



The MEANING of the GĀYATRĪ-MANTRA

SARVAMANGALA FOUNDATION

Explanation by Āchārya Vidyābhāskar

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TEMPLATE AND LAYOUT DESIGNER

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CONTENT DESIGNER

Divya S. Kaushik, B. Lustig

PRIMARY TYPEFACES

Cormorant Garamond

EB Garamond

Goldenbook

Monlam

Sanskrit 2003

Trajan Pro 3

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Johanna Rentsch, T. Laufer, Julian M. Stuart, Hima Bindu Rebbely, Milan Amin, Divya Sagar Kaushik, B. Lustig, A. Prajapati, Aditya Gurtu, Dr. Jaimin Shukla

— Āchārya Vidyābhāskar, publisher

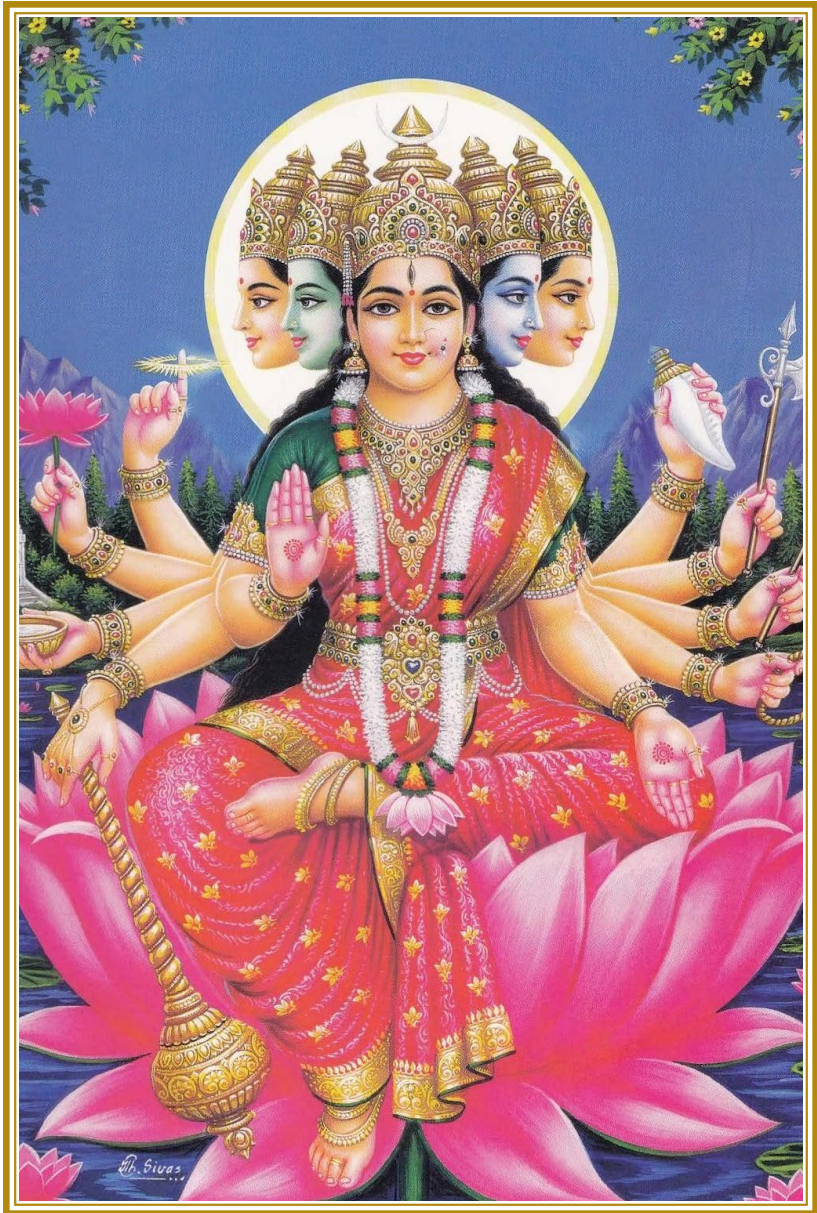


SARVAMANGALA

गायत्रीमन्त्रव्याख्यानम्

Gāyatrī-Mantra-Vyākhyānam

The MEANING of the
GĀYATRĪ-MANTRA



GODDESS GĀYATRĪ-DEVĪ

Gāyatrī is the Goddess embodying the energy of the Gāyatrī-Mantra

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गायत्रीमन्त्रव्याख्यानम्

Gāyatrī-Mantra-Vyākhyānam

The MEANING of the GĀYATRĪ-MANTRA

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः । तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

– ऋग्वेद ३.६२.१० यजुर्वेद ३.३५, २२.९, ३०.२, ३६.३ सामवेद १४६२

Om bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ | tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīma-
hi | dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt ||

– Ṛgveda 3.62.10, Yajurveda 33.35, 22.9, 30.2, 36.6, Sāmaveda 1462

Essential Meaning

Om Earth → Space → Absolute Light (of Consciousness)

Let us meditate on that beloved Radiance of (our) invigorating
Luminous (Consciousness), who profoundly inspires our virtuous
thoughts.

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1. Three Basic Meanings of OM

Om has innumerable meanings; up to 84 distinct meanings can be identified in the scriptures. Om essentially means:

- the Absolute Reality or *parabrahma*
- the unification of the states of waking (A), dreaming (U), deep sleep (M) and the transcendent state of Absolute Awareness
- the unification of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti in one.

2. The Basic Meanings of Bhūḥ Bhuvaḥ Svaḥ: the three Vyāhṛtis

According to Manusmṛti 2.76, the three Vyāhṛtis or enunciations ‘bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ’ summarise the three syllables A – U – M and thus simply are a code for the secret word OM. Moreover, each symbolises one of the three main Vedas: the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda. This view goes back to the ancient Brāhmaṇa-, Āraṇyaka- and Upaniṣad explanations.

Bhūḥ

Grammatically, bhūḥ means ‘earth’: It is formed from the root √bhū sattāyām with the kvip-suffix in the sense of ‘bhavati asmin’ (that in which one exists). Bhū means ‘to be’ (vidyamānatā) and ‘to become’ (utpatti).

Bhūḥ thus primarily means:

- The earth, pṛthivī
- The place where one is, sthāna
- In a Vedic context, it can also indirectly refer to the Agni of the fire ceremony, yajñāgni

In Yoga, it represents the lowest Cakra (earth).

Bhuvah

Bhuvah is an indeclinable ('bhuvah') derived from the same root √bhū with asun and kit-affix in accordance with Uṇādi-Sūtra 4.216 bhūrañjibhyām kit.

Bhuvah primarily means:

- Space, ākāśa

It is sometimes described as the space in between the earth and the sky, antarikṣa.

In Yoga, it represents the interim space between the lowest Cakra (earth) and the uppermost Cakra (space).

Svah

Svah is an indeclinable ('svah') related to 'su' (to be beautiful) and refers to the 'beyond realm', but also to space (ākāśa) and the realm of light (svarga).

Svaḥ thus primarily means:

- Light, the beyond-realm
- Beauty, śobhana
- Absolute Space

In Yoga, Svaḥ represents either the highest Cakra or the transcendent state beyond the Cakras.

3. **Word-By-Word Explanation of the Gāyatrīmantra**

Grammatically easier structure:

tat vareṇyam bhargah savitur devasya dhīmahi yah nah dhiyah pracodayāt

Let us meditate on that beloved Radiance of the invigorating Deva, the Luminous One who profoundly inspires our virtuous engagements or thoughts.

tat – that

‘That’: either accusative referring to ‘bhargah’; or a substitute for ‘tasya’ (‘tasya savitur devasya’).

savitur – of the invigorating

Visargasandhi of ‘savituḥ’, 6th or genitive case of ‘savitr’.

‘Invigorator’, ‘creator’, a name of Savitr, the Sun. The word ‘savitr’ is derived from the root √sū (ṣūñ) + ṛc (Pāṇini 3.1.133). The root has two basic meanings:

- prāṇiprasava: to set in motion, urge, impel, invigorate, create, produce beigns
- prāṇigarbha-vimocana: to beget, procreate, bring forth, bear

Thus, the word ‘savitr̥’ can be interpreted to refer to the Sun in its quality of invigorating beings and urging them to awaken to life.

vareṇyam – choice, choicest, most excellent, cherished, beloved

2nd or accusative case, serving as an adjective for ‘bhargaḥ’, ‘radiance’. The word ‘vareṇya’ is derived from the root √vr̥(ñ) + eṇya in accordance with Uṇādi-Sūtra 3.98 *vr̥ñā eṇyah*. The root has the basic meaning of:

- varaṇa: to choose, solicit, prefer, love, cherish

The root has a wide spectrum of meanings directly linked with German ‘wollen’ and Latin ‘voluntas’ (as in English ‘voluntary’, ‘something freely chosen’).

The range of meanings includes: to choose for one’s self; to choose in marriage; to woo; to ask a person on behalf of; to solicit anything from; to ask or request that; to like better than, prefer to; to like, love (as opp. to “hate”); to choose or pick out a person (for a boon), grant (a boon) to; ask or sue for (acc.) or on behalf of; to choose as a spouse.

Thus, the basic sense of ‘vareṇya’ is ‘vriyate lokair iti’, ‘that which is chosen, preferred or loved by people’.

Amarasimha explains that ‘vareṇya’ is one of the 17 words that have the sense of ‘śreṣṭha’, ‘best’, ‘most excellent’, or ‘pradhāna’, anything ‘preeminent’.

bhargo – on the Radiance

Visargasandhi of ‘bhargaḥ’, 2nd or accusative case of ‘bhargas’.

‘Bhargas’ is neuter and is derived from the root √bhṛj + asun-affix in accordance with Uṇādi-Sūtra 4.215 *añcyañjijyujibhṛjibhyaḥ kuñca*.

The basic meanings of the root are:

- to roast, to fry, to parch, to scorch, to burn up

It thus refers to the scorching Radiance of the Sun – jyotiḥ, tejaḥ.

In its masculine form, ‘Bharga’ is defined as ‘bhṛjyate kāmādir anena’, ‘he by whom the afflictive emotions such as obsessive desire are burnt up’. This sense can also be transferred to the neuter form.

devasya – of the Deva, the luminous one

6th or genitive case of ‘deva’. ‘Deva’ is masculine and is derived with the ac-affix (Pāṇini 3.1.134) from the root √div, which has ten basic meanings:

1. Krīḍā: ‘to play’. In this sense, Deva means ‘the playful one’. A Deva or Devī is playful in his or her creativity, inner freedom to move at will – for example as a khecara or khecarī, someone moving through space in complete freedom or *svacchanda*. It also

refers to the playful way in which the Deva of Absolute Awareness – the all-creating king – gives rise to the infinite display of *samsāra* merely in the form of a playful effulgence or outward radiance in the mirror of his own nature.

2. Vijigīṣā: ‘to seek to triumph over’. In this sense, Deva means ‘one who seeks to triumph over’ and refers to either a Deva such as the Sun overcoming the external darkness and slumber at dawn; or, the Devas, the gods, overcoming the external forces of evil or *asuras*; or the inner Deva of Awareness dissolving the inner negative emotions or *kleśas* of obsessive desire and greed, aversion and irritation, selfish confusion, pride and conceit, envy and jealousy – and all the endless minor emotional states they bring about.
3. Vyavahāra: ‘how to conduct oneself’. In this sense, Deva is ‘one who knows the right, auspicious conduct and teaches it to others.’
4. Dyuti: ‘to shine, to be luminous, to illuminate’. In this sense, Deva means ‘the luminous one’, ‘the one who illuminates the moving and unmoving world’. This is the sense that most traditional commentators adopt in the commentaries on the Upaniṣads.
5. Stuti: ‘to praise, to adore’. In this sense, Deva is someone who is ‘worthy of praise or adoration’.
6. Moda: ‘to delight, to be blissful, to be joyfully appreciative’. In this sense, Deva is someone who is ‘full of bliss and grants bliss

to others’, or ‘one who is full of delight and appreciation for the good qualities in others’.

7. Mada: ‘to be proud’. There are Devas in the higher Lokas or worlds who have not attained liberation and enlightenment. They are said to be among those beings who, while being exceedingly pure, have retained subtle pride. Due to this subtle pride, these Devas will eventually – after extensive periods of time – die and be reborn like all other beings into the womb of a new mother. This is why it is said in the scriptures that even an Indra, a Brahmā or a Viṣṇu can be reborn as an ant if they do not strive for enlightenment and realise the true nature of all things.
8. Svapna: ‘to dream, to sleep’. In this sense, Deva means ‘one who causes beings to dream or to fall asleep’ or ‘one who dreams’. A Deva is ‘one who causes beings to fall asleep in the unmanifest primordial state of *avyakta* when a world-cycle ends.’ This is called the time of dissolution or pralaya. Beings who have not attained liberation are then re-awakened in the next world-cycle along with their karmas and subtle impressions. In the sense of ‘dreaming’, Deva is also the mind itself which causes consciousness to fall into the hypnotic slumber or dream of *samsāric* experiences, and also very concretely: actual dreams. The mind can experience dreams unconsciously like in the case of most beings, or consciously (lucidly) like *yogīs* who have learned how to dream lucidly.
9. Kānti: ‘to be lovely’: In this sense, Deva means ‘one who is lovely’.

It can also mean ‘one whose aspirations or desires always turn out to be true or *satya*’ or ‘whose attainment or *prāpti* is lovely and delightful’.

10. Gati: ‘to move’ (and in a secondary sense, ‘to understand’): In this sense, Deva is ‘one who is present in all states, in all things, in all moments’, i.e. Awareness or Consciousness as the pervasive presence or space within which all moments of experience occur. In this sense, Deva can also mean ‘one who should be truly understood, *adhigata*’.

dhīmahī – let us meditate

Vidhi liñ ātmanepada uttamapuruṣa bahuvacana or optative 1st person plural of the root √dhyai, to contemplate, to meditate, to pay attention. This is also the root of the word dhyāna, meditation.

It thus simply means: Let us meditate.

There are several definitions of dhyāna in the scriptures. We shall follow that found in Yogasūtra 3.1-2:

deśabandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā

Fastening the mind to a *single spot or content* is called holding *attention*.

tatra pratyaya-ekatānatā dhyānam

A singular stream of cognisance *directed* towards that *spot or content* is *then* called meditation.

The Gāyatrīmantra is thus a call to learn to meditate by concentrating the mind on the Radiance of the outer life-giving Sun and the invigorating inner Sun of Awareness.

dhiyo – our virtuous thoughts or engagements

Visargasandhi of ‘dhiyaḥ’, accusative plural of Dhīḥ, a feminine noun.

Dhī is derived from the root √dhyai with the kvip-affix: to contemplate, to meditate, to pay attention.

It can have several meanings:

- Karma: Virtuous engagement, such as rituals, ceremonies, spiritual activities. In a Vedic context, Dhī is often used in this sense.
- Prajñā: Wisdom
- Saṁvit/Cit: Complete Awareness, Consciousness
- Buddhi: Intelligence, the subtle mind that can discern truth with certainty (niścaya-ātmikā-buddhi)
- Dharma-ādi-viṣayā buddhi: Virtuous thought or insight concerning Dharma and the like
- Medhā: Intelligence that has the capacity of sustaining insights
- Prekṣā: Observational Awareness
- Upalabdhi: Perception, understanding, insight

According to the language philosopher Rudra, the dynamic of Dhī has eight expressions, *aṣṭadhā dhiyah śaktiḥ (aṣṭadhā-dhiguṇāḥ)*:

1. Śuśrūṣā: the desire to learn
2. Śravaṇa: learning
3. Grahaṇa: comprehending
4. Dhāraṇa: retaining and integrating what has been comprehended
5. Ūha: deliberating critically upon what has been comprehended
6. Apoha: completely resolving the aspects that have been critically deliberated upon and becoming doubtless
7. Vijñāna: deep insight, realisation
8. Tattvajñāna: awareness of truth, knowledge of truth: the state of things as they are: tat-tva.

The Gāyatrīmantra can be understood as a prayer to inspire practitioners to seek knowledge, to learn, to comprehend, to retain and integrate what has been comprehended, to deliberate critically, to completely resolve all aspects that have been deliberated upon critically, to attain deep insight or realisation, and to finally accomplish the awareness or knowledge of truth: to realise the state of things as they are.

yo – he who

Visargasandhi of ‘yah’, 1st or nominative case, the masculine relative pronoun. Example in English: “Ever happy is he who meditates” – Sanskrit: sa sadā sukhī yo dhyāyati.

Here the ‘yaḥ’ refers back to ‘devasya’, ‘of the Deva’ – ‘upon the beloved Radiance of the invigorating Deva who...’

naḥ – our

6th or genitive case plural of ‘asmat’, ‘us’, thus it means ‘our’. The ‘our’ refers to ‘our Dhīs’, i.e. ‘our virtuous engagements, thoughts or insights’.

pracodayāt –

Vidhi or āśīr-liṅ parasmaipada prathamapuruṣa ekavacana, or optative 3rd person singular of pra+√cud. The root ‘cud’ means ‘to goad, to inspire, to encourage’. The prefix ‘pra’ has the sense of prakarṣa, ‘excellence, high intensity, i.e. thoroughly, definitely, absolutely, profoundly’.

The verb thus means ‘to thoroughly inspire’, to ‘profoundly inspire’.

Sāyaṇa has taken the verb to mean ‘prerayet’, ‘may he profoundly inspire’. Other scholars like Akhaṇḍānanda take it to mean simply ‘he who by his very nature inspires’ in an absolute present sense, not as a wish that ‘he may inspire’. The very nature of the Sun of Absolute Awareness is that it contains within itself the quality of awakening the deluded mind to its true nature.

The Gāyatrīmantra thus hints at the inherently liberative quality of Absolute Awareness. When the deluded mind directs itself towards the Sun of Absolute Awareness through meditation, the liberative

quality of Awareness becomes active and begins to inspire the mind towards virtuous engagements, karmas, and the eightfold process of insight or dhī that culminates in the knowledge of Absolute Reality, *tattvajñāna*.

4. Deeper Explanations and Perspectives on the Gāyatrīmantra

The three Vyāhṛtis as the manifestations of Brahman

In his remarks on the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, Sāyaṇa states that the three Vyāhṛtis express Brahman which has manifested as the three Lokas. Thus, their ultimate purpose is not to express the three worlds, but to point to Brahman which has manifested itself as the three worlds.

Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara states that the three Vyāhṛtis should be considered the essence of the three Vedas in the same way that butter is the essence of curd.

Vyāhṛti refers to something that is to be pronounced. Satya or Truth itself is considered a great Vyāhṛti: ‘tasmai haitāṃ śokatarāṃ vyāhṛtim uvāca yat satyaṃ tasmād u satyam eva vadet’ (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa).

Vyāhṛtis also refer to the limbs of one super-organism, vaiśvānara or viśvarūpa:

ya eṣa etasmin maṇḍale puruṣas tasya bhūr iti śiraḥ: Bhūḥ is

the head of that universal being in this Maṇḍala

bhuva iti bāhuḥ: the all-encompassing space is like the arms
(which embrace everything)

suvariti pratiṣṭhā (pāda): support, foundation.

– Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa

This view is also found in Maitrī-Upaniṣad 6.5/6/35.

Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 2.23.3:

When Prajāpati meditated on the three Vedas, the three Vy-
āhṛtis arose from it – bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ – bhūr iti vā agniḥ,
bhuva iti vāyuḥ, suvar ity ādityaḥ...

When he continued to meditate on these three, the three letters
of OM arose from it.

Prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat, tebhyo'bhītaptebhyas trayī vidyā
saṃprāsraivat, tām abhyatapat, tasyā abhitaptāyā etāny akṣarāṇi
saṃprāsraivanta bhūr bhuvaḥ svar iti

In other words:

The three Vyāhṛtis, instead of just pointing at the three realms,
actually point at the three manifestations of Light in the three
realms.

In the same way, Viśva, Taijasa and Prājña represent the way
Consciousness manifests in the three states of consciousness:
Waking, Dreaming and Deep Sleep.

This last important point leads to Sāyaṇa's insight that Brahman is
the inner Light.

In Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 6.3-4, a beautiful connection is made
between the Gayatrīmantra, the three Vyāhṛtis and the Ṛgveda man-
tra *Om madhu vātā ṛtāyate* (1.90.60):

tat savitur vareṇyam

On that beloved (glory) of the invigorator

Honey the winds, honey the streams drip on the righteous
person, honey-filled may the plants be for us. Bhūḥ svāhā!

bhargo devasya dhīmahi

On the glory of the (invigorating) luminous one let us meditate

Honey the night, honey the morn, honey-filled the earthly
expanse; Honey may Father Sky be to us! Bhuvaḥ svāhā!

Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

*that he may profoundly inspire our virtuous engagements or
thoughts*

Honey-filled the tree, honey-filled the Sun; filled with honey
the cows; honey-filled may they be to us! Svaḥ svāhā!

The three Vyāhṛtis in the Taittirīya-Upaniṣad

The meanings of the three syllables are given in great detail in the fifth Anuvāka of the Śikṣāvallī of the very early Taittirīya-Upaniṣad:

Fifth Anuvāka

‘Bhūḥ’, ‘Bhuvaḥ’, ‘Suvaḥ’:

These are the three utterances or *Vyāhṛtis*.

Among these there is *also* this fourth one,
which the son of Mahācamasa came to know:

‘Mahaḥ’.

That is Brahman, that is the true self.
Its limbs are the other luminous ones or *Devatās*.

‘Bhūḥ’ truly is this world.

‘Bhuvaḥ’ truly is the space in-between.

‘Suvaḥ’, the luminous, is the realm beyond.

‘Mahaḥ’ is the Sun.

By the Sun all the realms are glorified.

‘Bhūḥ’ truly is Agni.

‘Bhuvaḥ’ truly is Vāyu.

‘Suvaḥ’ truly is the Sun.

‘Mahaḥ’ is the Moon.

By the Moon all the lights are glorified.

‘Bhūḥ’ truly is the Ṛg mantras.
‘Bhuvah’ truly is the Sāma mantras.
‘Suvah’ truly is the Yajur mantras.
‘Mahaḥ’ is Brahman, the syllable OM.
By Brahman, the syllable OM,
all the Vedas are glorified.

‘Bhūḥ’ truly is the Prāṇa life-breath.
‘Bhuvah’ truly is the Apāna life-breath.
‘Suvah’ truly is the Vyāna life-breath.
‘Mahaḥ’ is nourishment.
By nourishment
all the life-breaths are glorified.

Thus these four truly have a fourfold explanation,
fourfold, fourfold are the Vyāhṛtis.

One who realises these, realises Brahman.
To him all the luminous ones, *the Devas*, bring offerings.

Sixth Anuvāka

That which is this space within the heart:
within this is the embodiment consisting of mind *or awareness*,
the immortal, the golden.
In the middle of the palate,
that which hangs down like a nipple,
is the origin of Indra, *the uvula*,

the doorway leading to the realisation of one's own true nature,
where the hairline parts
dividing both halves of the skull.

With 'Bhūḥ' one settles in Agni,
with 'Bhuvah' in Vāyu,

with 'Suvaḥ' in the Sun,
with 'Mahah' in Brahman.

One attains self-governance.
One attains the lord of the mind.
One becomes the lord of speech,
the lord of sight,
the lord of hearing,
the lord of consciousness.

Then he becomes this:
Brahman which has space as its body,
whose nature is truth,
who is the resting place of all the Prāṇas,
whose mind is bliss,
abounding in peace,
immortal.

'Thus, O Prācīna-yogya, meditate!' *said the son of Mahācamasa.*

5. The Traditional Bhāṣya or Commentary by Sāyaṇācārya

Sāyaṇa, the greatest of all Vedic commentators, offers four alternative meanings for the Gāyatrīmantra.

Meaning 1

Yaḥ savitā devaḥ naḥ asmākaṁ dhiyaḥ karmāṇi dharmādiviṣayā
vā buddhīḥ pracodayāt prerayet tat tasya devasya savituḥ sarvān-
taryāmitayā prerakasya jagatsraṣṭuḥ parameśvarasya vareṇyam
sarvaiḥ upāsyatayā jñeyatayā ca sambhajanīyam bhargaḥ avidyā-tat-
kāryayor bhajanād bhargaḥ svayamjyotiḥ parabrahmātmakaṁ tejaḥ
dhīmahi vyaṁ dhyāyāmaḥ |

Of the luminous one who inspires our thoughts – The invigorating luminous one who inspires our Dhīs, our positive engagements or thoughts related to Dharma and the like; the luminous one, the invigorator who enthuses us as the inner guide, the supreme lord who instils the world with creativity.

Upon the beloved Radiance – ‘Beloved’ because it is cherished by all, being that which everyone approaches through meditation and awareness. It is called ‘Radiance’ because it dispels selfish confusion and its effects. It is a self-luminous Radiance, the Luminosity whose very nature is the supreme Brahman, utmost Reality.

Let us meditate – Let us place our attention.

Meaning 2

yadvā | tat iti bhargo-viśeṣaṇam | savituḥ devasya tattādṛśam bhargo
dhīmahi | kim tad ity apekṣāyām āha | ya iti liṅga-vyatyayaḥ | yad
bhargo dhiyaḥ pracodayāt | tad dhyāyema iti samanvayaḥ |

‘That’ refers to ‘bhargaḥ’, ‘Radiance’. Let us meditate on the Radiance of the invigorating luminous one. Of what nature is that Radiance? ‘yaḥ’ can be understood as a Vedic form of ‘yat’. The Radiance that inspires our Dhīs, *our virtuous engagements or thoughts related to Dharma and the like*: this is what we should meditate upon.

Meaning 3

yadvā | yaḥ savitā sūryo dhiyaḥ karmāṇi pracodayāt prerayati ta-
sya sūryasya sarvasya prasavituḥ devasya dyotamānasya tat sarvaiḥ
dṛśyamānatayā prasiddham vareṇyam sarvaiḥ sambhajanīyam bhar-
gaḥ pāpānām tāpakam tejo-maṇḍalam dhīmahi dhyeyatayā manasā
dhārayema |

The invigorator, the sun, who inspires our engagements – of that invigorating shining luminous one, let us meditate upon the beloved Radiance cherished by all, beheld by all – the Mandala of Light which burns up all pāpas, *all negative states and their consequences in the form of actions which cause the mind to fall (p into lower states*. Meditation means to hold the mind’s attention.

Meaning 4

yadvā | bhargaḥ-śabdena annam abhidhīyate | yaḥ savitā devo dhiyaḥ

pracodayati tasya prasādād bhargaḥ annādi-lakṣaṇam phalam dhīma-
hi dhārayāmaḥ | tasya ādhāra-bhūtā bhavema ityārthaḥ |

The word ‘Radiance’ can also mean ‘nourishment’. Of that invigorating luminous one who inspires our Dhīs, *our engagements and thoughts about Dharma and the like* – let us meditate upon the fruit arising from his grace in the form of nourishment. May we have this as our fundament. This is the meaning.

6. Vedic Parallels

It is useful to look at other Vedic verses to gain a better understanding of the nature of the invigorating (savitā) Light of the Sun (sauram tejaḥ) as the inner light of Jñāna, awareness or knowledge (āntaram jñānātmakam).

Ṛgveda 1.6.3.

O mortals, *behold this wonder!*
Making light in the absence of light,
form in the absence of form,
he has emerged
together with *his brilliant* rays.

Sāyaṇa explains – ‘The absence of light’ represents the night in which the living being (prāṇī) is overcome by slumber and is devoid of *prajñāna*, insight and perception. ‘The absence of form’ represents the state of being formless (rūpa-rahita), since one is not manifest (anab-

hivyaktatva) due to being enveloped in darkness (andhakārāvṛtatva). 'He' refers to Indra in the form of Sūrya. Sūrya removes the darkness and thus makes light where no light was and form where no form was, resulting in *prajñāna*, insight.

1.35.6

**Steeds with white feet
have illuminated the people,
drawing the gold-yoked chariot –
forever do folks, all the worlds
dwell in the lap of the divine Savitṛ.**

Sāyaṇa explains – Savitṛ means the one who inspires (preraka). The steeds are the horses of Sūrya who draw his chariot. 'White' means 'like crystal'. As their feet appear like crystal (sa iva), the horses are said to have 'white feet'. The chariot is described as gold-yoked because the front part of the chariot, the yoke, is golden. 'Divine' means 'to be connected with all other Deities' (itara-deva-saṁbandhin). 'In the lap of' means to be 'in the presence of'. Not only the folks, the people, but all the worlds are in the presence of Sūrya for the sake of light (prakāśāya).

1.50.10

**Above the darkness
beholding the loftier light,
we have attained the Deity in the midst of the deities,
Sūrya, the utmost light.**

Sāyaṇa explains – ‘We’ means the practitioners (anuṣṭhātāraḥ). The darkness means the night, or it means vice (pāpa), that which causes the mind to fall (pātayati) into lower realms. What is beyond the darkness is that which is free of evil (pāpa-rahita). The Mantra is also explained by Taittirīya-Saṁhitā (5.1.8.6): ‘ “Ud vyaṁ tamasas pari” declares that pāpa is indeed darkness; they remove from us the darkness of pāpa.’

The Deity in the midst of the deities is Sūrya endowed with all virtues such as generosity and so on (dānādi-guṇa-yukta). ‘Beholding him’ means performing Upāsanā (meditative activity) upon him along with praises, offerings and so forth. Thus we attain the utmost light in the form of Sūrya. Taittirīya-Saṁhitā (5.1.8.6): ‘aganma jyotiruttamam’ declares Āditya to be the utmost light and that one attains union (sāyujya) with Āditya.’ ‘Whatever one worships in whatever manner, that one becomes’, states another Śruti (Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad).

1.113.1.

**This most excellent light of lights has come –
the wonderful *all*-illuminating *one* is born pervading *each and
all*.**

**Even as the night is the offspring of the Sun *after it sets*,
even so for *her* birth *the night* yields *her* place to Dawn.**

In view of Nirukta (2.19) Sāyaṇa explains the Mantra as follows – Among all luminaries such as the planets, the stars and the like, the

light called Dawn is the most excellent, the one most praiseworthy. Why is this so? The light of the stars only illuminates itself, not another. Although the moon illuminates another, its light is not very bright. Yet the light of Dawn is such that in an instance (yugapad eva) it illuminates the entire world by removing all darkness. Hence it is the most praiseworthy of all. Such a light has arrived in the direction of the East. And as it arrives, it illuminates all things enveloped in darkness. Its luminosity is all-pervading. When the Sun sets, it gives birth to the night. Likewise, the night yields her place for the birth of Dawn.

1.92.6

**We have crossed the limit of darkness –
 Breaking forth, Dawn makes the awareness of *all beings emerge.*
 Like a flirtatious *person* smiles
 for the delight of *another* while radiating brilliantly,
 of beautiful appearance she has swallowed
*the darkness for each and all to have a happy mind.***

Sāyaṇa explains – ‘The limit’ means ‘the place where the darkness ends’. ‘Makes the awareness’ means ‘Dawn establishes (nirmimīte) the perceptions (jñānāni) of all beings (sarveṣāṃ prāṇinām)’. Even as a flirtatious person with the ability to sway another smiles when coming into their presence, even so Dawn appears as if smiling, radiating brilliantly with her pristine light (nirmala-dīpti). Of beautiful form made of distinct light she has consumed the darkness in order for everyone to have a happy mind (sarveṣāṃ saumanasyāya).

2.27.11

**Neither the right nor the left do I discern,
neither the front nor the back, o Ādityas.
Yet to mature, yet to be guided, o Vasus,
led by you may I attain the fearless light!**

Sāyaṇa explains – One who is enveloped by the darkness of the night or by the inner darkness of ignorance (āntarād ajñānāt) does not discern the right or left, front or back. ‘Yet to mature’ means ‘one whose knowledge is not ripe’ (aparipakva-jñāna). ‘Vasu’ means ‘one who preserves’. O Vasus, led by you along the beautiful path (śobhane-na mārgeṇa) may I attain the fearless light, which is the light of the Sun (sauram tejaḥ) or the inner light of Jñāna, knowledge (āntaram jñānātmakam).

3.1.10

**O Vaiśvānara, I praise your splendours
whereby you, o perceptive one, are all-knowing.
The moment you are born
you fill all the worlds, earth and sky –
all, o Agni, you have encompassed with yourself.**

Sāyaṇa explains – ‘Your splendours’ are the ‘lights connected with you’. ‘Perceptive’ means ‘wise’. ‘Svar-vit’ (literally ‘one who has found the light’) means ‘all-knowing’ (sarva-vit, sarvajña). ‘The worlds’ means ‘those who are born as beings’. ‘You have encompassed with yourself’ means ‘you have comprehended all’.

3.22.2

O Agni worthy of veneration!
That radiance of yours
which is in the luminous *realm*,
on earth, in plants, in waters,
whereby you have spread out wide the interim *space* –
that brilliant light is *like* an ocean: the observer of humans.

In view of Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (7.1.23), Sāyaṇa explains the Mantra as follows – Agni’s radiance takes on many forms: in the luminous realm (dyuloka) his light is known as Āditya, the Sun. This is the known light. The hidden light is the effulgence in plants such the *potential of wood to burn*, or the *nectar of the Soma* found in the plants. O Agni, all this light which is present everywhere (ā sarvatra vartamānaṁ tejaḥ) is simply your light (tāvakaṁ eva). As the radiance in the form of Vāyu you spread out wide the interim space (ākāśa). Brilliantly shining thus you directly witness the activities of humans (sākṣitayā draṣṭā).

5.17.3

Indeed that *Sun is luminous* by Agni’s radiance,
who is yoked with power, with speech of *praise*,
by whose brilliance, like *that* of the Sun *itself*,
vast splendours shine forth.

Sāyaṇa explains – Agni is endowed with the power to protect the world (jagad-rakṣaṇa-samarthanena balena) and is yoked by speech of

praise. Agni's brilliance is like that of the luminous Sun. It pervades the entire universe. By his brilliance vast splendours – the lights – shine forth, and by his radiance the Sun itself is luminous.

Needless to say, there are innumerable explanations of the Sun as the inner Sun of Awareness in the later Vedic texts such as the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads.

These precious texts highlight the outer, inner and innermost interconnectedness of external nature, internal mental and astral phenomena as well as the innermost spiritual dimension of reality.

They demonstrate how

- 1. the outer Sun,**
- 2. the inner Eye or Vision, and**
- 3. the innermost Awareness or Consciousness**

are innately connected and are to be understood as interdependent manifestations of each other.

PRAYER *to*
GODDESS SARASVATĪ *to*
INCREASE *our* INTELLIGENCE



GODDESS SARASVATĪ, THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE PERSONIFIED

Illustration © Himalayan Art Resources

PRAYER to GODDESS SARASVATĪ to
INCREASE *our* INTELLIGENCE

ॐ नमस्ते शारदे देवि काश्मीरपुरवासिनि ।
त्वामहं प्रार्थये नित्यं विद्यादानं च देहि मे ॥

om namaste śārade devi kāśmīra-pura-vāsini
tvām ahaṁ prārthaye nityaṁ vidyā-dānaṁ ca dehi me

Om Obeisance to you, O Goddess Śāradā,
You who are like the Full-Moon in Autumn,
You who dwell in the Region of Kaśmīr!
I ever beseech you:
Grant me the gift of knowledge!

