

Gāyatrī Mantraḥ

॥ श्रीः ॥

Om bhūrbhuvahṣvaḥ
tatsaviturvareṇyaṃ
bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

ॐ भूर्भुवःस्वः

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।

भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Introduction

Gāyatrī is the name of a specific type of Vedic poetical meter (chandas) having six syllables to every quarter-verse. This is just one of many types of meters in Sanskrit prosody. This booklet deals with one particular mantra in gāyatrī meter which invokes the Lord/Īśvara (infinite-intelligent-being; the 'cause' of the universe) manifested as Savitr, one of the many Vedic names for the sun. This mantra is a prayer for discriminative brilliance; thus, the appropriateness of the invocation of Īśvara taking the form of the most brilliant object in our universe. This prayer to Īśvara as Savitr, being the most renowned, exalted and revered of all prayers in gāyatrī meter, has come to be known as *the* Gāyatrī mantra.

The earliest historical appearance of the Gāyatrī mantra is in the Ṛg Veda; iii:62:10. There are academic debates as to the exact age of the oldest sections of this text, ranging any-when from 1000 to 3000 B.C.E. In truth, time and dates are immaterial, as the Vedas transcend all cultures, times and places. The knowledge contained in the Vedas apply to all beings at all times and in all ages, and are timeless, universal truths.

It is said that in the Vedic tradition a Brāhmaṇa should chant the entire Vedic cannon daily. If she* is unable to do so, then by simply chanting the Gāyatrī mantra she will have fulfilled the same purpose. Bhagavan Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā (chapter 10, verse 35) proclaims that "amongst all meters, I am manifest as the Gāyatrī" (gāyatrī cchandasāmaham). One who has reverence for this or any mantra may chant it 108 times or more during the time prior to dawn (the time when the stars are clearly visible to the time when they disappear) and just after dusk. One may also chant at noon or at midnight if one is alert and inspired to do so. The Gāyatrī mantra is chanted to help integrate one's body-sense-mind complex in

*The pronouns she as well as he, used throughout this booklet, are universal pronouns and are not to be taken as any type of gender bias.

preparation for Self-inquiry. This helps one to neutralize inhibiting factors for the purpose of gaining emotional maturity (by invoking Īśvara's Grace) and ultimately (with the help of a teacher unlocking Vedāntic scripture over a long period of time) for gaining Self-knowledge (mokṣa). The Gāyatrī mantra is chanted for the purpose of preparing the spiritual seeker to receive the knowledge regarding the one-ness (aikyam) between 'I' and the Lord/Īśvara.

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

Om̐

Om̐ is the universal sound-symbol invoking the Lord/Īśvara (the non-separate-efficient, knowledge-and-skill material-cause of the entire universe). Īśvara is infinite-intelligent-order aware-full-being pervading all experience, and is in-and-through all names, forms and functions. Īśvara (as Om̐) may be described as praṇava; that which is most deserving of worship/reverence/adoration.

Om̐ may be understood more clearly by unfolding these two words:

- 1) **ava-rakṣane**; in the sense of **protection**. ava-rakṣane modified becomes **rakṣati**; it **protects** (the one who chants it); gāyatī trayate iti Gāyatrī: "Om̐/Gāyatrī will protect the one who chants it with reverence". And...
- 2) **āpī-vyāpane**; in the sense of **pervasiveness**. āpī-vyāpane modified becomes **āpnoti**; it **pervades** (all that is manifest and un-manifest/all material).

Om̐ is made up of three letters; 'a' plus 'u' plus 'm̐'. There are precise rules (saṁdhi) governing the euphonic combination of letters/sounds in Vedic Sanskrit. The saṁdhi rule governing 'a' plus 'u' states that when an 'a' meets an 'u' the two sounds become fused and form a new sound. That new sound is 'o'. They ('a' plus 'u') are never to be pronounced 'au' as in 'wow'. This pronunciation is quite popular in the yoga world but is incorrect. Once saṁdhi is invoked, 'a' plus 'u' plus 'm̐' always becomes om̐ (as in 'foam').

'a' is usually the first letter in all alphabets, and happens to be the

first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is the sound we make by simply opening the mouth and engaging the vocal cords. It is the most primal sound produced by the human voice. It is also usually the first sound (and is a component of the first word) we make as babies. Thus, as babies, we say 'mama'; in Tamil, 'amma', etc.

'a' is the sound which pervades all sounds. All other sounds are a modification of 'a' (when articulated by different mouth positions and modified by differences in breath pressure). 'a', pervading all sounds, pervades all letters that represent these sounds, which make up all words and therefore all worlds (there being no words or worlds without objects and the words with which to objectify them). All objects are represented by 'a' (the gross-material/waking-state universe). By closing one's mouth while saying 'a' one will hear the sound 'm' (representing the unmanifest/causal/deep-sleep universe). Between 'a' and 'm' resides 'u' (representing the subtle-worlds dream-state universe).*

gross-material/waking-state universe; resolving in 'a'
subtle-material/dream-state universe; resolving in 'u'
unmanifest-material/causal/deep-sleep-state universe; resolving in 'm'

Om̐ is sarvasya bījam, the seed mantra of the entire universe. By chanting om̐, one invokes the Lord/Īśvara: God as the entire universe, manifest and un-manifest, immanent and transcendent (and all that is beyond the concepts of manifest and unmanifest; immanence and transcendence).

yaccānyat trikālātītam tadapyom̐kāra eva

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (mantra 1); Atharva Veda

It is recommended that one study the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad if one desires a deeper understanding of Om̐ in its multiplicity. This course of study will include Gauḍapāda's Kārikā (commentary) along with Śrī Adi Śaṅkarācārya's bhāṣyam (commentary on Gauḍapāda's Kārikā) unfolded during live, traditional teaching.

*It is important to note that a word is not a word unless it carries meaning. An utterance without meaning is simply a sound.

Silence*

Before Om̐ is chanted there is silence. After Om̐ is chanted there is silence. Silence is the basis and reality of om̐; that reality from which om̐ arises, by which Om̐ is sustained and unto which om̐ returns without a trace. Without silence, Om̐ could not be. Om̐ comes from silence and returns to silence. At the same time, silence is in-and-through om̐ as its essence. Silence is an integral part of all mantras. It is very important to be aware of the silence preceding and following the chanting of any mantra.

"What I experience or am aware of between two thoughts is silence. If I see the silence after every thought, should I take myself to be the thought or should I take myself to be the silence? Thought arrives and thought departs. Before the arrival of the thought I am silence. After the departure of the thought I am silence. I am silence first, and I am silence last. Thus, in spite of thoughts, I am silence."

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī from the booklet
"Two Talks on Japa Mantra Meditation"

*This particular section on silence may only be comprehended after years of systematic study of Vedāntic scriptures under the guidance of a qualified, traditional teacher.

Vyāhṛti

The three words chanted after Om̐ (bhūḥ, bhuvah, suvah) which precede the beginning of the Gāyatrī mantraḥ are called vyāhṛti; 'utterance, speech or sound'. They are esoteric in nature and are not part of the mantra proper. They may be understood to symbolize the trinity archetype (the esoteric meaning of 'threes'); all groups, experiences or objects categorized into three aspects, for example Earth/cosmos/in-between, gross/subtle/causal, waking/dream/deep-sleep, birth/sustenance/death, etc. The vyāhṛti, and all that is implied by their utterance, objectifies the entire gross, subtle, and un-manifest universe (including all possible fields of experience).*

*There are 14 fields of experience in Vedic cosmology. In Sanskrit; 'loka'.

The vyāhṛtis (bhūḥ, bhuvah, suvah) are sacred utterances which have these esoteric meanings:

bhūḥ: Quality-less-existence/sat

bhuvah: Quality-less-awareness/cit

suvah: Cognitive-limitlessness-fullness/ānanda

These three vyāhṛtis are esoteric-sacred formula-utterances. They are always preceded by omkāra (Om̐). These sounds are uttered by every Brāhmaṇa* in their daily spiritual practice.

*The use of 'Brāhmaṇa' denotes a person who is following the Vedas with the assistance of a traditional teacher for the goal of gaining liberation. It has no relation whatsoever to the modern-day caste system.

The Meaning of the Mantra

tat = That (which 'seems' to be 'away' from 'me' in time and space); indicating...

savituḥ (modified from the stem **savitr**) = **The Sun (Sūrya)**; the singular, self-effulgent orb; the most profound symbol through which we worship **the Lord/Īśvara**;* the infinite-intelligent-being; non-separate knowledge-cause and material-cause of the entire universe.

*In the vision of the Vedas there is not one god; not many gods; only God.

vareṇyam = Most worthy of praise, reverence and worship.
Also, **varaṇyam = Fit to be adored.**

bhargo = Radiant burner; destroyer of darkness (ignorance).
Also, **bhargas = Radiance, luster** (Bhargas is also one of the names of Brahmā-jī; the 'creator'), and **bhargah = Knowledge**; * cognition of which is produced by teacher and scripture.

*Knowledge understood not as the 'knower-subject' or the 'known-object' or the 'knowing process', but knowledge as 'pure-awareness-existence'; the true nature of the self-evident, un-negate-able 'I'. This can only be the immediate cognition of the profound equation 'tattvasasi', which states an unrecognized but already accomplished fact: That you (the individual as limitless-being) are the cause of the universe. Note that while bhargo has numerous possible meanings, this is bhargo's subtlest, most esoteric meaning.

devasya = Diety; effulgent one (from the root div). Also, **deva = The self-effulgent one**; just closer than the closest; witness-awareness which can only be the content and reality of 'I'. Both Devasya and Savituḥ are in the 6th genitive (possessive) case; masculine-singular,* indicating that the self-effulgent orb/infinite creator and the self-effulgent 'I' are one and the same. The 'as-though' difference between them is simply caused by ignorance.

*Being in the same number, gender and case is called samanavi-vātikānam. It is a unique ability of Sanskrit to be able to use multiple words in a statement to indicate one, single, underlying meaning.

dhīmahī = We meditate upon; pray in this manner; contemplate this 'reality'. Dhīmahī* is in the first-person** plural form, indicating that the mantra is a collective-inclusive prayer: 'We will pray in this manner, recognizing the apparent division between the individual and the total'.

*The Sanskrit word indicating dhīmahī is dhyāyema: 'We contemplate and resolve into the meaning of this self-evident truth (revealed by the great saying/mahāvākya 'that-you-are/tattvasasi').

**Unlike English, the first-person in Sanskrit is 'we' or 'us', not I.

dhiyo (dhiyah) = Decision-making faculties; discriminating faculties; intellect-hearts* (where cognitive change must occur).

*The heart spoken of here is not only the physical heart but also the subtle heart which exists in precisely the same place. This subtle heart is the 'cave of the intellect', where cognition takes place. Cognition can only take place in a calm, unemotional state with a highly refined intellect (beyond the desire to conceptualize or objectify) resolved in trust in the Vedāntic teacher-teaching methodology. With this inner attitude, one understands 'that' which is outside perception and inference; the immediate cognition of which is 'I am the knowledge-cause material-cause of the entire universe'. There is an open, reverential type of listening when relating to this special means of knowledge. The presence of a 'knower-ego' (known as offence-defense posturing) acts as a barrier, preventing cognition of this special means of knowledge from taking place. When the barrier of the knower-ego is neutralized one is in a position to question one's own understanding of reality while resting in complete trust in the teacher-teaching methodology. With trusting intellect-hearts, we are ready to see ourselves in the 'word-mirror' of the scriptures, held up by the teacher. The intellect-heart is where the cognition of the equation 'tattvasasi' must take place.

yo = **Which**; referring to bhargo; literally 'that which burns', but here indicating the cognition of oneness* (aikyam) between the limitless creator and oneself.

*This is the implied meaning of the simple and profound equation 'that-you-are', revealed by the words devasya and savituh.

naḥ = **Our** (which connects to dhiyo).

pracodayāt = **Instill grace; make effulgent; enlighten.**

1. Synonymous with both **prerayet** = **Lead toward the ultimate good; emotional maturity; ultimate freedom from sorrow** and **prakaśyati** = **Allow us to immediately recognize; allow cognition of the implied meaning of the profound equation 'tattvamasi',* to be made manifest.**

*This cognition being 'I am limitless-being, here and now'. Thus, knowledge is gained by listening to Vedānta from a qualified, traditional teacher. Further, let this cognition be absolutely clear; free from vagueness, doubt and error.

The Gāyatrī mantra, as a straightforward prayer and understood by its immediate meaning may be unfolded to mean; **'Oh, most worthy, shining Sun; we ask you to bless our intellects with the ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate behavior (dharma-adharma viveka).'***

*Living a clean, Dharmic life infused with Vedic and universal values.

But on a deeper, esoteric and implied level, Gāyatrī may be understood to mean; **'Oh, Lord/Īśvara, we implore you to bless our intellects with the ability to discriminate between what is only an appearance (a name with a form and function, having no independent reality apart from what lends it substantiality) and 'that', which is ultimately real; un-negate-able in past, present and future; self-evident and timelessly present in waking, dream and deep-sleep.'**

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

The Qualities (Nature) of the Sun

It pervades

It protects

It shines

It attracts

Warming

Self-effulgent

Non-judgmental

Uninvolved and unaffected by anything it illumines

One without a second

Worthy of worship

Eye of the universe

Revealing

Consistent

Trustworthy

Never covered – Ever available

It enlivens

Because of which we are able to perform our sacred duties

Does not rise or set

From it our world is made manifest and returning to it, resolves

yadbhāvam tadbhavati

यद्भावम् तद्भवति

“As you worship, so you become.”

yathā yathā upāste tadeva bhavati

यथा यथा उपास्ते तदेव भवति

“In whichever way one worships Īśvara (infinite-intelligent-order); one becomes that, to the exclusion of all others (absorbing all the worshiped qualities).”

yā śraddhā tanmayo
bhavati pūruṣaḥ

या श्रद्धा तन्मयो भवति पूरुषः

“The individual becomes one with that in which trust (confidence) is placed.”

An Initiation into the Śāstra

by Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī

Introduction

The Gāyatrī mantra is so profound in its meaning that if one has studied the mantra, it is as though one has studied the whole of the Vedas. The Gāyatrī appears in all four Vedas; Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva. It is a very potent mantra and has been chanted by people for ages.

As part of the investiture ceremony of the sacred thread (upanayanam), the boy is initiated to the Gāyatrī mantra. For him it is only a prayer, and he is given a simple word meaning so that he knows what he is chanting. This initiation to the Gāyatrī imparts to the boy the mother-lode of the spiritual wisdom of the Vedas.

Preparing the Mind

Chanting a mantra helps one gain insight into the functioning of one’s mind. While chanting, one generally uses the mind. Thus, chanting reveals the ways of the mind. When one begins chanting a mantra, one discovers that one’s mind is often distracted from its intended activity because it has become habituated to mechanical thinking.

In mechanical, goal-less thinking, there is no question regarding intrinsic distraction. One thought will unconsciously lead to another thought, and yet another, and so on. For example, I see a car. I notice that it is a Ford; a Lincoln, like the one my father used to drive. I think of the places I went in that car with my father, and so on. This is how a pattern of thinking evolves with reference to an object/event, and this pattern will continue until there is an internal or external distraction. Then another unconscious pattern will emerge. The most dysfunctional aspect of mechanical thinking is that it automatically goes into an undesirable pattern. Even when

you do not wish to be sad, you become sad. You are unable to predict how this unconscious pattern will unfold and at the same time, have no way to disengage from it.

Once you become aware of your thoughts, you can at least become more conscious of what is happening. The ability to gain conscious mental awareness requires a certain space between you and your thinking. Acquiring this skill will give you the ability to direct your mind. You will no longer need to think yourself into sadness, frustration or anger. This skill would be very useful for an adolescent to acquire and that is why mantra initiations take place at that age.

Unlike mechanical thinking, when I give mind an occupation, like chanting a given mantra for a few minutes, I have made a commitment to myself as to what my next thought will be. Because of this commitment, I know that the given mantra will be my next thought. If any other thought occurs and starts a chain of thoughts, it is clearly an infraction on the commitment I have made to myself. Once one has made a commitment, distraction becomes evident. In the Bhagavad Gītā (chapter 6, verse 26) Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

**yato yato niścarati manaścañcalam asthiram
tatastato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vaśaṁ nayet**

“For whatever reason, the unsteady mind, being in constant flux, gets lost [in habitual, unconnected thought patterns]. One brings the mind back by discipline, wielding [gently and with non-resistance] the power of one’s own self-mastery [as witness-awareness].”

Whenever the mind moves away from the object of contemplation, bring it back. Thus, deliberately, the mind is brought back and the commitment is fulfilled.

Three Meanings of the Word Om̐

Om̐ is a beautiful, one-syllable word. In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad; 1:2:15, it is stated:

**sarve vedā yatpadamāmananti
tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yadvadanti
yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti
tatte padaṁ saṅgrahaṇa bravīmyomityetat**

“The Vedas speak with one voice; that the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, may be understood by the seeker through Om̐. All austerities are undertaken to help the seeker gain knowledge of that Reality. The seeker pursues knowledge through the study of the Vedas. Ultimate Truth is indicated through the briefest possible utterance...Om̐.”

The Gāyatrī mantra begins with the word Om̐. It is a name (abhidhānam) for the Lord. Abhidheyam, that which is implied by Om̐, is also the Lord. In this context the meaning of Om̐ (the Lord/Īśvara) is the cause of ‘creation’ (jagat kāraṇam). There are three approaches one may take to arrive at this meaning.

Linguistic Meaning of Om̐

In a linguistic sense, Om̐ is a word from the Sanskrit language being its own root (dhātu). Om̐ is derived from the root ava; in the sense of rakṣanam (protection and sustenance). Ava-man means ‘the one who protects and sustains the entire ‘creation’ (jagat kāraṇam) by lending it existence and awareness.’

By the rules of Sanskrit grammar, the suffix ‘man’ in the word avaman loses the last vowel and what follows it, which makes the word avam̐. Through a euphonic process (saṁdhi), ‘va’ becomes ‘u’. Further still (via saṁdhi), ‘a’ and ‘u’ will combine to form the diphthong ‘o’. This is the etymology of Om̐.

Superimposed Meaning of Om̐

The Upaniṣads load certain meanings into ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘m̐’. These meanings are deliberately superimposed (like a cloth, onto which one superimposes the entire constitution of a country, calling it a

national flag). 'a' implies your waking world; the gross, material world. 'u' is the dream, subtle or thought-world. 'm' is the unmanifest causal state, as in deep, dreamless sleep. When one is fully awake, one has access to this gross-material world; the dream-state gives access to the subtle-material thought world; in deep, dreamless sleep, all is unmanifest/causal. The totality of all material as the waker, the dreamer and the sleeper is 'a' 'u' 'm'. This is you, the universe and God all in one.

Phonetic Meaning of Om̐

From the perspective of the Lord/Īśvara, the manifest world is 'seen' as one. We can also see that it has many forms with corresponding names (and functions). Every form is the Lord's form, and the name of that form is the Lord's name. If the Lord is all, and one wants to give the Lord a name (a name not in any particular language or alphabet; a name that is purely phonetic; a name that includes all the names that are available), what should one do?

In any culture, anywhere on Earth, when a person opens the mouth and makes a sound without any other effort it is 'a'. When one closes one's mouth and makes a sound it is 'm'. All other sounds, in any language, fall between 'a' and 'm'. These other sounds are represented by 'u'. All words in all languages are made up of letters and letters, even if there is no written form, are sounds. The one word, which represents all these sounds, being expressed by the letters 'a' plus 'u' plus 'm', is Om̐.

Meaning of the Mantra

Om̐ bhūrbhuvahsvah̐

Om̐ is linked to bhūḥ, bhuvah̐, suvah̐. These three words represent the Earth, all beings and anything beyond our comprehension. Everything, from Earth to beings and onwards to the unknown is called 'bhūrbhuvahsvah̐'. Thus, the Lord (Om̐) is all.

tatsaviturvareṇyam̐ bhargo devasya dhīmahī

tatvareṇyam̐ = The one that is most worshipful; the one that should be worshiped by you. Whatever or whoever you worship, that worship goes to the Lord alone. Even when you worship a particular deity, it is still the Lord's aspect.

bhargah̐ = All-knowing.

savituh̐ devasya = The sun, spotless and bright; the Lord being effulgent and all-knowledge. That Lord is the one upon whom we meditate or to whom we pray.

dhīmahī = We pray with our hearts and minds to that Lord who is self-effulgent, all-knowing, all-consciousness and most worshipful.

dhiyo yo nah̐ pracodayāt

dhiyah̐ = Thoughts; the mind.

nah̐ = Ours.

yah̐ = That (are).

pracodayāt = Illumined or brightened.

The entire meaning of the mantra is: **'May He (the Lord) brighten our minds.'** Note that not only does one pray for oneself, but also for all others. In order to live a peaceful and meaningful life, people around you should also be content. Otherwise there may be conflict as one engages with others on a day-to-day basis.

In Pursuit of Maturity

The word pracodayāt has a secondary meaning; to direct. Therefore, the mantra may also be unfolded to mean: **“May He direct our minds in the ways of thinking that will lead us to clarity and Self-discovery.”**

Our lives are determined by our thinking. Clear thinking and good decisions are what make a life of maturity and growth. Being prayerful brings not only clarity, but His Grace. Prosperity and the like manifests when correct decisions are made. When one is invoking the Lord as all-knowing (bhargah) one is invoking knowledge. When one understands the Lord to be bhargah, one’s mind becomes effulgent, brilliant and clear. There is nothing more fascinating than clarity. It is that clarity for which we pray. This is the greatest blessing to pray for. Thus, we pray:

“May He stimulate our minds to right-thinking.”

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

Preparing to Chant the Gāyatrī mantrah

Om bhūrbhuvahṣvah
tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ
bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

Sanskrit expressed in the Latin script using IAST (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration) with diacritical marks.

ॐ भूर्भुवःस्वः

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।

भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Sanskrit expressed in the Devanāgarī script with intonation marks.

Svara

Svara means 'sound' or 'vowel' in the Sanskrit language. One of numerous definitions for the word 'svara' is 'that which can carry sound.' Saptasvara means 'seven sounds' (notes/pitches); the classical Indian musical scale. This scale is derived from the appendix (upaveda) of the Sāma Veda, which is called gandhārvavidyā. The Sāma Veda is composed in such a way as to allow it to be sung in a special manner that is handed down from teacher to disciple.

In the Gāyatrī mantraḥ presented on the previous page, we see markings (with the Devanāgarī script) denoting pitch or svara; high, middle (which has no mark but is understood to be there by context), low and upward bend. The highest pitch is called svaritaḥ; the middle pitch is called udāttaḥ; the lowest pitch is called anudāttaḥ. The upward sliding pitch is usually called dīrdhasvaritaḥ, and is only used to denote a slide or glissando from the middle to the high pitch.

Mātra, Balam & Akṣara

Mātra means 'a measure' or 'a measure of'. In the context of chanting Sanskrit, mātra means 'the duration of a certain sound.' This applies only to vowels in Sanskrit, as consonants unassociated with vowels have no svara.

Mātra come in three, well-defined durations. The first and shortest of these durations is called hrasva. Hrasva is measured as the time it takes to say the sound 'a', the time it takes for your finger to circle your knecap or the length of the first sound of a rooster's call. This length of time is considered one mātra. All the short vowels in Sanskrit have a duration of one mātra. Two mātra or dīrgham is applied to the long Sanskrit vowels. That sound which is three or more mātra in length is called plutaḥ. Plutaḥ is also known as 'prolonged'. For example, the word om̐ has a duration of three mātra and can therefore be explained in terms of duration as plutaḥ.

Balam means 'strength, power, effort or force.' This applies to the degree of proper effort needed to produce certain sounds or combinations of sounds in Sanskrit. Balam may be broken down into two technical terms; proper internal effort (āntara prayatanam - effort made inside the oral cavity) and proper external effort (bāhya prayatanam - effort made outside of the oral cavity; most notably the diaphragm). Each sound in Sanskrit requires a proper amount of force to accurately produce the desired sound.

Akṣara literally means 'indestructible, undying, imperishable and immutable'. In the context of Sanskrit, akṣara means syllable, but also 'consistent'. In a relative sense, akṣara are un-changing.* The Gāyatrī has twenty-four akṣaras; six in each quarter-verse of the mantra. Broken down, they look like this:

Om̐ tatsaviturvareṇyam̐

(1 2 3 4 5 6) (7 8

bhargo devasya dhīmahi

9 10 11 12) (13 14 15 16

dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

17 18) (19 20 21 22 23 24)

If one is inclined to achieve mastery or siddhiḥ in the Gāyatrī, one would chant it 100,000 times for every syllable or akṣara. That would mean that two million, four hundred thousand repetitions, done with reverence, would be required to gain the full blessing of the Gāyatrī mantra.

*Vedic mantras have relative eternity because they manifest from the Lord/Īśvara in every cycle of 'creation'.

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

श्री स्वामी वागीशानन्द सरस्वती

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī is a senior disciple of Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī, and has been studying and teaching Vedānta since 1975.

Svāmī jī was in his teens when he became fascinated with mystical poetry and non-dualistic philosophies. In 1975, at the age of 19, he left his home in the United States and traveled to India to study in a traditional gurūkulam. After graduating from a three-year residential course in Vedānta and Sanskrit, he attended four subsequent three-year courses in the United States and in India.

Using the traditional methodology called sampradāya, Svāmī Vāgīśānanda 'unlocks' the scriptures of Vedānta, thereby removing the veil of ignorance; the cause of all human suffering. He is a traditional samnyāsi (a renunciant who is committed to a life of knowledge and has taken a vow of non-injury). A master of the South Indian Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda style of chanting, Svāmī jī has traveled the world teaching Sanskrit, Vedic chanting and Vedānta.

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पूज्य श्री स्वामी दयानन्द सरस्वती

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī (1930 – 2015) is considered the leading figure in the renaissance of the study of Advaita Vedānta in the late 20th century. A 'teacher of teachers', Pūjya Svāmī jī took dikṣa samnyāsa in 1962 under the guidance of Svāmī Cinmayānanda Sarasvatī. Pūjya Svāmī jī studied the complete traditional teaching methodology from his sadguru, Svāmī Praṇavānanda. He then refined his teaching skills by studying the Brahma Sūtras with Pūjya Svāmī Tārānanda Giri of the Kailash Ashrama in Rishikesh.

In 1972 Svāmī Dayānanda began the first of what would become 10 three-year courses which would take place over the next 40 years. These courses focused on the study of Advaita Vedānta and Sanskrit.

Pūjya Svāmī jī established four traditional teaching centers for the express purpose of the study of Vedānta and Sanskrit. These centers are located in Rishikesh (Uttarakhand), Annaikatti (Tamil Nadu) and Nagpur (Maharashtra) in India, and in Saylorsburg, PA in the United States.

Current estimates regarding the number of Pūjya Svāmī jī's students who currently teach Vedānta and/or Sanskrit at 200. Samghas of these teachers may be found in such diverse locations as California, Madras, Réunion, Sweden, Hawai'i and Brazil and in many other locations around the globe.

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī's contribution to the study of Vedānta is incalculable. His legacy of centers of learning, recorded discourses, books, and most of all teachers, will continue to bless the world for many years to come.

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