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Spiritual and physiological aspects of Suryanamaskara: A yogic practice

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Abstract

The purpose of the Study is to explore the Spiritual and Physiological aspects of the holistic yogic practices SURYANAMASKARA on human body and inner sprit. Suryanamaskara, or salutation to the sun, is an important Yogic practice which dates back to the ancient Vedic period when the sun was worshipped as a powerful symbol of spiritual consciousness. Suryanamaskara is an ancient knowledge of this country which provides physiological and spiritual health by affecting different activities of human body based on body, mind and breath concept. So Suryanamaskara is a complete work out for body, mind and soul. it helps on all the 5 dimensions of our body. Strengthens body, creates awareness of mind, helps in strengthening bones and joints and helps in transformation spiritually by working on so many energy centers.

Keywords: Yogic, Suryanamaskara, spiritual, physiology, human body system

Introduction

The word Suryanamaskara derived from Samskrit roots Surya and Namaskara here refers to the Sun and Namaskara means 'salutations'. Suryanamaskara has been handed down from the enlightened sages of the Vedic Age. The sun symbolises spiritual consciousness and, in ancient times, was worshipped on a daily basis. In Yoga the sun is represented by pingala or Suryanadi, the pranic channel which carries the vital, life-giving force. This dynamic group of Asana-s is not regarded as being a traditional part of hatha yoga practices as it was added to the original asana group at a later time. Suryanamaskara has developed into a practice of twelve postures which weave together to generate prana (subtle energy), aiming towards the purification and rejuvenation of the practitioner. Suryanamaskara have a holistic effect and bring body, mind, consciousness and soul into balance. Suryanamaskara helps to develop a greater understanding of our self, the purpose of life.

History and Origen of Suryanamaskara Practice

Suryanamaskara is as rich in symbolic and mythic overtones as it is in physical benefits. There's some disagreement among authorities over the origins of the form. Traditionalists contend that the sequence is at least 2,500 years old (perhaps even several hundred years older), that it originated during Vedic times as a ritual prostration to the dawn, replete with mantras, offerings of flowers and rice, and libations of water. Skeptics of this dating maintain that Sun Salutation was invented by the raja of Aundh (a former state in India, now part of Maharashtra state) in the early 20th century, and then disseminated to the West in the 1920s or 1930s. However old Sun Salutation is, and whatever it may originally have looked like, many variations have evolved over the years.

Techniques of Suryanamaskara

Each round of Suryanamaskar is done, after the utterance of 'Omkar' with the appropriate Bijmantra-s, along with the corresponding name of Sun God in the following step. Each stage of Suryanamaskar is accompanied by regulation of breath.

Position 1: Pranamasana: Standing upright with the feet together. Slowly bend the elbows and place the palms together in front of the chest in Namaskaramudra.

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Position 2: Hasta Utthanasana (Raised arms pose): Keep the arms and spine in a straight line. Raise the torso and stretch the arms above the head. Keep the arms separated, shoulder width apart. Bend the head, arms and upper trunk backward slightly.

Position 3: Padahasthasana (Hand to foot pose): Bend forward from the hips until the fingers or palms of the hands touch the floor on either side of the feet. Bring the forehead as close to the knees as is comfortable.

Position 4: Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose): Place the hands on the floor beside the feet. Stretch the right leg back and grasp the floor with the toes. Bend the left knee, keeping the left foot on the floor in the same position. Keep the arms straight. The head should be tilted backward, the back arched and the inner gaze directed upward to the eyebrow centre.

Position 5: Parvatasana (Mountain pose): Keep the hands and right foot still, and take the left foot back beside the right foot. Simultaneously, raise the buttocks and lower the head between the arms so that the back and legs form two sides of a triangle.

Position 6: Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with eight parts or points): Keep the hands and feet in place. Lower the knees, chest and chin to the floor; the feet will come up on to the toes. In the final position only the toes, knees, chest, hands and chin touch the floor. The knees, chest and chin should touch the floor simultaneously.

Position 7: Bhujangasana (Cobra pose): Keep the hands and feet in place. Slide the chest forward and raise first the head, the shoulders, then, straightening the elbows, arch the back into the cobra pose. This will lower the buttocks and hips to the floor. Bend the head back and direct the gaze upward to the eyebrow centre.

Position 8: Parvatasana (mountain pose): The hands and feet do not move from position 7. From bhujangasana assume parvatasana. Keep the arms and legs straight, grip the floor with the toes and use the strength of the arms to raise the buttocks and lower the heels to the floor.

Position 9: Ashwa Sanchalanasana: (Equestrian pose): Place the hands on the floor beside the feet. Stretch the left leg back and grasp the floor with the toes. Bend the left knee, keeping the left foot on the floor in the same position. Keep the arms straight. The head should be tilted backward, the back arched and the inner gaze directed upward to the eyebrow centre

Position 10: Padahasthasana (Hand to foot pose): Bring the right foot forward next to the left foot. Straighten both legs. Bring the forehead as close to the knees as possible without straining.

Position 11: Hasta Utthanasana (Raised arms pose): Keep the arms and spine in a straight line. Raise the torso and stretch the arms above the head. Keep the arms separated, shoulder width apart. Bend the head, arms and upper trunk backward slightly.

Position 12: Pranamasana (Prayer pose): Standing upright with the feet together. Slowly bend the elbows and place the

palms together in front of the chest in Namaskaramudra.

Breath synchronization during Suryanamaskara practice
Suryanamaskara helps in regulating the breathing pattern expanding the chest and contraction of abdominal muscles while performing sun salutation. Rhythmic flow breathing helps in self awareness and calms the mind. Breath Work - The alternate expansion and contraction of the chest helps in regulating and deepening the breath through the practice. For a novice Yoga practitioner, it is hard to synchronize breathing with body postures. Suryanamaskara practice helps immensely in developing this capacity of mindfulness in everything we do. When we are mindful, we commit less mistakes and there are less chances of accidents and we have better control of our emotions and reactions.

Effect of Suryanamaskara on different system of body
Cyclic Practice of Yogic postures in Suryanamaskara helps to tone up joints and muscles in a short period of time. Abdominal Organs are alternately stretched and compressed. This ensures proper functioning of the organs. This practice also has a profound positive effect on the back as it involves alternate backward and forward bends. It also improves spinal flexibility and results in improved immunity. almost 90 % of the muscles get exercised by this practice.

Nervous System
In the twelve movements of Suryanamaskara, the spinal column is systematically stretched and compressed to the maximum extent, stimulating circulation in the whole spinal cord, and all nerve plexuses. Suryanamaskara tones nerve flows by stimulating internal organs. It stretches organs. It stretches nerves, works on the spine and enhances pran, which activates brain centre. The whole nervous system is activated and seems to wake up.

The Endocrine System
The endocrine glands are the most vital and mysterious of all systems of the Body. They play an overall role in the coordination and integration of all physiological process and yet very little are actually known about them. The main function of the endocrine glands is the production and secretion of hormones, chemical substances are released into the bloodstream and carried throughout the body to act upon particular organs. Suryanamaskara stimulate the hypothalamus, which regulates the pituitary action. The practice of Suryanamaskara thereby has a direct and beneficial effect on this vital centre and the whole body. Suryanamaskara plays an ideal role in the maintenance of pineal gland. The Suryanamaskara compresses the abdominal organs, which press onto the pancreas especially during forward bending in Padahasthasana.

Circulatory System
Suryanamaskara improves flow of blood, to speeds up the elimination of morbid matter and introduces fresh oxygen and nutrient of all the cells, and general circulation is improved. The cardiac muscles are strengthened. Microcirculation to the heart is increased and reducing the chances of heart attack. Sluggish circulation, cold hands and feet, blood vessel diseases and general fatigue can also be eliminated. The circulation of lymph, which is prime importance in fluid balance and in combating infections, is toned, the body gains an increased resistance to infections, and a better ability to heal.

Respiratory System

In Suryanamaskara a deep rhythmic breathing process is synchronized with each movement, which completely empties the lungs of all, traces of stale gas and refills them with fresh, clean, oxygenated air. All the pockets of the lungs are expanded stimulated and then cleaned. The oxygen content of the blood is increased, which improves the overall vitality and oxygenation of the cells and tissue of the body and brain. Sluggishness and lethargy are rapidly overcome. This practice is also good for the prevention of diseases such as tuberculosis, which develop in the little used, stagnant regions of the lungs.

Digestive System

The alternate stretching and compressing movements of Surya Namaskar tone the whole digestive system by thoroughly massaging all the abdominal viscera. This not only enhances elimination but also increases the digestive fire, promoting a healthy appetite, and complete and rapid assimilation of food.

Skin

The skin is the important and largest body organ and apart from holding the body together serves to regulate body temperature, as well as excreting waste matter through perspiration. When there is an excess of poisonous matter in the blood, it comes out through the skin in the form of boils, rashes and pimples. As Suryanamaskara produces perspiration, speeds up circulation and enhances the elimination of wastes through the digestive and urinary systems, it cleanses and endows the practitioner with a clean, glowing complexion, which is an important sign of health.

Spiritual aspects of Suryanamaskara practice

Suryanamaskara is a complete work out for body, mind and soul. it helps on all the 5 dimensions of our body. strengthens body, creates awareness of mind and helps in transformation spiritually by working on so many energy centers. The Sun Salutation is a prayer in motion. It allows us to use the body as an instrument of higher awareness, so that we can receive wisdom and knowledge. Mudras like Namaste and poses like Ashtanga bring humility and remove self-binding ego in the practitioner. Salutations to Sun, the visible divinity in nature allows the practitioner to practice with faith (shraddha and bhakti). The breathing is regulated, thereby calming the mind. If practiced slowly, it has a calming effect. If practiced briskly, it is invigorating.

Conclusion

So Suryanamaskara has great significance in providing great flexibility to the muscles that keeps you active and fit. From the above facts it is clear that Suryanamaskara is an ancient knowledge of this country which provides physiological and spiritual health by affecting different activities of human body based on body, mind and breath concept. So Suryanamaskara is a complete work out for body, mind and soul. it helps on all the 5 dimensions of our body. strengthens body, creates awareness of mind, helps in strengthening bones and joints and helps in transformation spiritually by working on so many energy centers.

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