# **GAYATRI MANTRAM**

### By Swami Paramarthananda

### Transcribed by Swamini Svatmabodhananda

NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciple.



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# गायत्री मन्त्रम्

# Gāyatri mantram

# By

# Swami Paramarthananda

(based on the talks given in Chennai)

An offering unto Gayatrī mātā

By

Swamini Svatmabodhananda

## ओं गायत्री देव्ये नमः



# Śrauta gāyatrī

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Om bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ tat-savitur-vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt ||

# Smārta gāyatrī

यो देवः सवितास्माकं धियो धर्मादि गोचराः ।

प्रेरचेत् तस्य यत्भर्गः तत्वरेण्यमुपारमहे ॥

"yo devaḥ savitāsmākam dhiyo dharmādi gocarāḥ | prerayet tasya yat bhargaḥ tat vareṇyam upāsmahe" ||

### Gāyatri mantram

#### gāyatrī mantra as a japa

In the second part *uttarāṇgam* of the *sandhyāvandanam* we have seen *ācamanam*, *gaṇapati dhyānam*, *prāṇāyāma* and *gāyatrī japaḥ*. Then as a part of this *gāyatrī japaḥ* we have seen *āvāhanam* and *nyāsaḥ*. Now we are seeing the *japa vidhiḥ*.

The first point to be noted is that <code>gāyatrī</code> is <code>pañcāvasānā</code>, having five stops. The first stop is after <code>omkāra</code>, the second stop is after <code>bhūrbhuvaḥ</code> <code>suvaḥ</code> <code>vyāhṛtiḥ</code>, the third stop is after <code>tatsaviturvareṇyam</code>, the fourth after <code>bhargo</code> <code>devasya dhīmahi</code> and the final after <code>dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt</code>. Many people pronounce wrongly with a long 'ī', <code>dhīyo yo naḥ</code> is wrong pronunciation. The 'i' should be short. It is <code>dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt</code>.

The second point we saw was, we had said in the beginning itself *nichṛd gāyatrīcchandaḥ*, it should have only 23 letters and not 24 letters. Therefore *tatsaviturvareṇyam* should be chanted and not *tatsaviturvareṇīyam*. If ṇī yam are separated it is gāyatri chandaḥ and ṇī and yam are combined ṇyam – it is nichṛd gāyatrīcchandaḥ. Ekākṣara vihīnā tu nichṛd gāyatrīcchandamucyate | This nichṛd gāyatrī is used for prāṇāyāma arghyam dānam and japa. The other gāyatri with 24 letters is supposed to be used for *homa* etc.

One more point with regard to *japa* is being pointed out. *Japa* is supposed to be of three types –

### 1. Ucca japaḥ 2. Manda japaḥ 3. Mānasam japaḥ

*Ucca japaḥ* is a chanting, which is loud and audible to the people around. Sometimes it is audible and often times it is disturbing to others, if they are engaged in some other *vyvahāra*.

Manda or upāmśu japaḥ is chanting with the lip movement and which is audible only to the chanting person. It is not audible to the people around, like a murmur, murmuring chant with the lip and the tongue movement.

Mānasam japaḥ where lip movement, tongue movement and even throat movement is not there. It is purely and totally mental chanting.

Of these three, which one is to be adopted? All the three can be adopted but there is a gradation. The gradation is described in this manner –

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"uttamam mānasam japyam, upāmśu madyama smṛtaḥ | adhamam vācikam prāhuḥ sarva mantreśu vai dvijāḥ" ||
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"The best is mental *japa*, mediocre is murmuring, the lowest is said to be loud *japa*, and this is applicable to all forms of chanting."

It is not for *Gāytari mantra* alone, *sarva mantreśu vai dvijāḥ*, it is applicable to all chanting. Of the three, mental chanting has got the greatest value. In terms of puṇya – if loud chanting has got one unit of puṇya, upāmśu japa, murmuring has got ten units and mānasam japa hundred times the benefit. Of course mānasa japa is difficult, because you cannot be that mechanical in mānasa japa, whereas in vācika japa mouth can go on chanting and mind can go on worrying. Some people hold on to the 'poonal/ yajñopavītam'(the sacred thread) and do all vyavahara! Gāyatrī will be on but other thoughts like 'Who has come?' 'What does he want?' 'What is the phone call?' 'What is the message?' Recently I(Swamiji) read somewhere that one should not hold on to yajñopavītam while chanting. We are supposed to use the hand for counting. This is an incidental point. We can become mechanical in the chanting if it is louder whereas if it is mental one has to involve oneself. Therefore, it is going to be difficult and hence the punyam is more. What is more difficult will give more punyam and what is less difficult will give less

puṇyam. But if a person is not able to do mānasa japa, the only way out is to start with ucca japaḥ and gradually come to manda japaḥ and gradually proceed to mānasa japaḥ. This is ideal for most of the people.

During the *japa* one cannot think of the deity(visualize) not only with respect to *gāyatri*, it is with respect to any *japa*. The imagination of the deity is only before the *mantra* chanting during invocation. If during *japa* one (visualizes) imagines the deity, either the *japa* will become mechanical or imagination will become impossible. Therefore deity visualization is only before the *japa* and later the concentration is only on the mantra.

The concentration on the mantra is twofold – either the *mantra* can be *śabda pradhāna* or the *mantra* can be *artha pradhāna*. In *śabda pradhāna japaḥ*, I don't think of the meaning I just visualize the sound. *Bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ tat saviturvareṇyam* – the *śabda* alone I visualize. The *śabda* itself is sacred and it is capable of giving the *phalam*. In fact, if it is *japa* it is *śabda pradhāna* only. The meaning can be visualized before the beginning of the *japa* or after the end of *japa* but not during *japa*. The *artha pradhāna japa* is - I see the meaning of the *mantra* and I don't give that importance to the *śabda*. So in *gāyatrī* also, when it used as a daily ritual it is *śabda pradhāna*, the sound portion only.

### The arthah, meaning of gāyatrī mantra

When we chant the *gāyatrī*, we are adding two portions, the *praṇava* and the *vyāhṛti*. Om is called *praṇava mantra* which is not a part of *gāyatrī*. *Bhūrbhuvaḥ suvaḥ* is *vyāhṛti mantra* which is also not a part of *gāyatrī*. They are appended. Then what is actual *gāyatrī*? The three lines - *tatsaviturvareṇyam*, *bhargo devasya dhīmahi*, *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt* | We will see the meaning part by part.

#### The first part is Pranava Omkāra

 $Omk\bar{a}ra$  is very much glorified in the scriptures and it is said that irrespective of the meaning of the  $omk\bar{a}ra$ , the very sound 'Om'' is a purifying mantra.

omkārśca atha śabdaśca dvāvetau brahmaṇaḥ purā | kaṇṭam bhitvā viniryātau tasmāt māṅgalikau ubhau ||

It is said that *Brahmaji* initiated this creation after uttering the two words 'om' and 'atha', therefore they are mangalam because of the sound and whatever be the meaning.

Omkāra is supposed to be the best name of the Lord. Lord has got so many names but the best name of the Lord is supposed to be 'Om'. It is said in the Gītā 'om tatsaditi nirdeśaḥ brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ' (17.23). Om tat and sat — these three are the names of Brahma or the Lord. Because of this alone Omkāra is known by the name praṇavaḥ. Praṇavaḥ means a name which is ideal for the Lord. 'prakarṣeṇa nūyate brahma abhidhīyate anena iti praṇavaḥ 'om'- by which word Brahman is well understood and that name is called 'praṇavam'. Why Omkāra is the ideal name? Many reasons can be given but we will point out two reasons. One is Omkāraḥ is ekākṣaram. It is one syllable word and Lord is also one -'Omkāraḥ ekaḥ brahma ekam'. Omkāraḥ is akṣaraḥ, syllable and Brahman is akṣaram, the imperishable one. In addition to this there are philosophical significances which we find in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. Omkāra is the ideal name for the Lord and therefore by uttering this we remember the Lord.

The word *Omkāra* is derived from the root 'av rakṣaṇe' 'avati rakṣati iti om'. The one who protects is called 'om'. It is applicable to the mantra and also to the Lord. padam api rakṣati padārthaḥ īśvaraḥ api rakṣati'.

#### The second part is Vyāhṛti mantra

*Vyāhṛti mantra* is also supposed to be auspicious irrespective of its meaning and because of the sound it is supposed to be very sacred. By the very *uccāraṇam*, the sound purifies and that is why it is called *vyāhṛtiḥ*. There are different definitions given for *vyāhṛti*.

1. Bhūrbhuvastathā pūrvam svayameva svyambhuvā vyāhṛtā jñāna dehena tena vyāhṛtayaḥ smṛtā ||

These three mantras have been uttered by *Brahmaji* Himself.

'brahmaṇā vyāhṛtā iti vyāhṛtiḥ

It has been uttered in the beginning itself therefore it is auspicious like *omkāra*.

2. ' viśeṣeṇa āsamantāt harati pāpāni iti vyāhṛtiḥ' | pāpān apaharati that which removes all the pāpas when it is uttered. It is a purifier so it is uttered before beginning the rituals.

Meaning wise  $bh\bar{u}h$  bhuvah and suvah represent the three lokas which are the manifestations of the Lord. The simple meaning is – I remember 'om' the Lord who manifests in the form of the three lokas.

'trolika rūpeņa paridṛśyamānam onkāra abhidheyamīśvaram smarāmi'.

This is the meaning of om bhūr bhuvaḥ suvaḥ.

From *Vedānta* standpoint *om-kāra* represents the *nirguṇa turīyam. bhūr bhuvaḥ suvaḥ* represent the *saguṇa viśva taijasa prājña*. Therefore *om bhūr bhuvaḥ suvaḥ* represent *catuṣpād brahma*.

I remember the *nirguṇa brahma* who alone is manifesting in the form of saguṇa brahma - saguṇa viśva virāt, saguṇa taijasa hiraṇyagarbha, saguṇa prājña īsvara that Lord I remember. This is the philosophical meaning of the praṇava and the vyāhṛti.

#### The third part is gāyatrī mantraḥ

The sāmānya arthaḥ is explained first for the general public. Then the viśeṣa vedānta arthaḥ is being explained.

#### sāmānya arthaḥ

The sāmānya arthaḥ is invocation of sūrya devata. According to the meaning is "yam nam dhiyam pracodayāt savituḥ devasya tat vareṇyam bhargaḥ dhīmahi". dhīmahi means we meditate upon. Meditate upon what? vareṇyam bhargaḥ means, sacred, auspicious adorable, śreṣṭaḥ bhargaḥ, brilliance, effulgence. We meditate upon that most effulgent or light of whom? Devasya savituḥ, of the Lord Sun, sūrya devasya tejaḥ dhyāyāmaḥ; dhīmahi dhyāyāmaḥ. In what way is it sacred? naḥ dhiyaḥ pracodayāt — which effulgence alone, which energy alone, which light alone pracodayāt means enlivens, energizes, activates, prerayati - which sunlight that energizes dhiyaḥ, our buddhi, our intellect. So, the simple running meaning of the gāyatrī is — we meditate upon the sacred effulgence of Sun God which activates our intellect. The explanation for this in the Gītā (ch15.12):-

'yadādityagatam tejaḥ jagatbhāsayate'khilam | yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tattejo viddhi māmakam ||

Bhagavān says, "Oh Arjuna! The light and energy in the Sun belongs to me".

Therefore you look upon this sunlight in the early morning as the *pratyakṣa* symbol of the Lord because Lord Krishna says "I am in the Sun as the light", there I can worship the Lord. How much of the glory is there?

'gāmāviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmyahamojasā | puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ' || That energy of the Sun alone pervades the whole Earth, nourishes all beings, activate all beings and even plants and animals. Therefore we get nourishment from the sunlight. Even though it nourishes the whole being, here the student is interested in the *buddhi* alone. A *gṛhastha* is interested in health and money because he has to run the family. He does not have much time to read, so, not much intellect is required. *Buddhi* is primarily used by *brahmacāris* and *sannyāsis*. Therefore *brahmacāri* is interested in *buddhi poṣaṇam*.

'mayi medhām mayi prajām mayyagnistejo dadhātu mayi medhām mayi prajām mayīndra indriyam dadhātu mayi medhām mayi prajām mayi sūryo bhrājo dadhātu'

"May Lord Agni, Lord Indra, Lord Sūrya, bless me with intelligence, continuity of progeny and radiance born of Vedic study, prowess and splendor"

Most of the *brahmacāri* prayers seek *medhā* and *prajñā*. *Gāyatrī* is primarily a prayer for *brahmacāri*, a *vedic* student. This word '*brahmacāri*' does denote an unmarried person. *Brahmacāri* means a *vedic* student and for him memory etc. is required '*yo naḥ dhiyaḥ pracodayāt*' may the Sun God bless me. "Bless me" is not explicitly said, it is a *mantra* or statement, it is indirectly asked for. This is the *sāmanya arthaḥ* of *Gāyatrī*.

#### viśeșa vedānta arthaḥ

The *viśeṣa vedānta arthaḥ* - to understand this, one should have the background understanding of the *Upaniṣadic* teaching. Those who do not have the background can ignore this portion.

Here *dhīmahi* means meditate upon, *nididhyāsanam kurmahe*. It is *nididhyāsanam* for a *Vedāntic* student. *'dhīmahi'* means *abhedena dhyāyāmaḥ*. What do we want to meditate upon? *Bhargaḥ vareṇyam* refers

to saccidānanda svarūpam. We meditate upon the saccidānanda svarūpam - tat bhargaḥ vareṇyam. Of what? Savituḥ devasya – of the Lord, Īśvaraḥ, tat padārthaḥ Īśvaraḥ. We meditate upon the saccidānanda svarūpam of the Lord.

How do arrive at the meaning? We will analyze one by one.

Here the word *savituḥ* literally means that which procreates the universe - *sūyate iti savitā*.

Lord Krsna says, 'mayādykṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram'(gītā 9.10) su means to procreate, to give birth to. 'savitā' means that which is the creator of the Universe. This savitā is used as the material cause of the Universe. Mother is the material cause of the baby. Similarly  $\bar{l}$ śvara is the material cause of the creation. Savitā = upādhānakāraṇam.

'devasya' means that which is effulgent *cetana svarūpam*, *cetanātmakam*, the intelligent principle. By using the word *devasya*, the Lord is supposed to be the intelligent cause of the creation also – *nimmitta kāraṇasya*.

So, the Lord is the material cause of the creation and the intelligent cause of the creation. Therefore, savituḥ devasya means abhinna nimitta upādhāna kāraṇabhūtasya brahmaṇaḥ Īśvarasya tatpada vācyārthbhūtasya māyopaadhikasya.

This is such a short statement but the Sanskrit commentators go crazy with this. They have written umpteen numbers of *vyākhyānams* including Śaṅkarācārya.

What is the nature of that *Īśvara? Upāādhi vinirmukte'pi kim svarūpam syāt?tat bhargaḥ vareṇyam. Tat* refers to *tadeva soumya idamagra āsīt* – refers to *sat svarūpam* the nature of existence – *sattāsvrūpam.* The word *tat* has to be taken from *tat savituḥ* and join it with *tat vareṇyam bhargaḥ*. These

three words should be read together 'tat bhargaḥ vareṇyam'. So, Brahman or Īśvara's svarūpam is sattāsvrūpam.

Bhargaḥ means that which is light, effulgent capable of removing darkness. It is derived from the root bhṛg dāhe – bharjate to burn down, to roast, to fry etc. This indicates the caitanya svarūpam because caitanyam alone vṛtti dvārā andhakāraṁ nāśayati, andhakāraṁ bharjate, saṁsāraṁ bharjate. We have both the meanings now. That which is effulgent and that which destroys ignorance through vṛtti, vṛttyārūḍhaṁ tat. By way of removing darkness, ignorance, it removes saṁsāra also. Thus bhargaḥ stands for the awareness, caitanyam, cit svarūpam.

The third word is *vareṇyam*. Literally *vareṇyam* means that which is worth choosing by all – *varaṇīyaṁ varaṇa yogyam*. What is that, which is chosen by all? Can you say money? Positon? On *Vedāntic* analysis we say, in and through everything everybody chooses one thing *ānandaḥ*, and *pūrṇatvam*, fulfillment. Thus, there is only one *puruṣārtha*, *varaṇīyaṁ puruṣārtha*, there is only one and that is *ānandaḥ*. Therefore *vareṇyam* means *ānanda svarūpam*.

tat means sat svarūpam, bhargaḥ means cit svarūpam, vareṇyam means ānanda svarūpam.

To whom does the three svarūpams belong? savituḥ devasya abhinna nimitta upādhāna kāraṇātmaka tatpada abhidheyasya Īśvarsya etat svarūpam dhīmahi abhedena dhyāyāmaḥ.

What type of *svarūpam* is it? The third part *yaḥ* - *caitanyam*, that all pervading *saccidānanda svarūpam* which is the cause of the creation behind the intellect also. As what? *Sākṣi rūpaḥ yaḥ*, *kṣetrajña rūpaḥ yaḥ*, *anupraviṣṭha rūpaḥ yaḥ* (*anupraveśa śṛuti* – *tat śṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat*).

There is also a grammatical beauty here – starting with neuter gender word - *Brahman*, the mantra lands in a masculine gender word - *ātmā*. Yaḥ is masculine which refers to *ātmā*, tat is neuter which refers to *Brahman*. That *Brahman*, which is saccidāndananda svarūpam and is the jagat kāraṇam, that *Brahman* shines as ātmā by illumining the buddhi. So, yaḥ, which caitanya svarūpam, naḥ dhiyaḥ, our intellect, or to be precise buddhi vṛttīḥ- (dhiyaḥ,dhiyau, dhiyaḥ - dvitīyā bahuvacanam), all our thoughts pracodayāt, illumine satta sphūrti pradhānena, by giving both satta and sphūrti.

According to this interpretation, tat savitur vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi indicate brahma caitanyam, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt indicate ātma caitanyam, all our thoughts pracodayāt, illumine satta sphūrti pradhānena by giving both satta and sphūrti.

According to this interpretation, tat savitur vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi indicate brahma caitanyam, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt indicate ātma caitanyam, dhīmahi indicates abheda dhyānam.

We meditate upon the ātma caitanyam which is nothing but brahma caitanyam – prajñānam brahma. This idea is contained in the famous Taittirīya mantra "sa yaścāyam puruṣe | yaścāvāditye | sa ekaḥ |" 'sa yaścāyam puruṣe' is dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt | 'yaścāvāditye' is tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi | 'sa ekaḥ' is abhedena dhyāyāmaḥ |

This is the *Gāyatrī mantra* from *Vedāntic* stand point.

If a person chants *Gāyatrī* before the study of *Vedānta* it becomes *upāsanam*. But the very same *Gāyatrī* after the study of *Vedānta* becomes *nididhyāsanam – aham brahma asmi dhyānam*. *Gāyatrī viśeṣa arthaḥ samāptaḥ* with this.

#### The meaning of smārta Gāyatrī

**Swamiji chants the** *Gāyatrī* and asks everyone to repeat after Him. He also said that "Whoever does not know *Gāyatrī*, this is a mass initiation. They can repeat")

यो देवः सवितास्माकं धियो धर्मादि गोचराः ।

प्रेरयेत् तस्य यत्भर्गः तत्वरेण्यमुपारमहे ॥

"yo devaḥ savitāsmākam dhiyo dharmādi gocarāḥ | prerayet tasya yat bhargaḥ tat vareṇyam upāsmahe" ||

This is the *smārta Gāyatrī* which is the same as the well known *śrauta Gāyatrī*. The only difference is - the *Vedic Gāyatrī* has got three lines "tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt"

Om bhūr bhuvassuvaḥ is chanted in the beginning and that is not part of Gāyatrī, it is merely an introduction. The real vedic Gāyatrī has only three lines. smārta Gāyatrī has got four lines. The meanings are the same. The effectiveness is also the same. Smārta Gāyatrī means non-vedic Gāyatrī.

### What is the meaning?

Savitā devaḥ asmākaṁ dhiyaḥ prerayet | Savitā devaḥ means the Sun God. When we say Sun God, we refer to the Lord Sun alone who is invoked in the Sūrya Maṇḍala. Savitā devaḥ prerayet — activate, direct. What does He activate? asmākaṁ dhiyaḥ — our intellect. The Sun God, activates, enlivens, energizes all our intellect.

### What type of intellect?

dharmādi gocarāḥ — Which intellect deals with varieties of knowledge, light, dharma. Gocaraḥ, viṣayaḥ means a discipline of knowledge, any subject. Like what? Dharmajñānam, satya jñānam, etc. there are varieties of

knowledge and *buddhi* deals with varieties of knowledge. That *buddhi*, the Sun activates.

What is the intention of the statement *dharmādi gocarāḥ*?

The mind can also deal with *sāttvic* knowledge, *sattva vṛttayaḥ*. The mind can entertain *rajo vṛttayaḥ*, *rājasic* knowledge also; the mind can entertain *tāmasic vṛttis* also. Generally *sāttvic vṛttis* are less, *rājasic* and *tāmasic* are more. Here we say that the Sun God changes the proportion.

dharmādi gocarāḥ dhiyaḥ prerayet means — make the thoughts more and more sāttvic. The adharma vṛttis, rājasic vṛttis and tāmasic vṛttis will reduce. Daivī sampat will increase. So, who does that? Sun God energizes the mind and makes it sāttvic.

Tasya bhargaḥ vareṇyam asti – tasya, of the Sun God, bhargaḥ means effulgent, radiance, brilliance or light, prakāśaḥ. Tasya bhargaḥ means sūryasya bhargaḥ, sūrya prakāśaḥ. That sūrya prakāśaḥ is vareṇyam, holy, sacred. The light of the Sun God is the holiest and sacred which is capable of making me holy.

Tat upāsmahe – I meditate upon that holy sunlight.

If you combine all the three sentences the meaning will be – "We meditate upon the sacred effulgence of that sun God who activates our intellect which has got knowledge of *dharma* etc. a simple translation is *dhārmic buddhi – dharmādi gocarāḥ dhiyaḥ (dhiyaḥ is dvitīyā bahuvacanam, dharmādi gocarāḥ is adjective to dhiyaḥ, strīliṅgaṁ dvitīyā bahuvacanam)* object of *prerayet*.

Savitā dharmādi gocarāḥ prerayet. "We meditate upon the sacred effulgence of that sun God who activates our dhārmic buddhi.

The *smārta Gayatrī* is a holy *Gayatrī*. The greatest advantage is that you do not require any sacred thread, there is no differentiation of male or

female or young or old or Hindu or Christian, or Islam or *deva* or *asura*. It is *janata Gayatrī*, Universal *Gayatrī*, left and right you can initiate every one. Even children can be initiated. Choose an auspicious day, ask them to take bath, let them go to a temple, you can tie a yellow colour thread in the right wrist, the father or mother or any elder can initiate the child and the child can regularly chant this, a minimum of 11 times and any number of times. So this we can spread, *Gayatrī spreading*.

Om tat sat

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