

Surya

- The sun is one of the five deities worshipped by the Smarta tradition. These five are Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, Ganesh and Surya.
- Worship of the sun goes back to ancient times. The ancestors of Rama came in the *Surya vamsha* (dynasty of the sun) and the Sun was their worshipable deity (note: Krishna, on the other hand, appeared in the dynasty of the Moon). Worship of the Sun is also mentioned in the Rig Veda.
- The sun is often considered a form of Vishnu called 'Surya-Narayana'.
- The sun (by the name Savitri) is worshipped through the chanting of the Gayatri mantra
- One of the most important Hatha yoga postures (more precisely, a series of postures), is the Surya namaskara, the 'salutation to the sun'.
- In some temples, particularly in South India, the nine *grahas* (planets) are venerated, and the sun, placed in the centre, is often considered most important.
- The Sun is often considered to have three wives; Ushna (dawn), Padmini (the lotus, which only opens with the sunshine) and Chaya (shadow). Some consider Sanjina (another name for Ganga) to also be his wife.
- The sun is depicted as riding a glowing chariot pulled by seven white horses. He has a reddish complexion and is often shown with three eyes and four arms.
- Some sun temples are very old. Especially famous is the temple at Konarka in Orissa. The building itself is in the form of a chariot with 24 wheels, each ten feet in diameter.
- The sun is often worshipped for health and to cure disease. He is considered particularly important for vigour and keen eyesight.
- Surya is considered one of the principal witnesses of all actions, by which humans accrue their good and bad karma
- Surya is worshipped during the South Indian festival of Pongal, which falls on the same day as the more-widely celebrated festival of Makara Sankranti.
- Further references: Teachers' Book: pages 50, 53, 100, 137
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