namaste?

When we know the significance of our greeting – It is just not a just a gesture but way for a deeper connection with another in an atmosphere of love and respect



Namaste

- Namaste is the greeting in Indian culture.
 - Is done with two palms placed together in front of the chest and the head is bows while saying the word “namaste”.

Basic Meaning

- In Sanskrit, namah + te means “I bow to you.” Meaning my greetings / salutations to you.

Deeper Meaning

- In Sanskrit, namah more literally interpreted as “na ma” (not Mine). Its significance is to negate or reduce one’s ego in presence of another.
 - The real meeting between people is meeting of minds. When we greet one another, we do so with namaste which can be thought of as “may our minds meet”. In India, classes (in school) or session with spiritual Guru and disciple (in ashram) start with Namaste between student and teacher / guru – symbolizing meeting of minds – teachers and students minds are connected hence process of teacher giving knowledge and students receiving it can commence.

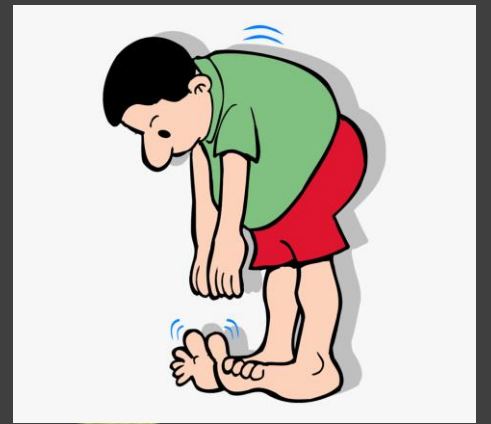
Spiritual Meaning

- The life force – Atma (soul) - divinity in me is the same as in all.
- In Bhagwat Geeta – Lord Krishna say I am seated in heart of everyone.
 - Namaste also means “I salute / greet / bow my head to the divinity within you”; This is why sometimes we close our eyes when we say namaste. Also therefore many people say “Jai Siya Ram”, “Jai Shri Krishna”, “Namo Narayana”, etc in place of “Namaste”

Why do we touch feet?

No – I Don't Mean That!

I Mean Those!

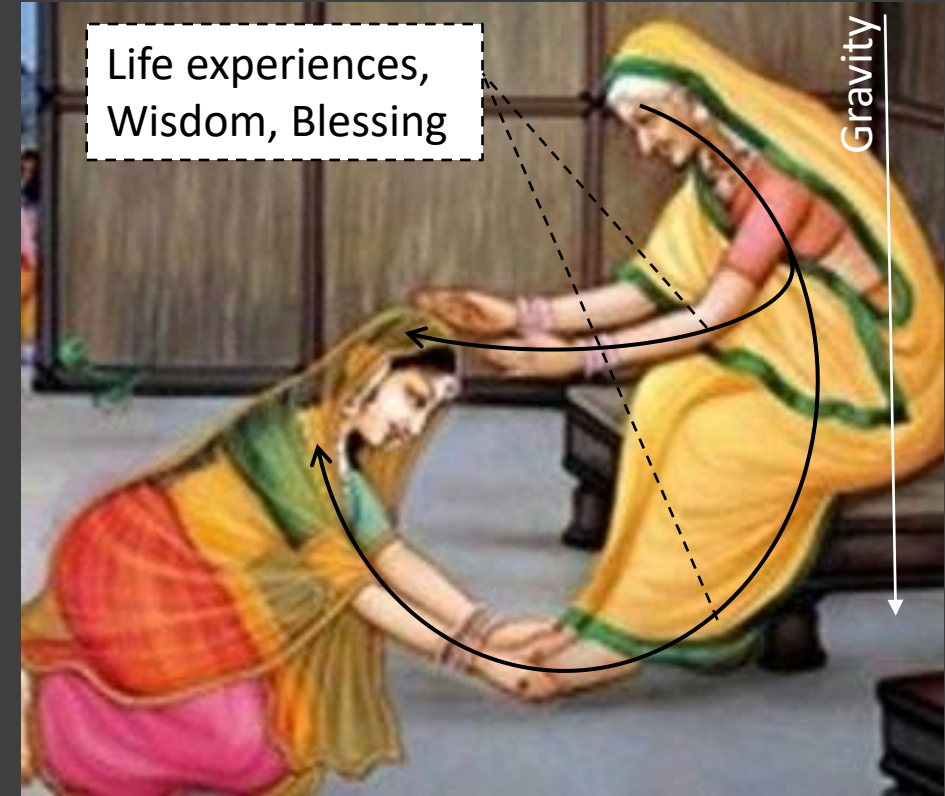


Why do we touch our elder's feet? (Upasangrahan)

- Touching the feet of elders is an age-old Indian tradition that is to show sign of respect for the age, maturity, nobility and divinity of the elderly - parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and spiritual persons and in many household, older brother or sisters.
- In return the person shown respect blesses the person giving respect.

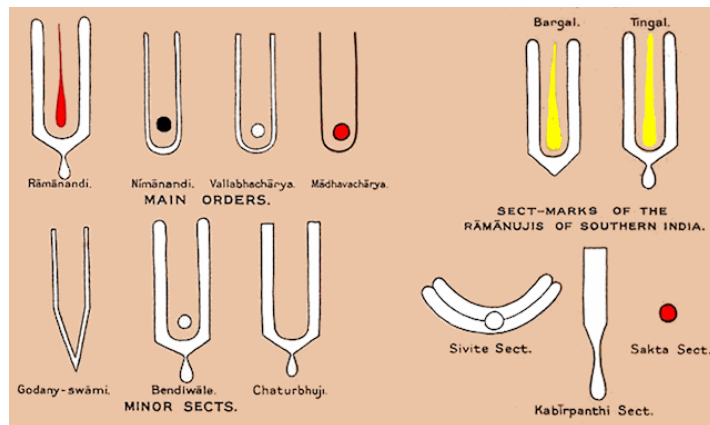
The science behind touching the feet

- The nerves in the human body – start from our brain, spread all over our body and end at our fingertips and toes.
- While doing *Upasangrahan*, when the fingertips of your hand are joined to the feet of the opposite person, a closed circuit is established between the two immediately and the energies of your bodies are connected – your fingers and hands become the receptor of that energy, while the feet of the elder person become the giver of the energy. When the elder accepts this respect, their heart becomes filled with love, good thoughts and positive energy, which they give out through their hands and feet.



Combine thought with action

Think that you are receiving / absorbing the blessing / wisdom of the person as you are touching their feet



Why do we wear marks on the forehead?

Why do we wear tilak?

- The tilak or pottu invokes a feeling of or having quality of being holy, or saintly in the wearer and others. It is recognized as a religious mark.
- Its color varies:
 - White chandan mark signifying purity
 - Red kumkum mark signifying valor
 - Yellow kesar or turmeric mark signifying prosperity, and so on.
- Also, its shape varies by religious sect or the form of the God worshipped
 - Vishnu worshippers apply a chandan tilak of the shape of “U”,
 - Shiva worshippers apply a tripundra of bhasma,
 - Devi (Goddess) worshippers apply a red dot of kumkum and so on.

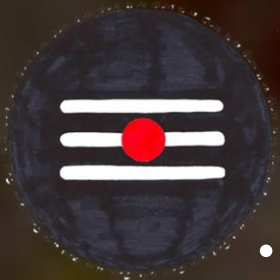
Scientific and Spirituality Behind Tilak:

- The tilak is applied with the prayer – “May I remember the Lord. May this pious feeling pervade all my activities. May I be righteous in my deeds.” Even when we temporarily forget this prayerful meaning, the mark on another reminds us of our resolve. The tilak is thus a blessing of the Lord and a protection against wrong tendencies and forces.
- The tilak cover the spot between the eyebrows – Where Ajna Chakra lies and is the seat of memory and thinking.
 - The entire body emanates energy in the form of electromagnetic waves – the forehead and the subtle spot between the eyebrows especially so. That is why worry generates heat and causes a headache. The tilak and pottu cools the forehead, protects us and prevents energy loss. Sometimes the entire forehead is covered with chandan or bhasma.
- It is also termed as Lord Shiva’s third eye as it is the abode of noble thoughts. Application of sandalwood paste or vermilion as a tilak on the spot helps in nurturing the Ajna Chakra and the two adjacent glands. This also develops intellectual power, vitality and thinking.

Applying tilak has both scientific and spiritual benefits. That is why we apply tilak before starting any auspicious task.

Why do we apply holy ash?

- Bhasma is holy ash, however the word Bhasma means “that by which our sins are destroyed, and the lord is remembered.” So putting it on our forehead shows the destruction of evil and remembering the divine inside of us.
- Bhasma is also associated with shiva, who puts it on his forehead in tripundra(the ≡ on his forehead) and puts a red dot on the center. Altogether the symbol represents Shiva-Shakti
- Bhasma symbolizes the burning away of anava (ego), karma and maya (illusion)
- Bhasma also has medicinal properties in ayurvedic medicine.





Why do we ring the bell in a temple or during aarti / pooja?

- Is it to wake up the Lord?
No! --- Lord never sleeps!

Is it to let the Lord know that we entered the temple? No! --- Lord is all-knowing!

Why do we ring the bell?

The ringing of the bell produces the sound representing, ॐ the universal sound / name that represents God

- Therefore, ringing the bell helps us drown out any inauspicious, distracting noises or thoughts that might disturb our payer, concentration and inner peace.
- It is meant to help us focus our concentration and our thoughts on prayers towards the deity.

We start *pooja* with ringing of the bell and chanting the mantra:

आगमार्थं तु देवानां गमनार्थं तु रक्षसाम्
कुर्वे घण्टारवं तत्र देवताह्वान लक्षणम् ।।

Aagamaarthamtu devaanaam gamanaarthamtu rakshasaam,
Kurve ghantaaravam tatra devataahvaahna lakshanam.

I ring this bell indicating the invocation of divinity, so that virtuous and noble forces enter; and the demonic and evil forces, from within and without, depart.



← Think of this prayer the next time you ring the bell in the temple



Why do we do
pradakshina?

You probably seen people circling the temples or God or
Goddesses inside the temple. Why are they doing that?

Why do we do pradakshina?

- Pradakshina is when we chant while walking around a deity / temple.
- A circle always has a center point. When we walk around god, we are recognizing that he is the center and is the focal point in life.
- We always do pradakshina clockwise. Why?
 - Right side is known to be auspicious (beneficial, prosperous, etc.). As we do pradakshina clockwise god is always on our right side.

We also do pradakshina around our teachers and parents:

- Prayer – *matrudevo bhava, pirtudevo bhava, archaryadevo bhava*
– Consider your parents and teachers as you would the Lord
 - Surely you may have heard story of Lord Ganesh circling his parents.
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- It also customary to do pradakshina around ourselves after performing pooja.
 - In this way we recognize and remember that supreme divinity within us, which we worship in form of the God / Goddess outside.



Combine Thought with Action

As you perform pradakshina, think yourself to lead an auspicious life of righteousness, with God being the “center” source of help and strength, as your – “right hand” – guide of your life.