

# Surya Namaskar

Salute to the Sun



# Introduction

Surya = Sun | Namaskar =  
bowing with reverence

A sequence of 12  
postures, linked with the  
breath

Traditionally practiced at  
dawn, facing the rising sun





# Origins

- The history of Surya Namaskar as a sequence is debated – some say it dates back to the Vedas, others that it is more recent circa 1920s
- Revered throughout history, the sun has been worshipped and celebrated throughout the ages and across many traditions and religions
- The Vedas contain reference to Surya, the Sun God
- Now a key element of Ashtanga Yoga & Vinyasa Flow styles

Image ref: [World History Encyclopedia](#) – the Sun God Surya



# Effects & Benefits

- Builds strength and stamina / releases tension
- Energising...yet can also be soothing – depending on your approach and intention
- Coordinates breath with movement: naturally deepens and regulates the breath
- Connects the energy of the outer sun with our 'inner sun'. Uplifting.
- A complete Sadhana (practice)... but, which spinal movements are missing?
- Can incorporate mantra or affirmations
- Pratyahara: draws the senses inwards, away from external distractions
- Dharana: concentration and focused awareness
- Subtle body: balances solar (pingala) and lunar (ida) energies (Day 6)
- Highly adaptable: physical needs, energy levels

# Breath, Movement & Stillness in Asana

## COORDINATION OF BREATHING & MOVEMENT:

- Movement warms & prepares muscles
- Releases tension
- Lubricates joints
- Supports healthy fascial network
- Helps develop proprioception
- Uniting breath, body, mind
- Opportunity to find stillness in movement (on/off the mat)

*“dynamic movement allows the body to open more slowly, gently and deeply so that the ultimate movement becomes more assimilated into the body”* Mark Stephens

# Breath, Movement & Stillness in Asana

## STILLNESS – USE OF BREATH WHEN STAYING IN POSTURES:

- Builds strength and stamina (depending on the asana)
- From the physical to the subtle / outer to inner world
- Embody the pose
- Develops concentration, focus and patience
- Connect to the deep wisdom within the body
- Yielding / discovering the art of letting go
- Soothes the nervous system
- Stills the mind

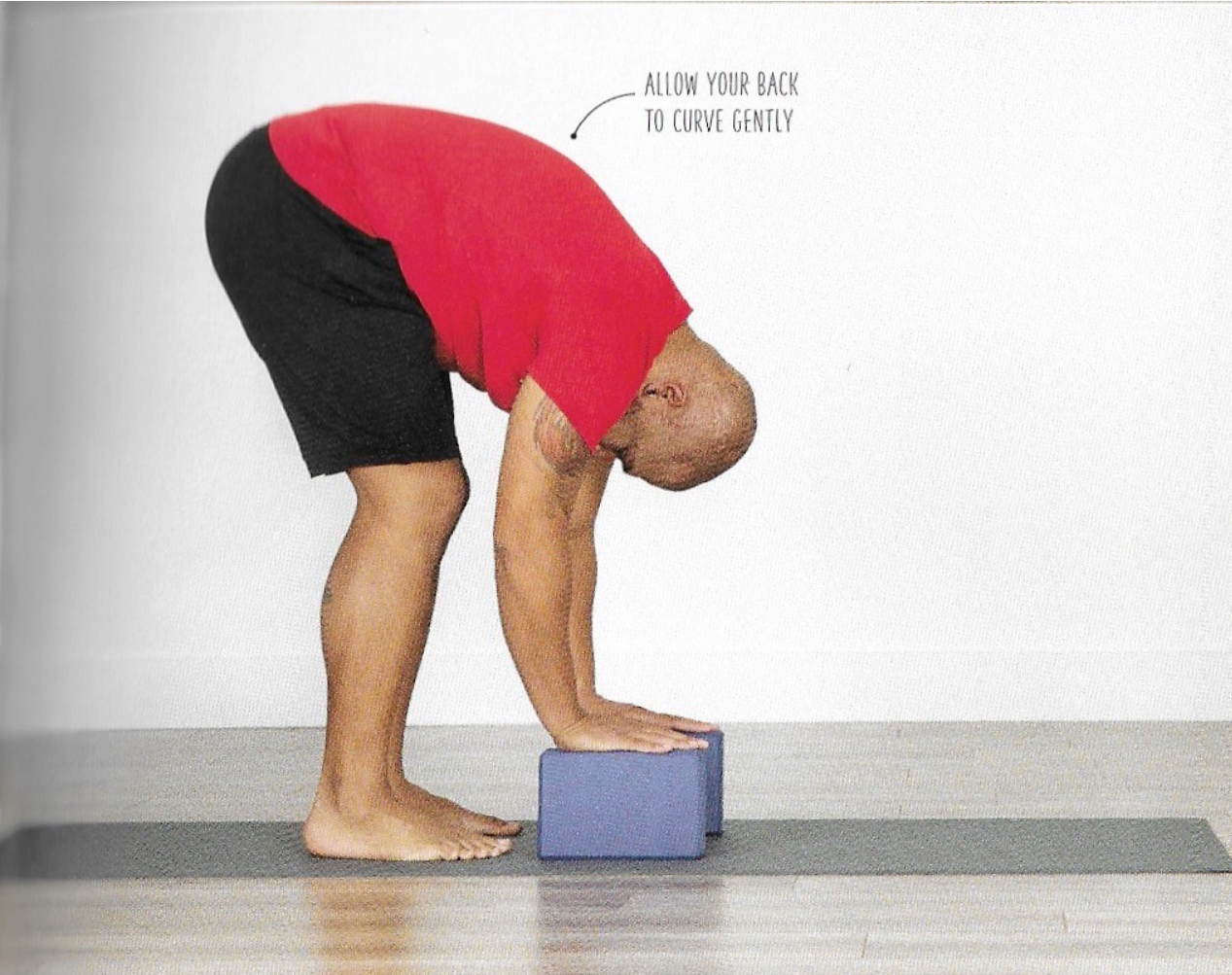


# Mudra

- Anjali Mudra (aka Atmanjali, Namaskar, Hridaya)
- Balances energies on left and right of the body
- Calming, centering
- Connects to heart energy
- Draws the mind inwards



# How can we make Surya Namaskar more accessible?



- Use variations for the individual postures which present the greatest challenge e.g. swan instead of downward dog
- Use of props for support: wall, chair, bricks, wrist wedges
- Ardha (half) surya namaskar (avoids weight bearing)
- Supine version
- Seated version
- Visualisation
- Can you think of any others?

Image credit: Yoga for Everyone, Dianne Bondy



# Ahimsa: applying non-harm in asana

**The following may require Surya Namaskar to be practiced with caution, modification or omission...**

- See handouts for backbends, forward bends and inversions for list of cautions for the component postures. These include:
- Unmanaged high blood pressure
- Glaucoma
- Slipped/herniated disc or other back injury
- Abdominal hernia / recent abdominal surgery
- Postural hypotension / conditions affecting balance

Also...

- Wrist, elbow, shoulder, foot & ankle conditions require modification
- Stepping or jumping through may require alternative options

# Key Principles of Practice

- Refresh yourself with principles of practice for forward bends, backbends
- Establish firm, steady foundations
- Light, spacious, lifted
- Allow the breath to lead the movement
- Breath: is the breath steady and even? (stirha / sukham)
- Incorporate ujjayi breath to help with focus
- Notice if the breath becomes laboured – this may be a nudge from the body to slow the pace or check that you're not over-breathing
- Pause between sides – take time to notice and return to tadasana
- Drishti: single-pointed gaze

# Preparing & Counterpose

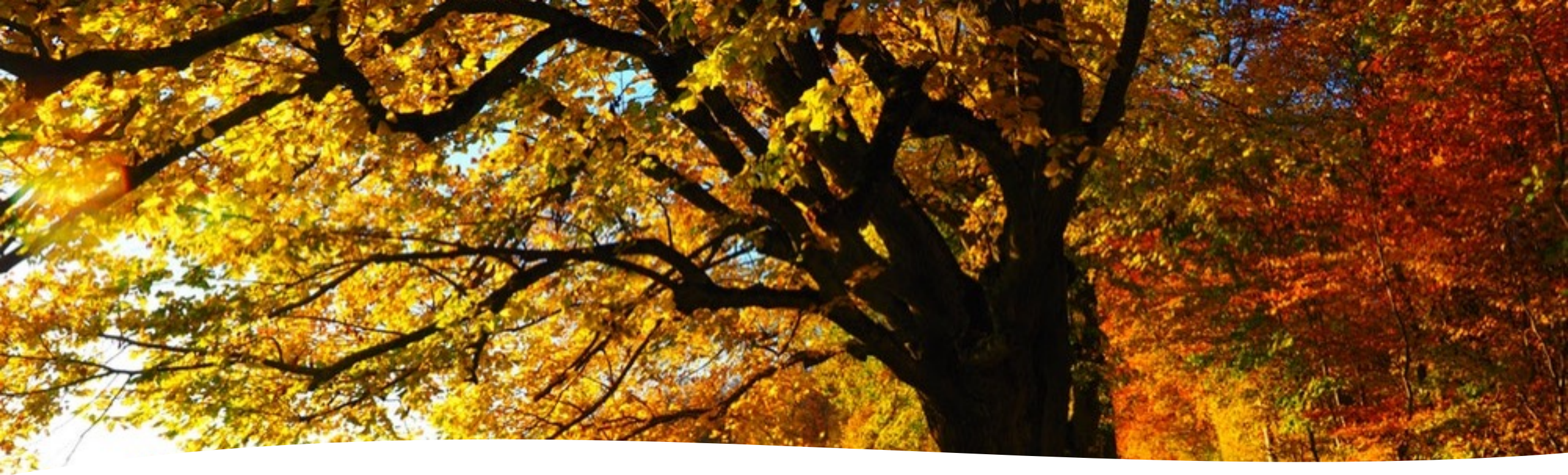
## Preparing the body:

- Subtle breath awareness
- Bring awareness to the feet and grounding
- Lengthen the spine
- Release hamstrings
- Pawanmuktasana (joint/energy freeing series)
- Mobilise the spine (e.g. cat)
- Start subtle and gradually expand as the body warms up

## Counterposes:

- Neutral alignment of spine e.g. *tadasana* (mountain pose)
- Soothing, quieting postures
- *Savasana*
- You may also wish to incorporate gentle twists and side bends to ensure that the spine is taken through its full range of movement





Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

# Autumn Equinox

Midpoint between Summer & Winter Solstices

Perfect balance night & day, light & dark

As the external light fades, connect to your inner light

# Yoga Sutras...

Patanjali tells us that we can experience clarity, calm and knowledge of our true nature...

*“by concentrating on the supreme, ever blissful light within”*

*Sutra 1.36*

# **Group Work....**

**In your groups create a version of Surya Namaskar:**

- Seated on a chair**
- Supine (lying on your back on the floor)**
- Incorporating a twist and a side bend**