

Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations)

~ An ancient practice for physical & mental health

“Surya Namaskar with Mantra” is one of the most powerful and advanced yoga practice. Nevertheless, it is suitable for everyone, beginners as well as advanced practitioners alike. This traditional and ancient practice includes 7 different asanas, combined in a sequence of 12 postures and each posture is accompanied by the 12 names of the sun.

In ancient times yogis performed this practice to pay gratitude to the sun, which is providing the life force, our universal energy. The best time to do Surya Namaskar is early in the morning, with an empty stomach, facing east or the rising sun. It is not recommended to do Surya Namaskar in the afternoon or evening because it increases metabolism and activates the sympathetic nervous system. Surya Namaskar helps to create harmony between our physical cycle and that of the sun and therefore we feel especially energetic, recharged, and rejuvenate after this practice.

The practice can be done for physical and mental fitness, as well as for spiritual development. It can be used as a warm-up or as a main practice according to the need of the practitioner. All asanas in the Surya Namaskar sequence combined have direct impact on our *muscles (precisely cardiac muscles)*, *nadis* (energy channels), *chakras* (energy centers), and *section of hormones* (endocrine glands). Surya Namaskar is a complete practice which overall improves flexibility, stamina, strength and boost our immunity.

Asana	Mantra	energy center	breath
	1) Aum Mitraya Namaha Friend of all	Heart	exhale
	2) Aum Ravaye Namaha The shining, radiant, and eternal source of vitality.	Neck	inhale
	3) Aum Suryaya Namaha Dispeller of darkness and bringing of activity.	Lower Back	exhale
	4) Aum Bhanave Namaha One who illumines	Third Eye	inhale
	5) Aum Khagaya Namaha All pervading, moves through the sky	Throat	exhale
	6) Aum Pushne Namaha Giver of nourishment and strength	Navel	retain
	7) Aum Hiranya Garbhaya Namaha The golden cosmic self	Lower Back	inhale
	8) Aum Marichaye Namaha Possessor of rays and Lord of dawn	Throat	exhale
	9) Aum Adityaya Namaha Son of Aditi (the cosmic mother)	Third Eye	inhale
	10) Aum Savitre Namaha Producer of everything and Lord of creativity	Lower Back	exhale
	11) Aum Arkaya Namaha Worthy to be praised	Neck	inhale
	12) Aum Bhaskaraya Namaha Illuminator and leads to enlightenment	Heart	exhale



Apart from the 12 names of Surya, there are beeja mantras. There is no literal meaning of beeja mantras but during chanting it creates powerful vibrations of energy within mind and body. There are 6 beeja mantras, repeated 4 times in a round in the following sequence.

1. Om Hraam
2. Om Hreem
3. Om Hroom
4. Om Hraim
5. Om Hraum
6. Om Hrah

It can be useful and easy to repeat during fast Surya Namaskar practice.

To gain a deeper understanding and to experience the profound benefits of this practice teachers add different focal points per rounds: e.g.

- awareness on body movement
- awareness on the breath
- focus on the designated chakras (every asana in Surya Namaskar has a designated chakra)
- focus on mental movement (imagination)
- with closed eyes
- chanting the Surya mantras.

Traditional vs modern versions of Surya Namaskar

Worldwide exist different variations of Surya Namaskar from different yoga traditions and gurus. The traditional and ancient way is performed with mountain pose and not with plank pose. Plank pose is a modern approach where the focus is on strengthening the core, while in mountain pose the focus is to open the designated chakra for smooth and open flow of prana (energy).

Another significant difference between the traditional and a modified Surya Namaskar is the leg position in equestrian pose (posture 4 and 9). In the traditional sequence you step back with the right leg in posture 4, and you step forward with the left leg in posture 9. In this first half the right leg is back in equestrian pose. In the second half of a round, you step back with the left leg in posture 4 and you step forward with the right leg in posture 9. In the second half the left leg is back in equestrian pose. Newer versions of Surya Namaskar bring the same leg back and front in one half round.

Due to the repetitions of postures and to make it more interesting and challenging teachers added different postures like plank and warrior postures to the sequence. But this is against the original and traditional version, ---> **It is taking away the soul of the practice.**

To understand the different variations, their focus and benefits it is best to learn from an experienced teacher. At Divine Yoga, Bangkok we keep the ancient traditions alive and teach the traditional “Surya Namaskar with Mantra”.

~ by Sanjiv Chaturvedi

Divine Yoga Bangkok, 20 April 2022