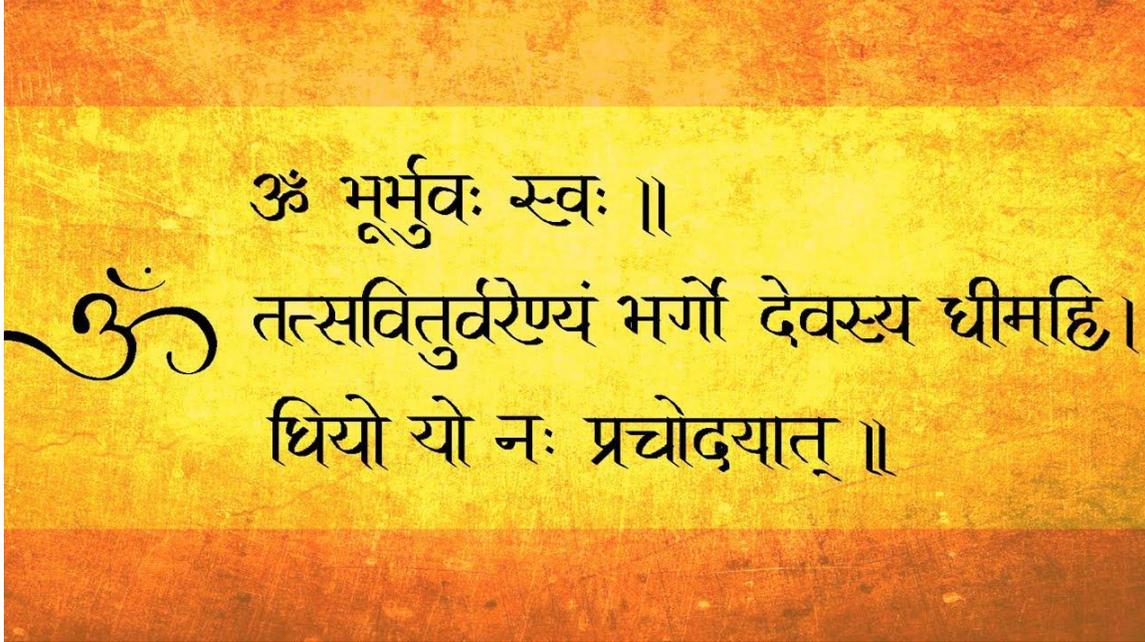


The Mother of all Mantras: The Gayatri

by Colleen Cackowski with Prince Hirindra Singh



Living in times of financial and material success for many people has resulted in stress, depression, and mental imbalance. This has resulted in our dependence on modern medicine, on eating wrong or too much food and engaging in other addictive behaviors due to stress and other factors. This dependence is not a permanent solution. It is a temporary distraction from the inner spiritual quest that leads to a permanent solution and balance between the body, mind and spirit.

Western culture gives importance to personal gain, both physical and financial. It ignores the inner development of the soul and spirit to a new awakening. When we pass from this world, we do not take our successes and money with us. In order to find a balance between our spiritual development and financial successes, we find ourselves seeking the answers in the ancient wisdom of India, written in the books of knowledge called the *Vedas*. The Indian sages well understood this paradox of life, and tapped into the nature of the inner universe to find a deeper meaning to life. It is very important to know and be aware of this phenomenon.

Reciting *any* mantra is a powerful practice that speeds the path and clears the obstacles in the way of reaching realization. Among the many mantras one may choose, the Gayatri Mantra is one of the most beneficial. The Gayatri uses solar energy vibrations of the Sun to recharge our metabolism in each and every cell in our body and mind. This instills a new sense of dynamic power, leading to healing, good karma and protection, both from known and unknown obstacles and other entities. Eventually this leads to a spiritual awakening and self-realization.

When the Gayatri Mantra is recited, it destroys attachment to the body i.e. ignorance or deficient knowledge that sprouts from material objects and causes beyond human control. The Gayatri Mantra removes agonies and mental obstructions like pain, sorrow, grief and anxieties, resulting in happiness, bliss and knowledge.

Also known as the "Guru Mantra" and the "Savitri Mantra", the Gayatri Mantra is one of the oldest mantras, and generally thought of as being among the highest and most powerful mantras of all. Goddess Gayatri or Annapurna is believed to be the Mother-God that animates all Life. Its first reference was found in the *Vedas*, believed to be the storehouse of all Divine Knowledge and the

most ancient scriptures known to mankind. Being an ancient Vedic mantra, the Gayatri has accumulated so much power that it works within a few days.

The Gayatri effulgence destroys all the previous bad Karmas and gives instant relief. It has the most purifying, healing and sublime effect on the human body. People who suffer from weak will power and ill health should repeat the Gayatri at least 56 times during the day. With a handful of people chanting this mantra, this act alone can create vibration in a society that will bring peace, love, understanding and harmony among people.

Back in Vedic times, Rishis selected the words of various Mantras and arranged them so that they not only convey meaning but also create specific power of wisdom through their utterance. The Gayatri Mantra occupies a unique position in that it has both the power of mantra and of prarthana (prayer). The difference between the two is that a mantra may be articulate or inarticulate, or a combination, as with AUM. It has an inherent power or "Mantra shakti" which has a positive influence not due to any philosophical meaning behind the mantra, but simply due to its utterance alone. The expression may be vocal or silent (expressed in the mind or by the soul). So, a mantra may or may not have any actual meaning or philosophical significance, its power being intrinsic to the mantra itself and not instrumental to any meaning.

A prarthana, on the other hand, does generally have a philosophical meaning behind it, and it is generally through this meaning that the prayer has its power. A prarthana is easier to understand, having a meaning that can be comprehended through purely intellectual means since rational thought is much more in the reach of the ordinary person. That Gayatri Mantra possesses both the power of mantra and prarthana, thus has an intrinsic power through its mere utterance alone and also an instrumental power which is derived from the understanding of its meaning and philosophical significance. The repeated and correct chanting of the Gayatri Mantra, with proper understanding of its meaning is believed to be of the greatest good to the individual.

Originally the Gayatri was expressed through a series of mudras, with each finger representing one of the 5 elements. Moving through the mudras and stimulating the energies in the body related to the respective meaning of each line, the body would have a yogic experience of the mantra, deeper than the current practice of reciting the words alone. Sri Swami Vishwananda is currently bringing back this ancient wisdom. (*Gayatri Mudra practices available through the Sri Swami Vishwananda organization. For more info visit: www.Vishwananda.org*)

All the problems of a person are solved if he/she is endowed with the gift of righteous wisdom. Once endowed with such wisdom, a man neither entangles himself in misfortune, nor does he tread the wrong path. A wise man finds a solution to all outstanding problems. Only those who do not think correctly find difficulty and take wrong steps due to imprudence. Chanting of Gayatri Mantra removes this deficiency. Righteous wisdom starts emerging soon after Japa (recitation) of the Gayatri Mantra is performed.

Due to its great power, the Gayatri Mantra had become, over time, the sole property of the Brahmins, who abused their power to maintain a hold of the common people. The great Hindu reformer, Swami Dayanand Saraswati however freed the mantra from the command of the brahmins, and made it freely available to the entire world.

Understanding the many complex levels of the Gayatri, now let's explore how to articulate it and incorporate it into our daily life so that we may benefit from the many gifts it offers.

OM...
 BHUH BHUVAH SVAH
 TAT SAVITUR VARENIUM
 BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI
 DHIYO YO NAHA PRACHODAYAT

Should be pronounced as:

OM...
 BHOO BHUVAH SVA-HA
 TAT SAVITUH VARE-UNYUM
 BHARGO DEVASYA DHEEMAHE
 DHIYO-YO NAHA PRACHO-DAYAAT

- Sign () over, indicates that the letters have to be joined together
- Sign () over, indicates extra stress on that letter
- Sign () under, indicates a lesser stress on that letter
- Sign () over the "e", indicates it is to be pronounced as "a" in ANCIENT
- Sign () under, indicates is to be cut short and only half pronounced
- Sign () between letters indicates a very slight break or a pause

The individual words and characters of the Mantra have a meaning of their own than can be defined as follows:

Gayatri

Gaya means Life Force (Pran) and Tri is Protector. The Protector of the life force within.

Om:

The primeval sound that represents Brahma. The first sound of creation. Whatever has existed, whatever exists, and whatever is likely to exist hereafter is OM. It is the ultimate reality. OM is used as a synonym for God. God expressed OM, therefore it is the love expression of God. OM is love.

Bhuh:

The physical world that embodies the vital spiritual energy or 'Pran'. The gross, Earth plane. It destroys attachment. Bhuh implies the removal of afflictions of three kinds, that no human being is immune to: 1) Pertaining to body and soul, such as defective knowledge, ignorance, passions and pains of opposites 2) As coming from one's enemies or sorrow that

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| | sprouts from material objects, and 3) From causes arising beyond human control, such as excessive rains, extremes of heat and cold, and mental worry. The presiding element is Fire. |
| Bhuvah: | The mental world and destroyer of all sufferings. The astral plane. The presiding element is Ether. It removes agonies and is the destroyer of pain, sorrow and mental obstructions like grief and anxiety. |
| Swaha: | The spiritual world that embodies happiness. The celestial plane. The causal. Heaven. All pervading bliss. The giver of happiness. Destroys sensory obstructions like pride, through knowledge. The presiding force is the Sun. |
| Tat: | Stands for "That" or God, referring to transcendental Paramatma (Ultimate Spirit). The ultimate Reality defies all description through speech or language. It also means to spread, extend or help. It is pervasive, extending on all sides, worthy of our faith. |
| Savitur: | The Bright Sun or the Creator and Preserver of World and the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. It is equated with the vivifying power contained within the Sun. This power enlightens and heals. |
| Varenium: | To adore. It implies the surrender of the seeker to the will of God. |
| Bhargo: | Destroyer of all sins and ignorance. The pure effulgence of God. All resolves, doubts, desires and urges of the mind lay hidden in the subconscious. They rise to the surface and become active by stimulating molecules when we breathe. These impure tendencies, unpleasant emotions and sentiments are kept under control, regulated and transformed by the influence of pure effulgence (Bhargo) on the nervous system. This is how Gayatri becomes the redeemer of the fallen. |
| Devasya: | Divine Deity or Supreme Lord. Resplendent. Divine Grace. |
| Dheemahe: | To meditate on and take in. To hold in heart. To embrace. It is pure radiant splendor of God that we embrace in our hearts and in our minds. |
| Dhiyo: | The intellect, intelligence. It is action (karma) which is the vivifying power contained within the Sun. It promotes and guides. |
| Yo: | The Light. Who or which. |
| Nah: | Our or He. |
| Prachodayat: | Inspire or Enlighten. Urge, guide or a prayer. |

Thus, the Gayatri Mantra can be translated as follows:

**We meditate on the glory of the Creator;
Who has created the Universe;
Who is worthy of Worship;
Who is the embodiment of Knowledge and Light;
Who is the remover of all Sin and Ignorance;
May He enlighten our Intellect.**

or

**Oh God! Thou art the Giver of Life,
Remover of pain and sorrow,
The Bestower of happiness,
Oh! Creator of the Universe,
May we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light,
May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.**

We can say that Gayatri Mantra basically consists of three parts:

1. Praise
2. Meditation
3. Prayer

While chanting the mantra, we first praise the God or the Divine Power, meditate upon it in all reverence, and then finally pray or make an appeal to God to awaken and strengthen our intellectual powers.

Ideally the Gayatri Mantra would be recited three times a day, at dawn, noon and dusk. The day is divided into three parts and has three aspects. By reciting the Gayatri during each part of the day, the opportunity to move through obstacles is maximized. This also serves to reduce the effects of wrong acts through the day. It's like paying cash for goods instead of buying on credit. There is no accumulation of karmic debt as each day's karma is atoned for that day by reciting the Gayatri. If there is not the availability of time during the day to practice recitation three times, the Satvic hours of the morning (4am-8am) are particularly conducive for this mantra.

The mind often like to know what to expect, so creating a routine for your mantra practice is very helpful, whether it's a certain number of repetitions or repetitions for a certain number of days. A typical traditional practice would be to recite the mantra either 108 times (one mala) in a sitting, or for a period of 40 days. The period of 40 days has been widely recognized as an auspicious period both in the East and the West since ancient times. If you decide that the Gayatri practice is useful, then you might want to continue it for a longer period.

It has been said that there is freedom in discipline; and choosing to do a regular practice frees the mind from wondering each day, what will be done today. It is important not to do the mantra practice with rote repetition, but rather, with feeling and awareness.

Many musical artists have taken the Gayatri Mantra and set it to music, the most notable being Deva Premal. Deva's rendition of the Gayatri Mantra is not only accurately produced, but in creating such a powerful and beautiful musical track on *The Essence*, she inspires fans worldwide to be internally singing the Gayatri while they are shopping, running errands, etc. instead of having random mental thoughts pervading their consciousness. Cher showcased Deva's haunting "Gayatri Mantra" on her *Living Proof Farewell Tour*, bringing humanity's most ancient mantra to the mainstream. This is another benefit of having a mantra practice – not only

does reciting a mantra help an individual through the prayer itself, it stops the negative effect of what might be happening in the mind if it weren't otherwise occupied. Other artists who have created beautiful renditions of the Gayatri include Larisa Stow & Gathering Guru, Wah! and Girish.

Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati has created a CD of 4 x 108 repetitions of the Gayatri, without music. This CD can be helpful correct pronunciation, for keeping track of how many malas you do, and for playing in the background while you are engaged in other activities but keeping your mind on the Gayatri. This CD is available through www.Swamij.com.

However you choose to practice, incorporating the Gayatri Mantra into your daily routine will yield powerful results on many levels. When solar energy is drawn down into the human egoic field, can darkness triumph? When you call upon the radiant light, can sorrow prevail, ignorance confuse or egoism blind? Rely on the Gayatri Mantra to impart illumination and see what miracles become manifest in your life.

Additional Sources: "The Great Science and Philosophy of Gayatri" by Shree Ram Sharma Acharya, Shanti Kunj, Hardwaar, Uttar Pradesh, India, and www.eaglespace.com/gwords2.html