

Surya

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Surya is the Sanskrit name of the Sun and a Vedic solar deity. In Theosophical interpretation the name opens a range of related meanings: the visible source of daylight, the spiritual principle of illumination, a ray within cosmic order and a symbol of the human being undergoing purification. These meanings illuminate one another when their levels remain clear. The sun that marks our morning can awaken gratitude, while the spiritual teaching asks a further question: how may the light we receive become understanding and service?

H.P. Blavatsky describes *Surya* as a reflection of the Central Spiritual Sun and as the prototype of solar bodies. She gives the Vedic title *Loka-Chakshuh*, the Eye of the World. Within this metaphysical account, visible radiance points toward an inward source of life and intelligence. The distinction between source and reflection is fundamental. Physical light makes forms visible; spiritual illumination concerns the apprehension of meaning. The comparison offers a way into the doctrine without making the two kinds of light interchangeable.

The imagery of *Surya*'s chariot develops unity within differentiation. Blavatsky speaks of seven horses and of one horse with seven heads, relating the former to the planetary field and the latter to a common origin in the One Cosmic Element. The horses belong to sacred symbolism, and their meaning depends upon the cosmological account in which they appear. They invite the mind to consider how distinct powers can participate in one life. Number serves contemplation here by directing attention from separate appearances toward their underlying relation.

In "Spectator and Participant," Professor Iyer places *Surya* beside *Agni* and *Vayu*: spiritual sun, spiritual fire and spiritual air. These are the primeval Vedic triune rays in the *Tetraktys*, the sacred Four. The account connects them with *Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati*, the luminous cosmic egg, and with the primordial seven, the *Ah-Hi*. Professor Iyer expressly cautions against emphasizing separation among these powers. Their enumeration makes distinctions within a whole; its value would be lost if the reader turned the names into isolated entities with unrelated functions.

He brings that unity into the rhythm of meditation at dawn, sunset, midday and midnight. The invitation is to sustain gratitude through the changing hours. A sacred invocation may gather attention, or a well-assimilated idea may quietly inform whatever comes before the mind. Recollection then becomes available amid ordinary duties. The morning can renew an intention, the day's work can test it, and the evening can offer an occasion to understand how it was expressed. The solar image provides continuity without requiring constant inward commentary.

The *Gayatri* gives this contemplation a particularly clear ethical direction. In “Dateless and Deathless,” Professor Iyer quotes William Q. Judge's rendering, which joins the *Gayatri* with an invocation from the *Isha Upanishad*. It asks that the face of the True Sun, hidden by a vase of golden light, be unveiled so that truth may be seen and duty fulfilled. The request joins insight with responsibility. Illumination is sought for what it makes possible in life, and the journey concerns the whole being rather than a passing experience of brightness.

Even the golden vase is a veil. Professor Iyer identifies it with *Hiranyagarbha*, the cosmic sphere of light around the secret spiritual Sun. This gives the student a subtle lesson in discernment. Something beautiful and luminous may disclose a deeper reality while remaining an expression of it. The mind need not despise the expression, but it should remain open to what exceeds it. In study, the same attitude allows a fruitful symbol to deepen understanding without becoming an object of possessiveness or premature certainty.

The allegory of *Visvakarman* cutting down *Surya*'s rays adds the theme of initiation. In Blavatsky's account, *Yoga-siddha*, spiritual consciousness, cannot endure her husband's excessive effulgence. The divine artificer places the Sun upon his lathe and reduces its brightness; *Surya* becomes *Vikarttana*, shorn of his rays. Blavatsky interprets the story through the trials of the candidate who must master fiery passions before entering a renewed spiritual life. The language of crucifixion in her exposition belongs to that initiatory symbolism of overcoming the lower nature.

Its human application concerns the quality of our strength. Enthusiasm can encourage another person, yet the same intensity can overwhelm a listener or leave no room for a different pace. Knowledge can clarify a difficulty, yet impatience can make the explanation painful to receive. The solar allegory suggests a refinement of power through self-mastery. We learn to make what we offer appropriate to the person and circumstance before us. A quieter explanation may convey more light because it gives understanding room to awaken.

This is especially evident when someone is learning a task we already know well. We may see the answer immediately and rush to supply it. A more attentive response begins by discovering where the learner's understanding has reached. We can explain one step, invite a question and allow time for practice. Such patience does not diminish the knowledge being shared. It brings skill into relation with care. As a practical analogy, the rays become serviceable when their expression is fitted to the life they are meant to nourish.

The spiritual Sun also expresses a universal source of illumination. Professor Iyer's discussion of the *Gayatri* culminates in benefit for the entire human family and all living beings. Human Solidarity is therefore intrinsic to this solar contemplation. An intention to understand cannot be separated from concern for those whose lives our actions touch. We may begin by asking

whose needs remain outside the circle of our attention: an overlooked colleague, a neighbour carrying a burden, or people affected by a decision whose consequences fall beyond our immediate view.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception turns this question into sustained responsibility. Sunlight offers an image of giving that does not consult personal preference. Human action still requires discrimination, limits and attention to particular needs. Within those conditions, the image can help us examine where goodwill has become selective. Can firmness remain free of contempt? Can assistance preserve another person's dignity? Can a useful contribution continue when recognition is unlikely? These questions translate universal intention into the detailed work of relationship.

Professor Iyer's "Nirvana and Samsara" directs contemplation toward the Invisible Sun and the inward significance of beauty, truth and meaning. The movement is into silence and depth. It is an invitation to look beyond the surface of an impressive appearance, including our own appearance of competence. When thought grows quiet enough to acknowledge what it does not yet understand, *Manas* can become more receptive to *Buddhi*. Spiritual illumination then concerns a clearer apprehension of relations and a less self-centred use of intelligence.

Attention can be renewed in the middle of an ordinary task. We can pause long enough to recover its purpose, notice who depends upon it and give the next action the care that distraction had displaced.

The visible sun's daily return may remind us of this discipline, but the spiritual principle is not confined to daylight. It can inform an evening act of care, a difficult conversation or the unobserved keeping of a promise. *Surya* gathers strength, clarity and gratitude around the task of responsible illumination. The student receives the symbol most fully by allowing it to change the manner of giving. What has warmed and clarified one life can pass onward as patience, truthful understanding and a steadier presence in the lives of others.

Glossary

Absolute — The unconditioned Reality, beyond the limitations and distinctions of manifested existence.

Adept — A person who has attained profound spiritual knowledge and mastery through discipline; the cited passages emphasize wisdom joined to service.

Agni — Fire; the Vedic divine figure associated with sacred fire and creative spiritual energy.

Ah-hi — Spiritual intelligences that contain and reflect universal ideation in the cited cosmology.

Artificer — A maker or shaper; in the solar allegory, a designation of *Visvakarman* as the divine architect.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhist means pertaining to it.

Christos — The anointed or spiritually illumined one; in the cited initiatory allegory, the candidate reborn into a purified life.

Differentiation — The emergence of distinct forms, functions or levels from a less divided condition.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

Gayatri — A sacred Vedic invocation seeking illumination; also a name of its metrical form. The essay emphasizes its relation to understanding and duty.

Hierophantic — Pertaining to the revelation or interpretation of sacred mysteries; Hierophant-Initiator names the initiating teacher in the solar allegory.

Hiranyagarbha — The golden germ, egg or sphere; in the cited passages, the luminous veil or matrix associated with the emergence of cosmic life.

Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati — The cosmic egg considered in relation to the creative Lord of beings; a combined symbol in the quoted cosmology.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Ideation — The activity of thought or the expression of ideal patterns; Divine Ideation concerns cosmic intelligence in the cited teaching.

Ineffable — Beyond adequate expression in words.

Initiation — An inward passage into spiritual knowledge through a corresponding transformation and preparation of the knower.

Isha Upanishad — A Hindu sacred philosophical text whose solar invocation is joined with the *Gayatri* in William Q. Judge's rendering quoted by Professor Iyer.

Loka-Chakshuh — Eye of the World; a title of *Surya* in the quoted passage from *The Secret Doctrine*.

Mahamaya — The great power of manifestation and illusion, differentiated through creative potencies.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manifestation — The expression of differentiated existence from a subtler or unmanifest condition.

Mantram — A sacred formula or invocation; a spelling related to mantra in the quoted sources.

Nirvana — Spiritual liberation beyond the limitations of ordinary conditioned consciousness; distinguished from the temporary Devachanic state.

Noetic — Pertaining to the higher mind and spiritual cognition, distinguished from merely personal or reactive mental activity.

Om / Aum — The sacred syllable of invocation and consecration; *Om* emphasizes its unity and *Aum* its trilateral expression in the cited interpretations.

One Life — The universal unity of life underlying and expressed through the many lives and forms of Nature.

Orientalist — A historical term for a scholar of Asian languages and traditions; used in Blavatsky's account of translations.

Prana — The life-principle or vitality active in embodied existence; pranic means pertaining to this current.

Psychic — Pertaining to subtle or psychological modes of experience; its level and relation to spiritual intelligence depend upon context.

Sarva Madha — General sacrifice, in the spelling and explanation given by the quoted *Studies in Occultism* passage.

Spiritual Sun — The inward source of spiritual illumination contemplated beyond the visible solar orb in Theosophical symbolism.

Surya — The Sun in Vedic tradition; in the Theosophical interpretation, a symbol of spiritual illumination whose visible expression reflects a deeper source.

Takshaka — Wood cutter or carpenter in the cited solar allegory; a designation of the artificer who reduces *Surya's* excessive brightness.

Tetraktys — The Pythagorean sacred four, represented by ten points in four rows; *Tetractys* is another spelling used in Theosophical interpretation.

Trimurti — A threefold divine expression; the cited contexts use *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, or the triad of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya*.

Upanishads — Hindu sacred philosophical texts concerned with the Self, spiritual reality and liberation; *Upanishad* is the singular.

Vayu — The wind deity; in the cited cosmic triad, spiritual air.

Vedas — Ancient Indian sacred texts associated with spiritual knowledge and revelation; Vedic means pertaining to them.

Vikarttana — Shorn of his rays; a designation of *Surya* after the symbolic reduction of his brightness.

Visvakarman — The all-forming divine artificer in Vedic and Puranic symbolism; *Visvakarma* is another form, and the cited allegory associates this figure with the initiator.

Yoga-siddha — Spiritual consciousness in Blavatsky's interpretation of the solar allegory; named there as the wife of *Surya* and daughter of *Visvakarman*.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 100–101.

“Himself only a reflection of the Central Spiritual Sun, *Surya* is the prototype of all those bodies that evolved after him. In the *Vedas* he is called *Loka-Chakshuh*, ‘the Eye of the World’ (our planetary world), and he is one of the three chief deities.”

Meditation thought: Let the visible source of warmth suggest a deeper inquiry into illumination. What enables the mind to recognize a truth, and how might that recognition become a more responsible action?

2. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 101.

“Thus he is depicted as drawn by seven horses, and by one horse with seven heads; the former referring to his seven planets, the latter to their one common origin from the One Cosmic Element. This ‘One Element’ is called figuratively ‘Fire.’”

Meditation thought: The seven horses retain a common origin within the symbol. Consider how distinct capacities in your own life can serve one worthy purpose without losing their particular gifts.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 316.

“From that One and the egg, the inseparable and androgyne *Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati*, emanate the Three-in-One, the *Tetraktys* or sacred Four. The original triune rays in the *Tetraktys* are the primeval Vedic *Trimurti* of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* – spiritual fire, spiritual air and spiritual sun. From these emanate the other seven. Together they constitute either the seven or the ten, depending upon how one counts the original Three-in-One. However reckoned, one must not emphasize any separation between *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* or between these three and the primordial seven, the *Ah-Hi*.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate the triad through its underlying unity. How might energy, understanding and illumination support one another in a task that currently feels divided or incomplete?

4. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 316.

“It is best to think of them as one while meditating at dawn, at sunset, at midday and midnight. Whether one employs a sacred mantram or invocation to draw one's entire attention to the great Mystery, or whether one has the idea of it so impacted in the consciousness that it may be linked to anything before the mind's eye, this is the path of those who are serious about living a life of constant gratitude. Once a taste for it is developed, it is pure bliss. It is better to spend time in gratitude than in brooding over the shadow.”

Meditation thought: Choose one ordinary moment in which gratitude can become attentive rather than habitual. Let appreciation make you more available to the life before you and less absorbed in a grievance.

5. W.Q. Judge, quoted by R.N. Iyer — “Dateless and Deathless”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 108.

“AUM. Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat. OM.”

Meditation thought: The prayer joins seeing truth with doing duty. Hold those aims together, and ask what responsibility would become unavoidable if one cherished insight were taken fully to heart.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Dateless and Deathless”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 108.

“The vase of golden light is the *Hiranyagarbha*, the cosmic sphere of Light around the secret, sacred Sun which is the true source of all enlightenment, all ideation, and all divine and supra-mental energy. It is only reflected at a very limited level in the physical sun, which is the source of what people call physical life or pranic vitality, and also what they call light.”

Meditation thought: An illuminating appearance can invite thought beyond itself. Honour the beauty of the veil while allowing it to awaken inquiry into the deeper source it only partially reveals.

7. Commentary, quoted by H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 541.

“The Sun is the heart of the Solar World (System) and its brain is hidden behind the (visible) Sun. From thence, sensation is radiated into every nerve-centre of the great body, and the waves of the life-essence flow into each artery and vein ... The planets are its limbs and pulses.”

Meditation thought: The image of a living solar body suggests interdependence. Notice one relationship through which nourishment reaches you, and consider how your own participation might return care to the whole.

8. R.N. Iyer — “The Gayatri Invocation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 414.

“If one partakes of daily meditation, experiencing a sense of Duration, then one can repeatedly transcend the boundaries of time and its compression into secondary causes and effects. One can let go every psychic preoccupation with external relations in visible space, and develop a deeper, noetic sense of what it is to live inwardly. Daily, replenished by the cool stream of insight that flows from the Spiritual Sun, one may actualize the *Gayatri* mantram with a deep resolve that will endure without wavering, releasing a mighty current of unacknowledged but incalculable benefit for the entire human family and indeed for all living beings.”

Meditation thought: A quiet practice can be dedicated beyond personal comfort. Let the resolve formed in stillness accompany one useful act whose benefit need not be noticed or attributed to you.

9. H.P. Blavatsky — “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels, note 38”, *Studies in Occultism*, PDF pp. 150–151.

“The Orientalists and Theologians are invited to read over and study the allegory of *Visvakarman*, the ‘Omnificent,’ the Vedic God, the architect of the world, who sacrificed himself to himself or the world, after having offered up all worlds, which are himself, in a ‘*Sarva Madha*’ (general sacrifice) — and ponder over it. In the Puranic allegory, his daughter *Yoga-siddha* ‘Spiritual consciousness,’ the wife of *Surya*, the Sun, complains to him of the too great effulgence of her husband; and *Visvakarma*, in his character of *Takshaka*, ‘wood cutter and

carpenter,' placing the Sun upon his lathe cuts away a part of his brightness. *Surya* looks, after this, crowned with dark thorns instead of rays, and becomes *Vikarttana* ('shorn of his rays')."

Meditation thought: Read the cutting away of brightness as an initiatory symbol. What excess in your own manner obscures a more useful light, and what patient refinement would make understanding easier to share?

10. H.P. Blavatsky — "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels, note 38", *Studies in Occultism*, PDF p. 151.

"All these names are terms which were used by the candidates when going through the trials of Initiation. The Hierophant-Initiator personated *Visvakarman*; the father, and the general artificer of the gods (the adepts on earth), and the candidate — *Surya*, the Sun, who had to kill all his fiery passions and wear the crown of thorns while crucifying his body before he could rise and be re-born into a new life as the glorified 'Light of the World' — *Christos*."

Meditation thought: The passage portrays renewal through mastery of passion. Let its symbolism turn attention toward a generous purpose that can guide desire without harshness toward the body entrusted to your care.

11. R.N. Iyer — "Nirvana and Samsara", *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, pp. 416–417.

"Therefore the wise recognize that there is nothing more beautiful in the *Mahamaya*, in the realm of the unreal where relativity supervenes, than the supreme veil that shrouds the majesty of the Absolute. Not just the rare astronomer, but many a humble sea captain and many an ordinary person has had the privilege of seeing the nimbus of the solar corona during an eclipse of the sun. Having seen something so overwhelmingly beautiful, they understand that everything seen and known about the physical sun is but a dim, paltry veil upon the glory of the Invisible Sun."

Meditation thought: Beauty can awaken reverence for what exceeds perception. Receive a moment of wonder without demanding that it explain everything, and let it make ordinary attention more grateful and exact.

12. R.N. Iyer — “Nirvana and Samsara”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 417.

“The light of the Invisible Sun lends whatever beauty, truth and meaning there is to human life and to the lives of all beings, so powerful and potent is it. Though one can see and sense this even on the physical plane, most people fail to think about it. Instead of drenching in the external, coarse, visible sunlight, which the wise find suffocating, one should sit in the shade as birds and animals do, and as human beings do when they remain simple and full of love for the soil on which they walk. Then when closing one's eyes, whether at mid-day or at night after one has fulfilled one's duties of the day, one should turn homeward within and think of the ineffable, invisible glory hidden behind the veil of the visible, the mask of manifestation, ever celebrating the One without a second, the One and only existence.”

Meditation thought: After the day's duties, allow attention to return inward. What remains luminous when the wish to impress or possess grows quiet and the shared source of life is remembered?