

YOGATM

MAGAZINE

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PAUSE, BREATHE, REALIGN

**KUNDALINI
ACTIVATION**

**TANTRIC
ARTS, SACRED
TEXTS**

SPIRITUAL
TEACHING OF
Ram Das

SPIRITUAL

'Master On'

**Long COVID
Yoga** &

**TRAUMA-
INFORMED YOGA**



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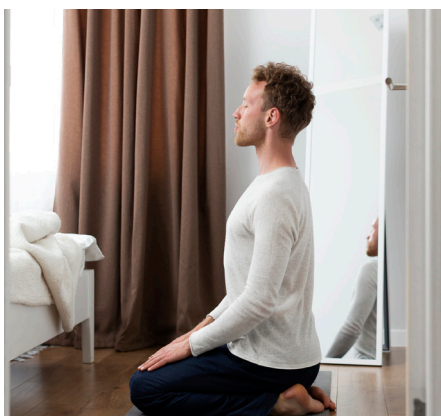
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HONOURING THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

Through

YOGA

Words: Sunnah Rose, BWY Course Tutor
In the Photos: Sunnah Rose

The summer solstice is a time to honour the earth and give thanks for the sun's blessings of warmth, light and life. As the sun reaches its highest point in the sky, it reminds us of the abundance and energy that sustains us.

In Pantanjali's Yoga Sutras (3.26), it is written: "One learns from the perfect discipline of the sun and solar system." The sun becomes a symbol of vitality and a teacher, inviting us to observe the harmony and rhythm of the natural world and reflect that balance within ourselves.

Recognised worldwide and rooted in traditional pagan customs, midsummer, which falls on or around 21 June in the northern hemisphere, marks a celebration of the sun's power and its life-giving force.

On a spiritual level, it's a time of reflection and renewal when we reconnect with our inner light. At the heart of yoga is this very intention: to uncover and radiate that light from within. The energy of the solstice can help us align with our true selves, nourish the soul and cultivate clear, heartfelt intentions.

It's also a natural point in the year to pause – to acknowledge all we have learnt and experienced so far and set

meaningful intentions for the months ahead. This can inspire us to expand our practice, open our bodies and hearts and embrace the qualities of kindness and self-compassion that support us both on and off the mat.

Perhaps it's no surprise that the summer solstice is also the date chosen for the International Day of Yoga. Around the world, people come together to practise yoga in celebration of unity, peace and connection to nature. So how can we honour the solstice in our practice? Here are six simple ways.

Sun Salutations

What better way to celebrate the sun than through Surya Namaskar?

Also known as the Sun Salute, this flowing sequence is more than just a physical practice – it's a moving meditation that honours the sun as the source of life. Traditionally performed at sunrise, Surya Namaskar is both grounding and uplifting, helping students connect to their inner vitality. The 12 postures are often seen as symbolic of the 12 months of the year, making each round a rhythmic expression of gratitude and reverence.

This sequence is central to many dynamic yoga styles and can be adapted to suit all levels – from kneeling versions to stronger forms like Ashtanga Surya Namaskar A and B. It generates inner heat, builds strength and creates a feeling of vitality.

Simple Sun Salutation Sequence

- *Tadasana* (Mountain pose) – Stand tall with palms together at the heart centre in Anjali Mudra
- *Samastih* (Upward Sun Salute) – Inhale, lift arms to the sky, opening your heart to the sun
- *Uttanasana* (Forward fold) – Exhale, fold forwards hinging from the hips
- *Uttita Ashwa Sanchalanasana* (Lunge) - Step right foot back into a low lunge
- *Phalakasana* (Plank) -Step left foot back to meet the right foot. Hold here for 3 breaths to ignite the fire in your belly.
- *Ashtangasana* or eight-limbed pose – Lower to the ground via knees-chest-chin
- *Bhujangasana* (Cobra) – Inhale, lift the chest, using the muscles in your back
- *Adho Mukha Sarvangasana* (Downward dog) – Exhale, lift your hips high in an inverted 'V' shape. Hold for 5 breaths.



- *Uttita Ashwa Sanchalanasana* (Lunge) - step right foot forward into a low lunge
- *Uttanasana* (Forward fold)- Step left foot forward to meet right in a forward fold
- *Ashtangasana Samastihi* (Upward Sun Salute) – Inhale, lift arms to the sky, opening the heart to the sun
- *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose) – Exhale, return hands to the heart in Anjali mudra

Repeat this sequence, this time stepping back with the left leg. In keeping with the symbolism of 12, I would suggest practicing this 12 times, 6 on each side.

Stoke your inner fire (Agni)

In yoga, Agni refers to the digestive and transformational fire that fuels both body and mind. To awaken it, try core strengthening postures such as:

Navasana

1. Sit with knees bent, hugging them lightly.
2. Lean upper body back slightly. Lift lower legs and pause when parallel to the floor.
3. Extend arms forwards so they align with the legs.
4. For a stronger version, straighten the legs into a V- shape.



Variation – Ardha Navasana (Half Boat Pose)

To create more tapas or inner heat, lower your back and legs towards the floor, keeping your legs straight without collapsing onto your upper back. Keep arms extended forwards and gaze towards your toes.

Plant a seed – set a solstice intention

Solstice is a great moment to pause and plant seeds – figuratively and literally. This could be part of your Sun Salutation sequence, a quiet ritual during meditation or a journaling session. Try writing down what you're

“At the heart of yoga is this very intention: to uncover and radiate that light from within.”

grateful for this year and what you hope to welcome in the months ahead.

Heart opening poses for expansion

Practising backbends can help us energetically expand, creating more space around the heart centre. This aligns perfectly with the outward, expressive nature of the summer solstice. These postures help strengthen the back body, improve posture, stimulate circulation and boost lung capacity. This often leads to a sense of lightness and openness.

Try gentle or more energising options such as Camel Pose (*Ustrasana*), Locus pose (*Salambhasana*), Bow pose (*Dhanurasana*) or Upward Bow/Wheel (*Urdhva Dhanurasana*).



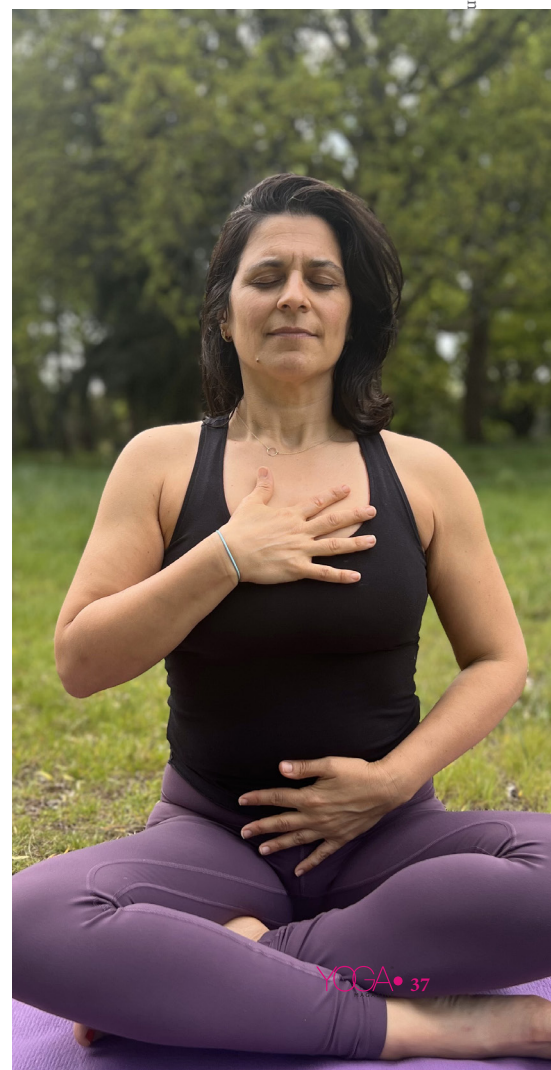
Camel Pose

- Begin in high kneeling with knees hip-width apart. Toes can be tucked if preferred.
- Keep your chin towards your chest, bringing your hands to the lower back.
- Gently guide your hips forward and lift the chest, allowing your front body to open.
- Reach your hands back to find your heels – if they don't easily reach, then keep them at your lower back.
- Gently drop the head back without straining the neck. You should feel a slight stretch in the front of the neck.
- Breathe smoothly, allowing your front body to expand.
- To release, slowly rise and return to high kneeling.
- Settle in a comfortable posture – either kneeling or seated. Let your breath resettle and your body find its sense of ease and lightness.

Cool and calm: Sitkari breath

This is a cooling breath technique – ideal for hot summer days or for calming an overheated mind. I often teach it in class on the rare occasion that we have a UK heatwave, but it's also a wonderfully accessible practice for all students. It's particularly helpful during pregnancy or menopause, when the body naturally runs warmer.

- Sit in a comfortable seated position with a tall spine.
- Part the lips slightly, keeping the teeth gently together.
- Inhale through the teeth, sucking in cool air.
- Close the lips and relax the mouth as you exhale through the nose.
- Repeat for up to 12 breaths.



Meditation – Cultivating Loving Kindness

Finally, the solstice is a chance to turn inward with compassion. Remember – when we honour ourselves, we bring the right energy into the world.

This simple meditation, inspired by teacher Jack Kornfield and his poem ‘May you be held in compassion’, begins with love for someone close to you and gently moves toward self-compassion. In this traditional practice, we combine a repeated inner intention with gentle visualisation and the evocation of the feeling of compassion.

Find a comfortable seat (such as cross-legged in *Sukhasana* or kneeling in *Virasana*) or lie down if that feels best. Begin by settling into your body. Breathe softly. Feel your heartbeat – the life within you. Notice how you treasure and protect yourself, especially in the face of sorrows.

Now, bring to mind someone close to you whom you love dearly. Picture them clearly. Feel your natural care for them, how you hold them in your heart. Then, let yourself be aware of their struggles and suffering. Let your heart open with the wish to comfort them, to share in their pain and to meet it with compassion. This is the natural response of the heart. Silently recite the following phrases:

- *May you be held in compassion.*
- *May your pain and sorrow be eased.*
- *May your heart be at peace.*

Continue reciting while holding this person in your heart. Feel free to adapt the words to match your heartfelt intention. After a few minutes, imagine this person turning toward you with loving awareness. They acknowledge the burden of sorrows you carry and,

with tenderness, offer the same wishes for you:

- *May you be held in compassion.*
- *May your pain and sorrow be eased.*
- *May you be at peace.*
- *Take in these words. Let them soften and touch your heart.*
- *Now, in your own time, turn the compassion inward.*
- *May I be held in compassion.*
- *May my pain and sorrow be eased.*
- *May I be at peace.*

You can repeat this practice, including all your loved ones. Hold the image of them in your heart and offer them the same compassionate phrases. In time, you might choose to include your neighbours, your wider community and even those you find difficult.

Remember, it is natural for this to feel challenging. We are not trying to “fix” the pain of the world, only to meet it with an open, compassionate heart. Relax. Breathe. Let your breath and your heart rest naturally, as a centre of compassion in the world.

References

- The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (3.26), translated by Swami Satchidananda, Integral Yoga Publications, 2012
- Kornfield, J. (2017), Meditation on Compassion, <https://jackkornfield.com/meditation-on-compassion/>



Sunnah Rose is a British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) Diploma Course and Foundation Course Tutor based in North London. She teaches a variety of classes including general yoga, pregnancy and postnatal yoga. Alongside her weekly classes, Sunnah also leads yoga weekends and holidays both in the UK and abroad. Find out more about Sunnah here: www.stretchingpeople.co.uk. Her next BWY Teacher Training Certificate begins in October 2025, with an introductory day on Sunday 13 July. To book: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/416>

Join the BWY Summer Solstice Festival

To honour the sun and 60 years of the British Wheel of Yoga, we are hosting an online celebration on Friday 20 June. Join a great line-up of teachers to inspire your practice. Find out more here: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/events/874>.



A woman with curly hair, wearing a white tank top and patterned leggings, is smiling while being assisted in a yoga pose by another person. The background is a bright, indoor setting. The image is split into two main color sections: a yellow-orange section on the left and a teal section on the right, separated by a diagonal line.

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