

SVT Vidyalaya – Gayatri Mantra

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यम्
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्

Om | bhur bhuvas suvah |
tat savitur varenyam | bhargo devasya dheemahi |
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat ||

“We fix our minds (contemplate) that adorable radiance of the sun (savitur).

May He (Parameshvara, the Lord) who is represented by the sun, stimulate (impel) our thoughts”.

The Gayatri Mantra (Rig Veda 3.62.10) is both a meditation and a prayer addressed to God who is represented by the sun. The sun is a fitting symbol for God, as it is the principal source of light and energy in our solar system. All life on earth ultimately depends upon the radiance emitted from the sun. The sun is self-effulgent; it depends upon nothing else in order to shine, since its energy comes from itself and not from a source outside of itself. Therefore the Sun is the most fitting representation of the supreme Lord.

The Gayatri mantra is in Gayatri metre, a Vedic meter consisting of 24 syllables. There are many vedic mantras in the Gayatri metre. It is considered to be the best of the metres, because in the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says: “among the Vedic metres I am the Gayatri” (10.35). This hymn in the Gayatri metre that is addressed to the sun (savita) is known as ‘Savitri’. The word Savitri means “that which is connected to the sun”. Since the Savitri mantra is the most famous among all the mantras composed in the Gayatri metre, the Savitri mantra is often just called ‘Gayatri’.

The Gayatri mantra is considered so sacred that it is thought of as a goddess. That is why in the Sandhyavandana ritual, it is invoked as the three goddesses; Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati. It is Goddess Gayatri in the morning, Goddess Savitri at midday & Goddess Saraswati in the evening.

Though the mantra is thought of as a goddess, the meaning of the mantra is, as we mentioned, a meditation and a prayer to God who is represented by the sun. It is recited either 1008, 108, 64, 32 or at least 10 times, in the morning at the time before and during sunrise, again at noon and in the twilight period during sunset. It is the most revered mantra in the Veda and it should be known to all Hindus. There is a manner of reciting which can be learnt from a competent teacher (Guru).

Meaning: The word OM is prefixed to the Gayatri mantra. All vedic chanting should commence and conclude with OM. Because of its symbolism, the word OM is the best name for the supreme Lord. After OM, the three “vyahrtis” or sacred utterances are chanted. The sounds of these are held to be auspicious and purifying. The three vyahrtis are bhur, bhuvas, suvah. They represent the three worlds: the earth, the intermediate region and the heavenly world respectively. In the Krishna Yajur Veda, which is popular in South India, the word used is “suvah”, whereas elsewhere the word is “svah”. Both words stand for the heavenly world. After uttering the three vyahrtis, we come to the Gayatri mantra proper. The meaning of the first part of the Gayatri mantra is as follows: “we fix our minds on (dhimahi) that (tat) adorable (varenyam) radiance (bhargo) [the word bhargas means the same as tejas, ie., light or radiance] of the Lord (devasya) sun (savitur)”. This part of the mantra is a meditation on the light of the sun (the word “radiance” is the grammatical object of the verb dhimahi). The light of the sun is the symbol for Pure Consciousness, the essential nature of the Lord. The next part of the mantra is a prayer. “May He (yo), i.e., Parameshvara, the Lord who is represented by the sun, stimulate or impel (prachodayat) our (nah) thoughts (dhiyo)”. This is a prayer to the Lord to help improve our thinking, ethically and spiritually. The regular chanting of Gayatri mantra also helps to protect us, for it has been said that the life involves making choices and the chanting of Gayatri helps us to make the right choices.

SVT Vidyalaya - Gayatri Mantra – Meaning, Significance and Correct Chanting
By Sri Vasudevacharya, held on Sunday 2nd July, 2006 at SVT Helensburgh.
Classes are Free – Please visit <http://www.svtsydney.org/vidyalaya.asp> future classes.