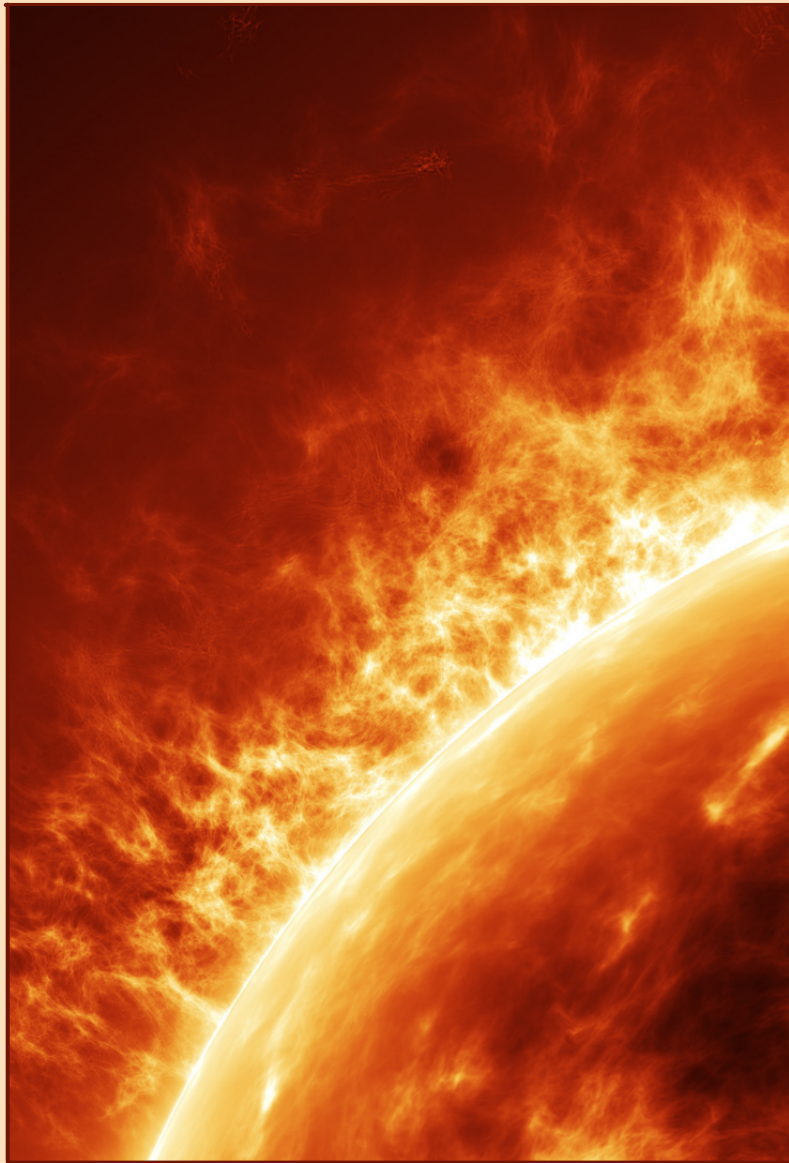


ORIGINAL INTIMACY: SOUL PILGRIMAGE
TO FIVE AUSPICIOUS HEALING SHRINES

RESOURCES AND PRACTICES

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Fire

LIVE WITH THE SOUL-FIRE OF CLARITY
AND DETERMINATION

The Elements of Nature

“To see the world in a grain of sand” and the cosmos mirrored in our human body, mind, and soul is both a profound and practical method for contemplation and meditative insight. With tools from the Indian philosophical systems of Yoga and Samkhya, we can explore our intimate connection with all creation and discover how science and spirituality meet to reveal the inter-being, or interconnection, of all life.



The five elements of nature— earth, water, fire, air, and space (or ether) are the basic building blocks of all creation. Everything in nature, including our bodies and our minds, is formed of the elements in gross or subtle expression. Focused contemplation of any element can be a doorway into the heart of reality, an experiential introduction to the original intimacy of oneness with all life.

Meditative contemplation of the elements has many benefits, it:

- Calms the mind and prepares us for superconscious meditation
- Reconnects us to the original intimacy of the individual and the cosmos as imbued with *both* consciousness and matter
- Provides the key to experiencing nature as sacred—inseparable from the divine
- Brings relaxation and healing renewal by connecting body, mind, spirit, and nature

The five elements, on subtle and gross levels, are always combined with one another in varying degrees, which comprises the physical manifestation. As we explore each element, we naturally encounter the others—that's the dance of creation, which is moving and changing all of the time.

Each element has a corresponding symbology to indicate its predominant qualities—a color, geometric shape, mantra, and associated chakra center. There is also a connection to a physical sense organ and capacity for perception that element makes possible.

The colors and mantras associated with the elements are found in the classical yoga text from the Hindu tradition, the Gheranda Samhita. Similar teachings are also found in Buddhist and Jain scriptures. Insights into related sense organs and perceptions are found in the Samkhya and Yoga philosophical systems. Each physical element is associated with an organ of perception, an organ of action, and a subtle capacity. These tools are offered to open our awareness to subtle levels of perception, breaking down the barrier of materialization and objectification.



The experiential insight born of element contemplation strengthens our capacity to honor nature in a sacred way. We see the way things are. We realize the virtue of reciprocity and grow beyond our greed. We wake up spiritually and connect heaven and earth.

This is our dharma.

Yogacharya Ellen Grace O'Brian

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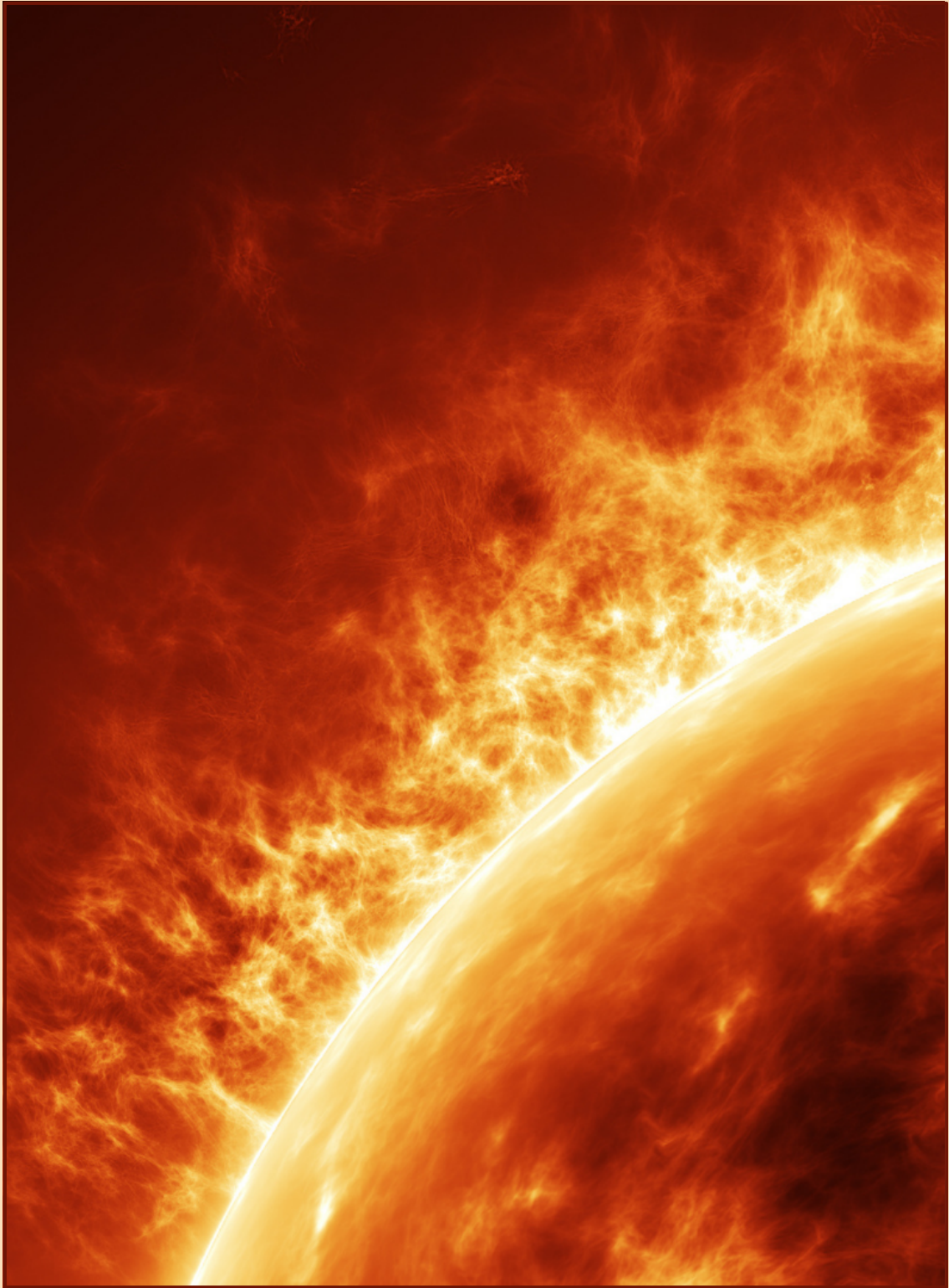
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Fire Element

COLOR

Red

SHAPE

Triangle

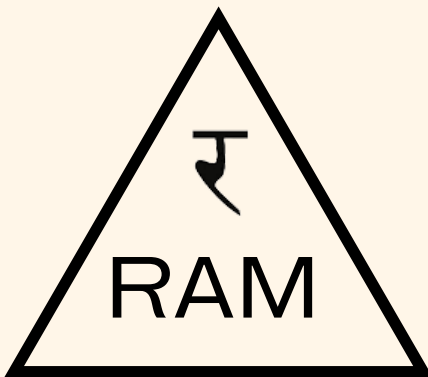
SENSE

Sight

SOUND

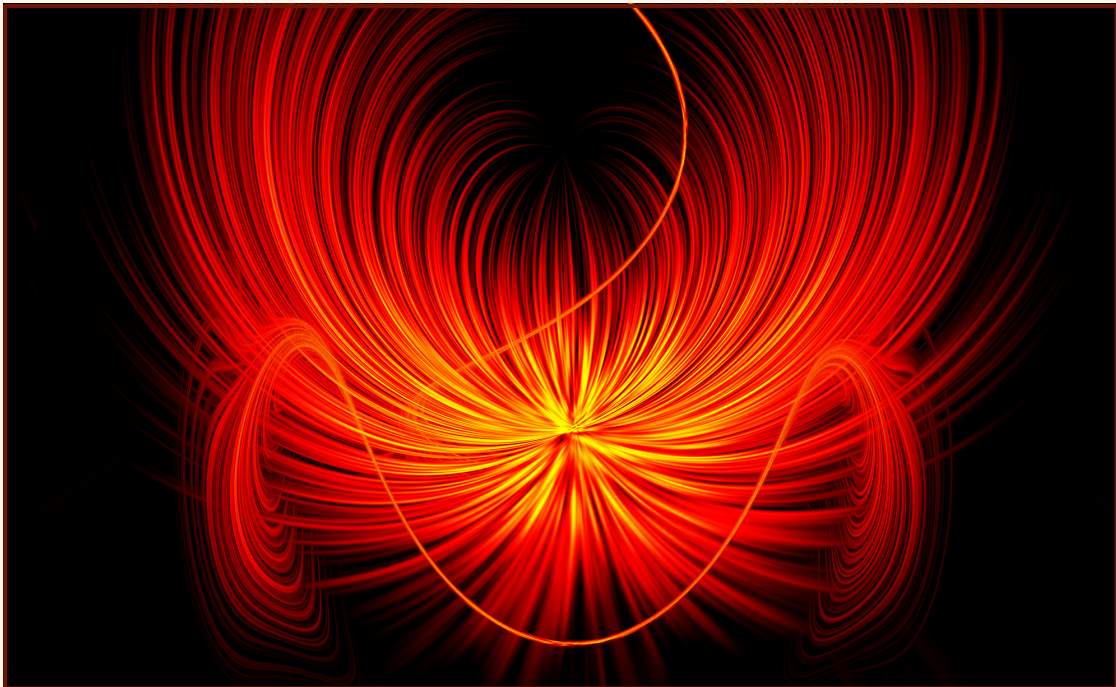
Bija Mantra: RAM

The elements are progressively lighter and subtler as they move from the density of earth to the transparency of air and space. Fire element holds a middle position between earth and water, air and ether, or space. Thus, it is appropriate that one of the primary qualities we associate with fire is transformation. Along with its heat and ability to radically transform what it touches, fire gives us the light that makes it possible to perceive form. The fire element is associated with the eyes and our capacity to see. The action capacity connected to fire is locomotion, and its organ, the feet. Life on our planet depends on the sun—its heat that warms the earth and its light that makes food possible and allows us to see.



Contemplation Rituals

FIRE



Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt—blessed vision!—
a blazing sun shone
here in my heart.

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt—blessed vision!—
That it was God I had here in my heart. —Antonio Machado

The sun shines not on us, but in us. —John Muir

Fire Element Rituals

These rituals are ways to facilitate greater awareness and intimacy with the fire element, to realize its presence both within and around us. No longer some “thing” outside of us, the fire element becomes a living reality.

Connect the fire element with your daily meditation practice. It is common in many religious and spiritual traditions to kindle light to begin a service or a time of prayer and meditation. Place a candle or oil lamp on your meditation altar. When you light it each day before you meditate, contemplate fire as an element—what it represents spiritually as a light of awareness or Spirit, and what it makes possible physically—physical sight and intuitional insight

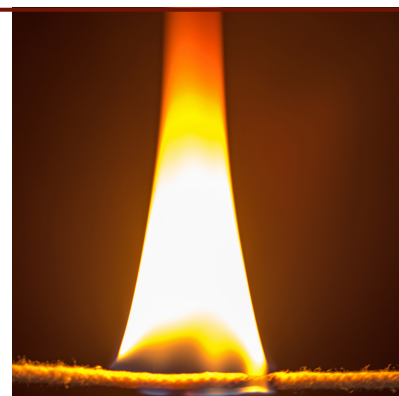
Be attuned to the rising and the setting of the sun. Timing your daily meditation practice to begin just as the sun rises is ideal for contemplation and experiencing the transforming power of solar energy on the body, mind, and subtle energy system.

Go out into nature and pay attention to how the light and heat from the sun infuse the plants with the energy for photosynthesis and makes food possible. Then, consider how the fire of your digestive system makes it possible for you to digest food and assimilate nutrients.

Fire is known as *tapas* in the yoga tradition. It is the fiery energy of self-discipline that supports transformation. During this time of fire element awareness and contemplation, connect with fire energy through a discipline you are ready to begin, such as exercising daily, avoiding unhealthy foods, or curbing the tongue from gossip or other harmful forms of speech.

I am the brilliance in fire and the life in all beings.

–Bhagavad Gita



MUDRA

Fire Gesture (Agni Mudra)

MEANING

In Sanskrit, **Agni** means Fire and **Mudra** means "seal" or "gesture." Also called Surya (Sun) Mudra.

BENEFITS*

Invokes the element of fire, helps to balance the heat within your body and enhances your willpower and self-confidence. It symbolizes illumination and the power of transformation, allowing us to digest life experiences and make positive life changes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Bend the ring finger of each hand and place the tip of the finger on the base of the thumb. Secure the ring finger in place by bringing the gentle pressure of the thumb upon the ring finger. Extend other fingers straight out. Rest the backs of the hands on the thighs or knees.

PRACTICE

Hold the mudra for a few breaths and notice the movement of breath and energy in the solar plexus. Imagine inner light bringing increased health and vitality to the body and mind.



*Mudra practice helps us focus attention, raises awareness of vital force, and supports the balance or flow of prana or energy.



ASANA

Chair Pose (Utkatasana)

This strengthening and heat-building asana brings all parts of your body together into a cohesive and powerful whole. This pose demands strength and stamina in the body and focuses on the breath and mind. When you are centered and aligned in the posture, you'll feel like you're accessing a great well of energy.

PRACTICE

- Stand in Mountain Pose (Tadasana)—your feet together, arms at your side, palms facing forward.
- Inhale and raise your arms overhead, so your biceps are slightly in front of your ears. Keep the arms parallel, palms facing inward, or join the palms.
- Exhale and bend your knees, squatting down until your thighs are as parallel to the floor as possible. Your knees will project over your feet, and your torso will lean slightly forward over your thighs forming approximately a right angle with the tops of your thighs.
- Press the shoulders down and back. Direct your tailbone down toward the floor to keep your lower back long. Shift your weight back towards your heels. Stay for 30 seconds to a minute.
- To come out of the pose, straighten your knees with an inhalation, lifting through your arms. Exhale and release your arms to your sides into Mountain Pose (Tadasana).

VARIATIONS: For increased stability, begin by standing with your feet hip-distance apart. If unable to bring your hands directly overhead, bend your elbows more, separate your hands, or simply join palms at the heart.

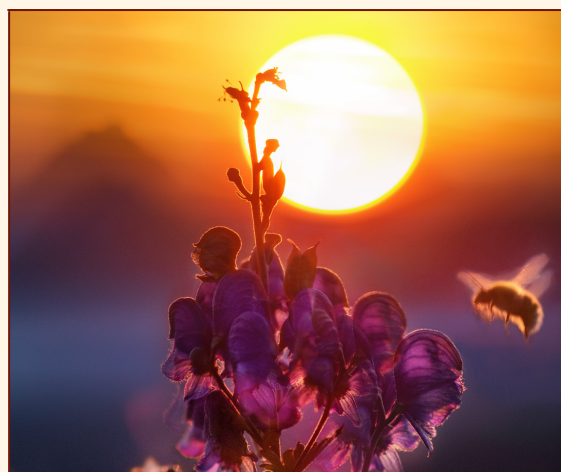
Journal

FIRE

Contemplate and write about fire element experiences that have been formative or especially impactful for you, both in your childhood and adult life. What did the element of fire reveal to you? What did you learn or "see" because of its presence? It may be something as warm and comforting as sitting around a campfire with friends or the significant loss of home or loved ones due to fire.

When I was a child, my father worked in an iron foundry where they poured molten iron into sand-casted molds to make various large machinery parts or things like manhole covers. Going into the foundry was like entering another world where liquid fire was poured from huge vats into the molds. Imagine liquid fire! I was astounded to witness how something as solid and rigid as iron could, through fire, become capable of melting, being poured into a mold, and take on a new form. Fire's early life lesson for me was that amazing transformation is possible. Potential is not limited to the way we see things.

Pay close attention this month to your encounters with fire. Notice the energy of cooking a meal, eating, and digesting it. Take that observation to the subtler dimension of "cooking" your experiences in life and how well you can digest the things that come your way. Tune into the fire of emotion, will, dedication, and discipline.



Karma Yoga Practice

FIRE

Karma yoga is the experience of oneness realized through selfless action or service. As we recognize the sacred nature of fire, we are naturally inclined to respect it and be in the right relationship with it. Fire is life-giving and supportive when in balance and can be destructive when out of balance. Global warming is a fire imbalance. What is needed for us to be in the right relationship with fire?

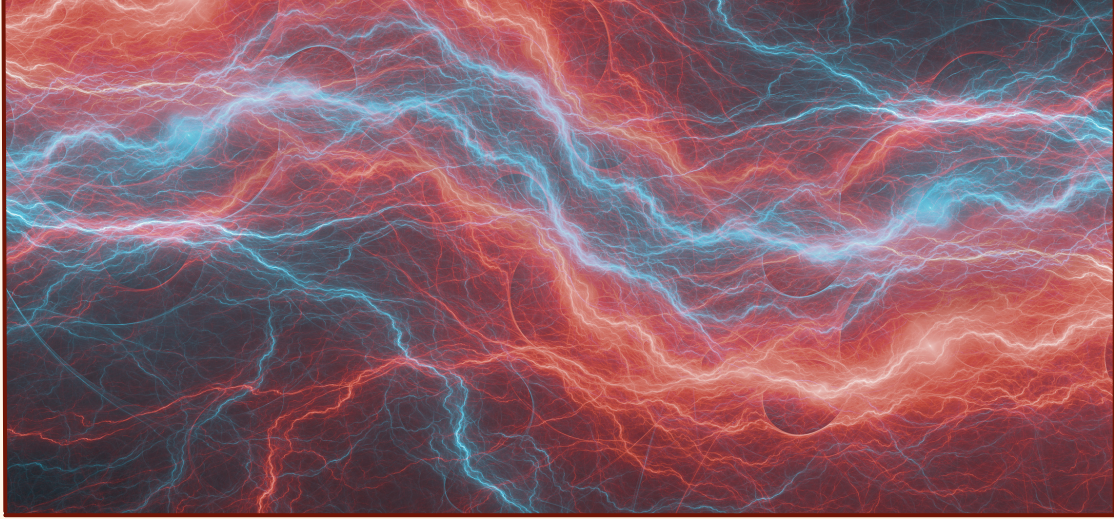
Use this space to record any new thoughts and actions inspired by your practice. This month would be an excellent time to consider any supportive measures for mitigating global warming. While it can feel like too much to even consider, there are many changes we all can make. Remember that the fire element brings clarity for us to see and fuels the will to act.

GOALS

-
-
-

ACTIONS

-
-
-



Suggested Resources

BOOKS

Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation by Paul Hawken

World as Lover, World as Self by Joanna Macy, 30th Anniversary Edition

The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist's Guide to the Climate Crisis by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

Living Landscapes: Meditations on the Five Elements in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Yogas by Christopher Key Chapple

ARTICLES

Nature Connection Guide: US Doctors are Prescribing Nature

<https://natureconnectionguide.com/us-doctors-are-prescribing-nature-in-34-states/>

[Yoga, Consciousness, and Climate Change](#) by Ellen Grace O'Brian (EllenGraceOBrian.com)

AUDIO

[Meditations on the Five Elements](#)

Podcast: The Yoga Hour (theyogahour.com)

Dr. Laurel Trujillo interviews Christopher Key Chapple, author of the new book *Living Landscapes* about meditations on the five elements.

VIDEO

Journey of the Universe

An epic film about the human connection to Earth and the cosmos.

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