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Surya namaskar is a sequence of movements by which the yogi/ni celebrates the return of the sun and stimulates his/her own internal “sun.”

— Janita Stenhouse

SURYA NAMASKAR OVERVIEW

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Translate “Surya Namaskar.”
- Describe Surya Namaskar.
- How may Surya Namaskar be utilized in an *asana* practice?
- What is the deeper purpose behind its practice?
- Describe the history and symbolism of Surya Namaskar.
- What is the primary energetic effect?
- What other energy-related benefits are said to arise from practicing Surya Namaskar?
- What are the physical effects?
- How does the practice benefit the mind?
- Why is Surya Namaskar described as a complete spiritual practice?



INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

- Surya Namaskar is a particular sequence that features a “marriage of breath and movement,” a series of postures and transitions coordinated with a phase of the breath.
- Surya Namaskar includes stretching, strengthening and warming poses that energize, revitalize and “wake up” the body.
- The three primary forms of Surya Namaskar are Classical Surya Namaskar (Lunge Salutes), Surya Namaskar A and Surya Namaskar B.
- Each round of the sequences may begin and end with *anjali mudra* (palms together) at the heart. “This placement is no accident; only the heart can know the truth.” (Richard Rosen)

SANSKRIT

“surya” = sun

“namas” = bow to or adore

“namaskar” = greeting of honor and respect to the divinity present in all

“Surya Namaskar” = Sun Salutation

PURPOSE

- Surya Namaskar is a celebration of the sun, a symbol of spiritual consciousness.
- It is designed to awaken one’s “inner sun,” or vital energy, to support spiritual awakening and growth.
- Sun Salutations are known to serve as a complete physical practice and are also often used for warm-up and heat-building sections of an *asana* class.
- In addition to serving as a complete physical practice, Sun Salutations are known as a complete spiritual practice. (More info follows.)

HISTORY & SYMBOLISM

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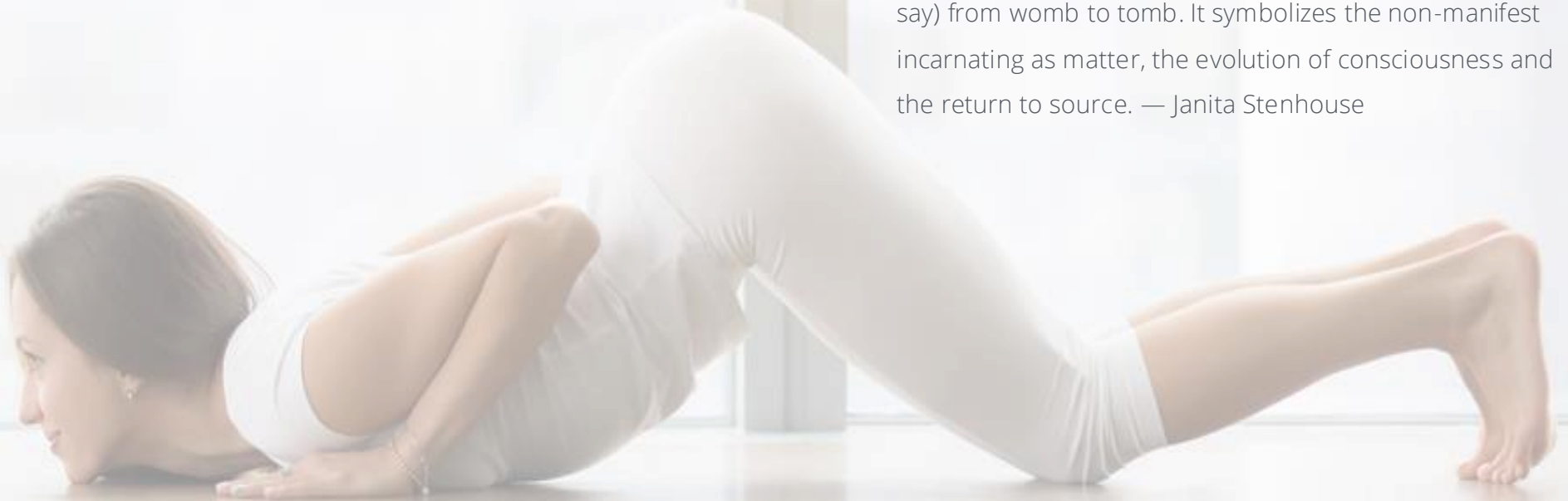
Historically, the sequence of poses now known as surya namaskar may have developed from an early sunrise practice honoring Surya as the source of energy and light for the world. In the 1920s, the Raja of Aundh introduced a fixed sun salute series into the schools of his tiny kingdom (now part of Maharashtra) and published a small book, urging every man, woman, and child to adopt this practice for the sake of their physical and spiritual health. — Zo Newell

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Surya namaskara has been handed down from the enlightened sages of the vedic age. The sun symbolizes spiritual consciousness and in ancient times was worshiped on a daily basis. In yoga the sun is represented by pingala or surya nadi, the pranic channel which carries the vital, life-giving force. — Swami Satyananda Saraswati

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Surya Namaskar may be seen as representing the cycle of life, the journey (as Swami Anandakapila Saraswati likes to say) from womb to tomb. It symbolizes the non-manifest incarnating as matter, the evolution of consciousness and the return to source. — Janita Stenhouse



FULL PRACTICE ON ITS OWN

- One of the unique aspects of Surya Namaskar is that it is said to be a full practice on its own.
- Physically, the practice lengthens and strengthens many of the main muscles in the body.
- It affects the body, mind and soul, and yogis deem it a “complete spiritual practice.”

ENERGIZE & AWAKEN

- Surya Namaskar is designed to energize, revitalize and “wake up” the body.
- It is said to awaken one’s internal energy located in the solar plexus.
- The practice is also said to balance the flow of *prana*, or life force energy, within the body.



Surya namaskara is one of the most complete practices of hatha yoga. The primary intention of this series of poses is to awaken the energy of the sun that normally lies dormant at the navel center. Surya namaskara allows us to reach deep into our solar plexus and awaken and circulate the sun’s healing power to restore a radiant body and cultivate a clear, calm, and tranquil mind. With a couple of cycles of the sun salutation, you can fan your digestive fire, energize your nervous system, balance your pranic flow, activate both the lower and upper extremities, and influence your mood.

— Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

BENEFITS

END
SURYA NAMASKAR
OVERVIEW