

Special Topic: Gayatri Mantra—Excerpts from The Pravachan at The Sunday

Satsangh of PBHM on December 10, 2018

(December 12 –December 18, 2018)

(1) **What is Gayatri Mantra? Ans:**

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः ।
तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

“Om, Bhur Bhuva Swaha, Tat Savitur Varenyam, Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi, Dhiyo Yonah Prochodayaat’ Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti hi”

Word-by-Word Translation:

“I pray to that (Tat) God (Devasya), who exists on earth (Bhur), on astral plane (ether) or all around me (Bhuva), and in the heavens (Swaha), and who is shining brilliantly (Bhargo) like the most prominent (Varenyam) Sun (Savitur) (or the Sun of Suns), for transmitting from Him (Yo) to me (Nah) the knowledge and wisdom (Dhiyo).”

(2) **What Vedic Literature Does Gayatri Mantra come from? Ans:** *It is from Rig Veda (3.62.10: Mandala 3 (Book 3), Hymn/Sukta 62 (Chapter 62), Shloka 10 (Stanza/Verse 10). Vedas are divided into 4 divisions: (a) Samhitas (Collections of Mantras or hymns/Suktas), Aranyakas (Rituals), Brahmanas (Commentaries on Rituals), and Upanishads (Philosophy). In Rig Veda, there are a total of 1028 hymns/suktas (Chapters) consisting of 10,600 shlokas (Verses), which are classified into 10 Mandalas (Books).*

(3) **Who Wrote the Gayatri Mantra? Ans:** *Maha Rishi (or Bhahmarshi) Vishvamitra wrote it >5000 years ago. There are 7 Rishis who are credited to composing the Vedas. According to Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, these Rishis are: Atri, Bharadwaj, Bhrigu, Gautam, Jamadagni, Vasishta, and Vishvamitra. According to some other accounts such as Shrimad Bhagavatam, one or two other Rishis are either added or substituted, mainly Agastya, Angirasa or Kaushyapa. Although Samhitas themselves never mention which Rishi wrote which part of the Vedas, the information about it can often be obtained from either the Upanishads or the Puranas. It is generally agreed that Sage Vishvamitra wrote Mandala 3 where the Gayatri Mantra comes from.*

(4) **Which Deity does Gayatri Mantra aim at? Ans:** *A simple Google search gives a wide variety of answers: Some say it is aimed at Goddess Gayatri, some say Surya, some others say Shiva or Vishnu? But a vast majority of*

Google results point to Gayatri Devi or Sun God or Paramaatman (Brahman).

Let us examine which one of these is the most accurate answer?

- (5) **(a) Gayatri:** In the entire Gayatri Mantra, there is no mention of Gayatri Devi anywhere! Then why is it called Gayatri Mantra? **Gayatri is one of the poetic styles of Vedas, called Chandas.** There are in all 26 different kinds of Chandas in Vedic Literature. Gayatri Chanda consists of 3 lines of 8 syllables each with a total of 24 (3x8) syllables. Each line normally contains 3 words. For example:

Tat Sa vi t ur Va r en i a (y) m(1+3+4=8)

Bh a rg o D e va sy a Dh i m ah i(2+3+3=8)

Dh i yo Y o nah Pr ach o d a y at(2+2+4=8)

Similarly, Anushtup Chanda has 4 lines with 8 syllables each, with a total of 32 syllables, and Pankti Chanda has 5x8 = 40 syllables.

Note: Om, Bhur, Bhuva, Swaha, which precede Gayatri Mantra are not part of the original Gayatri Mantra. While Om is the universal divine sound for communication with God, Bhur Bhuv Swaha are called Mahavyahritis or the Great Mystical Utterances borrowed from Taittiriya Aranyaka (2.11.1-8).

- (b) **Surya:** As described above, Gayatri Mantra does have a reference to Surya or Savitur. But does it really aim at Surya? Let us carefully examine the word-by-word meaning of Gayatri Mantra given above. It says I pray to that God, who exists on earth (Bhur), all around me (Bhuva), and in the heavens (Swaha), and who is brilliantly shining like the most prominent (Varenyam) Sun (or the Sun of Suns), to transmit to me His knowledge and wisdom". **The two key words here are (a) Bhuv and (b) Varenyam. The physical sun is not all around us at night. Secondly, it refers to the most important (Shreshtha) Sun or the Sun of Suns.** Our sun is one of the trillions of stars in the universe, and is only a low or mid-sized star. There are many stars in this universe, which can literally accommodate hundreds or even thousands of our sun inside them. To give a picture of how big is our own sun compared to earth, at least a million earths can be comfortably placed inside our sun. So, it is impossible to imagine the vastness of our universe, let alone grasp the enormity of 13 other universes besides ours as mentioned in the Vedas! All these suns were created by one and only God (referred to as Brahman or Paramaatman). Therefore, to place our Sun, who is only considered as one of the many deities that we worship, into the rank of God (Brahman/Paramaatman), who created the Sun along with trillions of other such Suns, would not be too logical.

(c) **God/Brahman/Paramaatman:** For reasons given under (b) above, **Gayatri Mantra** seems to be aimed at the Ultimate Truth of this Universe, namely, *the one and only **God/Brahman/Paramaatman**, who has no beginning nor end, whose power is unlimited, and who exists everywhere, including inside, outside and all around everything that exists!*