

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Gayatrī-mantra

Question

Please explain the meaning of the *Gayatrī-mantra*.

Answer

The *Gayatrī-mantra* is a very sacred *mantra* from the Vedas. It has been known to grant brilliance of the intellect and guide one's thoughts in the right direction.

ओं भूर्भुवः स्वः । तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ, tatsaviturovareṇyam

bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

Om is the basis of everything, earth, the space in between and the heavens. We invoke that Lord who is the most venerable, the Sun. We meditate upon the splendor of that effulgent, all-knowing Lord. May He brighten our minds and direct our intellects in the right direction.

Om is the name of the Lord. *Bhūḥ*, *bhuvāḥ*, and *svāḥ* are called *vyāhṛtis*, mystical utterances that bring about auspiciousness. They stand for this world, the intermediate world, and the heavens. They also denote *sat cit ānanda*. *Om*, the name of the Lord, is equal to *bhūḥ*, *bhuvāḥ*, and *svāḥ*, which signify the Lord. This statement, *om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ*, is followed by the actual *Gayatrī-mantra*, which has two parts.

The first part of the *Gayatrī-mantra* is *tatsaviturovareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi*. *Dhīmahi*, we meditate upon, *bhargāḥ*, the splendor, which is described as *vareṇyam*, the most adorable. Whose splendor is this? *Savituh devasya*, the splendor of the self-effulgent Sun. This is a prayer to the Lord who manifests in the form of Sun. We meditate upon the most adorable splendor of the Sun, who is the self-effulgent Lord. The second part of the prayer is *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*. *Nah*, our, *dhiyah*, thoughts, *yah*, he, *pracodayāt*, may he guide. The prayer is, may the self-shining, self-effulgent deity guide our thoughts in the proper direction.

Light stands for knowledge, so a prayer to the Lord Sun also becomes a prayer for knowledge. The sun can be said to symbolize the Lord who is of the nature of knowledge. This can become a prayer to the Sun directly, seeking his grace to inspire our thoughts and give our minds the same brilliance that is his nature. The sun can also symbolize *Īśvara*, the Lord, in which case we are seeking *Īśvara's* grace to guide us. The self-shining entity can also mean our very self, in which case we are seeking the grace of the Self who illumines our thoughts to guide our minds in the right direction¹.

¹ Transcribed by Malini, KK Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.