

An Indian handshake can go on seemingly forever, causing some visitors discomfort. Simply view a prolonged handshake as a sign of Indian warmth.

Sometimes a handshake is followed by a traditional Indian salutation, *namaste*, where the palms are pressed together and the hands held in front of

the chest. Although most women in the private and public sectors shake hands, many prefer to say *namaste* instead. Some Canadians have experienced embarrassing moments, stretching out their hands to a woman only to find that she acknowledges their offer with a *namaste*. Take your cue from her and reciprocate in a similar manner.

Gift-giving ♦ ♦ ♦

It is common in India to communicate with gifts, especially during festive seasons. A gift can be an expression of joy or thanks for a favour. It can be a token to help pave the way for an upcoming request. Sweets and dried fruit are common gifts.

The tendency to give expensive gifts, such as video players and televisions, is on the rise. Some people go as far as giving air tickets to foreign countries

as gifts. The kind of gift offered depends on the position and function of the recipient.

For foreigners unaccustomed to exchanging gifts with anyone other than close family members, the practice can be embarrassing. Remember that gift-giving is not universal; some Indians neither promote nor accept gift-giving.

Communication ♦ ♦ ♦

Verbal communication

With 60 million Indians fluent in English, you are unlikely to experience major problems communicating with your Indian partners. Although accents and

pronunciations may differ, don't presume an Indian's English vocabulary is limited. A recent incident during a workshop for managers illustrates the point: