

## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

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**Indira Gandhi Government Post Graduate College,**

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### Importance of Aasan and Surya Namaskar

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#### **Abstract:**

*Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The term "yoga" in the Western world often denotes a modern form of Hatha yoga, yoga as exercise, consisting largely of the postures called asanas.*

**Keywords:** Yoga, Asanas, Rigveda, Yoga Sutras, Patanjali.

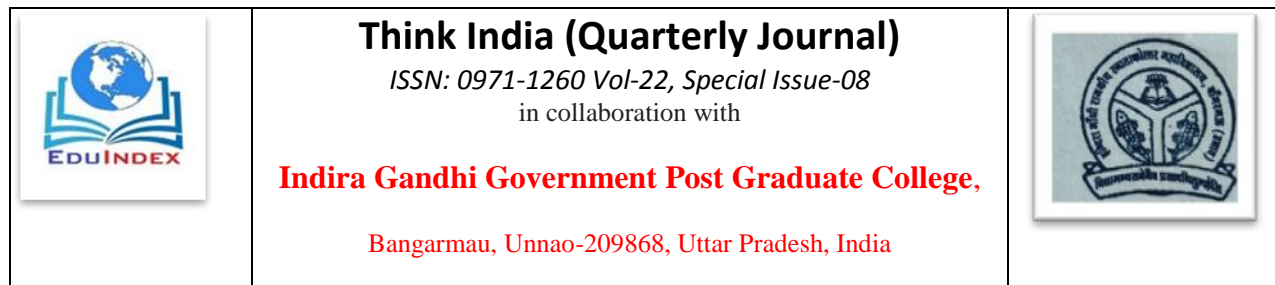
The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the Rigveda,<sup>[note 1]</sup> but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic and śramaṇa movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Upanishads. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE, and gained prominence in the West in the 20th century. Hatha yoga texts emerged sometimes between the 9th and 11th century with origins in tantra.

Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West,<sup>[15]</sup> following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century with his adaptation of yoga tradition, excluding asanas.<sup>[15]</sup> Outside India, it has developed into a posture-based physical fitness, stress-relief and relaxation technique.<sup>[16]</sup> Yoga in Indian traditions, however, is more than physical exercise; it has a meditative and spiritual core.<sup>[16][17]</sup> One of the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism is also called Yoga, which has its own epistemology and metaphysics, and is closely related to Hindu Samkhya philosophy.<sup>[18]</sup>

The impact of postural yoga on physical and mental health has been a topic of systematic studies, with evidence that regular yoga practice yields benefits for low back pain and stress. On December 1, 2016, yoga was listed by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage.

Asana” is the Sanskrit word for a physical posture. Expressed in general terms Asana denotes a specific position which can be held in a relaxed and comfortable manner for a long period of time. In the 2nd Century before Christ, Patanjali wrote down the principles of Yoga practice in the “Yoga Sutras” (aphorisms). He named only the meditation posture “Asana” and the physical postures he termed “Yoga Vyayam”. However, in common usage the dynamic Yoga exercises also became known as Asanas.

Many Asanas were derived from the natural movements and positions of animals and carry the names of animals such as “cat”, “deer”, “tiger”, “hare”, etc. These postures make use of examples from nature on how to help oneself. Asanas have a far-reaching effect upon body and



mind. The animals instinctively used these movements and positions because of their natural benefits. These effects are attained through the practice of the Asanas. For example: Marjari (The Cat) for stretching the body and the spine, Bhujangasana (The Cobra) for the release of aggression and emotions, and Shashankasana (The Hare) for relaxation. The headstand (Shirshasana) and Lotus (Padmasana), are regarded as the supreme or “royal” Asanas.

Asanas are beneficial for the muscles, joints, cardiovascular system, nervous system and lymphatic system, as well as the mind, psyche and Chakras (energy centres). They are psychosomatic exercises, which strengthen and balance the entire nervous system and harmonise and stabilise the practitioner’s state of mind. The effects of these exercises are a sense of contentment, clarity of mind, relaxation and a feeling of inner freedom and peace.

The system “Yoga in Daily Life” is designed in such a way that the body is gradually and systematically prepared, leading from simple preparatory exercises towards the more advanced and difficult Asanas. Periods of relaxation are included at the beginning and end of each Yoga class, as well as between the individual exercises. By developing the ability to relax, the feeling for one's own body is deepened. Physical and mental relaxation are prerequisites for the correct performance of all Yoga exercises and it is only in this way that the effects of the Asanas completely unfold.

The breath plays an important role in the Asanas. With coordination of breath and movement, the Yoga practice becomes harmonious, the breath deepens of its own accord and the body’s circulation and metabolism are stimulated. Use of the breath greatly enhances muscle relaxation by concentrating on tense areas of the body and consciously relaxing those parts with each exhalation.

As most people are in the habit of breathing quite shallow, inadequately filling the lungs, the Full Yoga Breath is practiced in “Yoga in Daily Life”. Correct breathing is fundamental for the body’s optimum metabolic function. With regular practice, the Full Yoga Breath becomes the habitual and natural way of breathing. Slower and deeper breaths improve circulation, nerve function and one’s whole physical condition. It also develops a calm, clear mind.

You have heard the word Surya Namaskar so many time and most of you practice Surya Namaskar daily in your Yoga season. So let’s understand its meaning “Surya” stands for the Sun and you know that the meaning of Namaskar very well its means Salutation. When you search the word Surya Namaskar on the net you find a huge amount of search results (Like steps of Sun Salutation pose, Benefits of Sun Salutation etc). But here we are not discussing these things. In this, we discuss the importance of Surya Namaskar in Yoga. Everybody knows Sun Salutation pose is a 12 step pose. It’s a special gesture to express your respect to the Sun.

In the time Sages, They practice this pose at early in the morning in a time of sun rises. And they show their gratitude towards the Sun by performing Surya Namaskar. According to Hindu religion, Sun is worshiped as a God. Coz it’s a real source of energy for all living beings and for nature (photosynthesis). And there is no replacement for Sun and surviving without the



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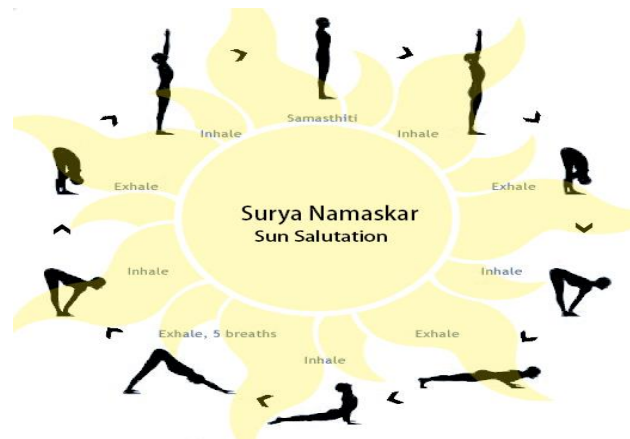
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energy of the sun is like breathing without air. This is the religious fact; now move on to the scientific Facts of Sun Salutation Pose.

Apart from Hindu religion, there are many other ancient cultures who worship the sun as a God. For example- Roman titled sun as Hyperion/Titan, in Greek Sun is known as the God Helios. **Yin – Yang** is the Chinese word in which Yang represents the Sun and Yin stands for Moon. Yin – Yang is termed as Ida and Pingala in the Sanskrit. In term of Yoga **Ida** is Chandra (Moon) Nadi and **Pingala** knew by Surya (Sun) Nadi (In most simple word left nostril is Ida and right nostril is Pingala that's it).

According to Scientific aspects, performing Surya Namaskar is not worshipping the Sun. As per science, the sun is the natural source of energy. The scientist doesn't admit the Sun as a God. In the morning, the rays of the sun are more beneficial for human beings than other time. When you perform Surya Namaskar in the early morning you got some energy from the sun. And the level of Ultra violet rays is not up to the mark or not enough to harm your skin. As time passes the level of UV rays is increasing. In the early morning and in the evening the sunlight is bearable and not harmful. Surya Namaskar rejuvenates your body, refreshes your mind and gives you the awesome feeling of energy throughout the day. So, that's the reason, why we perform Surya Namaskar in the morning.



### Importance of Asana:

Asanas are always performed in coordination with the breath:

1. Movements that expand the chest and abdominal cavity, are always connected with the inhalation
2. Movements that narrow the chest and abdominal cavity, are always connected with the exhalation



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In the initial stages of practice, the Asanas are performed once or twice without holding, so that the movement of the body and the breath are synchronised. In this way it is clearly established with which movement to inhale or exhale. This type of practice calms the nervous system, stimulates the glands, increases the capacity of the breath and frees one from physical and mental stress. The mind becomes relaxed, calm and clear.

Only after this preliminary practice should an Asana be held for a longer time, breathing normally. During practice, concentration is directed to the specific part of the body on which the exercise is working. The breath consciousness is also directed to this region of the body.

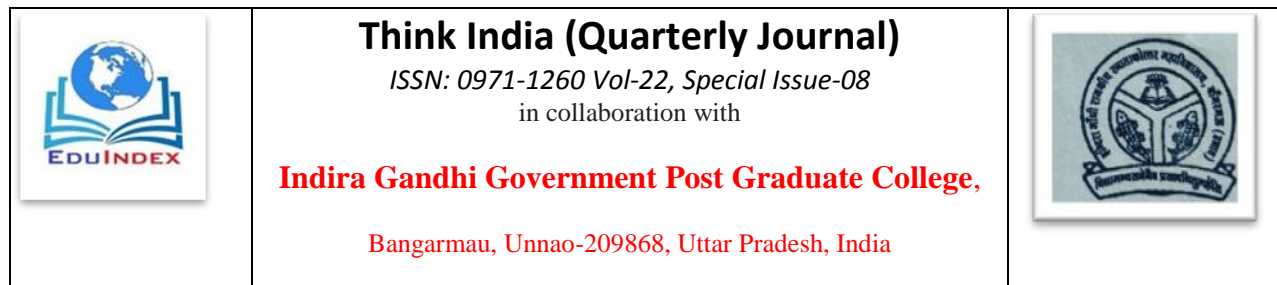
1. After practicing a posture, a counter pose or equalising posture is carried out. For example, when one part of the body is flexed or contracted, then in the following Asana it is extended or stretched.

### ***Health Benefits from the Regular Practice of Asanas***

- Flexibility of the spine is increased
- The joints become more mobile
- The muscles are relaxed, toned and receive a plentiful supply of blood
- Organ and glandular activity is stimulated and regulated
- The lymphatic system and metabolism are stimulated
- The immune system is strengthened
- Circulation and blood pressure are normalised and stabilised
- The nervous system is calmed and strengthened
- The skin becomes clear and fresh

### IMPORTANCE OF SURAY NAMASKAR

1. Breathing Process
2. Gives you the perception of body awareness
3. Awesome energetic Pose
4. Gives you the perception of mindfulness
5. Sun Salutation Changes your Social behavior
6. Sun Salutation is the most powerful Asana having lots of amazing plus points.
7. Surya Namaskar directly targets your liver, throat, chest, legs, and stomach means it benefits your whole body.
8. Surya Namaskar also boosts and improves the circulation of blood throughout your body.
9. Proper circulation of oxygenated blood means well functioning of the stomach, bowels movement and nervous system.
10. If you add Surya Namaskar to your everyday routine, it ensures you to balance the level of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. When these are on the level automatically your body is free from general diseases.



11. Because of a beautiful mixture of repetitive steps and variability, it gives you self-motivated practice without feeling bored. It gives an individual's to ample time for self-actualization.
12. Remember one thing; always perform Surya Namaskar with mantras. When you add mantras to the routine of Sun Salutation Pose. It removes dullness, creates a pleasing effect.
13. Mantras create soothing vibrations, which helps to remove fatigue and calms your mind.
14. Mantras give positive effects to your different Chakras, that gives the spiritual benefits to the Practitioner's who looks to grow in spiritual practice or sadhana.
15. The first step of Surya Namaskar is Namaste pose and poses like eight limb pose builds modesty along with it kicks out overconfidence or self-binding ego in the learner.
16. A salute to the sun is the divinity in nature and it permits the learner to practice with more devotion (Bhakti & Shraddha). Assuming the energy of the sun in our heart produce a wholeness and gives a sense of peace.

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