“Surya Namaskar”

Solar vitalization
using Sun Salutation

Shriram Sarvottham
Surya Namaskar: Sun Salutation

Salient features on Surya Namaskar:

- Surya Namaskar is a practice of 12 postures done in a flow
- It serves as a complete exercise for the body, vitalizing all the major muscles and vital organs
- Each round takes 1 to 2 minutes to perform, depending on the speed and intensity of the practice
- Depending on one’s predominant ayurvedic dosha (i.e., unique body type), it is recommended to personalize the practice. For example – Vata practitioners benefit greatly by practicing the Sun Salutations slowly, Pitta people benefit greatly by doing the practice gently without aggression, and Kapha practitioners benefit greatly by practicing it with intensity and speed.
- Several variations on the classic Surya Namaskar exists.
- Surya Namaskar is a universal practice. From beginners to seasoned Yogis, children to elderly, everyone is encouraged to practice Surya Namaskar. Especially kids love the practice of Surya Namaskar.
- Surya Namaskar can also be used as a therapy to target specific ailments and bodily conditions.
- Surya Namaskar is done in the beginning of the Yoga practice. After several rounds of Surya Namaskar, the body is fully warmed up, Prana is moving briskly in the body, and so the subsequent practice of Asanas, Pranayamas, Dhyana becomes easy and enjoyable.
- Surya Namaskar is usually done in the early morning around sun rise, facing the sun.
Surya Namaskar in the context of Yoga Sadhana:

- Surya Namaskar is not a mere sequence of Asanas. It combines body movement with breath and awareness. One can combine Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana and all the other 8 limbs of Yoga in this practice.

- When we combine the body movement with rhythmic breathing, the practice becomes extraordinarily powerful. We can further add power to the practice with a meditative state of mind and using mantras (see below).

- Most importantly, Surya Namaskar is a spiritual practice to honor the source of Life.

Benefits of Surya Namaskar practice

- Incredible vitality and sense of exhilaration, lightness in the body, clarity in the mind, raising of awareness, sharpness of focus, illuminating the intellect, removal of any blocks in the nadis and blood vessels, strengthening of immunity.

- Every cell in the body is filled with vitality and Life (prana).

- All round benefits for health and wellness.
Surya Namaskar Mantras
Each of the 12 postures of the Surya Namaskar has an associated Mantra that we chant. Here is the list of 12 Surya Namaskar Mantras:
Solar and Lunar principles in Yoga

- The name *Hatha Yoga* comes from combining Ha (Sun, energy) and Tha (moon, relaxation). Hatha Yoga is the beautiful blend of energy and relaxation.
- The right nostril, left hemisphere of the brain and the sympathetic nervous system are related to the solar principle.
- The left nostril, right hemisphere of the brain and the parasympathetic nervous system are related to the lunar principle.
- There principles are used in the practice of Pranayama.
Let us conclude with a Prayer on Maharishi Patanjali:

योगेन चित्तस्य, पदेन वाचां
मलं शरीरस्य च वैपकेन ।
yogena cittasya, padena vācāṁ
malam śārīrasya ca vaidyakena |

योपाकरोत तं प्रवरं मुनीनां
पतञ्जलि प्राज्जलिर्म आन्तोस्मिम ॥
yopākarot tam pravaram munināṁ
patañjalim prāñjalir ānato’smi ॥

आबाहु पुरुषाकारं
शष्क्षचक्रासि धारिणम् ।
ābāhu puruṣākāram
śaṅkhacakrāsi dhāriṇam |

सहस्त्र शिरसं श्रेष्टं
प्रणामाति पतञ्जलिं ॥
sahasra śirasāṁ śvetāṁ
praṇamāmi patañjalim ॥

Meaning:
“I offer reverence to the eminent sage Patañjali, who removed the impurities of the mind through yoga, of speech through grammar, and of the body through medicine.”

“The upper body of human shape, holding a conch (divine sound), discuss (wheel of time) and sword (discrimination), I bow down to the white (pure) thousand-headed (elevated awareness), I respectfully bow to Patanjali.”