

## Chapter VII. Gayatri: Mother Of Mantras

All that is visible shines as *Gayatri*, for speech is *Gayatri* and all objects are speech, are indicated by speech, and are subsumed in speech. It is speech that describes them, declares them, and denotes them. All objects are also of the world. Nothing can go beyond it. This world is the body of mankind; one can't leap out of the body. The breath (*prana*) that sustains a person is inside the heart (*hridaya*), and it cannot move outside and beyond the heart.

The *Gayatri* has four feet and six categories. The categories are speech, objects, world, body, breath, and heart (*vaak, bhutha, prithvi, sarira, prana, and hridaya*). The Supreme Being that is extolled by this *Gayatri* is indeed exalted, sacred, glorious. As has been said, all this objective multiplicity is but a fraction of His body. The number and nature, the measure and meaning of the objects are beyond understanding; yet all this is but a quarter of His magnificence. The other three quarters are His effulgent immortal form.

It is impossible to grasp the mystery of that splendour-filled form. This Supreme Being indicated by the *Gayatri* is indeed referred to as Brahman.

He is the sky (*akasa*), beyond the comprehension of a person; He is spoken of as “outside the personality of people (*bahirardhaa purushaakaashah*)” —this is the mark of the waking stage. The Supreme Being is the sky, inside the personality (*anthah purushaakaashah*) —this is the mark of the “dream stage”. He is the sky inside the heart of a person; He fills and fulfils it —this is the “deep-sleep stage”. Whoever knows this truth attains fullness and Brahman. That is, the one who knows the three states of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep (*jaagrath, swapna, and sushupti*) is himself Brahman.

How ridiculous it is that a person, known as a divine being and bearing the name of this embodiment of the *Atma*, should become the repository of egotism and consequent impurity, busy in the unholy pursuit of injustice! How calamitous! At least for being known even today as a “divine being”, one should try to practise the path that will endow one with an atom of that glory.

Then what should we say of *dharma* for people? How can people who have not cared to earn even the infinitesimal glory of the Primal Supreme Being be expected to practise *dharma* for people? Not even the most diligent search will now reveal a fraction of it! As the ancient sage (*rishi*) said,

The twice-born who gives up the morning-evening (*sandhya*) worship falls into perdition.

Those who neglect the morning-evening worship have no right to any other type of ritual.

*Samdhyaa heeno suchirnithyam, anarhah sarva karmasu*

*Yadh anyath kuruthe karmano thasya phala bhaagbhaveth.*

So say all the authoritative traditions (*dharma*) and *Vedas*. It is because the sages of ancient times performed the morning-evening worship for many years that they acquired long life, fame, glory, wisdom, and the splendour of Divinity; this is mentioned by Manu also. Therefore, from whatever point of view we consider, the *brahmin* who does not meditate on the *Gayatri* does not deserve that status.

Of course what is meant by *brahmin* in this context is the one who has realized the Brahman principle (*Brahmathathwa*) and who has purified himself by the practice of the ceaseless contemplation of Brahman. This has nothing to do with caste or even religion. Nevertheless, those who have inherited the name *brahmin* have a special responsibility to adhere to the morning-evening worship and the *Gayatri*.

### **The four duties of people**

What exactly is *sandhya*? *San* means “well” and *dhya* is derived from *dhyana*, so *sandhya* refers to proper or intense meditation (*dhyana*) on the Lord. It means concentration on the Godhead. To fix the mind on God, the activities have to be controlled. For success in that process of control, one should overcome the handicaps of the qualities (*gunas*), the pure, passionate, and dull (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*). When these forces of natural impulse predominate and try to direct along their channels, one must pray to God to negate their pull. That is the first duty of the one who strives toward God.

The rule of nature is that the morning is the period of pure (*sathwic*) quality, the noon of passionate (*rajasic*) quality, and the evening hour of dusk of dull (*thamasic*) quality. At dawn, the mind is awakened from the comfort of sleep liberated from agitations and depressions, so the mind is calm and clear. At that time, in that mental condition, meditation of the Lord is very fruitful, as everyone knows. This is why dawn worship (*praathah-sandhya*) is prescribed. But, ignorant of the significance, people continue doing the ritual in a blind mechanical way, simply because the ancients laid down the rule. The second duty is to perform the dawn worship, after realizing the inner and the deeper meaning of the same.

As day progresses, one is infused with the passionate quality (*rajoguna*), the active effortful nature, and one enters the field of daily work and toil. Before one takes the midday food, one is directed to meditate on the Lord again and to dedicate the work, as well as the fruit derived through it, to the Lord Himself. One can start eating only after this act of devotion and grateful remembrance. This is the meaning of the noontime (*maadhyamika*) worship. By observing this ritual, passion is kept in check and is overpowered by the pure (*sathwa*) nature. This is the third duty of all people.

Then, people are possessed by a third nature, the dull (*thamas*). When evening descends, one hurries home, eats one’s fill, and is overpowered by sleep. But a duty still remains. To eat and sleep is the fate of idlers and drones. When the worst of the qualities (*gunas*), the dull (*thamas*), threatens to rule, one must make a special effort to escape its coils by resorting to prayer in the company of those who extol the Lord, reading about the glory of God, the cultivation of good virtues, and the purposeful nursing of good rules of conduct. This is the prescribed evening worship (*sandhyavandana*).

Therefore, the mind that emerges from the vacancy of sleep has to be properly trained and counseled; it must be made to feel that the bliss of meditation and the joy of being unaware of the outer world are much grander and more lasting than the comfort one gets by means of the daily dose of physical sleep. This bliss, this joy, can be felt and realized by all; discrimination will bring this home to you. This is the fourth duty of people.

People who, as long as they have life in them, observe the thrice-a-day worship are indeed of the highest type; they are ever glorious and attain all that is desired. Above all, they are liberated, even while alive (*jivanmuktha*).

## Cultivate the soul-force

Care must be taken to see that the morning-evening prayers are not taken as a routine ritual, one among many laid down for observance. This is to be carried out while one is aware of the significance and dwelling on the inner meaning. One should clearly grasp the sense of the *Gayatri Mantra*. It is necessary to feel the identity between the effulgent Being (*Atma-swarupa*) mentioned therein and oneself. Only those who are ignorant of its meaning will neglect the *Gayatri*.

Manu lays special stress on just this; he has declared the *Gayatri* to be the very life-breath of the *brahmin*. It is not only his declaration: it is the truth. What is more efficient for spiritual uplift than meditation on the effulgence that illumines and feeds the intellect? What is more vitally fruitful than the prayer that pleads for saving the mind from sinward tendencies?

For a person, there is no better armour than the cultivation of virtues. Manu states that *brahmins* won't lose status as long as they hold on to the *Gayatri* and are inspired by its meaning; Manu says that if they are too weak to pursue the study of the *Vedas*, then they must at least recite the *Gayatri* and adhere to it till the very end. The authoritative tradition (*smrithi*) also says that there is no treasure richer than the *Gayatri*.

Soul-force can accomplish all the tasks of the world; and, since the *Gayatri* confers inner strength, to foster that force the *Gayatri* has to be cultivated with care at the right moment, without neglect. For the growth and development of the body, pure (*sathwic*) food is necessary, isn't it? So too, the effulgence of the Sun has to be drawn, to reinforce the inner effulgence in the form of creative thought (*bhaavana*).

When soul-force waxes, the senses are activated and directed along fruitful lines. When it wanes, the senses fail and fail you. So, if the solar energy is drawn at that very juncture, it will be as seeds planted in season, and the harvest is assured. Can darkness hide and confuse when the sun has risen and bathed the earth in splendour? Can sorrow prevail when one has infused oneself with that effulgence? How can one be devoid of strength, the strength derived from the very fountainhead of Brahman? The technique of this process has been laid down by the ancients for the benefit of all aspirants. Learn and practise it, and, by your own experience, you will be able to witness the truth of their path.

Of what purpose is the sacred thread (*upanayana*) sacrament? Which *mantra* are you initiated into that day?

Why was that *mantra* alone taught then? Why are other mystic formulae not given equal prominence? Reflect on these matters, and you will find that the *Gayatri* is the mother of *mantras*. You will also find the rituals shining with a new meaning, the rules and restrictions will be full of purpose; the deeds and activities of the ancients will seem worthwhile. If you do not try to know their significance, you will interpret them as your fancy leads and land yourselves in tricks and stratagems to escape the obligations of life. You will be caught in injustice and negation (*anyaya* and *a-dharma*).

## The real meaning of Gayatri

Well, what is the real meaning of the word *Gayatri*? Does anyone try to know it today? The word is taken to mean either a Goddess or a formula. *Gayatri* is that which protects (*thra*) the life breaths (*gayas* or *pranas*) or the senses (*indriyas*), beginning with speech. Besides, it is said,

That which saves those who sing it, revere it, repeat it, or meditate on it is called *Gayatri*.

*Gaayantham thraayathe yasmaath Gayatri, thena kathyathe.*

That is to say, it is this sacred *mantra* that transformed a royal sage (*rajarshi*) like Viswamitra into a *brahmanical* sage (*brahmarshi*). The mother that is the *Veda* (*Vedamatha*) will confer all boons on all those who worship Her. That Goddess is described in glorious terms in the *Brahmanas* and in the texts on *dharma* (*dharma-sutras*); if you understand these clearly, you can realize it, unaided.

*Dharma*, imbued with such deep mysteries, is today rationalized and interpreted wilfully in various paltry senses. That is why the decline of *dharma* has come about. So, it is imperative to revive the eternal religion (*sanathana dharma*) and the principles of interpretation natural to the *Atmic* truth, which is the basis of *dharma*. Otherwise, the meaning will be changed out of all recognition, and the whims of individuals will prevail. Every act will be stamped as *dharma*, whatever its nature!