



rise!

by shiva rea

the global mala project



june  
2007

as seen in

The borders of our yoga mats are like our skin, giving the illusion of our individual self-contained space. We know that our embodiment—physically and energetically—is not just local, but global, as our body is composed of many places. Every breath we inhale contains molecules that are breathed from every being on the planet. The food we nourish our bodies with brings the world into our cells. It is the rigidity of our self-identity and long held “fear of the other” that denies the power and beauty of the inter-connected nature of our lives.

And now the essential issue of our time—global warming—has no borders as the carbon emissions from every part of the world are affecting our shared biosphere. As the wisdom of the *Upanishads* (the spiritual contemplation of the Vedas) evokes, what happens to the part happens to the whole. As above, so below. The illusion of separateness is dissolving, giving way to the very essence of the yogic path—to realize, experience and intimately live from our conscious unity.

#### RISE! Yoga as Peace in Action

The Global Yoga Mala Project is a call to the worldwide yoga communities to cross the borders of our mats, studios, schools, styles or forms of yoga to come together to experience the power of collective practice and sacred action. The collective practice is based on joining hatha yoga, bhakti and karma yoga around practices relating to the 108 mala bead cycle—a sacred circle of beads used for *mantra japa* practice. The sacred action is raising funds and awareness for specific projects addressing that which we can prevent with urgent and peaceful action: global warming, AIDS and poverty. This will all take place on September 21 and 22 (UN International Peace Day and the fall equinox), when diverse yoga communities from around the world will be creating ritual events to form a symbolic “mala” or sacred circle around the earth. Currently over 54

cities are participating from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv, from offices, institutions and service organizations to the United Nations, Yahoo, AIDS centers and juvenile halls.

Like mini-Kumbha Melas (sacred festivals), communities are gathering in variations of 108, from one studio gathering in Cape Town to 54 studios in Chicago to 108 studios as in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York City, so that teachers and students from many styles of yoga practice together, not in an instructional form, but in a meditative form of the mala. The mala cycle of 108 sun salutations as moving meditation, 108 rounds of the sacred mantra *om or gayatri* (hymn), 108 Kundalini *kriyas* (movements, vocalizations or actions that clear the karma), 54 minutes of kirtan and dance, and 27 minutes of silent meditation form an open ritual in which common ground is found in the universal practices of yoga. This activates individuals and communities to experience the power of a mala, which supports collective consciousness and empowers the individual to go beyond the limits created by our mind.

#### The Circular Power of 108

I have been offering yoga malas of 108 sun salutations in a circular mandala for the past 12 years at ritual junctures of the equinox, solstices and the New Year. Like the challenges we face in the world, people’s first response to going beyond the regular five to ten sun salutations of a yoga class is, “Whoa! 108! I could never do that!” And yet people’s experience is often the opposite. When we reach the 108<sup>th</sup> salutation, the rejuvenation, empowerment, and communion that the group experiences over the two-hour, collectively guided moving prayer (there is no need for verbal instruction) has the effect of turning our mind’s limit and our individual shell on its head. We ask ourselves: *How much of the potential of my life is limited by my mind? How can yoga ignite this potential? What are the*

*unique ways that my potential can be activated in these extraordinary times?*

When we sync our breath, movement and *bhava* (heart’s intention) internally and collectively, the natural state of unified consciousness deepens within us. To breathe in harmony with others in a meditative state is now scientifically proven to have an effect beyond the borders of our own body, such as lowering the crime rate (one measurable outcome of large meditative gatherings), and creating a ripple effect in every dimension of our lives. The Global Mala Los Angeles is gathering 1,008 teachers and 10,000 participants to explore this power of meditation in action through a celebration of sacred activism.

This brings us to the root significance of the 108 number. A mala is a spiritual reflection of our relationship of the microcosm with this circular macrocosm of our solar system. The 108 cycle forms the basis of the spiritual culture of yoga since Vedic times, echoed in the 108 chapters and 10,800 verses of the *Rig Veda*. The Vedic astronomers remarkably discovered the distance between the earth and the sun is approximately 108 times the sun’s diameter. The diameter of the sun is about 108 times the earth’s diameter. And the distance between the earth and the moon is 108 times the moon’s diameter.

The mala cycle, in essence, expands our consciousness from the center of our being to help us realize the extraordinary experience of being alive and our participation in the whole. Please join the many teachers, students and conscious press and businesses such as *Yogi Times*, *The Y Catalog* and *Namaste Interactive* engage the diverse yoga world to RISE! And breathe the change we want to envision in the world.

[globalmala.org](http://globalmala.org)  
888.254.9642  
[info@globalmala.org](mailto:info@globalmala.org)