



July, 2012



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A B S T R A C T

Recently many people are turning towards Yoga to get rid of physical problems and found Surya Namaskar a simple, yogic exercise that provides immense health benefits. Surya Namaskar is a sequence of yogic postures along with chants that together comprise a complete yoga called Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) which is a worship system of worshipping Surya, has been practiced in India for thousands of years. It's a combination of twelve poses in the series with graceful movement. For the physiological system of the body to be fit, the systems must function well enough to support the specific activity that the individual is performing. More over different activities make different demands upon the organism with respect to circulatory, metabolic, neurological and temperature regulatory functions.

Introduction

You can count five seconds for each step of the Surya Namaskar. It means that one Surya Namaskar goes for one minute (or a bit more). The only change during the second set is to exchange leg with the one involved in movement during the first set. Surya Namaskar, if performed in a systematic and précised manner, do not cause any strain or injury in the body, that's why it is the safest yogic practice. One can experience health benefits by practicing this just once daily. When practiced in the morning, Surya Namaskar relieves a person from stiffness in body it energizes the whole body and refreshes his mind. It is a physical exercise in which about 90% to 95% of your muscles are stretched and activated.

Reasons To Practice Surya Namaskar

- 1 It can be practiced by anyone, anywhere, anytime.
- 2 It takes only 3 to 10 minutes.
- 3 It acts on the entire body.
- 4 It requires no props or equipment.
- 5 It tones up the digestive system by stretching and compressing the abdominal region.
- 6 It massages the viscera (liver, stomach, spleen, intestines, and kidney).
- 7 It synchronizes movements with breathing, thoroughly ventilates the lungs, oxygenates the blood, acts as a disintoxicant, and gets rid of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases.
- 8 It increases cardiac activity and blood flow and warms the extremities.
- 9 It tones up the nervous systems by stretching and bending the spinal column and regulates the sym

- 10 It promotes good sleep.
- 11 It improves memory.
- 12 It allays worry and calms anxiety.
- 13 It stimulates and normalizes endocrine glands, thyroid in particular, activity by compression and decompression of the neck,
- 14 It refreshes the skin and clears complexion.
- 15 It improves muscle structure of the whole body.
- 16 It controls activity in the uterus and ovaries, helps pms and assists in childbirth.
- 17 It prevents flat feet and strengthens the ankles.
- 18 It helps to get rid of fat in the stomach, hips, thighs, neck, and chin.
- 19 It increases immunity to disease.
- 20 It lends grace and ease to movements.
- 21 It revives and maintains youthfulness.

Regular Practice of Sun Salutation Benefits Your Body With:

- * Increased blood oxygenation by copious lung ventilation and this is great news for your heart.
- * Stretches and tones your muscles keeping them supple and flexible.
- * Clears your elimination channels helping your body rid itself of toxins. This is especially good in the morning after many hours of lack of movement during sleep (the lymphatic system eliminates toxins through movement).
- * Stimulates and tones your Endocrine system (especially the Thyroid, the master gland that controls all the other glands).
- * Tones up the internal abdominal organs by alternate stretching, compression cycles that results

in better digestion and bowel movement.

- * Increases spine and waist flexibility.

The Mental Benefits Of Sun Salutation

The mental benefits of Sun Salutation are similar with meditation. You can look at Sun Salutation as meditation in movement. It is not random that Tai-Chi (Chinese) or Kata in Karate, have a similar focused mind on movement approach at the core of their practice. Sun Salutation helps to:

- * Increase your mental focus and concentration.
- * Reduce depression, anxiety and stress by reducing key markers like Cortisol.
- * Increase the quantity of "good mood" neurotransmitters like Serotonin.
- * Increase mind to body coordination which is very good especially for older persons. If done properly, twelve repetitions of Sun Salutation (six pairs of Sun Salutation starting with one leg and then the other), go a long way. It takes roughly 30-40 seconds for one complete cycle (twelve postures flowing from one to the other). Add two minutes of relaxation at the end, to allow your body implement the "reset" you just performed, and you are ready for the new day. Ten minutes all together in the morning will help you look at the unwinding life from a different perspective.

Who Should Not Do Surya Namaskar?

1. Pregnant women
2. Patients of hernia and high blood pressure.
- 3 People suffering from back condition should seek proper advice commencing surya namaskar.
- 4 Women should avoid surya namaskar during menses.

Despite its ancient Hindu religious interpretations, Surya Namaskar is no less applicable in the modern context. Surya Namaskar is one complete set of sequential yoga posture that reaps the collective benefits of both strength and endurance training. Hence, it has been rightly called "Sarvang Sunder Vyayam" or the best all round exercise.

Scientific Relevance Of Surya Namaskar

' Core Stability' or the strengthening of the back muscles around the spine and the diaphragm is the objective of Kinesiology. The various yoga posture of Surya Namaskar along with the Pranayam practices achieves this effect more easily and effortlessly. In addition to that, you get a more balanced frame of mind and sense of wellbeing due to sun salutation. Surya Namaskar promotes strength of mind

and positive thinking, which encourages uplifting -- thoughts in practitioners and induces a mental awareness which helps connect them to God and the divinity within.

Surya Namaskar ---benefits

Like other yoga exercises, the Sun Salutation promises to improve the physical, mental and spiritual aspects. It is said to be effective in alleviating stress, boosting concentration, stabilizing emotions and inducing peace of mind. Surya namaskar benefits the body by improving blood circulation, digestion and flexibility. The joints, and ligaments are strengthened and the nervous system's functions are sharpened. The exercise is also believed to have a positive effect on the pituitary, thyroid and parathyroid glands in the endocrine system. Yoga experts recommend the exercise for people who have trouble sleeping as it refreshes and relaxes the mind without the need for drugs.

One of Surya's many other appellations is Savitri (the Vivifier), who, according to the Rig Veda, "begets and feeds mankind in various manners". Moreover, since everything that exists originates from the sun, it "must contain the potentiality of all that is to be known." For the Hindus, the sun is the "eye of the world", seeing and uniting all selves in itself, an image of and a pathway to the divine. One of the means of honoring the sun is through the dynamic asana sequence. Sanskrit word namaskar stems from namas, which means "to bow to" or "to adore." Each Sun Salutation begins and ends with the joined-hands mudra (gesture) touched to the heart. This placement is no accident; only the heart can know the truth.

History and Practice

There's some disagreement among authorities over the origins of Sun Salutation. Traditionalists contend that the sequence is at least 2,500 years old (perhaps even several hundred years older), that it originated during Vedic times as a ritual prostration to the dawn, replete with mantras, offerings of flowers and rice, and libations of water. Skeptics of this dating maintain that Sun Salutation was invented by the raja of Aundh (a former state in India, now part of Maharashtra state) in the early 20th century, then disseminated to the West in the 1920s or 1930s. However old Sun Salutation is, and whatever it may originally have looked like, many variations have evolved over the years. Surya Namaskar sequence here consists of 12 "stations" composed of eight dif-

ferent postures, the last four being the same as the first four but performed in reverse order. In this sequence, we'll start and end in Tadasana. The eight basic postures, in order of performance, are Tadasana (Mountain Pose), Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute), Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), Lunge, Plank Pose, Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose), Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog Pose), and Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose).

The transition from posture to posture is facilitated by either an inhalation or an exhalation. As you move through the sequence, watch your breath closely. Slow your pace or stop and rest entirely if your breathing becomes labored or shuts down altogether. Always breathe through your nose, not your mouth: Nasal breathing filters and warms incoming air and slows your breathing down, thereby lending the sequence a meditative quality and reducing the risk of hyperventilation. To perform the sequence, start in Tadasana, with your hands together at your heart. Inhale and lift your arms overhead to Urdhva Hastasana, then exhale while lowering the arms down and fold your torso into Uttanasana. Then inhale, arch your torso into a slight backbend with the fingertips or palms pressed to the floor or blocks, and exhale while bringing your left foot back into a lunge. Inhale forward to Plank, then exhale and lower yourself into Chaturanga Dandasana. On an inhalation, arch your torso up as you straighten your arms into Upward Dog. Exhale back to Downward Dog; step the left foot forward on an inhalation into Lunge. Swing the right leg forward to Uttanasana on an exhalation, then lift your torso and reach your arms overhead on an inhalation to Urdhva Hastasana. Finally, lower your arms on an exhalation and return to your starting point, Tadasana. Remember, this is

only a half-round; you'll need to repeat the sequence, switching left to right and right to left to complete a full round. If you're just starting out, it might help to work on the poses individually before you put them together. Many of the variations of Sun Salutation begin in Tadasana with the sacred hand gesture mentioned earlier. Touch your palms and fingers together in front of your chest and rest your thumbs lightly on your sternum, with the sides of the thumbs pressing lightly on the bone about two-thirds of the way down. Be sure to broaden your palms and press them against each other evenly, so your dominant hand doesn't overpower its non dominant mate. The pressing and spreading of the palms helps to firm the scapulas against, and spread them across, your back torso.

Deepening the Practice

Success with Sun Salutation, as with all aspects of yoga practice, depends on commitment and regularity. An everyday practice would be best, but you might at first aim for four times a week. If possible, don't skip more than a couple of days in a row, or you might end up back at square one.

Traditionally, Sun Salutation is best performed outdoors, facing east—the location of the rising sun, a symbol of the dawn of consciousness and jnana. On days when only a quickie practice is possible, an intense 10-minute Sun Salutation and five minutes spent in Savasana (Corpse Pose) will do you just fine. Variations of Sun Salutation are legion, and because of the sequence's malleability, it's easy enough to cook up a few of your own. For instance, you can make things more challenging by adding one or more poses: Insert Utkatasana (Chair Pose) after Urdhva Hastasana, or from Lunge, keeping your hands on the floor, straighten the forward leg to a modified Parsvottanasana (Side Stretch Pose). Let your imagination run wild and have fun.

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