

WORDS OF WELLNESS

The American psychologist James Hillman said that “the world is like a garden, and everything that happens in a garden is full of metaphors about our interior life”. The life cycle of plants has great symbolic value: it's not difficult, in fact, to compare the phases of human existence to those of nature. And it is precisely the warm season – when buds sprout from branches and soil, turning into foliage, flowers, and fruit – that has inspired this new issue of AQCUA, the magazine of QC Terme in collaboration with Vogue Italia. Let us imagine a blossom opening, kissed by sunlight. Let us breathe the sparkling air of spring. Let us gather the energy that has eluded us during the long winter months. And lastly, let's dive into reading. Because these pages are full of vitamin C, a wellness booster par excellence. In the spirit of the neologism we intend to launch – the verb “to spa”, i.e., to be reborn in the pleasure of a treatment, a bath, a full immersion in the greenery – let us leave the stress and tension behind and embrace a lifestyle that's good for us. We can start with a trip to Italy, in search of the brightest

blossoms – because, as everyone knows, color therapy is a cure for the soul – and continue on to the rest of the world, where water puts on a show in the form of spectacular waterfalls. Or we can look for nature at home, discovering design objects inspired by flowers and animals, and enjoying plant-based cuisine (which is good for the planet as well as for our bodies) and, why not, maybe even chocolate, that delicious derivative of the cocoa bean. We can glow with an early morning yoga session, purify ourselves with Palo Santo wood, follow intriguing olfactory itineraries that recreate imaginary bouquets. Or we can give our skin an injection of energy with vitaminized cosmetics or daily DIY practices that revitalize it deeply and make us more beautiful. Finally, we can dress up in flowers, enjoy a musical, or delve into the interdependence between the human and plant worlds through essays, children's books, and novels. The important thing is that the wellness of spring continues to flow through us as we tune in to nature's rebirth and give meaning to the verb “to spa”.

YOGA AWAKENS

Reawakening the conscience for a clearer vision of yourself, with energizing practices that revitalize the body and have a positive effect on the nervous system. If done in contact with nature, that's even better



When is the golden moment of meditation? It is an hour and a half before dawn. "Upon awakening, when we are still floating between the two states of sleep and wakefulness, we can savor a certain sense of tranquility. We have not yet donned the clothes of our qualifications and intentions," writes Christian Pisano in the book 'Virasamavesa. La contemplazione dell'eroe,' Edizioni Mediterranee. This time frame is called Brahma Muhurta, which means the Time of Brahma, also known as the deity of Creation. "Sleep has regenerated the body; the mind is clearer and more relaxed. This means the latter has still not been affected by reiterated conditioning that occurs during the day and

can therefore better concentrate on observing structural conditioning to avoid repeating it," explains Alessandra Martin, a yoga teacher in Milan. The sun — which awakens, nourishes, and brings life into the world every morning — occupies a prominent place in the symbolism of yoga. The reawakening of self is nothing other than a transposition of the legend of Plato's cave. We all need to free ourselves from the heavy chains that hinder and condition our lives. "The essence of yoga is the reawakening from darkness. Surya Namaskar, the Sun Salutation that usually opens the practice, is the first form of contact with our inner sun, meaning our consciousness, our soul, that ineffable source of life that we often forget, but that rises with us

From top. The Tibetan bell for setting up a meditation space at home: rituals are symbolic actions full of spirituality, and daily practice transmits emotional stability, confidence, and discipline (photo by Conscious Design on Unsplash). The lotus flower, a symbol of purity and rebirth (photo by Jay Castor on Unsplash). Opposite page. Vrksasana, the tree pose (photo by Eneko Uruñuela on Unsplash). All three photos, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license).



every time we wake up. The Sun Salutation is the reawakening of our most profound essence and truth, of which we are the guardians. Going out in the sun means acquiring clearer self-knowledge," says Martin. Each yoga practice is constructed as a sequence of opposite movements and gestures. The same word hatha, a term that encompasses all forms of physical yoga practiced today, combines within it the symbols of the sun (ha) and the moon (tha). The first represents expansion and activation, while the second refers to contraction and stillness. Even the Sun Salutation — of which there are many vari-

ations — is a succession of contractions and expansions. What we do, in fact, is close ourselves to get in touch with and better appreciate our inner spirit and then be ready to open ourselves to the light to understand what we can bring into the world. Yoga works on the body and mind through a continuous sequence and flow of energizing and calming asanas that, when combined, lead to the state of reawakening. "Energizing practices are those that bring warmth to and invigorate the body. Emphasizing the inspiratory phase or breathing through the right nostril is an activating technique that stimulates the





Right. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (the equestrian pose), low lunge with opening of the heart: all expanding asanas are energizing (photo by Dmitriy Frantsev on Unsplash). Opposite page, from top. Yoga practiced in the midst of nature to accentuate the connection between the environment and yourself and benefit from the positive influence of light on the circadian rhythm (photo by Mikita Karasiou on Unsplash). Tadasana, the mountain pose (photo by Madison Lavern on Unsplash). All three photos, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license).



central nervous system: both are perfect for starting the day in a better mood. For example, Surya Bhedana Pranayama (in one of its variations) is performed sitting cross-legged, closing the left nostril and inhaling slowly through the right nostril. Then the right nostril is closed and air is exhaled through the left nostril, trying to fully empty the lungs and lengthen the time as you acquire familiarity," underlines Alessandra Martin. "Another invigorating technique that is both a pranayama and a kriya, which is a cleansing technique, is Kapalabhati, the literal translation of which is Shining Skull. Able to generate heat in the body, it carries out a form of internal cleansing that frees the sinuses, supplies blood to the brain, and strengthens the nervous system." Activating asanas are those in which the front part of the body extends and generates expansion, as well as lateral body stretches and inversions such as Shirshasana (headstand pose), which produces its most important effects on circulation and, when practiced habitually, increases resistance to nervous fatigue and helps eliminate many states of anxiety (see André Van Lysebeth, 'Yoga Self-Taught', Weiser Books). "In any case, these techniques should be done under the supervision of an instructor, especially pranayama,

which has powerful and profound effects on the nervous system. Reawakening starts out from an honest observation of yourself and your starting point," concludes Martin. It may seem paradoxical, but yoga reawakens energy through introspection using breathing that is the simplest and most effective resource that the body makes available to us. "In Stråla Yoga, more attention is paid to movement and less to the form of the pose. It is a flowing sequence in which the whole body is used instead of isolated individual parts. This makes you feel good and energizes you during practice, and it supports general mobility in everyday life as well," sums up Alexandra Meffert, an instructor at the Light Space Movement center in Düsseldorf, Germany. Stråla in Swedish means radiating light, but it also means meditation in movement for a strong, clear, connected mind and body and a more creativity-oriented life. Meffert recommends this next sequence to relieve stress and regain dynamism. Starting from the Downward Dog Pose (Adho Mukha Svanasana), take a deep breath while lifting the right leg high and then exhale while taking a step forward. From this asana, inhale while going into a high lunge and exhale while proceeding into a low lunge. Rise up while inhaling

again and then twist to the right as you exhale. Inhaling, return to the center. Exhaling, open the position into a Warrior 2 pose (Virabhadrasana 2). Inhale while arching the back and then bring the weight forward for the Warrior 3 pose (Virabhadrasana 3). From there, bring the bent knee forward towards the body and then bring it back by grabbing the foot or ankle. Afterwards, stretch the body in the Natarajasana pose and subsequently return to the Tadasana. Take a deep breath, rise up, and exhale as you bend downward to return to the Downward Dog pose. Repeat the sequence with the other leg. If yoga is done surrounded by greenery, the reawakening of the senses that also stimulates your train of thought is even more powerful. Natural elements have a deep-rooted power that is stabilizing and anti-stress. The warm season favors the contact between the environment and body for a connection that generates new inner light. In this regard, it is worth trying the 'Together we journey' retreat by Deborah Hanekamp, who is also known as Mama Medicine and is an expert in yoga, meditation, reiki, and shamanic ceremonies. From July 9 to 15, 2022, she will be at the Mandali Retreat Center (mandali.org) located on the hills overlooking Lake Orta.

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