

## Surya Namaskar or 'Sun salutation': A way to happiness

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### Abstract

There will be no life on earth, without the sun. Surya Namaskar or 'Sun Salutation' is a very ancient technique of paying respect or expressing gratitude to the sun that is the source of all forms of life on the planet. Symbolically, the sun becomes our source of energy as well. About the history of this technique, it has been said by the ancient rishis of India that the different parts of the body are governed by different devas (divine impulses or divine light). The solar plexus (located behind the navel, which is the central point of the human body), also known as the second brain, is said to be connected to the sun. This is the main reason why the ancient rishis recommended the practice of Surya Namaskar, because the regular practice of this technique enhances the solar plexus, which increases one's creativity and intuitive abilities. It is also important to understand the science behind this very ancient technique, because a deeper understanding will bring forth the right outlook and approach towards this very sacred and powerful yogic technique. All our emotions get stored in the solar plexus, and it is also the point from where one's gut feelings arise. The size of the solar plexus is said to be like the size of a small gooseberry. However, for those who do yoga, it becomes much bigger - almost three to four times bigger than the normal size. The more expanded your solar plexus, the greater is your mental stability and your intuition. This could be your mantra to stay fit, happy and peaceful. A mantra whose effects last through the day.

**Keywords:** Surya Namaskar, gratitude, creativity, intuitive, mental stability, yogic technique

### Introduction

In vedic astrology, the Sun is the principal of light, love and life. It represents the soul, the body – whose will is behind our fate. It is also the mind or the mental principal on a lower level as reason, clarity and illumination. Surya Namaskar, which is known as “Sun Salutation” in English, is essentially about building a dimension within you where your physical cycles are in sync with the sun's cycles, which run at about twelve-and-a-quarter years.

### Aim of the study

The main aim of this study is to find the effect of Surya Namaskar on children who regularly practice it over those who do not practice it and also to find whether the practitioners are healthier and their stress dispositions than other children.

### Objectives of the study

To determine the effect of Surya Namaskar on overall health, respiration and endurance of children.

To compare the effect of Surya Namaskar on children who do Surya Namaskar and those who do not.

### Hypothesis

Surya Namaskar training would offer higher benefits in improving physical fitness and improve immunity and reduce stress levels in children. Children performing Surya Namaskar will be mentally and socially fit.

### Sample

500 children in the age group of 12-16 were selected, 250 were Surya Namaskar performers while 250 were non-performers. The children were assessed before and after the Surya

Namaskar programme. The students were taught the 12 different poses of Surya Namaskar.

### Methodology

In the present research to get the desired result the Adjustment Inventory for School Students by K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh (1971) was used.

### Salient features of Surya Namaskar

The Surya Namaskar, is a set of 12 powerful yoga asanas, providing a good cardiovascular exercise. These alternating backward and forward bending postures flex and stretch the spinal column through their maximum range giving a profound stretch to the whole body. The postures are a good way to keep the body in shape and the mind calm and healthy. The best time to do Surya Namaskar is early morning on an empty stomach. Each Sun Salutation round consists of two sets. These 12 yoga poses complete one set of Surya Namaskar. To complete the second half, you need to repeat the same sequence of postures, only moving the left leg instead of the right. Besides good health, Surya Namaskar provides an opportunity to express gratitude to the sun for sustaining life on this planet. It is not by accident but by intent that it has been structured with twelve postures or twelve asanas in it. If your system is in a certain level of vibrancy and readiness, and in a good state of receptivity, then naturally your cycle will be in sync with the solar cycle.

### 12 Poses of Surya Namaskar

#### 1) Pranamasana (Prayer pose) om mitrāya namaḥ

Stand at the edge of your mat, keep your feet together and balance your weight equally on both the feet. Expand your chest and relax your shoulders. As you breathe in, lift both arms up

from the sides and as you exhale, bring your palms together in front of the chest in prayer position.

**2) Hastauttanasana (Raised Arms pose) om ravaye namaḥ:** Breathe in, lift the arms up and back, keeping the biceps close to the ears. In this pose, the effort is to stretch the whole body up from the heels to the tips of the fingers

**3) Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose) om sūryāya namaḥ:** Breathe out; bend forward from the waist, keeping the spine erect. As you exhale completely, bring the hands down to the floor, beside the feet.

**4) Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose) om bhānave namaḥ:** Breathing in, push your right leg back, as far back as possible. Bring the right knee to the floor and look up.

**5) Dandasana (Stick pose) om khagāya namaḥ:** As you breathe in, take the left leg back and bring the whole body in a straight line.

**6) Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with Eight Parts or Points) om pūṣṭe namaḥ:** Bring your knees down to the floor gently and exhale. Take the hips back slightly, slide forward, rest your chest and chin on the floor. Raise your posterior a little bit. The two hands, two feet, two knees, chest and chin (eight parts of the body touch the floor).

**7) Bhujangasana (Cobra pose) om hiraṇya garbhāya namaḥ:** Slide forward and raise the chest up into the Cobra posture. Keep your elbows bent in this pose, the shoulders away from the ears. Look up.

**8) Parvatasana (Mountain pose) om marīcaye namaḥ:** Breathe out, lift the hips and the tail bone up, chest downwards in an 'inverted V' posture.

**9) Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose) om ādityāya namaḥ:** Breathe in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands, left knee down to the floor, press the hips down and look up.

**10) Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose) om savitre namaḥ:** Breathing out, bring the left foot forward. Keep the palms on the floor. You may bend the knees, if necessary.

**11) Hastauttanasana (Raised Arms pose) om arkāya namaḥ:** Breathe in, roll the spine up, hands go up and bend backwards a little bit, pushing the hips slightly outward.

**12) Tadasana om bhāskarāya namaḥ:** As you exhale, first straighten the body, and then bring the arms down. Relax in this position; observe the sensations in your body. Shavasana is practiced to take rest after Surya Namaskar. Add the attitude of gratitude to your Sun Salutation practice with sun salutation mantras. Through Surya Namaskar, you can honor not only the Sun but also the whole Nature. Surya Namaskara is performed facing in the direction of the rising (east) or setting (west) sun. According to the scriptures one who performs the Surya Namaskaras daily does not get poor in a thousand births. There are 5 ways in which breathing should be done during Surya Namaskar.

## Benefits of Surya Namaskar

**1. Improves Blood Circulation of the Body:** The lungs are constantly ventilated and the blood remains oxygenated, Due to the active process of inhalation and exhalation. It's a great way of detoxicating your body and getting rid of excess carbon dioxide and other toxic gases.

**2. Weight loss:** It is a great cardiovascular workout that stretches the abdominal muscles while simultaneously helping you reduce excess weight around your stomach, when done at a fast pace. It also results in toning your arms, abs and giving great flexibility to your spine. It also helps to strengthen your entire skeletal system including your ligaments.

**3. Promotes a Regular Menstrual Cycle:** If you're facing the problem of an irregular menstrual cycle, these asanas will help you suppress this irregularity and if practiced daily, it ensures an easy childbirth.

**4. Benefits your Skin and Hair:** by incorporating it in your routine it will keep you youthful and healthy even in old age. It improves your blood circulation that aids in bringing back the glow on your face; preventing the onset of wrinkles, making your skin look ageless and radiant. It also prevents hair loss and the ageing of hair.

## 5. Anti-anxiety and Calming Properties

Surya Namaskar helps to improve memory and the nervous system. It stabilizes the activity of the endocrine and thyroid glands, hence reducing anxiety and inducing the sensation of complete calmness and tranquility.

**6. Tones up the digestive system:** Due to the alternate stretching and compression of abdominal organs, it activates digestion and gets rid of constipation and dyspepsia.

7. Strengthens abdominal muscles.

8. Thoroughly ventilates the lungs, and oxygenates the blood.

9. Promotes sleep and calms anxiety.

10. Refreshes the skin. Prevents Skin disorders.

11. In women, stimulates the breasts to help firmness normally. Restores any lost elasticity, through stimulation of glands and the strengthening of pectoral muscles.

12. Prevents loss of hair and graying.

13. Helps reduce fat.

14. Reduces abnormal prominence of the Adam's apple.

15. Eliminates unpleasant smells from the body.

16. Lends grace and ease of movements to the body.

17. Revives and maintains the spirit of youthfulness.

18. Broadens chest and beautifies arms.

19. Makes the spine and waist flexible.

## Why School Children Should Do Surya Namaskar

A survey on the psychological perception on Surya Namaskar among school going children was carried out, it was found

Variable	Mean	S.D	S.P.P
Surya Namaskar	53.41	+ 1.13	53

The psychological perception on Surya Namaskar among school going children was found to be average.

### Benefits of Yoga Postures for School Going Children

**1. Pranamasana (Prayer pose):** This posture helps ease the nervous system and gives better balance to the body. This is the first step of the Surya Namaskar.

**2. Hastauttanasana (Raised arms pose):** Though it seems like a simple stretch, Hastauttanasana has multifold benefits. This pose helps strengthen the shoulder and also improves the level of oxygen in the blood. It helps relax the muscles in the neck and back; stretches the spinal cord and helps alleviate back-ache. It is also good for the abdominal muscles as they are stretched and even beneficial for the thyroid gland. This is the second and eleventh step of the Surya Namaskar.

**3. Hasta Padasana (Hand to foot pose):** This is an excellent pose to improve blood circulation to the head; and stimulate digestive, nervous and endocrine systems. It also helps stretch the spinal cord and muscles of the back and those in the back-side of legs. This is the third and tenth step of the Surya Namaskar.

**4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose):** Improved motion and flexibility of the hips and legs are the main benefits of this pose. This is the fourth and ninth step of the Surya Namaskar.

**5. Dandasana (Stick pose):** In this posture, the entire weight of the body is on the wrists and thus strengthens them. It also strengthens the arms and spine while also aiding in toning the abdomen. This is the fifth step of the Surya Namaskar.

**6. Ashtanga Namaskar (Salute with eight parts or points):** It is also referred as salutation with eight limbs, this posture works on eight limbs at once. It reduces tension and anxiety, improves the strength of muscles of the back and also improves the flexibility of the spine. This is the sixth step of the Surya Namaskar.

**7. Bhujangasana (Cobra pose):** Bhujangasana opens up the shoulder and neck, tones the abdomen, strengthens the back and shoulder, improves flexibility of the upper and middle back, improves blood circulation and reduces stress and fatigue.

This is the seventh step of the Surya Namaskar.

**8. Parvatasana (Mountain pose):** This pose stretches the muscles of the calves, hamstring, back and forearms. It also eliminates fatigue and improves memory and concentration. This is the eighth step of the Surya Namaskar.

**9. Tadasana (Mountain pose):** Tadasana helps improve awareness, blood circulation and digestion. It also increases energy and enthusiasm. This is the twelfth and final step of the Surya Namaskar.

**10. Dhanurasana (Bow pose):** This posture helps strengthen the back and abdominal muscles and also makes the back more flexible. It is also a great stress and fatigue buster.

**11. Vrikshasana (Tree pose):** Vrikshasana brings balance and equilibrium to the mind, enhances concentration and strengthens the hips, legs, back and arms.

**12. Marjariasana (Cat pose):** This posture helps relax the mind, improves blood circulation and digestion. It also strengthens the wrists and shoulders.

**13. Vajrasana (Adamantine pose):** Vajrasana is an excellent posture for digesting food and strengthening the nerves of legs and thighs.

**14. Veerbhadradasana (Warrior pose):** This posture increases stamina, improves balance in the body, and brings courage and peace. It also strengthens and tones the arms, legs and lower back.

**15. Shishuasana (Child pose):** Shishuasana is an effective posture for relaxing the back and calming down the nervous system.

These yoga postures are good for school children as it helps them in their psychological and physical growth. Most of these poses help strengthen various muscles and helps relieve stress, leading to a balanced mind and body. Yoga is not just a workout regime; it is our very nature which, can help our life blossom more.

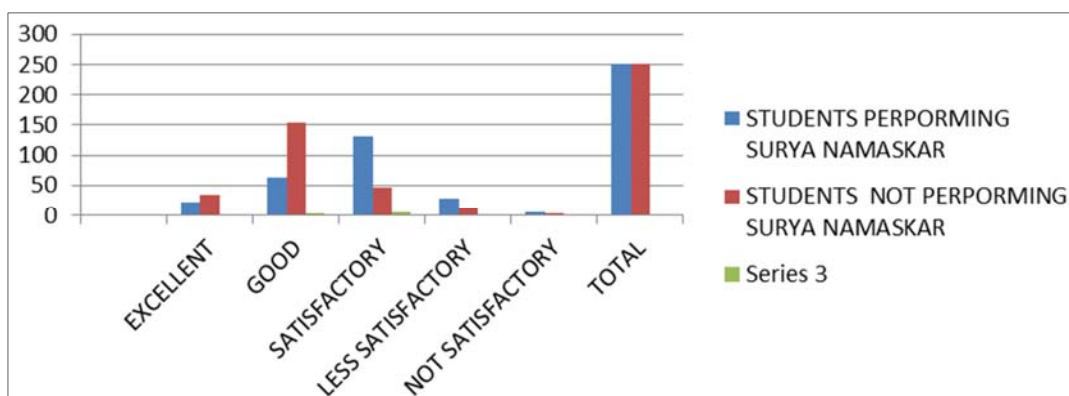
### Data Analysis

Table Showing Comparison between Children Performing Surya Namaskar & Non-Performers

Level of Social Adjustment	Students Performing Surya Namaskar		Students Not Performing Surya Namaskar		Z	P
	No. of Students	%	No. of Students	%		
Excellent	22	8.8	35	14	-1.8293	NS
Good	64	25.6	153	61.2	-8.0307	< 0.05
Satisfactory	132	52.8	46	18.4	8.0324	< 0.05
Less Satisfactory	27	10.8	12	4.8	2.5015	< 5.05
Not Satisfactory	5	2	4	1.6	0.3364	NS
Total	250	100	250	100		

From the above table it was observed that the social adjustment in children doing Surya Namaskar (< 0.05) was better than the students who did not perform Surya Namaskar

### Graphical representation of the above table



### Discussion

From the above findings it is observed that the level of social adjustment in children performing Surya Namaskar is higher than children not performing Surya Namaskar. It was also observed that the performing children were healthier, focused and had a positive attitude. They were cheerful and active throughout the day. It is clear that doing Surya Namaskar helps participants to reach the state of a quiet mind and level of stress was very less. It was observed that their digestion, breathing had improved.

### Conclusion & Recommendation

The present study shows that Surya Namaskar has positive physiological benefits. Children practicing this ancient art were found to be more sound and stable. It is recommended that Surya Namaskar should be introduced to school children to improve their physical fitness. It was observed that in many schools sports was not given a priority. All schools should begin their morning session with the practice of Surya Namaskar, as it is the basic of physical fitness. Many Principals ignore the positive effects of the art, but seeing the advantages Surya Namaskar should be added in the list of sports activities. Proper Physical education teacher should be appointed in every school. The Physical education teacher should not be engaged in activities other than sports. The Government should intervene and take necessary decisions, so that we get better sportspersons in the coming years.

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