

A Study In The Philosophy Of *Surya Namaskara* For The Physiological Harmonization Of The Human Body

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Abstract

Surya Namaskara means worship of the Sun God. The sun as the center of the solar system is a symbol of unlimited power whose rays of universal love shine on every object and creature regardless of differences in status, ethnicity, gender, race, and class. *Surya Namaskara* is not just a series of physical exercises but also has depth and perfection as a spiritual practice through *pranayama* and *asana* by controlling and concentrating the fluctuations of the mind. The entire movement of *Surya Namaskara* represents a deep sense of appreciation for nature which manifested in various postures as a form of harmonious interaction of yogis with living creatures and the environment. This research aims to examine references to mantras/slokas in several holy books which are the philosophical basis of *Surya Namaskara* as well as to determine the implications of *Surya Namaskara* for the physiological harmonization of the human body. The method used in structuring this research is descriptive qualitative, with a phenomenological approach through data collection in the form of observation, interviews, documentation, and document study. The results of the research show that *Surya Namaskara* is a *yadnya* to the Sun God as the source of life as well as a source of energy that gives life to all creatures on Earth, and if done regularly will have implications for the system in the body, physical and mental health so that body harmonization will be realized and in ultimately it can increase intellectual and spiritual intelligence.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence; Physiological Balance; *Surya Namaskara*

Abstrak

Surya Namaskara artinya pemujaan terhadap Dewa Matahari. Matahari sebagai pusat tata surya merupakan simbol kekuasaan tanpa batas yang sinar cinta universal menyinari setiap benda dan makhluk tanpa memandang perbedaan status, suku, jenis kelamin, ras, dan golongan. *Surya Namaskara* bukan sekedar rangkaian latihan fisik tetapi juga memiliki kedalaman dan kesempurnaan sebagai latihan spiritual melalui *pranayama* dan *asana* dengan mengendalikan dan memusatkan gejala pikiran. Keseluruhan gerakan *Surya Namaskara* mewakili rasa apresiasi mendalam terhadap alam yang diwujudkan dalam berbagai postur sebagai wujud interaksi harmonis para yogi dengan makhluk hidup dan lingkungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji referensi mantra/sloka pada beberapa kitab suci yang menjadi landasan filosofis *Surya Namaskara* serta mengetahui implikasi *Surya Namaskara* terhadap harmonisasi fisiologis tubuh manusia. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pendekatan fenomenologis melalui pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan studi dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Surya Namaskara* merupakan *yadnya* kepada Dewa Matahari sebagai sumber kehidupan sekaligus sumber energi yang memberi kehidupan bagi seluruh makhluk di Bumi, dan jika dilakukan secara rutin akan berdampak pada sistem di dalam tubuh, kesehatan jasmani dan rohani sehingga terwujud harmonisasi tubuh dan pada akhirnya dapat meningkatkan kecerdasan intelektual dan spiritual.

Kata Kunci: Kecerdasan Spiritual; Keseimbangan Fisiologis; *Surya Namaskara*

Introduction

The human body as we know it is not only an object or a source of inspiration for many artworks that exist, it is also a subject of its own which we are responsible for, and thus it is our duty to care for it, maintain its health and hygiene on a daily basis in order to keep it strong. Maintaining the physical wellness of the body with yoga presents us with many good benefits, be it physically or spiritually. Yoga bestows the body with flexibility, which is beneficial for a healthier lifestyle as well as a way to gain spiritual awareness. *Surya Namaskara* is not only a compilation of physical movements, there are stretches and massages that strengthen and stimulate all the muscles, vital organs, and other physical aspects of our bodies by moving them back and forth. In addition, there is also a sense of depth and perfection in the form of spiritual exercise. Hereinafter it is explained that yoga as a practice puts an emphasis on the individual's effort to take control of the changes in the subtle body. Yoga emphasizes control over mental and bodily activity as it is a form of practice to free one's self from any attachments. Therefore, the discipline of the subtle body, which is the thread that connects the physical body and the consciousness, becomes the main focus of this practice. By following the principles of yoga, one will gain the ability to focus their consciousness, which results in one gaining the ability to detect any deviation of the mind by aligning their inner potential, meaning they will have the ability to control their own soul.

The teachings of yoga are a way to achieve *vivekajnana* or the insight to be able to tell wrong from right as a form of release. Yoga taught us that release can be achieved through the knowledge of the difference between the soul and this physical plane, which includes the body, mind, and my own personality. (Surada, 2016). As a form of spiritual exercise, yoga generally has a sacred philosophical basis to its practice that lasts thousands of years. The word yoga defines the relationship between the personal soul and the universal soul which has no person, as such yoga becomes defined as the systematic effort to concentrate the mind in order to center it in the universal soul. The personal soul in yoga has more liberty and can achieve freedom with the help of God. According to Patanjali, God is the ultimate *Purusa* or an exceptional spirit unaffected by misfortune, *karma*, results taken, and how it is taken, to Him is the highest limit of Ultimate Knowledge. This means that He is not confined by time, eternally free, and is the teacher for the wise dating back to ancient times (Maswinara, 2006).

Surya Namaskara has existed since the time of Veda and the sun became a huge symbol to bring out the aspect of the sun in our consciousness. *Surya Namaskara* is a variety of dynamic and energetic movements done in an order with a steady rhythm, and this posture reflects the rhythm of the universe. *Surya Namaskara* is regarded as a complete spiritual exercise as it includes *asana*, *pranayama*, *mantra*, and meditation techniques. *Surya* means to pay tribute to the Sun God, and as such *Surya Namaskara* can be seen as a form of worship to the Sun God. The origins and the inner workings of yoga movements are regarded as a rhythm and became the response to the natural balance. The inspiration that comes from the movements of *Surya Namaskara* is not without organic patterns of the environment.

Every object in the universe and form of organic objects has its own magnificent structures. The general movements of *Surya Namaskara* are representations of the deep appreciation for nature, as each posture contains harmonic interactions between the yogis with other living beings and the environment. The result of this interaction can stimulate and generate an experience or pleasure that feels contemplative and transcendental (Dibia, 2012). The movements of *Surya Namaskara* are a form of yoga to increase awareness and spiritual enlightenment by respecting and worshipping the sun. *Surya Namaskara* has

existed since the time of Veda and the sun became a huge symbol to bring out the aspect of the sun in our consciousness (Nerta, 2020).

Yoga activities, specifically *Surya Namaskara* Yoga are one of the means for the body to explore itself. Within the movements of *Surya Namaskara* Yoga, there is a composition in the form of a human body which is an effort to imitate a natural object where within it exists a living being fighting for its life by building connections between the living and the non-living in their habitat or environment. This includes learning the transfer of energy and material from one living being to another into their environment and other factors that caused it. Humans need to connect to nature, seeing themselves as the creatures of the environment (*homo ecologus*) which proves that humans are an inseparable part of an ecosystem, and instinctively humans have the tendency to always understand their environment (Putra, 2002).

Surya Namaskara Yoga consists of 12 varieties of *asanas* yoga. *Asanas* is the perfect and comfortable form of the body, also known as the physical preparedness to help with concentrating the mind. *Surya Namaskara* Yoga includes the *Asana* (specific postures) variety, among them are the *Pranamasana*, *Hasta Utthanasana*, *Padahastasana*, *Ashwasanchalanasana*, *Ashtanga Namaskara*, *Bhujangasana*, and *Parvatasana* (Arora S, 2008). In doing each *asana*, certain mantras can be chanted with their own postures. This 3.000-year-old tradition of exercising one's body, soul, and mind in the Western world is now considered a holistic approach to health and is classified by the National Institutes of Health as a form of Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) (Williams et al, 2003). Consistent practice of yoga can increase strength, durability, the flexibility of the body and soul. Moreover, yoga can enhance a person's emotional state which affects their cordiality, compassion, and self-control, which results in inner peace and satisfaction (Lasater, 1997). Further exercising will result in a boost in one's stamina, as well as a change in one's perspective on life, self-awareness, and the confidence to live life to the fullest and with genuine pleasure (Lasater, 1997). Yoga practice results in a physiological change that would reduce the stress response produced by the body so that the balance and unity between the mind and body can be achieved (Williams et al, 2003).

Methods

The method used in the making of this research is qualitative research, with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is a form of qualitative research, where the researcher compiles data with participants' observations in order to understand an essential phenomenon of the participants in their life experience (Sugiyono, 2006). Informants are chosen in this research by using the purposive technique, which means we chose the people based on certain deliberation in accordance with the research process. The primary data of this research was gained through an interview with a figure in building the Bekasi temple, Hindu yoga practitioners in the Bekasi temple, other practitioners of yoga, and other figures in society who are regarded as knowledgeable in this research. The secondary data of this research was gained through certain research findings such as proceedings, journals, references from holy books, and references from books about yoga regarded as relevant for further study. The data gathering was done through observations, interviews, and documentation of the yoga routine practiced in the Bekasi temple. The compiled data was then analyzed in a descriptive, qualitative way which could explain the philosophy and benefits of *Surya Namaskara* to maintain the physiological harmonization of the human body.

Result and Discussions

Mastering every posture of the *Surya Namaskara* requires certain skills. The *asana* movements of the *Surya Namaskara* Yoga are beautiful movements with grace, muscle and body flexibility, forming a variety of *asanas* that resemble many sorts of living beings on the ecology of this planet Earth. Per the information explained before, *Surya Namaskara* Yoga appears through spiritual observation of nature and everything that it contains. The beauty of nature and its content creates ethereal and magical creations in the form of *asana* movements. The movements of *asana* can only be done on the human body, however, if the posturing resembles a natural body and its content, then the movement provides spiritual enlightenment which is meditative and transcendent (Dibia, 2012). Worship and adoration for the sun have been practiced since the olden times. In Veda, there are some references to certain goals in order to achieve wellness and prosperity. In the *Yuddha Kanda* chapter of Ramayana, it's explained that: After a long, arduous battle with Rahwana, Rama became bemused by the fact that he could not kill him. When the gods meet in heaven, Rama is then advised to seek the help of Maha Rsi Agastya. Maha Rsi Agastya then taught Rama to worship the sun, which then resulted in Rama gaining the ability to kill Rahwana and save Sita. Rama fought Rahwana to save Sita as a symbol of his *yadnya* journey, a heartfelt sacrifice as a manifestation of the human struggle to fight their common enemy (symbolized by Rahwana). The understanding to overcome ego, lust, anger, greed, and other sins in order to achieve spiritual awareness is symbolized by Sinta.

Surya Namaskara is mentioned in the first part of *Taittiriya Aranyaka* in Yajur Veda. This tradition is passed down through generations in the form of schooling. This exercise consists of a variety of movements and yoga positions done in a specific order. *Surya Namaskara* Yoga has many benefits, as a way to worship the sun, as an exercise to better one's posture, and as a way to improve one's physical and mental health. The practice of *Surya Namaskara* has become an integral part of the culture of South India and has since been done by many people. Worship towards the Sun God is one form of worship given to the Godly Entity connected to light and life for the faith and religion in the world. In many cultures, the Sun God is often regarded as a manifestation of the power to create and nurture all the contents in the universe. This worship may include the proceeding of a ritual, the slaughter of an animal as a sacrifice, and the building of a temple dedicated to worshipping the Sun God.

Surya Namaskara is a form of exercise for the wellness of the mind and the body, which involves a combination of muscle activity and care focused internally on self-reflection, breathing intervals, and one's energy. The four main principles that underly the teachings and the practice of healing yoga are explained hereinafter:

1. The First Principle

The human body is a holistic entity composed of many dimensions. Health or sickness cannot be separated from the intermingled connection. One dimension affects the other. According to dualism, humans have two different substances, which are the body and the soul. This means that humans cannot be separated physically or spiritually. A body without a soul will die and vice versa, a soul without a body cannot keep existing. As a result, both have an effect on each other. Perfect health will be achieved if both aspects are fulfilled. In achieving the physical aspect of one's health the practice of *Surya Namaskara* with the *pranayama* technique greatly helps with revitalizing all cells of the body, providing physical strength, flexibility, and mental tranquility. *Pranayama* means the breath control done in every movement in the *Surya Namaskara*. Anandamitra, 1990a explains as such:

In *pranayama*, the fluctuation of the mind slows, the lungs expand to their maximum capacity, which results in the body receiving oxygen and vital energy equally throughout, the body circulation flows better, the energy reaches its full capacity and the mind is able to concentrate better.

This is further emphasized in an excerpt from the holy book:

*agnervayam pratham asyā mṛtānām
manāmahe cāru devasya nāma
sa no mahyā aditaye purnadāt,
pitaram ca dṛśeyam mātaram ca.*

Translation:

Agni is the primary God of all the Gods, which we will remember and worship, the god *Agni* gives us health so that we shall live observing nature (Reg. Veda. I.24.2).

In its early stages, the *pranayama* technique is done, which is controlling the mind in the second theory of yoga which is *yogas citta vertti nidordha*. In doing *pranayama*, the shaken mind is redirected to one objective, which is to keep up with breathing using the techniques learned. In the process of controlled breathing, *atha yoganusasanam* is done, which is the concentrating of the mind on the sun referred to as the God Surya as the provider of strength and the cause of all activities. The sun is a symbol of God's power which has become the focus of *pranayama* and other postures in the *Surya Namaskara*. Thus, the centering of the mind in breath control in every movement is indirectly a form of meditation that acknowledges the existence of God. By believing God as the holiest and highest being, as the center of concentration and the all-immaculate provider of strength (Gunawijaya, 2020). In the next phase, the god *Surya* is worshipped as the strength and spirit in human lives as a ray of limitless affectionate energy, as described in the *Gayatri mantra* below:

*Om bhūr bhvāh svah,
tat savitur varenyam,
bhargo devasya dimahi,
dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt.*

Translation:

OM is the earth, sky, and heavens. Let us meditate to the Sun spirit and may our minds be inspired by the spirit.

The *Gayatri mantra* is a holy, sacred mantra dedicated to the God *Surya*, and in the *skanda purana* there is no mantra regarded as sacred as the holiness of the *Gayatri* mantra. The *Gayatri* mantra was even regarded as the mother to Veda (Vedanta) and Brahmanda (Brahmamata). The repeated chanting of the *Gayatri mantra* will result in the safety and virtue of someone. A mini *mantra* can greatly increase a person's quality of life. From the perspective of astronomy, the sun is regarded as the star in the solar system which provides light and energy for Earth. The philosophy of the sun teaches humans about bravery and the strength of one's heart. Much like the light of the sun that bravely moved through the obstacles and stood straight in the sky, people must apply this philosophy to their daily lives. One must have the courage and resilience to face any sort of challenges and obstacles in life. The existence of the sun becomes vital for life as it is the only star in our solar system. Without the sun, the planet Earth would not have the energy needed to create and sustain life. As humans, we must strive to find meaning in life. In order to achieve a meaningful life, one must have ambitions and goals that are

beneficial for ourselves and those around us. In addition, it is important to give and receive, just as the sun gives energy and warmth to the planets, it also receives its gravitational pull and magnetism from the planets surrounding it in order to maintain its stability in the solar system. Such is life, where we learn to give and receive to and from other people. Eternity is also a characteristic of the sun, as a star that constantly shines and brings energy to planet Earth for millions of years, this provides a lesson in eternity and the urgency to maintain heritage for many generations to come (Ruth, 2019).

2. The Second Principle

Individuals have needs that are unique to one another, as such it must be approached with care for the individual uniqueness in mind and their practices may be adjusted to their needs. Each human has their own unique traits, be it from their characteristics, mentally or physically, in the form of physical quirks and bodily anatomy. The human body consists of three bodies, which are called *sthula sarira* (gross body), *sukhma sarira* (subtle body), and *antahkarana sarira* (causal body). Nature itself has three bodies, which are called *bhur loka* (universal body), *bwah loka* (universal intelligence body), *swah loka* (nirvana). The bodies contained within humans share connections with the bodies of the universe, and it is leveled in varying intensities. A perfect connection between the human body and the universe is formed. The body from the waist down symbolizes *alam tala*, whereas the ankles symbolize *alam vitala*. The calves represent *alam sutatala*, while the knees symbolize *alam talala*. The belly button represents *alam bwah loka*, the heart represents the *svah loka*, the esophagus represents *alam mahaloka*, the face represents *janaloka*, the forehead represents *tapaloka* and the head is the *satyaloka* (Watra, 2006). The human body is, at its core, the resting place for *Brahman*, and it can be said that the body is *Brahman's* fortress also known as *Brahma Pura*. Furthermore, the *Brahman* living inside us is called *Atman*. As a defense mechanism, our body has many layers starting from the most visible known as *ana maya kosa* to the most abstract in form known as *ananda maya kosa* (Watra, 2006).

3. The Third Principle

Yoga is a self-empowerment technique based on the fact that a practitioner is able to heal themselves. Yoga involves the individual in their process of healing. By taking an active part in the journey towards wellness, by practicing yoga, a person may feel the growing awareness of healing that comes from the inside, not from any external sources, and the determination to take charge of their own fate. The third principle is based on the history of yoga. At the time, the practice of yoga was not well known, but Goraknath taught *asana* to all his closest students. The yogis of that time usually lived far from civilization, such as in the mountains or deserts. This means they live a simple life alone with only nature to sustain them. All the animals were decent teachers to these yogis as they lived life naturally, free of any diseases and other worldly issues. Animals did not have doctors or medicine to heal their ailments, as they only had nature as their savior, which is why most techniques in yoga were developed by studying the behavior of wild animals, particularly forest animals (Saraswati, 2002).

Asanas yoga generally takes inspiration from the movements of animals or nature. Philosophically, the yoga of the olden days was closely studied by the Rsi who have released themselves from any worldly activities, and as such they kept to themselves and would stay in silence or in the comfort of a forest. There, they figured out how animals and plants adapted to their surroundings, specifically how they were able to adapt to

changing climates and not fall ill whereas a human would instantly fall sick if there is a slight change in the climate. With that philosophy, movements were formed from the demeanors of animals and nature. As such, by practicing these movements, humans may develop tolerance for climate and weather change so that they would not get sick easily. For that reason, the movements used in *asanas* yoga are also classified as the postures in *Surya Namaskara* (Sumarkandya, 2021).

In the SOR theory, any behavior exhibited is caused by outside stimuli, which then becomes a socio-psychological pattern wherein said yoga practice is regarded as social regulation in society. Outside of the system that completes it, the practice of yoga also involves the emotions of the people participating in an intense way and is a thread that connects the skills, cognition, personality, behavior, and values contained within it. Regarding the activities in yoga, specifically *Surya Namaskara*, if done routinely can be made into a habit after achieving a certain level of understanding of the practice of *Surya Namaskara*, especially after getting the good benefits of doing so in an orderly way. If a practitioner of yoga executes the *pranayama* technique accordingly, the energy of the sun will reside inside the body as a system that can be trained through the *Nadi Ida* (left nostril) and *Pingala* (right nostril) purification. In yoga, the nostrils represent 2 energies, the right represents the sun while the left represents the moon. The energy of the sun enters through the right nostril during sunrise which is around six A.M. until the sun sets, the right nostril will perfectly work during an inhale, and exhaling will go more smoothly and feel warmer during the day. The energy of the sun that spreads smoothly throughout the body is called *Pinggala*. *Surya Namaskara* is a practice that encourages people to start living life in a healthy way and free of any sickness, especially spinal injuries, waist and/or knee pains, and an unstable mind. *Surya Namaskara*, when practiced routinely, will result in a smoother bloodstream and the energy of the sun radiates throughout the body which brings in a newfound sense of joy, hope, and robustness (Prakas, 2004). Through the regular practice of *Surya Namaskara* yoga, one will get benefits such as physical and mental balance as well as spiritual awareness, and so each individual will be able to more actively practice yoga moving forward.

4. The Fourth Principle

Self-healing really depends on the quality of the individual's state of mind. An individual with a positive state of mind may experience a faster rate in self-healing, and vice versa if said person has a negative state of mind, resulting in a slower process (Williams et al, 2003). In the second theory, *Yogas citta vrtti nirodhah*, yoga is the cessation/control of *citta vrtti* or the changes that occur in the seeds of mind and heart (Krisna, 2015). According to Patanjali, yoga is the act of limiting or controlling the modifications that occur in the mind. This is a condition in which there are no longer modifications in the mind (thoughts), or rather, the mind is in a stable and calm state, allowing it to reflect the pure state of the soul (Suamba, 2015). In the aforementioned *sutra*, there are three important concepts; (1) *nirodhah*, which is control, (2) *citta*, which is the mind, and (3) *vrtti*, which is the fluctuations, waves, and movements in the mind. The control of the mind is a central point in *Sutra Patanjali Yoga*. Maharsi Patanjali mentioned *citta* as the mind, as stated below:

The mind is the main cause of people's suffering or happiness. The only people who can live a peaceful life are people who can control or take advantage of their minds in a good, efficient, and right way (Yoga Sutra, I:12-17 in Yasa, 2015).

The goal of yoga is to manage the *citta* into its former state, which is pure without any changes so that the *purusa* is free from suffering. The activity of the *citta* is affected by the *tri guna* (*satwam*, *rajas*, and *tamas*), causing humans to be embroiled in *samsara*,

or repeated births. Furthermore, suffering is also caused by the *klesas* within the self, which are called *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (egoism), *raga* (excessive lust), *dvesa* (hatred), and *abhinivesa* (fear of death). In order for the *purusa* to be free of *prakerti* bonds, a person must suppress the turmoil of the *citta* (*cittavrtti*) and eliminate the *klesas*.

Maharsi Yogiswara explained in the epic poem Ramayana written in Ancient Javanese:

*Rāgādi musuh maparō,
ri hati ya tonggwanya tan madoh ring awak,
yéka tan hana ri sira,
prawira wihikan siréng niti.*

Translation:

Lust and other sins are the closest enemies, the heart is their resting place, not far from the body, and all of it is not present in him.

In Hindu literature, it is emphasized that the closest and most dangerous enemy within a person is their self, and any form of denial to search outside of the self, in the form of lust and other sins, is all the byproduct of *citta*. Aside from the aforementioned quote, Maharsi Kanwa in the holy literature of Arjuna Wiwaha gave a parable for when a person practices yoga in order to manage a mind drowning in contemplation, as explained below:

*Sasi wimba haneng ghata mesi banu,
ndanasing, suci nirmala mesi wulan,
Iwa mangkana rakwa kiteng kadadin,
Ring angambeki Yoga kiteng sakala.*

Translation:

Just as the moon reflected onto a water-filled tray, only with clear, pure water shall the reflection of the moon be visible, and the might God is of the same principle in this life, for when they diligently practice yoga, God will reveal himself in the flesh (Punyatmaja, 1976).

The bits of holy literature above clearly stated that the idea/history of the beginning of yoga, Hatta yoga or any form of meditation, yoga appeared in opposition to the belief that humans have the awareness of the need for the ultimate combined mindset. In the philosophy of yoga, *citta* is regarded as the first result of the development of *prakerti*. *Citta* is the combination of *mahat*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, and *manas*, which mirrors the awareness of *purusa* so the *citta* becomes conscious and can function in many different ways. Every *purusa* related to the *citta* is called a *karana citta*. *Karana citta* may develop depending on the body or the place in which it resides. The *karana citta* related to the body of a living being is called the *karya citta* (Surada, 2016).

The purpose of yoga is to manage the *citta* in its authentic state, which is pure and unchanging, so as to release the *purusa* from suffering. The *citta*'s activities are controlled by the *tri guna* (*Satvam*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*) causing humans to be embroiled in *samsara*, or repeated births. Moreover, suffering is also caused by the *klesa* within one's self, which are: *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (egoism), *raga* (excessive lust), *dvesa* (hatred), and *abhinivesa* (fear of death). In order for the *purusa* to be free of *prakerti* bonds, a person must suppress their inner turmoil. As long as there is change and turmoil in the *citta*, the spirit will be reflected in the changes in the *citta*. With the nonexistence of the *vivekajnana*, one will compare themselves to the changed entity. As a result, the soul will feel hardships and happiness, hatred and love in accordance with the ever-changing *citta*. If a person releases his or her self from this mortal coil and achieves freedom, he or she has to manage the activities of the senses and the mind. In this way, change and turmoil in the *citta* may cease.

Besides being a form of worship to the sun, the postures in *Surya Namaskara* are always related to the essence of nature. The movements in *Surya Namaskara* enable the body to be in touch with the *panca maha Bhuta* in the universe. The body parts connected to the *pertiwi* (motherland) become solid, such as flesh, bones, muscles, and so forth. *Apah* refers to the liquid that becomes blood, enzymes, and so forth. *Bayu* becomes the energy in the body. *Akasa* becomes the cavities and holes in the body, and *teja* becomes the heat that keeps the body working. According to Sumarkandia in (Somvir, 2009) there exist twelve steps in honoring the sun which have to be done every day and are part of yoga. *Surya Namaskara* must be done before any of the movements to warm up the body. These twelve steps must be done with an inhale and an exhale.

The *Surya Namaskara* recently introduced is a combination of 82 movements so as to grant practitioners a healthy lifestyle. These 12 steps are chosen by a yogi without a source in order to simplify all 82 movements. Somvir relayed the 12 phrases introduced in *Surya Namaskara*, listed hereinafter:

- a. *Mitra* (friend);
- b. *Ravi* (shining);
- c. *Surya* (an immaculately shining sun);
- d. *Bhanave* (shines above us all);
- e. *Khaga* (grants protection for the birds);
- f. *Pusne* (grows plants in the Earth and nurtures them);
- g. *Hiranyagarbha* (a golden sphere);
- h. *Marica* (the special ray of sunshine which nurtures a tree called the marica);
- i. *Aditya* (the first ray of light);
- j. *Savitri* (rising sun);
- k. *Arka* (the ray of sunshine that gives trees a specific type of water);
- l. *Bhaskara* (perfectly shining).

All of the aforementioned above are names for each ray of sunshine, which aids in sustaining the wellness of all living beings. As such, practitioners of yoga may be able to exercise early in the morning. *Surya Namaskara* consists of 12 body postures; each posture relates to one of the 12 symbols of the zodiac. Each full round of the 12 body postures in *Surya Namaskara* is done twice in a row, complete with the *Asana*, *Mudra*, *Pranayama*, *Bandha*, and *Mantra*. The twelve *Surya Namaskara* postures are as follows:
a. *Pranamasana*

Stand straight with your feet and the palms of your hands touching in *Anjali Mudra*. This relaxes the entire body, as you breathe normally whilst focusing on the *Cakra Anahata* (heart chakra). Chant the *mantra*: *Om Mitraya Namaha* (Respect all living beings). This movement focuses and calms you in preparation for the next exercise.



Figure 1. *Pranamasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

b. Hasta Uttanasana

Raising both hands above your head and rest them at shoulder-width. Then, lean your head and torso back. Inhale as you raise both hands, focus on the Throat Chakra (*Vishuda Cakra*). Chant: *Om Ravaye Namaha* (Respect the one brightly shining). This movement is beneficial for your digestive system as it flexes the cavities of your stomach. Moreover, it trains the muscles of your arms and shoulders as well as stabilizing the position of the spinal cord.



Figure 2. *Hasta Uttanasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

c. Padahastanasana

Bow down and reach out to the ground, your fingertips or the palms of your hands touching either your sides or in front of your toes. Stick your knees to your forehead and keep your legs straight as you exhale while still bowing. Concentrate on the *Svadhistana Cakra* (sex chakra). Chant: *Om Suryaya Namaha* (Respect to the provider of actions). This movement may help with reducing or preventing stomachaches, reducing fat accumulation in the belly area, stabilizing your digestive system, flexing and aligning your spine.



Figure 3. *Padahastanasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

d. Asva Sancalanasana (The Horse-riding Posture).

Stretch your right leg as far back as you can. The left knee bends as the right leg stretches straight to the back. Your body weight is sustained by your hands, left foot, right knee, and the toes of your right foot. Stretch your head out back, bend your back, and keep your eyes up to the sky while taking a deep breath. Concentrate on the *Ajna Cakra* (the third eye chakra in the middle of your forehead). Chant: *Om Bhanave Namaha* (Respect to the one that shines above us). This movement helps in massaging the organs in your belly and fix any sort of problems, strengthening the nervous system in the muscles of your legs.



Figure 4. *Asva Sancalanasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

e. *Parvatasana* (The Mountain Posture).

Form the body into a triangle by straightening both of your legs, and position your rear to the sky with your head bowing to the ground. Direct your eyes to both legs as you bend. Exhale as you straighten your legs and bend your body. Concentrate on the *Vishuda Cakra* (Throat Chakra). Chant: *Om Khagaya Namaha* (Respect to the fast-moving things in the sky). This movement strengthens the nerves and muscles of both arms and legs, as well as aligning the spine in the right direction.



Figure 5. *Parvatasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

f. *Astanga Namaskara* (worship with all 8 parts of the body).

Stick your body to the ground, only some parts such as your belly, thighs, the palms of your hands, knees, and chin. Stick your waist and hips off the ground and concentrate on the *Manipura Cakra* (belly button chakra). Chant: *Om Pusne Namaha*. (Respect to the provider of strength). This movement strengthens the muscles of your legs and arms, as well as your chest.



Figure 6. *Astanga Namaskara* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

g. *Bhujangasana* (The Cobra Posture)

Lifting the body from the waist up by positioning your arms straight on the ground, stretch your head out to the back and inhale as you lift the body and arch your back. Concentrate on the *Svadhista Cakra* (sex chakra). Chant: *Om Hiranya Garbhaya Namaha* (Respect to the golden cosmic self). This movement strengthens the spinal cord.



Figure 7. *Bhujangasana* Posture
(Source: Self-Documentation 2023)

h. *Parvatasana* (The Mountain Posture)

This step repeats the fifth posture. Exhale as you lift the hips of the floor. Concentrate on the *Vishuda Cakra* (throat chakra). Chant: *Om Maricaye Namaha* (Respect to the ruler of dawn). This movement strengthens the nerves and muscles of both arms and legs as well as making the spine more flexible.

i. *Asva Sancalanasana* (The Horse-riding Posture)

This step repeats the fourth posture. Inhale as you concentrate on the *Ajna Cakra* (the third eye chakra, in the middle of the forehead). Chant: *Om Aditya Namaha* (Respect to the son of Aditi). This movement massages the organs in the belly and strengthens the leg muscles.

j. *Padahasthasana* (Hands to Feet Posture)

This step repeats the third posture. Exhale as you tighten your core whilst bending your body in half. Concentrate on the *Svadhista Cakra* (sex chakra). Chant: *Om Savitre Namaha* (Respect to the mother of all wisdom). This movement may help with reducing or preventing stomachaches, reducing fat accumulation in the belly area, and stabilizing your digestive system.

k. *Hasta Uttanasana* (The Raised Arms Posture)

This step repeats the second posture. Inhale as you lift both arms and concentrate on the *Vishuda Cakra* (throat chakra). Chant: *Om Arkaya Namaha* (Respect to the all-deserving). This movement trains the muscles of your arms and shoulders as well as aligning the spinal cord.

l. *Pranamasana* (Prayer Stance).

This step repeats the first posture. Exhale as you concentrate on the *Anahata Cakra* (heart chakra). Chant: *Om Bhaskaraya Namaha* (respect to the one who brings enlightenment). This movement forms concentration and tranquility to prepare for the next set of exercises.

One round of *Surya Namaskara* may help a person lose up to 14 calories in their body and if done for a total of 30 minutes, we may be able to burn at least 417 calories (Saraswati, 2002). *Surya Namaskara* is a compilation of holistic exercises that are not only beneficial for our physical health, it also improves our mental health and some other spiritual benefits. *Surya Namaskara* can provide all the main health benefits of yoga in a series of short movements. The benefits of practicing the *Surya Namaskara* include physically training the muscles, joints, ligaments, and skeletal system to improve your

posture, flexibility, and balance. Furthermore, these movements physiologically stimulate the entire system of your body. *Surya Namaskara* presents practitioners with the physical and mental integration to achieve flexibility and durability of the upper body. This is beneficial for the heart, as it stimulates the cardiovascular system, increases the oxygen levels in your blood, and strengthens the heart. *Surya Namaskara* is also good for the digestive and nervous systems. Lastly, it also stimulates the lymphatic system and promotes the health of the respiratory system or the lungs (Muliartini, 2018).

The movements of the *Surya Namaskara* have physical and spiritual effects on the human body which results in the body gaining balance. This is due to the movements in the *Surya Namaskara* being the combinations of multiple meaningful *asanas*. Every movement is a tribute and worship to the Sun God, for example. The human body, the sun, and the planets surrounding it share a strong bond because humans are a miniature of the universe. Inside the human body lies 72.000 veins with 114 overlapping points called chakras in a coordinated system that forms into the shape of a triangle. The sun's energy gives off stimuli to the chakras when a practitioner does *pranayama*. Vital energy or prana enters through the nose, and passes the cavities of the chest and into the stomach. From the belly down through the *muladhara cakra* or the sulbi point, then rise to synergize with all the chakras which are split into 5 *pranas (panca prana): prana, apana, udhana, samana, and vyana*. Physically, chakras are connected to the central nervous system and the endocrine glands of the body. These are the main conveyors and regulators of the organs in the human body which have a massive influence on a person's entire body which results in balance and harmony of the physical body (Saraswati, 2002).

By practicing the *Surya Namaskara* routinely, one may be able to build discipline within themselves, and their physical health will not be the only thing that receives the benefits of the practice itself. According to Rudiarta, this may act as the *tapah* that produces behavior and holiness based on the *karmas* of yoga. Every challenge faced head-on shall be dealt with if the person facing it is strong and faithful in their *tapa*, because in its barest essence, this yoga practice is done in order to bring a positive effect either spiritually or physically (Rudiarta, 2020).

Asanas Yoga, which is mostly done by the adult demographic, affects the physical aspects of a human's life, not only to balance the work of the glands but to also relax the muscles as well as the nervous system, stimulate blood circulation, and centering the mind. Whilst executing these movements, the body enters a state that is efficient and relaxed. Aside from that, the long breathing that goes along with the postures makes the blood absorb more oxygen. During the *asanas* exercise, energy is stored rather than used (Anandamitra, 1990b). Working with the blood circulation system by increasing the function of the liver without getting injured is no different than exercising to sculpt the body or doing gymnastics routines. As such, the result greatly improves blood circulation, accelerate the process of absorbing poisons, and give fresh oxygen and nutrients to the cells through the *parvatasana* postures. Physiologically, the human body is a system that is interconnected with one another.

When the movements of *Surya Namaskara* are practiced routinely and sustainably, all the chakras will work in a great system, and the body becomes conditioned in a way that is harmonized and balanced. As mentioned before, the human body is a miniature of the universe, which means as an alit universe that is related to the universe, what exists in the universe also exists in a human, and this by itself is the essence of unity. When a person practices the *Surya Namaskara* movements to worship the Sun God, said person has practically done *yajna* to God, and the universe shall answer to the person by giving their karma through eternal laws (*rita*) which work to stabilize the universe and its contents. From the explanation written prior, it can be understood that there are real

positive implications for the human body in maintaining physical and spiritual balance and even enhancing one's intelligence intellectually and spiritually (Saraswati, 2002).

The stretching movements and emphasis on *Surya Namaskara* alternate when working the digestive system, by fully massaging the cavities of the stomach. The *Bhujangasana* Posture is very effective in pressuring and stimulating the abdominal organs. *Surya Namaskara* controls the flow of the nerves by stimulating the internal organs, stretching the nerves, aligning the spine, and increasing the prana which activates the center of the brain. After the exercise is done, the body will be filled with energy as all the neurons are activated. Another benefit is maintaining balance in the body. Saraswati explained all parts of the human body have a center of gravity close to its functional side. Every center of gravity also affects the entire body's overall center. This center keeps changing according to the posture of the body. In any sort of position, either lying down, sitting, taking another position, or moving, the concept of balance is ever-present. Physical balance can only be maintained if gravity remains neutral, which is achievable through *Surya Namaskara* postures (Saraswati, 2002). The body's balance gets better because the area that touches the ground increases, and the center of gravity is lower. Balance is not static, it needs further adjustments related to posture fluctuations, movements, respiratory cycles, and levels of consciousness. The small part in the back of the brain is crucial in maintaining the body's balance. Here, the muscles responsible for hearing, vision, and sensory meet and unite to determine and maintain posture over and over again through feedback and reassignment when in a vegetative state, and the nervous system works even in an unconscious mode (Saraswati, 2002).

These are all shown, for example, in the *Hasta Uttanasana* posture. This posture shows movement pressuring the front of the solar plexus (*manipura chakra*) and the hips, the center of gravity moves between the two legs, and then the hands stretch out to touch the ears, the head bending back, and eyes stare upwards by flexing the front and pressing on the back of the neck. The effort to stay balanced becomes difficult in this position as moving the hands means that the center of gravity will move upwards. Tension occurs when one uses too much force in pushing out the chest, hence the movement being done with several steps. Meanwhile, arch forward while adjusting your position using the muscles of your upper arms and shoulders, lower arms, wrists, the muscle of your back which is the trapezius muscle and latissimus dorsi, and the front muscles which is the serratus anterior of the chest area (Saraswati, 2002). Krishna stated that *Asana* helps in stabilizing the condition of the body and make breathing smoother, which is crucial to practice the next steps. Proper breath control can reduce many modern-day illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, asthma, tuberculosis, and many more. According to the science of yoga, the respiratory system consists of four main parts, which include inhaling (*puraka*), holding in your breath after an inhale (*kumbhaka*), exhaling (*recaka*), and holding in your breath after an exhale (*sunyaka*). Whilst inhaling and exhaling, *pranendriya* (the soul's power which resides in the *anahata chakra*/heart chakra) is in an active state. Whilst holding our breath, *pranendriya* is in a contracted and passive state (Saraswati, 1996). The practiced routine of *Surya Namaskara* gives a holistic effect to all systems in the body, such as the respiratory system, through the *hasta uttanasana* posture. The *hasta uttanasana* posture in *Surya Namaskara* can fully expand the chest area. Saraswati explained as follows: *Surya Namaskara* as a means of therapy that explains how it prevents diseases and helps in aligning the physical functions, energy flows, and mental balance (Saraswati, 2002).

The benefits of yoga for physical and psychological wellness are what attracted the masses to practice it. Yoga is not only believed to have healing properties; it also has preventative properties. *Surya Namaskara* Yoga can form consciousness in a human

spiritually, as explained in Bhagavadgita II.48: Center your mind in yoga, do your job, o Arjuna; release the bonds within success and failure, for balance of the mind is what is referred to as yoga. From this Atman consciousness, may there be happiness as our souls are the very source of it (Artawan, 2021).

Conclusion

The philosophy of *Surya Namaskara* is as a yadnya that worships *Surya*, the Sun God worshipped as the holiest and highest entity in heaven as well as a source of energy that gives life to all living beings in the world. Through the practice of *Surya Namaskara*, the energy of the sun absorbed by the human body can stimulate the 7 main chakras inside, which affects the physiological system in which the body operates to its full capacity, towards physical and spiritual balance. The practice of *Surya Namaskara*, if done routinely, can have positive implications for the body's many systems, physical and mental wellness as well as achieving harmony in the body, which will improve intellectual and spiritual intelligence.

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