



SURYA NAMASKAR EXERCISE AND WORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation is a sequence of 12 powerful yoga poses. Besides being a great cardiovascular workout, Surya Namaskar is also known to have an immensely positive impact on the body and mind.

Practicing Surya Namaskar steps is best done early morning on 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 on how to practice Sun Salutation. However, it is advisable to stick to one particular version and practice it regularly for the best results.

Besides good health, Surya Namaskar also provides an opportunity to express gratitude to the sun for sustaining life on this planet.

KEYWORDS: Surya Namaskar, Exercise, Worship(Upasna), Om, Ashtang, Purak, Rechak, Kumbhak

1. INTRODUCTION

Surya Namaskar is a form of exercise and worship. It gives exercise to all the senses of man and supplies blood everywhere. It is considered a scientific form of exercise as the contraction-expansion movements are continuous and easy.

Since ancient times, Hindus have considered the sun as a deity because the sun provides energy, warmth, joy and life to creation. The Vedas say that the sun is the soul of the moving world. In India, the practice of combining religion and health dates back to ancient times. So Surya Namaskar must have become a way of worship. In India, attempts were made to give a scientific form to this healing worship. Many hymns, resolutions and practices were created from it. In many places in India, it is considered a religious duty to bow regularly before sunrise for Suriyapoasan. It is also known as 'Ashtang' or 'Sashtang' Namaskar or 'Ashtang Danda'. Suryanamaskar is a useful and fruitful form of exercise and worship.

Surya Namaskar is a unique form of worship on this earth. Many times Surya Namaskar is mistakenly considered as 'yoga' or a form of 'yoga' but that is not correct. There are some very basic differences between 'Yoga' and 'Surya Namaskar'. There are fundamental differences in the objectives of yoga and Surya Namaskar, in the results obtained and in the physical abilities required. The attitudes of these two forms of exercise are completely different. Although there are seven yoga poses in the 12 positions of Surya Namaskar, the process of doing them is completely different. So their effect is also different.

'Worship' is English meaning of Upasana. 'Upasana' means 'Upa' + 'Asana (seat)' And now we are supposed to go and sit at the feet (Upa Asana) of that deity. It simply means, we should look, talk and act like that deity. So, in short, the word 'Upasana' means to

try as much as possible to be like the deity whom one worships. This is the way to identify with that deity.

Surya Namaskar is the worship of the sun deity and its main purpose is that the seeker is expected to become bright, selfless, powerful, wise and charitable like the sun.

We are all part of that universal and self-luminous Sun. We are created from the sun. The clothes we wear, the food we eat, the house we live in, everything is an invention of power and energy and is directly or indirectly created by the Sun, the first creator of all energy.

2. HISTORY OF SURYA NAMASKAR

The beginning of Sun Worship (Upasana) is as ancient as the history of man. Not only Indians, but most of the ancient civilizations of the world have worshiped the sun as the god. It contains Egyptian culture, Mayaan culture, Chinese culture, Native Indian in America culture. In each of these cultures there are mentions of worshiping the sun in some form or the other.

In Indian culture we find many references to Sun being worshiped in different ways as the god of power and knowledge. Agni is the closest invention of the Sun to the Earth. The very first verse of the Rigveda is Agni-mile-purohitam- yagyasya dev mrita-vijamhotaran-ratnadhatam' in commemoration and praise of fire and alternately of the sun.

The most ancient and important evidence of Sun Worship is in 'Valmiki Ramayana'. When Lord Rama went to fight Ravana, Sage Agastya blessed Rama with a hymn called 'Aditya Hridayam'. It means that the sheen that came from fighting round the clock should go away and Lord Rama should be ready for battle with the new Chautanya. The purpose of this stotra is that



Lord Rama should be victorious everywhere and get all the achievements. All the names of the sun are taken in a very poetic manner in this hymn. The sun is very beautifully described. In it, it is said that whoever takes these names of Surya will also get victory everywhere.

It is mentioned later in the Taittiriya Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad presents the doctrine of non-dualism in a total of three volumes (Sikshavalli, Brahmananda Valli and Bhriugu Valli). In the first part of this, there is a discussion about what can be done to acquire Brahman in 'Shiksha Valli'. Sun worship is also mentioned in it.

Another important mention is in the book 'Hatha Yoga Pradipika'. This book is the supreme book of Hatha Yoga. Awakening Kundalini is very important in it. To do that, he has guided many asanas, diet, sleep, thoughts. The purpose of this book and Hatha Yoga as a whole is completely different from Surya Namaskar Upasan. However, the asanas performed in Surya Namaskar, how those asanas affect the spine and medulla are mentioned in a very scholarly manner.

After this, Samarth Ramdas, an important worshiper in the history of Surya Namaskar. He was a great worshiper of Sri Rama and Surya. He was celibate. It is said that he performed 1200 Surya Namaskars a day. Samarth Ramdas is a very apt confluence of Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Karma Yoga as described by Vivekananda. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he got the energy of his self-reflection from Surya Namaskar.

In the later period, the Shrimant Sadashivarabhau Peshwa was a great practitioner of this form of exercise. He had started several new Talamis in Pune. It is said that he used to perform 1500 Surya Namaskar daily.

3. HISTORY OF SURYANAMASKAR PERFORMED TODAY

Surya Namaskar that we practice today seems to have been first experimented with by King Appasaheb Pantapratidinidhi of the Aundh state around 1930's. Aundh king Appasaheb Pant representative and Mirjee Patvardhan Sarkar were personal friends. Many times they used to exercise together. Pantapratidinidhi invited a maestro named Imad from Punjab-Haryana to teach him wrestling. This form of exercise was born while studying wrestling from him. Pantapratidinidhi also taught this form of exercise to his Rani Saheb. Rani Saheb was relieved from many pains due to this exercise.

The exercise was refined and popularized by Bhavanarao Pant Pratinidhi in the 1920s. He wrote a book about it in 1928 called 'Surya Namaskaras'. In 1938, Pratinidhi wrote another short book called 'The Ten-Point Way to Health', which again gave a central role to Surya Namaskar

4. CIRCUMSTANCES FOR PERFORMING SURYA NAMASKAR

The best time to do Surya Namaskar is in the morning, on an empty stomach. With this simple and effective Surya Namaskar we can start a healthy life. A clean, quiet and ventilated place is suitable for Surya Namaskar. A space of about 2 to 3 meters long and about 1/5 to 1 meter wide is sufficient for this. Namaskar is performed by wearing loose and light clothes and spreading mat on the floor. Surya Namaskar can also be performed on the ground without using mat. But the ground should not be very smooth, so that the hands and feet do not slip on it. Bathing in cold water and salutations, if the young rays of the sun fall on the body, are of good use. Getting enough exercise in a short space and time is one of the characteristics of Surya Namaskar.

5. METHOD OF SURYA NAMASKAR

While doing Namaskar, the eight parts of the head, chest, two hands, two feet and both knees directly touch the ground. Sight, speech and mind are involved in mental worship. At the beginning of the salutation, the gaze is kept in front or towards the nostrils, which helps to concentrate the mind. Before that some mantras are chanted after meditating on Sun God.

Ways in which respiration (breathing) 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.

First by pronouncing Om (called 'Pranava') then twelve salutations are made with the twelve names of the sun like 'Om Mitraya Namah'. These twelve names are as follows:

- (1) Om Mitraya Namah,
- (2) Om Ravye Namah,
- (3) Om Suryai Namah,
- (4) Om Bhanve Namah,
- (5) Om Khagai Namah,
- (6) Om Pushne Namah,
- (7) Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namah,
- (8) Om Marichaye Namah,
- (9) Om Adityaya Namah,
- (10) Om Savitre Namah,
- (11) Om Arkaya Namah,
- (12) Om Bhaskarai Namah.

While offering the thirteenth salutation, 'Om Srisavitri-Suryanarayanaya Namah' is said. This is considered a version.

Surya Namaskar is performed slowly without haste means that one does not get out of breath. One should feel joy and excitement after completing Namaskar. If you feel tired, you should reduce the number of salutations, thinking that the number of salutations



has exceeded the body. To add Bara Namaskar, start by increasing the number as you jump.

6. SURYA NAMASKAR STEPS TO FOLLOW



Step 1. Pranamasana (Prayer pose):

Both feet touching each other, both hands joined at the center of the chest straight.

Breathing : Kumbhak

Benefit : Helps maintain the balance of the body.

as in prayer position back and neck straight and look

Step 2. Hastauttanasana (Raised arms pose):

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 bend 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.

Step 3. Hastapadasana (Standing forward bend):

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.

Step 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.

Step 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. Look ahead towards the ground

Breathing : Rechak

Benefit : Strengthens the arms and maintains body posture

Step 6. Ashtangasan (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 (Bahirkumbak)

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

Step 7. Bhujangasana (Cobra pose)

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.)

Step 8. Adho Mukha 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.

Step 9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose):

Breathing in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands. The left knee goes down on the floor. Press the hips down and look up. Tip to deepen this yoga stretch: Place the right foot exactly between the two hands and the right calf perpendicular to the floor. In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch.

Breathing : Purak

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

Step 10. Hastapadasana (Standing forward bend):

Breathing out, bring the left foot forward. Keep the palms on the floor. You may bend the knees, if necessary. Tip to deepen this yoga stretch: Gently straighten the knees, and if you can, try and touch your nose to the knees. Keep breathing.

Breathing : Rechak

Benefit : Makes the waist and spine flexible

Step 11. Hastauttanasana (Raised arms pose):

Breathing in, roll the spine up. Raise the hands up and bend backward a little bit, pushing the hips slightly outward. Tip to deepen this yoga stretch:

Ensure that your biceps are beside your ears. The idea is to stretch up more rather than stretching backward.

Breathing : Purak

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

Step 12. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

As you exhale, first straighten the body, then bring the arms down. Relax in this position and observe the sensations in your body. This completes one set of Surya Namaskar. Complete the round by repeating the steps. Only this time, start with taking the left foot behind in step number 4 and bringing the left foot forward in step number 9. Once done, you would've completed one round of Surya Namaskar.



7. SURYA NAMASKAR AND ITS BENEFITS

Surya Namaskar can help you a lot to stay healthy. You just need to spend 10 minutes every day for this. Also, try Surya Namaskar in the morning at sunrise and always on an empty stomach.

Following are the benefits of daily Surya Namaskar

i. Improves body condition

Surya Namaskar improves your overall body condition. It is beneficial for your muscles. It also relieves spine pain, neck pain and back pain. Daily Surya Namaskar also improves spinal alignment, which leads to better body posture. Flexibility also increases and muscles appear stronger and in better condition.

ii. Peace of Mind

One thing we all need in this fast paced life is to relieve stress. Daily Surya Namaskar calms your mind and reduces your stress. Along with this, the problem of insomnia is also relieved. It also improves your focus.

iii. Beneficial for Heart Health

Daily Surya Namaskar can be beneficial for your heart health. Suryanamaskar increases blood circulation. This makes your heart muscles stronger and blood can pump better.

iv. Useful for weight loss

Surya Namaskar reduces excess body fat and helps maintain a healthy weight. By doing this, digestion also improves and metabolism speeds up, which burns calories faster. Daily Surya Namaskar also reduces digestive problems. All these factors help in maintaining a healthy weight.

v. Beneficial for Lungs

Special attention should be paid to breathing while performing Surya Namaskar. In each position one has to take a deep breath and slowly exhale. This strengthens your lungs and also increases your lung capacity.

vi. Beneficial for Children

Surya Namaskar makes the mind calm and focused. In today's age of fierce competition, Surya Namaskar should be a part of children's routine. It increases stamina and reduces anxiety and restlessness, especially during exam periods. Regular practice of Surya Namaskar increases physical strength and stamina. This is a great form of exercise for aspiring athletes. This increases the strength of the muscles as well as the flexibility of the spine and other organs. Even a five-year-old child can start performing Surya Namaskar daily.

vii. Very beneficial for women

This is a boon for health conscious women as Surya Namaskar not only burns extra calories but also makes the body toned in an easy and inexpensive way by stretching the abdominal muscles. Irregularities in menstrual cycle are also regularized by Surya Namaskar. Surya Namaskar should be done for easy delivery.

viii. Beneficial for healthy skin

Surya Namaskar not only keeps your face fresh but prevents wrinkles and keeps you youthful and energetic.

ix. Other Benefits

Surya Namaskar is energizing, meditative and relaxing. They make the body flexible and improve blood circulation. With good blood circulation, the hair does not turn white, it does not fall, it does not have dandruff and its health improves. Improves the

functioning of vital organs in the body. Improves your bones and digestive system. Along with this, the balance of all three body-doshas namely Vata, Pitta and Kapha is achieved.

8. CONCLUSION

Suryanamaskar is a form of worshipping the sun. Apart from this Suryanamaskar is also a form of exercise. Surya Namaskar can be done by men or women of any age. Surya Namaskar takes little space. The body benefits even if Surya Namaskar is performed for 10 minutes.

Surya Namaskar is gaining popularity all over the world due to its benefits. Suryanamaskar is one such yoga, which can help you a lot to stay healthy. Surya Namaskar has many benefits. Like improves body condition, mental peace, beneficial for heart health, helpful for weight loss, beneficial for lungs...etc.

9. REFERENCE BOOKS

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