

## ADF COOR Vedic Spring Equinox Ritual -- Surya

Introduction: The home of the Vedic peoples in South and Central Asia is significantly farther south than most of the other cultures honored in ADF. Therefore, by the time of the Spring Equinox, Winter was already well over. The time around Imbolc is usually when these cultures celebrate the beginning of Spring. For the Vedic people, the solstices, especially the winter and summer ones, were used primarily as markers for their sacred calendar. Because of this sun-centered approach, I have chosen Surya, the Sun God as the deity for the Spring Equinox and based the high point of this ritual on the Soura (Solar) Sukta of the Rig Veda (I.50).

The Ritual

### **1) Preparation**

- Bathe. Dress. Layout altar items and tools.
- Meditate.
- Light the candle and incense. Ring bell.

### **2) Purification**

- Pick up water with flower and sprinkle over head then in a circle around you and the altar while chanting the traditional vedic purification verse:

Om apavitrah pavitra vaa  
sarvaa vasthaM gato'pi vaa  
yah smaret pundariika-aksham  
sah bhaaya-abhyantarah shuchih

Om - whether pure or impure  
in all places and paths  
those who remember the infinite  
they are purified inside and out.

- chant Shanti invocation from Brihad-aryanyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda( 5.1.1):

purnam adah, purnam idam, purnaat purnam udachyate;

purnasya purnam aadaaya purnam evavasisyate

That (origin of creation) is full. This (creation) is full. From fullness is fullness brought forth. Taking fullness from fullness, fullness still remains.

Om Shanti Shanti Shantih

Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

-Outdweller invocation:

To the strong Rudra bring we these our songs of praise, to him the Lord of Heros with the matted locks... (offer incense)

O Rudra, harm us not -- neither great or small .... Be gracious unto us, O God, and bless us, and then guarantee us doubly-strong protection. (offer fire)

imá rudráya taváse kapardíne kṣayád vīrāya prá bharāmahe matíḥ ....

má naḥ mahántam utá má naḥ arbhakám ....

mṛḡá ca no ádhi ca brūhi devádhā ca naḥ sárma yacha dvibárhāḥ

(Rig Veda 1 :114: 1a, 7a & 10c)

(offer water)

### 3) Honoring the Earth Mother

11a: O Mother Earth! Be auspicious to us with thy snow-clad mountains and hills and woodlands!

giráyas te párvatā himávantó 'raṇyaṃ te pṛthivi syonám astu

(Atharva Veda 12.1.11a)

Offer rice.

#### **\*\*\*4) Statement of Purpose:**

“I have come here at the Spring Equinox to offer worship to Lord Surya, the god of the Sun. He shines with the effulgence of the infinite spirit. May he cause the inner light to dawn within us all. May he illuminate our lives and create balance within and without!

Om! O Earth, Sky, Heaven!  
I meditate upon the divine brilliance  
Of the exalted Lord of the Sun  
May he enlighten our minds!

Om bhur bhuvah suvah  
tat savitur vareṇyam  
bhargo devasya dhīmahi  
dhiyo yó naḥ pracodayāt  
(Rig Veda 3.62.10)

#### **4.5) Two Powers**

- Take at least a few minutes to entrance the Two Powers. Then say,  
May mighty Heaven and Earth, most worthy of honor, be present here with light  
and gleaming splendour

mahii dyaavaaprithivii iha jyesthe rucaa bhavataaM shucayadbhir arkaih  
(Rig Veda 4.65.1a)  
(offer flowers, incense, light and water)

#### **5) Recreating the triad cosmos - Invoke cosmology - earth, air, heavens**

-"Under my feet the earth stretches, surrounding me, broad and boundless,  
holding me.

Offer rice.

-About my body the air envelopes me, mists and cloud, lightning and wind, the abode of celestial waters enfolds me.

Offer incense and water and flowers.

-High above me, luminous space, sun and stars and moon, form the heavens. Where the gods and spirits rest, drawing me ever up and onward."

Offer light.

Chant: From earth's high ridge to middle air I mounted, and from mid-air ascended up to heaven. From the height of heaven's reach I came into the world of light.

ṛṣṭhāt ṛṭhivā́ ahám antárikṣam áruham antárikṣād dívam áruham  
divó nákasya ṛṣṭhāt svàr jyótir agám ahám  
(Atharva Veda 4.14.3)

## 6) Opening the Gates

Call Gatekeeper

While chanting, wave ghee lamp in circles around the altar:

agnim ile purohitaM yajñasya devam ritvijam hotaaraM ratnadhaaatamam  
I worship Agni, the priest, the god of the ritual, the vibrant cosmic order (rtam vijam), the giver of delight. (Rg Veda 1.1.1)

Open Gates – make gate opening gesture – say “Swaha!”

## 7) Inviting the Kindred - Offerings to each as called

Ancestors - Offering: water

May the Pitris protect me at this invocation of the devas!

avantu maa pitaro devahuutau

(Rig Veda 6.52.4d)

Nature Spirits (Gandharva)<sup>1</sup>- Offering: incense

gandharva itthaa padamasya rakshati paati devaanaaM janimaanyad bhutah

Gandharva verily protects the dwelling place; Wondrously guarding the generations of the Gods.

(Rig Veda IX.83.4a)

Gods - Offering: ghee lamp or candle

vishve devaasa aa gata shrunutaa ma imaM havam

O Devas - Hear this my invocation; come hither, O Universal Gods

(Rig Veda 6.52.7a)

## \*\*\*8) Key Offerings - Call and offer to the Deity of the Occasion - Surya

Offering – wave light while chanting

1 His bright rays bear him up aloft, the God who knoweth all that lives,  
Surya, that all may look on him.

2 The constellations pass away, like thieves, together with their beams,  
Before the all-beholding Sun

3 His herald rays are seen afar refulgent o'er the world of men,  
Like flames of fire that burn and blaze.

4 Swift and all beautiful art thou, O Surya, maker of the light,  
Illuming all the radiant realm.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Gandharva has many meanings – it can refer to a particular class of nature spirits, to nature spirits generally, or even to the god Agni who is rather beyond and above most nature spirits – I use it here in the generic sense

(Rig Veda 1.50.1-4)

úd u tyám jātávedasaṃ devám vahanti ketávaḥ  
dṛśé víśvāya sūryam  
ápa tyé táyávo yathā nákṣatrā yanty aktúbhiḥ  
sūrāya víśvácaḥsase  
ádṛśram asya ketávo ví raśmáyo jánāṃ ánu  
bhrájanto agnáyo yathā  
taráṇir víśvádarśato jyotiṣkṛd asi sūrya  
víśvam á bhāsi rocanám

At end offer incense, water and flowers

(Note: the full Soura Suktam or Rig Vedic Hymn to Surya is at the end of this document.)

## 9) Prayer of Sacrifice

Offer ghee lamp to all areas of altar

When thou art praised with words and decked with brightness, accept this song,  
the singer's worship.

yác chasyáse dyúbhir aktó vácobhis táj juṣasva jaritúr ghóṣi mánma

(Rig Veda 6.5.6)

## 10) Sacrifice Offerings to the Three Kindred

Mighty Kindred! O Pitris, Gandharvas and Devas! I offer this rite in your honor and ask that all mistakes or incompleteness be overlooked. I ask that this rite be received in the same love and honor in which it is given. Kindreds accept my sacrifice!"

Offer Water to the Pitris

Fathers who sit on sacred grass, come, help us:  
these offerings have we made for you; accept them.  
bārhiṣadaḥ pitara ūty àrvāg imá vo havyá cakṛmā juṣádhvam  
tá á gatávasā sám̐tamenáthā naḥ sám̐ yór arapó dadhāta  
Rig Veda10:15:4

Offer incense to the Nature Spirits  
Accept in friendliness my hymn, and prosper him who offers gifts.  
práti sūktāni haryatam bhávataṃ dāsúṣe máyaḥ  
(Rig Veda 1.93.1c)

Offer light to the Devas  
With Holy Thoughts and with munificence may all Gods, knowing the Law  
immortal, Manu's Holy Ones, Boon-givers, favourers, finders of light, and Heaven,  
with gracious love accept my songs, my prayer, my hymn.  
vísve deváḥ sahá dhībhīḥ púraṃdhyā mánor yájatrā amṛtā ṛtajñāḥ  
rātiśáco abhiśácaḥ svarvídaḥ svàr gíro bráhma sūktáṃ juṣerata  
(Rig Veda 10.65.14)  
(bow)

## 11) Omen

Om! O Earth, Sky, Heaven!  
I meditate upon the divine brilliance  
Of the exalted Lord of the Sun  
May he enlighten our minds!

Om bhur bhuvah suvah  
tat savitur vareṇyaṃ  
bhargo devasya dhīmahi  
dhiyo yó naḥ pracodayāt  
(Rig Veda 3.62.10)

Make me your friend: show us some little mercy.

mitráṃ kṛṇudhvam khálu ṃṛlāta naḥ  
(RV Hymn to dice: 10:34:14)

Cast Vedic dice three times and interpret the omen

### **12) Calling for the Blessing - Call for a gift in return for your gift**

O Indra! Give us a share in the divine light and waters, purity, and reputation.  
sá tvám na indra súr̥ye só apsv ànāgāstvā á bhaja jīvaśamsé  
(1:104:6 )

Blessings - Water.

Calling -

"I request now that the spirits give to us their blessings. Offer to us as we offer to you, a gift for a gift. Honored Ones give us the Waters!"

### **13) Hallowing the Blessing - Acknowledge that the blessings are in the cup**

Ye Visvedevas, who protect, reward, and cherish men, approach Your worshipper's drink-offering.

ómāsaś carṣaṇīdhṛto víśve devāsa á gata dāśvámso dāśúṣaḥ sutám  
(Rig Veda 1:3:7)

-"Behold the Waters of Life!" (drink)

### **14) Affirmation of the Blessing**

O Lord of disciplined senses I drink of the twofold draught, the bright celestial mingled with the earthly.



ádhā niyutva ubháyasya naḥ piba súcim̐ sómaḥ gávāśiram  
(Rig Veda 8:90:10)

- Drink! :)

## **15) Workings (if any)**

### **\*\*\*16) Thanking the Beings – IN REVERSE ORDER**

"I have honored the gods, given sacrifice, received blessings in return, and now it is my turn again, this time to be grateful.

Visvadevas and Lord Indra, I thank you! Shri Indraaya Namah!

Lord Savitri, I thank you! Shri Savitreh Namah!

Shri Surya, I thank you! Shri Suryaaya Namah!

Shining Visvadevas, Nature Spirits and Pitris, I thank you!

Shri Visvedevbhyah Namah, Shri Gandharvebhyah Namah, Shri Pitribhyah Namah!

O Heaven and Earth, I thank you! Shri Dyaavaa-Prithiviibhyaam Namah!

Lord Rudra for your protection, I thank you! Shri Rudraaya Namah!

### **17) Closing the Gates -**

"Agni through you the gods have received my offerings. I thank you also, and ask now for you to shut the ways between the worlds here. Agni let the gates be closed!"

Shri Agnaye Namah!

(offer fire and water)

### **18) Thanking the Earth Mother**

"Prthivi, I thank you and once again honor your beauty and bounty."

Shri Prithivyai Namah!

### **19) Closing the Rite –**

Om ! Bhadram Karnebhih: Shrinuyaama Devaah:  
Bhadram Pashyemaakshabhir Yajathraah: |  
Sthirairangai Stushtuvaagum Sastanoobhih:  
Yashema Devahitham Yadhaayuh: |  
Svasti Na Indro Vriddha shravaah:  
Svasti Nah Pooshaa Vishva Vedaah: |  
Svasti Nastaarkshyo Arishtanemih:  
Svasthi No Brihaspatir Dhadhaathu ||  
Om ! Shaanti:, Shaanti:, Shaanti:. Om !

O' Ye Gods ! May we hear with our ears only what is auspicious.  
May we see with our eyes only what is auspicious.  
May we, who sing your praise,  
Live our allotted span of life in perfect health and vigor.  
May Indra who is praised by the devotees,  
vouchsafe to us safety and well being.  
May the all known Pushan grant us safety.  
May Taarkshya (the Sun) and Brihaspati grant us well being.  
-from Maandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda

**"The rite is ended."**

Bow

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The Soura Suktam of Rig Veda – the Hymn to the Sun. First Mandala, Hymn 50

1 His bright rays bear him up aloft, the God who knoweth all that lives,  
Surya, that all may look on him.  
2 The constellations pass away, like thieves, together with their beams,  
Before the all-beholding Sun  
3 His herald rays are seen afar refulgent o'er the world of men,  
Like flames of fire that burn and blaze.  
4 Swift and all beautiful art thou, O Surya, maker of the light,  
Illuming all the radiant realm.  
5 Thou goest to the hosts of Gods, thou comest hither to mankind,  
Hither all light to be beheld.  
6 With that same eye of thine wherewith thou lookest brilliant Varuna,

Upon the busy race of men,  
7 Traversing sky and wide mid-air, thou metest with thy beams our days,  
Sun, seeing all things that have birth.  
8 Seven Bay Steeds harnessed to thy car bear thee, O thou farseeing One,  
God, Surya, with the radiant hair.  
9 Surya hath yoked the pure bright Seven, the daughters of the car; with these,  
His own dear team, he goeth forth.  
10 Looking upon the loftier light above the darkness we have come  
To Surya, God among the Gods, the light that is most excellent.  
11 Rising this day, O rich in friends, ascending to the loftier heaven,  
Surya remove my heart's disease, take from me this my yellow hue.  
12 To parrots and to starlings let us give away my yellowness,  
Or this my yellowness let us transfer to Haritala trees.  
13 With all his conquering vigour this Aditya hath gone up on high,  
Giving my foe into mine hand: let me not be my foeman's prey.  
(Griffith translation ... for now)

úd u tyám jātávedasam devám vahanti ketávah /  
drśé víśvāya sūryam //

ápa tyé táyávo yathā náksatrā yanty aktúbhih /  
sūrāya víśvacakṣase //

ádrśram asya ketávo ví raśmáyo jánāṃ ánu /  
bhrájanto agnáyo yathā //

taránir víśvadarśato jyotiṣkṛd asi sūrya /  
víśvam á bhāsi rocanám //

pratyán devánām víśah pratyánñ úd eṣi mánuṣān /  
pratyán víśvam svàr drśé //

yénā pāvaka cákṣasā bhuranyántam jánāṃ ánu /  
tvám varuṇa páśyasi //

ví dyám eṣi rájas pṛthv áhā mímāno aktúbhih /  
páśyañ jánmāni sūrya //

saptá tvā haríto ráthe váhanti deva sūrya /  
śociśkeśam vicakṣana //

áyukta saptá śundhyúvah sūro ráthasya napyàh /  
tábhira yāti sváyuktibhih //

úd vayám támasas pári jyótiḥ páśyanta úttaram /  
devám devatrā sūryam áganma jyótiḥ uttamám //

udyánn adyá mitramaha āróhann úttarām dívam /  
hṛdrogám máma sūrya harimānam ca nāśaya //

śúkeṣu me harimānam ropanākāsu dadhmasi /  
átho hāridravéṣu me harimānam ní dadhmasi //

úd agād ayám ādityó víśvena sáhasā sahá /  
dviśántam máhyam randháyan mó ahám dviśaté radham //