

# **SURYA NAMASKARA: AN INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIAN CULTURE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Surya Namaskara is a novel and invaluable contribution of Indian culture to mankind. Surya Namaskara practices help us to achieve mental, emotional and physical balance. It improves physical as well as mental fitness, promotes relaxation, and reduces stress, anxiety, depression or many negative feelings. Surya Namaskara consists of twelve yogic postures with breathing practice. The regular practice of Surya Namaskara in the time of sun rise or sun set might be free from different diseases. In ancient time, Indian sage or rishi practiced Surya Namaskara after they took bath. They believed that Surya Namaskara is not only the exercise, but also it has divine nature. The study propagates that the practice of Surya Namaskara during sun rise or sun set is extremely important. We get cosmic energy from sun. It helps us to be more energetic and to do more or hard creative work for society. This energy also develops our spirituality. The series of yogic postures in Surya Namaskara helps us to develop our posture and it makes sound condition of our physiological and psychological systems.

**Keywords:** Surya Namaskara, physiological, psychological, stress

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Surya Namaskara is a novel and invaluable contribution of Indian culture to mankind. Surya Namaskar is an ancient Indian method of offering prayers to the rising Sun in the morning along with a series of physical postures with regulated breathing aiming at range of physical, mental and spiritual benefits. Facing east, in the early hours of morning, one standing with serene mind offers prayer to Lord Sun (Surya in sanskrit) with Surya namaskar. Along with physical postures, Surya Namaskar has specific spiritual connotations attached to it. Surya Namaskar is a graceful combined sequence of twelve positions along with regulated breathing and relaxation. Surya Namaskara consists of twelve yogic postures with breathing practice. Regular practice of Surya Namaskara in the time of sun rise or sun set might be free from different diseases. In ancient time, Indian sage or rishi practiced

Surya Namaskara after taking bath. They believed that Surya Namaskara is not only an exercise but also it has a divine aspect. During the practice of sun rise or sun set, we get cosmic energy from sun and it helps us to be more energetic and to do more and hard creative work for society. This energy also develops our spirituality and awakens our internal plexus or chakra. The series of yogic postures in Surya Namaskara helps us to develop our posture and sound condition of our physical, physiological and psychological systems.

## **THE PURPOSE OF SURYA NAMASKARA**

The purpose of the Study 'Surya Namaskara' helps us to achieve mental, emotional and Physical balance. It improves physical as well as mental fitness, promotes relaxation, and reduces stress, anxiety, depression and makes us free from all negative feelings. It also helps one to develop spirituality and inner power.

## **IMPORTANCE OF SURYA NAMASKARA**

Surya Namaskara or sun salutation literally means 'salute the sun'. It finds its roots from the worship of Surya, the god surya Narayan. According to Indian old scriptures, Lord Krishna had given jnana to Arjun and Surya Narayana; Surya Narayana gave it to Manu, Ikashu and Bharat accordingly. So, through Surya Namaskara, a series of activities and poses can be practiced as a physical exercise or a complete sadhana which incorporates exercise postures, breathing exercises, mantra chanting and profound meditation. When we expend little bit time and looking for a single mantra to stay fit, then the only answer: a sequence of 12 powerful yoga asanas (postures) that provide a good cardiovascular workout in the form of Surya Namaskar. Surya Namaskars are a good way to keep the body in shape and keep the mind calm and healthy. It improves our concentration and reduces all negative feelings. Regular practice of Surya Namaskara makes the spine and waist more flexible and strengthens and toning the muscles of different parts of the body. It improves all physiological system of regular practitioners.

Surya Namaskar is best done in early morning during the sun rise with an empty stomach. Each round of Sun Salutation consists of two sets, and each set is composed of 12 yoga poses. You might find several versions from several books on how to practice Sun Salutation. But I think, it is best to stick to one particular version and practice it regularly for best results.

## **PROCEDURES OF SURYA NAMASKARA**

Besides good health, Surya Namaskar also provides an opportunity to express gratitude

to the sun for sustaining life on this planet. For the next 10 days, one can start his day with a feeling of grace and gratitude towards the sun energy. *12 rounds of Sun Salutation*, followed by other yoga poses and then rest deeply in *yoga nidra*. You might just find that this could be your mantra to stay fit, happy and peaceful throughout the day.

## PRAYER FOR SURYA NAMASKARA

At first we stand erect and fold the hand with namaskara mudra, and prayer for God Surya Narayan:

“Hiranmayena Patrena Satya-Syapi-Hitam Mukham  
Tattvam-Pusanna-Pavnu Satya-Dharmaya Drastave”

*- Ishopanishad*

That means,

“Truth lies concealed by golden vessel.

Do thou o Sun

Open the entrance of that cover

So as the Truth you so concealed

Be visible to me,

A devotee, who by nature is truthful,

In the light of your illuminating grace.”

Then we should practice twelve postures of Surya Namaskara one by one and before practice every posture, we salute different name to God Surya with chants (mantras) following:

1. Om Hram Mitraaya namahaa
2. Om Hrim Ravaye namahaa
3. Om Hrum Suryaaya namaha
4. Om Hraim Bhaanave namahaa
5. Om Hraum Khagaaya namahaa
6. Om Hrah Pushane namahaa
7. Om Hram Hiranyagarbhaaya namahaa

8. Om Hrim Marichye namahaa
9. Om Hrum Aadityaaya namahaa
10. Om Hraim Savitre namahaa
11. Om Hraum Akaarye namahaa
12. Om Hrah Bhaaskaraaya namahaa

### **BREATHING PRACTICE (RESPIRATION) SHOULD BE DONE DURING A SURYA NAMASKAR**

1. Purak – Taking in a long breath.
2. Rechak – Leaving out a long breath.
3. Kumbhak –Holding the breath.
4. Aantar Kumbhak – Holding the breath after breathing in.
5. Bahir Kumbhak – Holding the breath after breathing out.

During every step we have to do the ‘purak’ and rechak breathing steps alternately.  
E.g. Step 2- purak, Step 3- rechak- Step 4 – purak and so on.

### **PRACTICE: TWELVE POSTURES OF SURYA NAMASKARA**

Start the Surya Namaskaras by standing at the edge of your mat. Keep your feet together, and make sure your weight is equally balanced on both the feet. You must now relax your shoulders and expand your chest. Inhale and lift both your arms up. Then, exhale and bring your palms in front of your chest in a prayer position. There are twelve steps or positions that make a Surya Namaskar. Every step in Surya Namaskar is a different yoga position. To get the maximum benefit of Surya Namaskar hold yourself stable in every position for at least 10 to 15 seconds. Try to practice it for twelve times in each schedule. Twelve steps or postures are following:

#### **Posture- 1**

***Prarthanasana or Pranamasana or Namaskara Mudra:*** Both feet touching each other, both hands joined at the centre of the chest as in prayer position back and neck straight and look straight.

***Breathing :*** Kumbhak

**Benefit:** Helps maintain the physical and mental balance of the body.

## **Posture- 2**

***Hastauttanasana*** : Continuing from the first position take your hands straight up above your head and bend slightly backwards to stretch your back. Keep your hands in prayer position (without bending your elbows). Keep your neck between your arms and looking upwards bending slightly backwards from the waist.

**Breathing:** Purak (While going from Position 1 to 2 slowly, start taking long breaths)

**Benefit:** Strengthens chest muscles which in turn help in breathing.

## **Posture- 3**

***Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose)*** : Continuing from 2nd position take your hands from above your head bending in the front and place your hands beside your feet on both sides. Keep your knees straight and try to touch the head to your knees.

**Breathing:** Rechak (Leave your breath slowly while going from Position 2 to 3)

**Benefit:** Makes the waist and spine flexible. It strengthens the muscles and is beneficial for the functioning of the liver.

## **Posture- 4**

***Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)***: From the 3rd position start sitting down and take one leg backwards in full stretching position, your hands resting on the ground on either sides of the front leg. The other leg should be bent at the knee. Put the chest weight on the front knee, your eyes should be looking slightly upwards.

**Breathing:** Purak

**Benefit:** Strengthens the leg muscles and makes the spine and neck muscles flexible.

## **Posture- 5**

***Chaturang Dandasana(Stick pose)***: Now slowly take the second leg back and beside the first. Keep the legs in line with the knees. The whole body weight should rest on the palms and toes. The foot, waist and head should be in a straight line. One should look ahead towards the ground (This is also called Chaturang Dandasana because the body rests on the toes and palms)

**Breathing:** Rechak

**Benefit:** Strengthens the arms and maintains body posture.

## **Posture- 6**

***Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with Eight Parts or Points)*** : Lower the chest towards the

ground bending both arms at the elbows. The following eight organs should touch the ground, forehead, chest, both palms, both knees and both toes. (Because eight body parts touch the ground it is called Ashtangasan)

Breathing: Kumbhak (Bahirkumbhak)

Benefit: Makes the spine and waist flexible and strengthens the muscles.

### **Posture- 7**

**Bhujangasan**: Now lift your body above the waist, bending it slightly backwards and looking backwards. Make sure your legs and thighs are touching the ground and your back is in a semi-circular position.

Breathing: Purak

Benefit: Makes the spine and waist flexible and strengthens the muscles. (Positions 5, 6 and 7 together, strengthen the arms and reduce the fat around the abdomen and waist.)

### **Posture- 8**

**AdhoMukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog pose)**: Now lift your waist upwards and arms fully stretched with hands and legs resting on the ground, try to touch the chin to the chest.

Breathing: Rechak

Benefit: Beneficial for spine and waist muscles.

### **Posture- 9**

**Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)**: Same as the 4th position with the opposite leg behind.

Breathing: Purak

### **Posture- 10**

**Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose)**: Same as that in the 3rd position.

Breathing: Rechak

### **Posture -11**

**Hastauttanasana**: Same as that in the 2nd position.

Breathing: Purak

## Posture-12

***Prarthanasana or Pranamasana or Namaskara Mudra:*** After that slowly come back to Position

1. Now one Surya Namaskar is over.

## BENEFITS OF SURYA NAMASKARA

1. Benefit of Surya Namaskar is that it strengthens the entire body. It improves endurance. Bhavanani and Rabindra (2011) found that the experimental groups significantly increased Isometric hand grip strength and endurance. Singh et. al. (2010) observed that surya namaskara improved abdominal muscles endurance significantly.

2. It relieves constipation and promotes healthy digestion.

3. It stimulates the nervous system including the brain, lower plexus, spinal cord, etc. Surya Namaskar Yoga strongly aids in preventing memory loss, builds focus and concentration, improves the functioning of the brain, activates Brain cells in the body.

4. It is highly beneficial for improving blood circulation. It is a well-known remedy to cure blood pressure and strengthens heart muscles. It also cures irregular heartbeat. Sasikumar (2011) found that after given treatment, surya namaskara practitioners group increased FVC and Systolic blood pressure and decrease heart rate and diastolic blood pressure significantly. Bhavanani and Rabindra (2011) found that the both experimental groups significantly improved pulmonary and slow surya namaskara group was decreased diastolic pressure. Singh (2011) observed that the vital capacity increased significantly through the practice of surya namaskara. Yadav and Kumar (2014) also revealed that Surya Namaskara can be an effective training programme to increase the cardio respiratory endurance of male soccer players.

5. It improves the capacity of the lungs, stimulates oxygen supply and regulates it to all the vital organs in the body. Sasikumar (2011) observed that the experimental group who practiced Surya Namaskara regularly have increased Peak expiratory flow rate and decreased Respiratory rate. Bhavanani and Rabindra (2011) found that the both experimental groups significantly increased Maximum inspiratory and expiratory pressure.

6. It also provides beautiful glow to the skin.

7. Regular Practice of Surya Namaskara promotes weight loss and activates basal metabolic rate of a person's body. Nautiyal (2016) revealed that the study of regular practice of surya namaskara for 30 days significantly reduced body weight of the experimental group. Monga and Trivedi (2018) showed that surya namaskara decrease body weight and abdominal growth.

- 8.** It helps for managing menstrual cramps and, also helpful in managing menopause stage. Due to its empowering effects on the uterus of a woman, Surya Namaskar also helps in making child birth comparatively easier.
- 9.** Surya Namaskara improves sexual functions of the body. Eradicates any internal flaws related to malfunctioning of sexual glands. Also, promotes healthy sexual appetite in a person.
- 10.** It reduces strained joints problems. Lubricates sore muscles and joints and promotes their healthy functioning. It is highly beneficial in managing arthritis, sciatica, other joint related ailments etc.
- 11.** It improves mental and physical balance of the person's body. Develops patience and builds stamina by increasing the mental capacity of the brain and the body.
- 12.** It Improves flexibility of the body and releases stiffness. It removes low back pain. Most of all, it fills you up with magnanimous positive energy. One feel rejuvenated and alive. Singh et. al. (2010) observed that the experimental group improved trunk flexibility significantly by the regular practice of surya namaskara.
- 13.** Suryanamaskar helps to develop physical relaxation, mental calmness and peace. It also brings joy and happiness and reduces sleepiness, somatic stress, worry and negative emotion. Godse, Shejwal and Godse (2015) studied and found the same results.
- 14.** It reduces anxiety and restlessness and enhances our strength and vitality.

Surya Namaskar Yoga comes with numerous benefits. The above mentioned ones are a mere fraction of its long list of prerogatives. We should imbibe Surya Namaskar into your daily life and live a healthy life.

## CONCLUSION

Surya Namaskars are a good way to keep the body in shape and the mind calm and healthy. A healthy and strong body is like an ornament. If we are healthy, we will be able to gain lots of knowledge, can do hard and creative work or can participate in healthy competitions. Due to the gift of Yoagasan given by ancient Sages, we remain healthy and lead a long life.

Regular practice of Surya Namaskara connects our mind, body, and soul, and brings out the best in us. It helps us to imbibe good habit and helps us to lead a harmonious life. The solar plexus (located behind the navel, which is the central point of the human body), also known as the second brain, is said to be connected to the sun. This is the main reason why the

ancient *sages* recommended the practice of Surya Namaskar, because the regular practice of this technique enhances the solar plexus, which increases one's creativity and intuitive abilities.

If we practice the Surya Namaskara regularly, we notice some exceptional benefits all over our body. The intense and powerful asanas in the practice have an incredible impact on the stomach, liver, heart, intestines, chest, throat, and legs, which means the whole body from head to toe is benefited. The Sun Salutation also improves and enhances blood circulation throughout the body, and this ensures the proper functioning of the bowels, the stomach, and the nerve centres. When we practice this routine every day, the *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are also balanced.

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