

Sun Mantras

(Mantras used for Surya Namaskara)

All the external sounds which we perceive are created when two or more objects, such as the vocal cords, strike together and set up a vibration in the atmosphere. These vibrations then enter the ear, in turn setting up vibrations in the eardrum and its fluid. The nature of these vibrations is relayed to the brain where they are acknowledged and compared to the memory of all past sounds, and mental images are then created. In this way sound is continuously affecting our minds.

Mantras are combinations of sounds, which are designed to produce a specific effect on the mind and its functioning. The mantra can be spoken aloud, whispered or repeated mentally, but mental repetition is the superior method. When a sound is mentally repeated with awareness and concentration, the thought takes on the form of that sound, it becomes that sound, and the energy inherent in that sound manifests in the mind.

Mantras are formulated from letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, each letter having its own particular vibrational frequency and corresponding effect on the consciousness. These fifty two sounds, known as Devanagari were realized by the ancient rishis of the vedic period during deep states of meditation. These highly evolved souls were able to touch on the source of all sound energy, the shabda brahman, the supreme consciousness manifesting as sound.

The twelve sun mantras

Every year the sun passes through twelve different phases known as the zodiacal signs in western astrology, and 'rashis' in Hindu astrology. According to Hindu astrology, each rashi has specific attributes or moods, and in each of these twelve moods the sun is given a different name. These twelve names comprise the twelve sun mantras, which are to be mentally repeated in their respective order in conjunction with the twelve movements of surya namaskara.

These sun mantras are not merely names of the sun, but every sound syllable contained in them is the vehicle of a basic, eternal energy (shakti) represented by the sun itself. By repetition and concentration on these mantras, the whole mental structure will benefit and be uplifted.

Although these mantras do not require intellectual understanding, translation of their meaning is given below for those with an enquiring mind as well as for the more spiritually inclined who wish to use the mantras as a form of attunement with the source of spiritual illumination symbolized by the sun.

1. Om Mitraya Namaha
(Salutations to the friend of all)

The first position, pranamasana, embodies the attitude of reverence to the source of all life as we know it. The sun is regarded as the universal friend, endlessly giving light, heat and energy to support this and all the other planets. In the scriptures, Mitra is described as calling men to activity, sustaining earth and sky, and beholding all creatures without discrimination, just as the early morning sun signals the beginning of the day's activities, and sheds its light on all life.

2. Om Ravaye Namaha
(Salutations to the shining one)

Ravaye means one who shines and offers divine blessings upon all life. In the second position, hasta uttanasana, we are stretching our whole being upwards, towards the source of light, to receive these blessings.

3. Om Suryaya Namaha
(Salutations to he who induces activity)

Here the sun is in a very dynamic aspect as the deity, Surya. In ancient vedic mythology Surya was worshipped as the Lord of the Heavens, pictured crossing the sky in his fiery chariot, drawn by seven horses. This is a beautiful analogy and needs a correct interpretation. The seven horses actually represent the seven rays or emanations of the supreme consciousness, which manifest as the seven planes of existence, bhu (earthly, material), bhuvan (intermediate, astral), swar (subtle, heavenly), mahar (the abode of the devas), janah (the abode of divine souls who have transcended ego), tapah (the abode of enlightened siddhas) and satyam (the ultimate truth of reality). Surya symbolizes the supreme consciousness itself, in control of all these different planes of manifestation. Surya is regarded as the most concrete of the solar gods, one of the original vedic triad, his place being in the sky, while Agni (fire) is his representative on earth.

4. Om Bhanave Namaha

(Salutations to he who illumines)

The sun is the physical representation of the guru or teacher, who removes the darkness of our delusions, just as the darkness of the night is removed with every dawn. In the fourth position, ashwa sanchalanasana, we turn our face towards this illumination and pray for an end to the dark night of ignorance.

5. Om Khagaya Namaha

(Salutations to the one who moves through the sky)

It is the sun's daily movement through the sky which is the basis of our measurement of time, from the earliest use of a sun dial to the sophisticated devices used today. In parvatasana, we offer obeisance to the one by whom time is measured, and pray for progress in life.

6. Om Pushne Namaha

(Salutations to the giver of strength and nourishment)

The sun is the source of all strength. Like a father, he nourishes us with energy, light and life. We offer respects in ashtanga namaskara by touching all the eight corners of our body to the ground. In essence we are offering our whole being in the hope that he may bestow mental, physical and spiritual strength and nourishment upon us.

7. Om Hiranya Garbhaya Namaha

(Salutations to the golden cosmic self)

Hiranya Garbha is also known as the golden egg, resplendent as the sun, in which Brahma was born as the manifestation of Self-existence. Hiranya Garbha is the seed of causality, thus the whole universe is contained within Hiranya Garbha in the potential state prior to manifestation. In the same way, all life is potential in the sun, which represents the great cosmic principle. We offer respects to the sun in bhujangasana, the seventh position, praying for the awakening of creativity.

8. Om Marichaye Namaha

(Salutations to the rays of the sun)

Maricha is one of Brahma's sons, just as the rays of light are produced from the sun, but his name also means mirage. For our whole life, we seek after a true meaning or purpose, like the thirsty man seeks after water in a desert, but is fooled by mirages dancing on the horizon produced by the sun's rays.

In the eighth position, parvatasana, we pray for true illumination and discrimination in order to be able to distinguish between the real and the unreal.

9. Om Adityaya Namaha

(Salutations to the son of Aditi)

Aditi is one of the many names given to the cosmic mother, Mahashakti. She is the mother of all the gods, boundless and inexhaustible, the creative power from which all divisions of power proceed. The sun is one of her children, or manifestations. In the ninth position, ashwa sanchalanasana, we salute Aditi, the infinite cosmic mother.

10. Om Savitre Namaha

(Salutations to the stimulating power of the sun)

Savitre is known as the stimulator, the arouser, and is often associated with Surya who also represents the same posture, padahasthasana. Savitre is said to represent the sun before rising, stimulating and arousing man into waking activity, and Surya is said to represent the sun after sunrise, when activity begins. Therefore, in the tenth position, padahasthasana, we salute Savitre to obtain the vivifying power of the sun.

11. Om Arkaya Namaha

(Salutations to he who is fit to be praised)

Arka means energy. The sun is the source of most of the energy in the world we know. In the eleventh position, hasta utthanasana, we are offering respects to this source of life and energy.

12. Om Bhaskaraya Namaha

(Salutations to the one who leads to enlightenment)

In this final salutation we offer respects to the sun as a symbol of the great revealer of all transcendental and spiritual truths. He lights up the pathway leading to our ultimate goal of liberation. In the twelfth position, pranamasana, we pray that this pathway may be revealed to us.

Bija mantras

As an alternative to the twelve names of the sun, there is a series of bija mantras, or seed syllables. The bija mantras are evocative sounds that have no literal meaning in themselves, but set up very powerful vibrations of energy within the mind and body.

The bija mantras are:

1. *OM Hramm*
2. *Om Hrim*
3. *OM Hroom*
4. *Om Hraim*
5. *Om Hraum*
6. *Om Hraha*

The six bija mantras are repeated four times during one complete round of surya namaskara. Either the bija mantras or the sun mantras can be recited aloud or mentally depending mainly on inclination of the practitioner and the speed of practice. If the speed is very slow then the sun mantras can be combined with chakra awareness. If the speed is a little faster, then the bija mantras can be utilized in the same way. If the physical movements are done a little more quickly then either the mantras can be recited alone without chakra rotation, or awareness can be rotated through the chakras without mantra.

[Note: the above material is taken from the book “Surya Namaskara” from the Bihar School of Yoga]