



# Winter Solstice

Introspection and Light

# Winter Solstice

- Supplies- tea, candle, journal, props
- Opening- Vyapak Anjali Mudra, Rama Chant & Meditation
- Discussion- context, cultural practices, personal significance
- Asana & pranayama practices
- Trataka- candle gazing
- Journaling
- Asato Ma Chant
- Handouts-Slides pdf

# Rama Chant Meditation



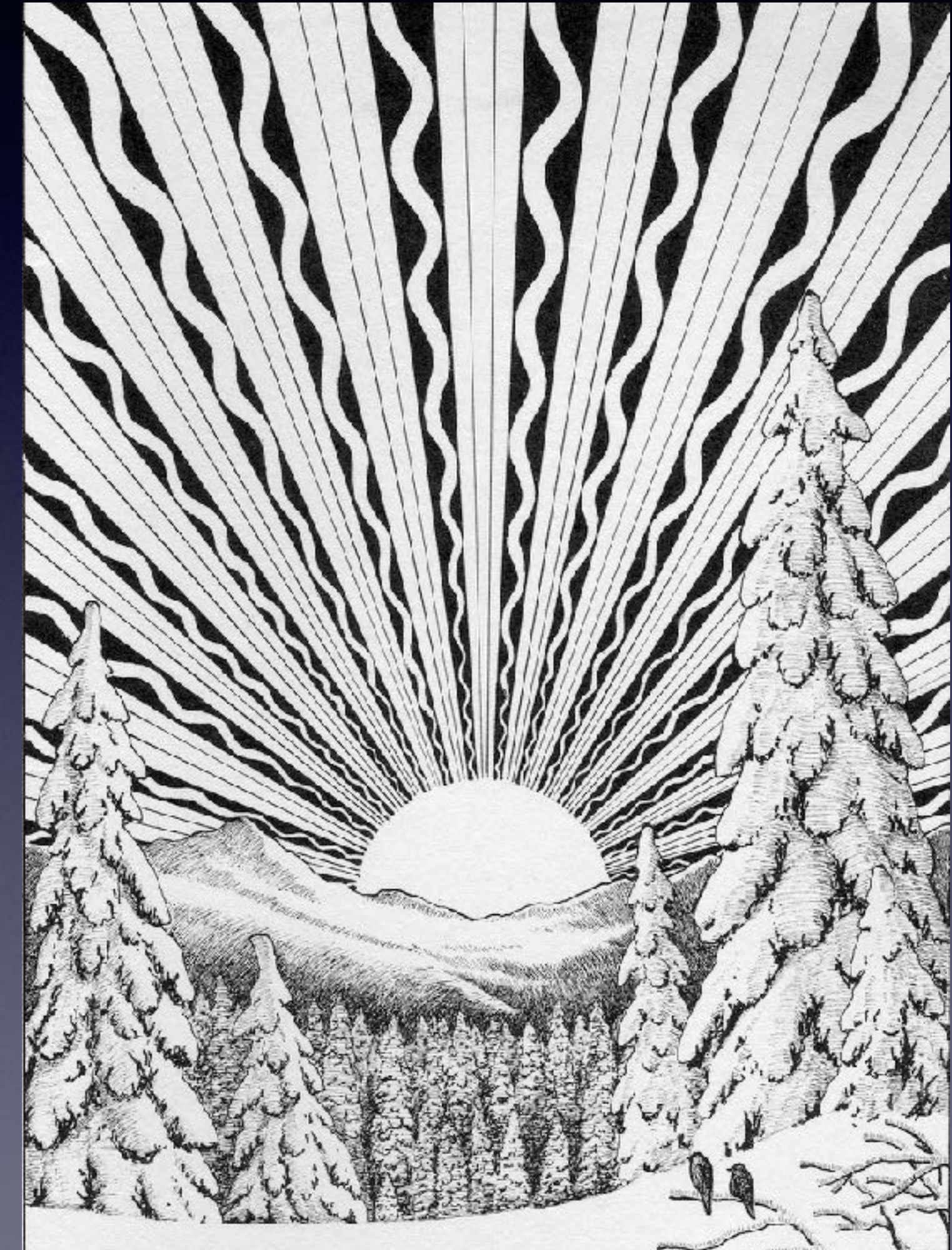
“Let us take a few silent moments to turn inward, to contact the place of winter within us - the cold, contracted places and the familiar enclosed haven in which a part of us has begun to live since fall began....”

**-<http://www.webwinds.com/thalassa/winter.htm>**

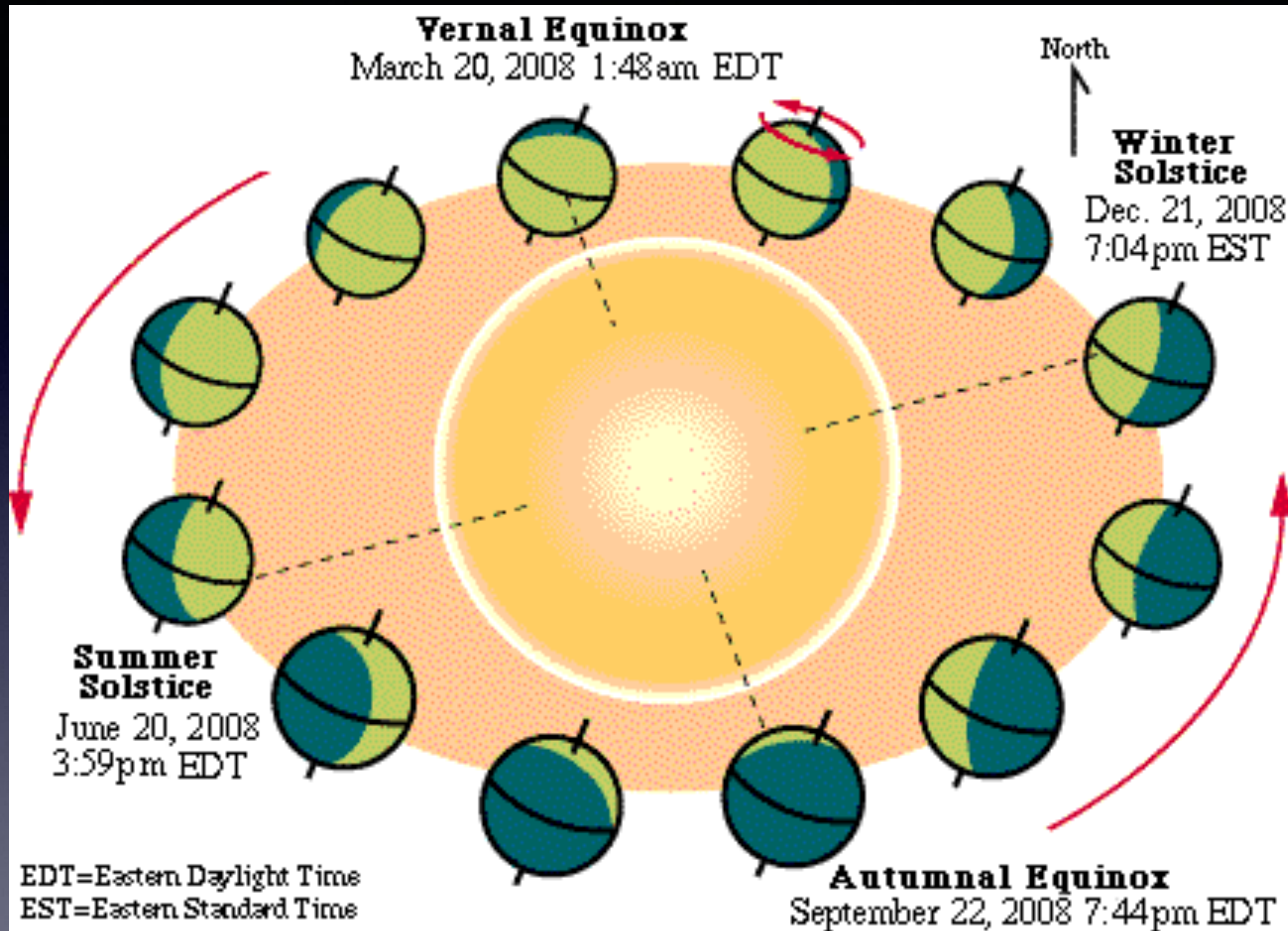


# Winter Solstice

- The shortest day and longest night of the year
- Sun appears lowest in the sky
- Earth's North Pole is tilted farthest from the sun
- We receive the least sunlight and warmth on this day (northern)
- Signals transition from darkness to light- days grow brighter





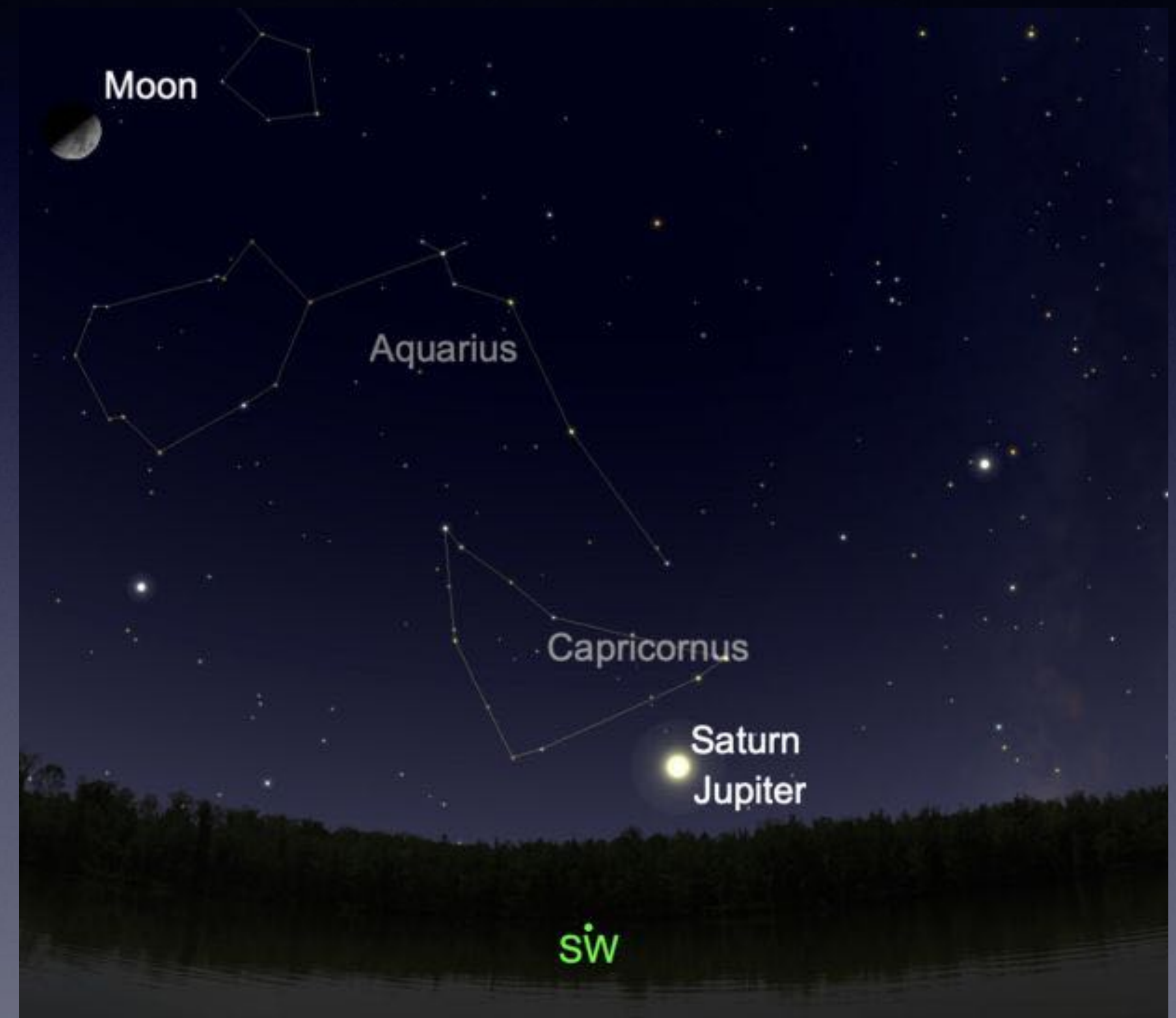


Source: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/summer-and-winter-solstices/>



# Winter Solstice 2020: Jupiter and Saturn Conjunction

- Jupiter and Saturn align in southwestern sky-
- Slow movers: Jupiter circles every 12 years, Saturn in 29.5 years
- Both planets are associated with authority
- Jupiter is a generous leader who's associated with health, wealth, and having a good time.
- Saturn favors strict responsibility and setting limits.
- Closer than they have in more than 800 years
- Auspicious gathering on Winter Solstice



# “Solstice”

- Literally means “sun stands still” in Latin
- Sun appears to halt in sky
- Celebrate the return of light
- Honor the great cycles of nature



# Global Celebrations

# Indian Light Celebrations

## **Diwali- November**

- Victory of light over darkness
- Rama (avatar of Vishnu) defeat of demon king Ravana
- Festival of Lights- illumination with light, candles, oil lamps, food & festivities

## **Makar Sankranti- January**

- Dedicated to the Sun- Surya, Gayatri Mantra chanted
- Celebrated in January, when light is fully returning- marks end of Winter Solstice season and growth of lighter days; is a harvest day
- Celebrated with light, fires, colorful decorations, singing, and bathing in waters





<https://www.news18.com/news/lifestyle/lohri-makar-sankranti-pongal-history-and-significance-1334950.html>



<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/happy-diwali/>



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54944963>



# Winter Solstice

## Pagan European Cultures

- Stories about rebirth of kings and gods
- Goddesses as light and dark
- Battles of light and dark- and light winning
- Monuments built to honor Winter Solstice: Newgrange in Ireland & Maes Howe in Orkney





# Newgrange, Ireland

Built between 3100 and 2900 BC

A beam of light enters the 62 foot long passage at exactly the Winter Solstice and shines for 17 minutes.





# Maes Howe in Orkney

In the weeks leading up to the winter solstice, the darkest time of the Orcadian year, the last rays of the setting sun shine through Maeshowe's entrance passage to pierce the darkness of the chambered cairn.

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/maeshowe/solstice.htm>



- Fires would be lit to welcome returning light
- Honor death of old sun and return of new sun

Winter Solstice occurs at the height of what was a time of great uncertainty. Starvation, disease and death was common during the cold and barren winter months.



3 European Regions  
Slavic, Mediterranean, Gaelic



# Slavic

## Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia

- Winter Solstice- “Koliadah” (cole-yah-dah). Also name of Slavic deity of newborn winter infant son
- lighting bon fires
- singing songs -caroling
- honoring fertility with the solstice goat “where goat goes, wheat grows”
- Porridge of wheat berries, poppy seeds, dried fruits, butter, honey- served to ancestors and to the living
- Wheat bundles were used to decorate and were displayed from winter solstice to spring equinox



# Koliadah

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koliada\\_\(deity\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koliada_(deity))





Mediterranean: Persephone



# Persephone

<https://feminismandreligion.com/2013/12/21/winter-solstice-when-darkness-nurtures-light-by-judith-shaw/>





# Mediterranean

- Feminine principle as light
- Mythology of Demeter, Persephone, Hades
- Represents descent into darkness: Persephone going underground and her ascent as returning light
- Demeter is the spirit of vegetation, Persephone is the light, Hades is the darkness
- Winter Solstice is Persephone fully within the dark Earth, waiting to emerge fully at spring
- Symbols: Pomegranate, fertility, richness within dark layers, feminine as light



# Gaelic

- Cailleach Bhéarra was the oldest goddess
- Earthly embodiment of winter
- Dark Goddess of Earth
- Cailleach clothes the land in whiteness, ending the time of regrowth
- Rules hidden realms
- Reigns over our dreams and inner realities



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- Cailleach seeks love from a young hero, if he accepts she transforms back into youth and life renews
- She symbolizes transformation of winter and the seeds that lay dormant awaiting rebirth in the spring
- Cailleach guarantees life force will return
- She leads us from darkness and death to light and rebirth



# Winter Solstice is a time

- for renewal
- to immerse ourselves in the healing, creative dark
- for visioning and dreaming
- for listening to our own inner wisdom
- to contemplate the cycles of nature – of death and rebirth
- to ponder on constancy of change
- to appreciate the still point before the next cycle is underway
- to let go of the old and welcome in the new



Light a candle, take charge of your inspirations and dreams.

The inner darkness brings us to unconscious realms where  
healing and new life begins.

We can allow ourselves to die to our old ways and be reborn.

This quiet dark time allows us to arrive at deeper levels of  
understanding and perception.



# Journaling Moment

How are you balancing personal and professional goals?

How are you prioritizing self care and abundance for your self and for others?

How can you align to these shifts in energy to gather inspired momentum?

Will you move in a new direction that aligns with Your Soul Purpose?



Asana



"At first, we are children of the darkness. Your body and your face were formed first in the kind darkness of your mother's womb. You lived the first nine months in there. Your birth was the first journey from darkness into light. All your life, your mind lives within the darkness of your body. Every thought you have is a flint moment, a spark of light from your inner darkness. The miracle of thought is its presence in the night side of your soul; the brilliance of thought is born of darkness. Each day is a journey. We come out of the night into the day. All creativity awakens at this primal threshold where light and darkness test and bless each other. You only discover the balance in your life when you learn to trust the flow of this ancient rhythm."

**-John O'Donohue**



Trataka- Candle Gazing  
Chanting



तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।  
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya |  
Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya |  
Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya |  
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

Meaning:

Lead us from the unreal to the real  
Lead us from darkness to light  
Lead us from death to immortality



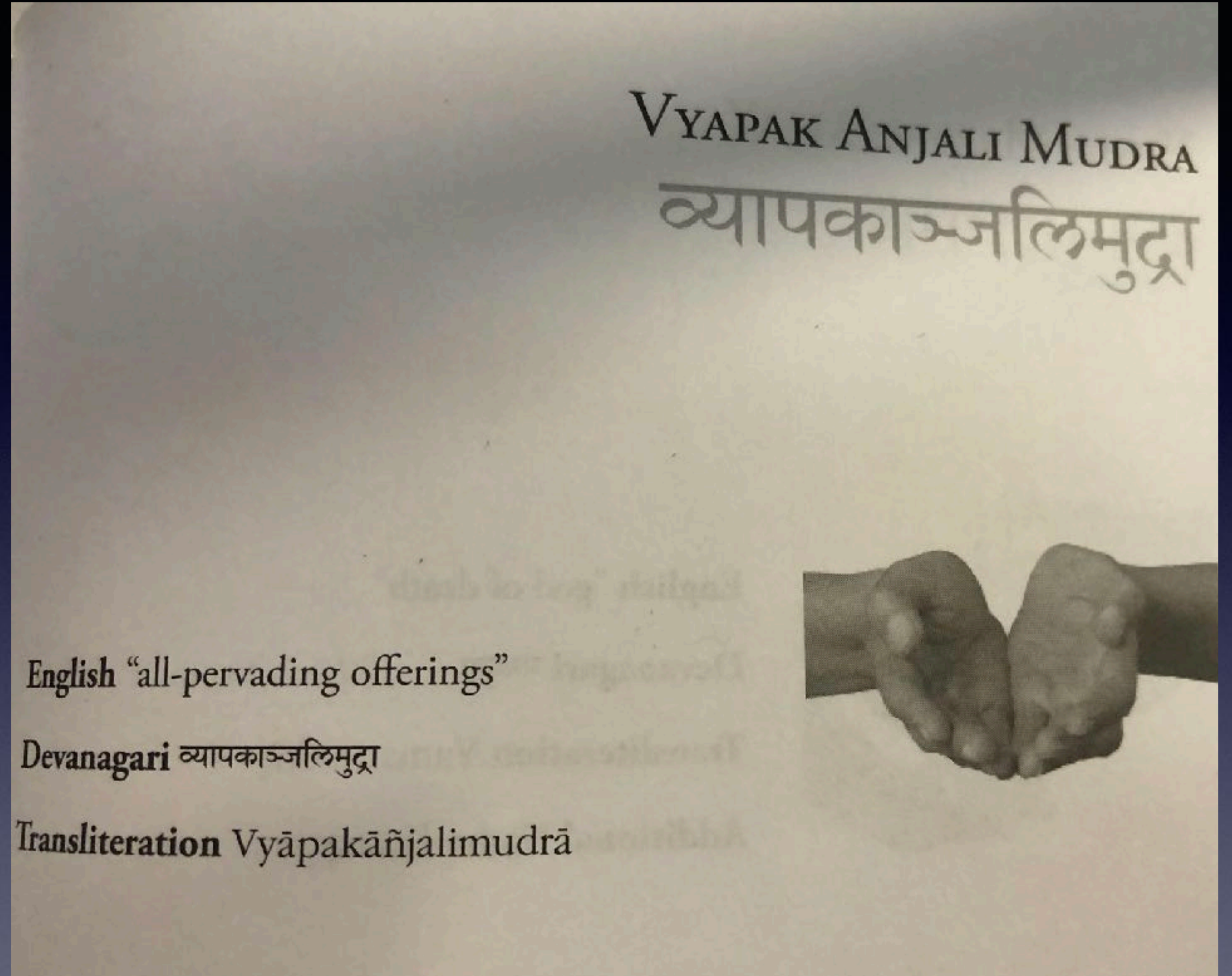




# Vyapak Anjali Mudra

To grow loving compassion.  
Hold at heart space and gaze into palms.

Relax the breath and body.  
Send loving compassion into hands,  
envision a light that radiates out to  
others.





# Recipes



# Grand Fir Dark Nougat

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1/2 cup of minced grand fir needles (keep a tablespoon back for garnish)
- 1 cup honey
- 2 cups roasted hazelnuts (or almonds)
- pinch of thyme (fresh or dried)

## PREPARATION

- In a food processor pulse Grand fir needles (or mince finely by hand) and mix into your honey.
- Line a small tin with aluminum foil and butter it well.
- Pour the honey in a saucepan. Bring to a simmer, stirring constantly, and cook at low heat for 10 minutes.
- Add the thyme and nuts and continue cooking for another 10 minutes, stirring constantly.
- When nuts begin to crackle and honey thickens to an amber brown, your nougat is ready. If you have candy thermometer you ideally you want a temperature around 266 °F or 125 °C Be warned, if you overcook the honey at too high a heat your nougat will come out hard as a rock – so keep a close watch.)
- To test, drop a teaspoon of honey into a glass of cold water; it should harden immediately. Remove honey from the heat and stir for 2 more minutes.
- Carefully pour the honey mixture into the buttered tin (it will still be very hot). Smooth the mixture with a metal spoon. When the nougat is completely cool, break it into small pieces with the back of a knife. Store in a cool place.



## Flummery (Kutia)

*This ancient traditional dish, served at most ceremonial feasts and commemorations, serves as a first or last dish for Sviata Vechera. Its three main ingredients are whole wheat kernels, poppy seeds, and honey.<sup>6</sup> Some cooks try to better it by adding nuts and raisins. Whatever is added, kutia remains an acquired taste, although children like its sweet taste and crunchy texture. Poppy seeds are hard to break down. In the past, poppy seeds were ground by hand in a special wooden mortar and pestle called a makitra (a poppy bowl) and a makohin (poppy chaser). It took a lot of effort and time. Kutia is high in nutritional value.*

*Note: This dish should be prepared several days ahead of time for flavor to develop. It keeps very well in the refrigerator for 2 weeks or so.*

**1 cup wheat kernels**  
**½ cup poppy seeds**  
**1 cup honey**  
**½ cup chopped walnuts**  
**½ cup raisins**  
**pinch of salt**

Blanch wheat with boiling water. Cover and let stand for about 1 hour. Pour off water, then add enough cold water to cover by about double, and cook covered over low heat until kernels are soft, about 3 to 4 hours, depending on the type of wheat. Strain and allow to cool.

Blanch poppy seeds with boiling water, allow to rest 15 minutes, then drain. Add enough water to cover and reheat to boiling. Cook a little, pour off liquid again, and squeeze dry in a cotton towel. Then mash seeds in a blender or processor until the mixture changes color from slate to milky. Combine wheat, poppy seeds, and honey. Taste and add salt as needed. Add chopped walnuts and raisins. The consistency should be semiliquid.



1 Tbsp Chaga mushroom (powdered or crumbled)

1 tsp of Reishi Powder (another medicinal mushroom that pairs well with Chaga)

1 Tbsp cardamon, freshly ground

3 Tbsp cinnamon chips

4 cloves

2 anise star pods

1/4 tsp black pepper

1 inch chopped fresh ginger

1 Tbsp dried dandelion root

### **Directions**

Gently grind spices in a mortar and pestle for about a minute. Add spices, chaga, and dandelion to the about 6 cups of water, boil for 30 minutes. Strain herbs. Flavor with your choice of mylk and sweetener (I prefer cashew mylk and a couple of teaspoons of maple syrup).

Chaga Chai:

My recipe on the peaceful dumpling! [https://  
www.peacefuldumpling.com/fallow-winter-heal-chaga-chai](https://www.peacefuldumpling.com/fallow-winter-heal-chaga-chai)