

SURYA NAMASKAR

12 POSTURES OF SURYA NAMASKAR

Introduction:

Known variously as Surya Namaskar or Prostrations to Sun or Sun Salutation, the Surya Namaskar is one of the best exercises that people can perform. The benefits accruing from these exercises are unique and excellent. This is a yoga based exercise and it is customary to perform Surya Namaskar after performing loosening yoga exercises.

The human being can be thought of consisting of 'pancha kosas' (or five sheaths) consisting of the Annamaya (or Body), Pranamaya (or Breath), Manomaya (or Mind), Vijnanamaya (or Intellect) and Anandamaya (or Bliss) sheaths. These same five kosas can be further grouped into Gross (or Sthula), the Annamaya or body sheath, Subtle (or Sukshma) consisting of the pranic, mental and intellectual sheaths and the Causal (or Karana), the Bliss sheath. Properly performed Surya Namaskar impacts and influences all five sheaths - the body, the breath, the mind, the intellect and the bliss - thus providing to the performers of these exercises the benefits for the Sthula (Gross), Sukshma (subtle) and Kaarana (Causal) bodies. Whereas conventional exercises of all forms including aerobic, weight lifting, walking, jogging and running are designed to provide benefits to the physical body and its various component organs including joints and muscles, Surya Namaskar provides benefits of a holistic nature by working on the physical body, praana (breathing), mind, intellect and the bliss components (or kosas) of the entire human personality. In that sense, Surya Namaskar can be considered to be a personality development tool and must be included as part of one's wellness program

Namaskar:

The Surya Namaskar is performed usually early in the morning facing the morning rising Sun. The Namaskar is done in 12 steps, each step having its own posture (including position and form) with its own breathing pattern (inhalation or exhalation), and its own mantra.

The Surya Namaskar Postures and Breathing Patterns:

The 12 postures are:



1. Stand facing the Sun with palms folded and both the thumbs touching the chest.

Breathing: Inhale while raising the hands and exhale as hands are brought down to chest level



2. Raise hands upward, with feet firmly on the ground, bend backwards, stretch arms fully.

Breathing: Inhale



3. Slowly bend forward, hands touching the earth with respect, head touching the knees.

Breathing: Exhale



4. Set both hands with the palms down firmly on the ground, pull the left leg backward, raise the head looking at the Sun, full weight resting on the two palm and ten fingers.

Breathing: Inhale



5. Bring right leg back close to left leg, keeping hands and legs straight, bend the body at the hip forming an arch, just like a mountain, known as 'parvathasan or mountain pose'.

Breathing: Exhale



6. Stretch yourself fully on the ground in the Saastanga Namaskar pose (all eight 'anga' or parts of the body on the ground - head, thigh, eyes (sight), mind, word, feet, hands and ears (hearing)). In reality, feet, knees, thighs, chest, forehead touch the ground with the hands stretched out and in folded position, with your mind and thoughts on the full namaskar, then slowly turn the head to the sides first to left and then to right so that each ear touches the ground.

Breathing: Inhale first and then Exhale fully.



7. Slowly raise the head, bend backward as much as possible, hands straight, in the cobra pose.

Breathing: Inhale



8. Parvathasan - same as Step 5.

Breathing: Exhale



9. Same as Step 4 with the difference that the right leg is brought forward.

Breathing: Inhale



10. Same as Step 3

Breathing: Exhale



11. Same as Step 2

Breathing: Inhale



12. Same as Step 1

Breathing: Exhale, Inhale and Exhale.

Mantras:

There are 12 mantras with four parts to each mantra. The first part is the chanting of Aum, the second part is the chanting of a 'bija mantra', the third part is a part of a Rik from the Rig Veda and the fourth part is the addressing of one of the 12 names of Sun. There are six bija mantras. Each mantra consists of 'h', 'r', vowel and ends in 'm'. The bija mantras are: 'hraam', 'hreem', 'hruum', 'hram', 'hroum' and 'haha' (where the vowels are 'aa', 'ee', 'uu', 'ai', 'ou' and 'visarga or hah'). The twelve names of Sun are: Mitra, Ravi, Surya, Bhanu, Khaga, Pushan, Hiranyagarbha, Marichi, Aditya, Savitha, Arka & Bhaskara. These six Bija Mantras are repeated in sequence to cover the twelve names of the Sun God. The three Rig Vedic hymns are used in the 12 mantras (one-quarter of the hymn used with each of these 12 names).

The chanting of AUM mantra activates stomach, heart, brain and the overall body/mind, thus creating vibrations in the associated chakras. Digestion, respiratory and sensory activities go thru the powerful lens of AUM turning intellect and memory into sharp and powerful tools.

The root alphabets of the Bija Mantra or Bija akshara are:

'h' - Heart is the source of its pronunciation. It empowers the heart to perform all its functions in a better manner.

'r' - The center of the forehead is the source of its pronunciation. The palate and the brain are gently buffeted by the vibration. The result is good taste and better intellect.

'swar (vowel) - 'a', 'i or e', 'u', 'ai', 'ou', 'ha' - various organs are impacted by the sound vibrations, making these organs strong and sensitive.

- * Long aa as in 'hraam': vibrations stimulate brain, heart & respiratory organs
- * Long ee as in 'hreem': vibrations work on palate, vocal cord & nasal area
- * Long uu as in 'hruum': vibrations work on stomach, small intestine, pancreas (make digestive system strong)
- * Combined Vowel 'ai' as in 'hram': vibrations work on kidney and urinary passage making the organs strong and sensitive.

- * Combined Vowel 'ou' as in 'hroum': vibrations work on excretory system making organs strong and sensitive.

'visarga' (hah) as in 'hraha;- sound vibrations work on the chest and the vocal cord.

'anunasik' - created in the nasal area, the vibrations keep the nasal passage clean, soft and wet.

The back bending of the body (as in step 2 when the front of the body gets elongation while the back and the spine gets compressed), the forward bending to touch the ground with the hands (as in step3 when the front of the body gets compressed while the back and the spine gets elongated), the stretching and bending in other poses (as in steps 4, 5 and 6) as well as in steps 7 thru 12 provide the type of benefits to the human body that are not available by any other exercise regimen.

The mantras chanted while performing the Namaskar generate minute vibrations in the body which helps and corrects functioning of all systems of glands in the body. The whole Namaskar process tones up the functioning of all systems in the body like sensory, respiratory, circulatory, digestive and nervous systems. Balanced state of mind and concentration and wide memory powers also result.

These explanations are provided here to illustrate how our ancient masters have, by their insight, study and research, understood how the various organs of the body can be kept in optimal and strong functioning levels. Their knowledge and understanding of the externals and the internals are amazing. Modern science is only gradually scratching the surface of the vast knowledge hidden in our hoary scriptures and in the practices of our Rishis.

The mantras are chanted in the following manner:

Aum followed by bija mantra followed by one paada of the Rik (from Rig Veda) followed by one of the names of Sun. The 12 mantras (with the 6 bija mantras appearing twice) are:

- * Om Hraam 'Udhyannadhyamitramahaha' Mitraya Namaha (Mitra - friend)
- * Om Hreem 'Aarohannuththaraamdivamm' Ravaye Namaha (Ravi - radiance)
- * Om Hruum 'Hridrogam mama surya' Suryaya Namaha (Surya - dispeller of darkness)

- * Om Hraim 'Harimaanam cha naashaya' Bhanave Namaha (Bhanu - Shining with luster)
- * Om Hroum 'Shukeshu May Harimaanamm' Khagaya Namaha (Khaga - all pervading)
- * Om Hraha 'Ropanaakaasu dhadhmasi' Pooshne Namaha (Pushan - mystic fire which gives)
- * Om Hraam 'Atho Haaridraiveshu May' Hiranyagarbhaya Namaha (Hiranyagarbha - golden colored)
- * Om Hreem 'Harimaanannidhadhmasi' Marichaye Namaha (Marichi - Ray of light)
- * Om Hruum 'Udagaadhayamaadithyah' Adityaya Namaha (Aditya - Sun, aspect of Vishnu, Son of Aditi)
- * Om Hraim 'Vishwena Sahasaa Saha' Savitre Namaha (Savitru - Light of enlightenment)
- * Om Hroum 'Dwishantham Mama Randhayann' Arkaya Namaha (Arkah - a ray of light, a flash of lightning, Sun)
- * Om Hraha 'Mo Aham dwishatho Rattham' Bhaskaraya Namaha (Bhaskara - Shining Light)

The meaning of the 12 paadas used in quotes in each of the above 12 mantraas comprising the 3 riks is:

- * **Meaning of 1st Rik:** "O one radiant with benevolent light, rising this day, You ascend to the supernal Heaven. O Surya, you remove the malady of my heart, And the yellow pallor (of my body)."

Details: Well-being, inner and outer is attained by the grace of Surya rising towards the great Heaven. The Seers hold that some perfection of the external body is also needed. The material body is the foundation for the God-aspiring mortal. Hence the Rishi prays to be cured of the heart disease which causes the yellow pallor.

- * **Meaning of Rik 2:** “Place my yellowness in parrots and starlings
In trees of this colour cast this yellow hue”

Details: In humans yellow colour is inappropriate; but it is beautiful in some (mobile) birds and (immobile) trees.

- * **Meaning of Rik 3:** “Here is Aditya arisen with all might
On my behalf, he destroys me foe
I strike not at the enemy”

Details: “The lord it is who does what is needed. I have placed all burdens on him.” Here is the seed of the idea of complete surrender to the Divine developed in detail, in the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja.

The Saashtaanga Namaskaram of step 6 (Prostrations with 8 limbs/organs opened/stretched out) is said to include the following 8 limbs/organs):

- * Urasaa Shirasaa Drishtyaa Manasaa Vachasaa Thathaa, Padbhyaam
Karaabhyaam Karnabhyaam Pranaamo Ashtaanga Ityuchyathey (Thighs,
Head, Eyes/Sight, Mind, Word, Feet, Hands, Ears/Hearing)

In the above 12 mantras, the four parts of the mantra must be noted carefully - the Aum (1st), bija mantra (2nd), the Rik (3rd - within quote marks) and namaskara word (namaha at the end) addressed ‘to one of the 12 names of the Sun’ (4th). Those who are having difficulty to chant the Rik or the 3rd part of the mantra, within quotes shown in the above 12 mantras, may drop the same and practice each mantra with the 1st, 2nd and 4th parts of the mantra above. When they become fully comfortable with the chanting of the mantras with the 1st, 2nd and 4th part, they are encouraged to add the missed 3rd part of the mantra and learn the full 4-part mantra.

Each of the above mantras is to be chanted for each of the steps discussed above with the associated breathing specified for that step. This then constitutes one Surya Namaskara. It is not easy to chant mantras during ‘inhalation’ (and sometimes during exhalation too). Two options are provided; first option is to chant the mantra in the mind (without any sound); the second, and preferred, method is to do the pose and the breathing associated with the particular step (each of the 12-steps) and then at the end of each of the poses, have normal breathing (inhalation and exhalation) and chant the mantra. This also has the added benefit of holding each of the poses for longer periods of time.

The second Surya Namaskara is done as follows: 2 of the mantras are taken together for the first six steps; 4 of the mantras are taken together for the next 3 steps, 6 of the above mantras are taken together for the next 2 steps, all 12 of the above mantras are taken together for the last of the 12 steps. The mantras for this namaskara are shown below:

- * Om Hraam Hreem 'Udhyannadhyamitramahaha Aarohannuththaraamdivamm' Mitra Ravibhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hruum Hraim 'Hridrogam mama surya Harimaanam cha naashaya' Surya Bhanubhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hroum Hraha 'Shukeshu May Harimaanamm Ropanaakaasu dhadhmasi' Khaga Pooshabhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hraam Hreem 'Atho Haaridrareshu May Harimaanannidhadhmasi' Hiranyagarbha Marichibhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hruum Hraim 'Udagaadhayamaadithyah Vishwena Sahasaa Saha' Aditya Savithrubhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hroum Hraha 'Dwishantham Mama Randhayann Mo Aham dwishatho Rattham' Arka Bhaskaraabhyaam Namaha
- * Om Hraam Hreem Hruum Hraim 'Udhyannadhyamitramahaha Aarohannuththaraamdivamm Hridrogam mama surya Harimaanam cha naashaya' Mitra Ravi Surya Bhanubhyo Namaha
- * Om Hroum Hraha Hraam Hreem 'Shukeshu May Harimaanamm Ropanaakaasu dhadhmasi Atho Haaridrareshu May Harimaanannidhadhmasi' Khaga Poosha Hiranyagarbha Marichibhyo Namaha
- * Om Hruum Hraim Hroum Hraha 'Udagaadhayamaadithyah Vishwena Sahasaa Saha Dwishantham Mama Randhayann Mo Aham dwishatho Rattham' Aditya Savithru Arka Bhaskarebhyo Namaha
- * Om Hraam Hreem Hruum Hraim Hroum Hraha 'Udhyannadhyamitramahaha Aarohannuththaraamdivamm Hridrogam mama surya Harimaanam cha naashaya Shukeshu May Harimaanamm Ropanaakaasu dhadhmasi' Mitra Ravi Surya Bhanu Khaga Pooshabhyo Namaha

- * Om Hraam Hreem Hruum Hraim Hroum Hraha 'Atho Haaridraiveshu May Harimaanannidhadhmasi Udagaadhayamaadithyah Vishwena Sahasaa Saha Dwishantham Mama Randhayann Mo Aham dwishatho Rattham' Hiranyagarbha Marichi Aditya Savithru Arka Bhaskarebhyo Namaha
- * Om Hraam Hreem Hruum Hraim Hroum Hraha Hraam Hreem Hruum Hraim Hroum Hraha 'Udhyannadhyamitramahaha Arohannuththaraamdivamm Hridrogam mama surya Harimaanam cha naashaya Shukeshu May Harimaanamm Ropanaakaasu dhadhmasi Atho Haaridraiveshu May Harimaanannidhadhmasi Udagaadhayamaadithyah Vishwena Sahasaa Saha Dwishantham Mama Randhayann Mo Aham dwishatho Rattham' Mitra Ravi Surya Bhanu Khaga Poosha Hiranyagarbha Marichi Aditya Savithru Arka Bhaskarebhyo Namaha

Thus 2 Namaskarams are performed. These 2 Namaskarams together is defined as 'one set' of Surya Namaskara.

The above set of 2 Surya Namaskaraas is repeated 12 times to perform 12 sets or 24 Surya Namaskaraas.

Beginning practitioners are advised to start performing one set of 2 Namaskaraas for few days, get comfortable and then gradually increase the set of 2 namaskaraas to 2, 3, 6, 12 sets, taking into account their ability to do these namaskaaraas over a period of as many days as it takes to reach comfortable levels before increasing the set of Surya Namskaara from 1 set to 2 sets, from 2 sets to 3 sets, from 3 sets to 6 sets, from 6 sets to 12 sets to complete the 12 set of 2 Namaskaaras each for the 24 Namaskaraas. They are requested to maintain this 12 set (or 24) Namaskaaraas for a period of a two weeks to a month before increasing them in sets of 12 to their desired level.

Still another easier option for beginners is to perform one 'saashtaanga' namaskaara for one mantra, thus 24 saashtaanga namaskaraas for the 24 mantras (first 12 namaskaaraas for the 12 mantras) plus next 6 namaskaaraas (13 to18) taking two mantras together plus the next three namaskaaraas (19 to 21) taking four mantras together plus the next two namaskaaraas taking six mantras together (22 and 23) plus the last namaskaara (the 24th) taking all 12 mantras together. It is also customary to add the following mantra at the end of each 'Saashtaanga Namaskara': "Chchaaya Samjna Sametha Sri SuryaNarayanaSwamine Namaha, Aum Namo Naaraayanaaya, Swamin Praseeda Praseeda".

The above 24 'Saashtaanga' namaskaaraas (or the one set of 2 Surya Namaskaara with postures and mantras) form part of the 'Poorvanga Surya Namaskaraa' (Poorvanga means the first part). There is the 'Uttaraanga' or the second part of the Surya Namaskaara (also known as 'Aruna Prasnah'). The second part consists of 133 mantras in 33 'anuvaakaas' (or lessons), sometimes counted as 34 including opening paryer, and one saashtanga namaskaara for each of the mantras for a total of 133 Namaskaaraas, thus the complete Surya Namaskaara (the 'poorvanga and 'uttaraanga' together) consists of 157 'saashtanga namaskaaraas'.

Other combinations of these Namaskaaraas are also in vogue and various practitioners have used such combinations. For example, the 1 set (or 2) Surya Namaskaaraa with the 12 postures and stipulated breathing for each of those postures is used for the 'poorvanga' part. For the 'uttaraanga' part, the one 12-step Surya namaskaaraa (or yoga surya namaskaara, as it is also known as) for each anuvaka of 'aruna prasnah' is performed, or 33 (or 34) yogic Surya Namaskaaraas for the uttaraanga portion. This results in 35 (or 36) yogic Surya Namaskaaras for the poorvanga and uttaraanga part together.

Additional suggestions include the use of some of the postures, and associated breathing patterns, of the yoga surya namaskaara to be used while performing the 24 poorvanga and/or the 133 uttaranga 'saashtanga' namaskaaraas.

These various options and suggestions are included in this write-up so as to allow each practitioner to adopt the ideas that most suit them. We must note that these namaskaaraas must be performed with joy and at individual pace involving 'our pancha kosas' fully. Start small, enjoy as you go, derive the full pleasure and benefits and then gradually increase the namaskaaraas - this is the suggested approach.

The poorvanga namaskaara mantras in 'devanagiri' script with 'swara' (chanting details) are shown below. It is beyond the scope of this write-up to include the 'aruna prashnah' mantras here; instead we note that the 'aruna prashnah' mantras are available in devanagiri script in the familiar 'mantra pushpa' book published by Ramakrishna Mutt.

ओं हाम् । उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमहः । मित्राय नमः ॥

ओं हीम् । आरोहन्नुत्तरां दिवम् । स्वये नमः ॥

ओं हूम् । हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य । सूर्याय नमः ।

ओं हैम् । हरिमाणञ्च नाशय । भानवे नमः ॥

ओं हौम् । शुक्रेषु मे हरिमाणम् । खगाय नमः ॥

ओं हः । रोपणाकांसु दध्मसि । पूष्णे नमः ॥

ओं हाम् । अथो हारिद्रवेषु मे । हिरण्यगर्भाय नमः ॥

ओं हीम् । हरिमाणन्निदध्मसि । मरीचये नमः ॥

ओं हूम् । उदगादयमादित्यः । आदित्याय नमः ॥

ओं हैम् । विश्वेन सहसा सह । सवित्रे नमः ॥

ओं हौम् । द्विषन्तं मम रन्वयन् । अर्काय नमः ॥

ओं हः । मो अहं द्विषतो रथम् । भास्कराय नमः ॥

ओं हाम् हीम् । उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमहः । आरोहन्नुत्तरां दिवम् ॥

मित्ररविभ्यां नमः ॥

ओं हूम्, हैम् । हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य । हरिमाणञ्च नाशय
सूर्य-भानुभ्यां नमः ।

ओं हौम्, हः । शुकेषु मे हरिमाणम् । रोपणाकांसु दध्मसि ।
स्वग-पूषभ्यां नमः ॥

ओं हाम् हीम् । अथो हारिद्रवेषु मे । हरिमाणन्निदध्मसि ।
हिरण्यगर्भ-मरीचिभ्यां नमः ॥

ओं हूम् हैम् । उदगादयमादित्यः । विश्वेन सहसा सह ।
आदित्य-सवितृभ्यां नमः ।

ओं हौम्, हः । द्विषन्तं मम रन्धयन् । मो अहं द्विषतो
रथम् । अर्क-भास्कराभ्यां नमः ।

ओं हाम्, हीम्, हूम्, हैम् । उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमहः । आरोहन्नुत्तरां
दिवम् । हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य । हरिमाणञ्च नाशय । मित्र-रत्रि-सूर्य-
भानुभ्यो नमः ॥

ओं हौम्, हः, हाम् हीम् । शुकेषु मे हरिमाणम् । रोपणाकांसु
दध्मसि । अथो हारिद्रवेषु मे । हरिमाणन्निदध्मसि । स्वग-पूष-हिरण्यगर्भ-
मरीचिभ्यो नमः ॥

ओं हूम्, हैम्, हौम्, हः । उदगादयमादित्यः । विश्वेन
सहसा सह । द्विषन्तं मम रन्धयन् । मो अहं द्विषतो रथम् । आदित्य-
सवित्त्रर्क-भास्करेभ्यो नमः ॥

ओं हाम्, हीम्, हूम्, हैम्, हौम्, हः । उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमहः ।
 आरोहन्नुत्तरां दिवम् । हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य । हरिमाणञ्च नाशय । शुकेषु
 मे हरिमाणम् । रोपणाकासु दध्मसि । मित्र-रवि-सूर्य-भानु-खग-
 पूषभ्यो नमः ॥

ओं हाम्, हीम्, हूम्, हैम्, हौम्, हः । अथो हारिद्रिवेषु
 मे । हरिमाणन्निदध्मसि । उदगादयमादित्यः । विश्वेन सहसा सह ।
 द्विषन्तं मम रन्धयन् । मो अहं द्विषतो रन्धम् ॥ हिरण्यगर्भ-मरीच्यादित्य-
 सवित्रर्क-भास्करेभ्यो नमः ॥

ओं हाम्, हीम्, हूम्, हैम्, हौम्, हः । ओं हाम्, हीम्,
 हूम्, हैम्, हौम्, हः । उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमहः । आरोहन्नुत्तरां दिवम् ।
 हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य । हरिमाणञ्च नाशय । शुकेषु मे हरिमाणम् ।
 रोपणाकासु दध्मसि । अथो हारिद्रिवेषु मे । हारिमाणन्निदध्मसि ।
 उदगादयमादित्यः । विश्वेन सहसा सह । द्विषन्तं मम रन्धयन् ।
 मो अहं द्विषतो रन्धम् । मित्र रवि-सूर्य भानु-खग-पूष-हिरण्यगर्भ-
 मरीच्या-दित्य-सवित्रर्क-भास्करेभ्यो नमः ॥

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROPER USE, DO'S AND DON'TS

The following suggestions for optimal benefit from yoga and surya namaskar along with few of the Do's and Don'ts are provided below:

- * Smile always, ABC (Always Breathe Consciously), Enjoy the sessions.
- * Try to involve the 'pancha kosas' - body, prana, mind, intellect & bliss kosas.
- * Practice only one of the 2 modules provided. Please start with Module 2 (sitting and lying down poses). When you are comfortable fully with the yoga, then you may switch over to Module 1. Afterwards, you can combine both Module 1 and Module 2. About 30 to 45 minutes of time may be allotted.
- * Proceed slowly with SN. Do not try to do very fast, all movements to be done slowly. Also the number - start with 1 set, then move on to 2, 3, 6, 12 sets over a period of time - whatever you are physically capable of and also based on time availability. Doing fewer on weekdays and larger numbers on weekends can also be considered.
- * SN can be done during morning and evening. Morning time face the rising Sun - the East direction, evening time face the setting sun, the West. Yoga is done to loosen the joints, muscles, limbs etc. before attempting SN. 6. DRT or Shavasana for 10 minutes must be done after SN. 3 to 5 alternate nostril pranayama, breathing slowly during both inhalation and exhalation, must follow the DRT.
- * SN must be done on empty stomach. At least 2 hours must elapse, after any meals are taken, before you do SN. Likewise, food must be taken only after at least 20 minutes after SN.
- * Mat must be used for SN (and not on the floor).
- * If the assigned breath is not able to be done in one breathing during a pose, try to do more breaths per pose early on. Over a period of time, you will be able to do it in one breath.

- * People suffering from hernia or back-problem must avoid SN. Pregnant women must also avoid SN certainly from third month onwards (even earlier, perhaps, once pregnancy is known or anticipated).
- * After a few weeks of yoga, one can consider 24 x 7 yoga, that is to say, whenever one finds time, one can do some aspects of yoga. For example, slow breathing consciously while taking a walk, trying butterfly in sitting position while sitting down, about 10 minutes of shavasana when convenient during the day, sitting in vajrasana or padmasana while watching TV and so on. Here 24 X 7 is used to indicate whenever convenient during every day of the week (and not used in the sense of 24 hours, 7 days a week).

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