

Baba and the Gayatri- from *Vision of the Divine* pp.79-88

THE GAYATRI

Later in early 1973, the author was better prepared when Baba taught him again to recite the Gayatri with the correct pronunciation and the appropriate rhythm. Baba was kind enough to repeatedly check and correct the recitation, over and over again, until the author felt confident. Finally the author enquired, "Swamiji. It is said that if this mantra is not recited correctly, it harms the individual. Is that correct?" He replied "Yes, it has the opposite effect of enveloping the person in darkness, but if you recite with Love, God will accept it." So the author learned that *Love was necessary for this mantra to activate His Grace.*"

"What is Gayatri Swamiji"? Well, *Gayatri* is *Shabda Brahman*. It is all pervasive like Brahman," said Baba. *Shabda* means sound and what is the Sound of Brahman? The Sound of Brahman is the Vedas. Therefore one may say, that *Gayatri* is at the very basis of the Vedas and merits the name of *Veda Mata or The Mother of Vedas*. It is all pervasive throughout the manifest Cosmos. It is Its Basis, the Reality behind the experienced and the cognised Universe. Zoroastrian readers may recall the second couplet of the *Ahunvar*, wherein they will find Its other name, *Mazdai*, the Basis of the manifest cosmos.

The *Gayatri mantra* is composed of a metre consisting of twenty-four syllables, generally arranged in a triplet of eight syllables each. Therefore, this particular metre (*Tri-padhi*) is also known as the *Gayatri metre* and a number of early Rig Vedic verses are composed in this metre. As a result, some of these verses come to be known as '*Gayatris*'. These are not to be confused with the '*Gayatri mantra*' which appears in the Rig Veda, as the tenth mantra in the sixtieth sutra of the third mandala.

At this stage it is necessary to understand the reason for calling this particular mantra as *GAYATRI*. The word is derived from:

GAYANTAM TRIYATE ITI

It means, That which rescues (protects) the chanter is This. Thus, this sacred word *GAYATRI*, itself explains the reason for this existence of this mantra. Also one can now understand the reason for the total absence of the word *Gayatri* from the mantra itself. That which rescues or protects the chanter is This. And what is This? It has been defined as *Shabda Brahman* or in other words, the Vedic Mantras. In this context we have also to try and understand something about the word '*Mantra*.' It has been said "*Brahmanam Brahmana Vahanam*" and it means that *Brahma* is the carrier of *Brahman*. Baba has said "The word *Brahma* here is understood to connote the *Mantra*. The inner meaning is that the *Purusha* who is the embodiment of the Vedas, has the *mantra* as His carrier. Mere utterance of words like *Om Namoh Narayana* or *Om Namah Shivaya* cannot constitute a *mantra*. A *mantra* has two aspects. The first is *Manana*, which means whatever you have learnt has to be taken into the mind and the second aspect is *Traana*, which means whatever has been taken into the mind has to be firmly established and preserved in the mind. (*Triyate*, *Traat* and *Traana*

originate from Trai, which means to protect, preserve, rescue or save from). By taking the Divine into your mind and firmly establishing it in the mind, if you carry on your life and do the work that is ordained for you, then your life will be full of happiness. Here we see that the inner meaning of these words which have the authority of the Vedas, is different from the interpreted meaning given by the various historians, because the historians have interpolated their own ideas into the interpretation. The Vedas do not have their origin in human beings, whereas history is something which is created by experienced people. Therefore, possibilities exist for changes, additions and alterations being made in history, but there is no such possibility in the case of the Vedas which have not had their origin in human beings. Because the Vedas have been obtained by listening to sound (*ghosha*), they have been referred to as *Sruti*. This is directly connected with the Lord, taking in and giving out His breath. Brahman rides over these mantras and therefore, He has been called *Brahmanaspati*. (*Pati* means *Karta* or the head of a situation). *If we want to get control over Brahman or obtain His Grace, then His carriers, namely the mantras, over which He rides, must first be brought under control."*

From the above explanations we are now in a position to conjure up yet another picture in our Vision of the Divine. The reader will recall Baba's declaration "I am Ghosha." In this context the statement means that Baba is Brahman and rides over the mantras. It has been said in the Rig Veda, that for the 'word' and for the 'speech', Brahman is the very foundation. Our words and speech are associated not only with the different objects around us but also with the different aspects of our lives. In this context Baba has said "Shabda or sound is the basis of all things. This sound gives rise to words and many such words connote what we see around us. Thus we have eight different aspects of life (revealed by such words):

Shabda Brahman - the aspect which relates to Sound.

Charachar Mayi - the aspect which relates to Moving and Non-moving.

Jyotir Mayi - the aspect of Effulgence.

Vang Mayi - the aspect of Speech.

Nityanand Mayi - the aspect of continuous Happiness.

Paratpara Mayi - the aspect of this World and the other World

Maya Mayi - the aspect of Illusion.

Shri Mayi - the aspect of Prosperity.

All these aspects are Brahman." All these aspects are contained in Baba and it is something which requires deep contemplation, to grasp the Mighty Grandeur and Majesty contained in Him.

In context of the Gayatri and the Vedas, there is yet another name which needs to be clarified and understood properly. That name is CHANDASS. It means a metre, the science of metres and is also applicable to the Srutis which contain mantras and the Brahmanas. Baba has said that it is incorrect to use it for any metre. It should be used solely in context of Vedic metres. Since Gayatri is Shabda Brahman, it is the basis of all the known metres and therefore, the name *Chandassam Mata* is also applicable to it. However, the origin of the word *Chandass* as pointed out by Baba, gives it a depth of meaning and sacredness, unmatched by mere dictionary definitions. Baba has said, "Some authorities tell us that those mantras which give you immortality and keep you away from death, should be called *Chandass*."

Yet another aspect of the relationship between Gayatri and the Vedas is traditionally portrayed through personification. Gayatri Parameshwari, the Supreme Goddess is shown having three feet, consisting of Yajur, Rig and Sama Vedas. Her body consists of the Mimamsa (one of the six Darshanas or the Systems of Indian Philosophy) and the head is Atharva Veda. One may inquire as to why of all the Vedas, the Atharva Veda has been given so much importance? Baba has explained that, "Amongst all the Vedas, the Atharva Veda has the distinction of being the oldest and the most important. The Atharva Veda is not something which is separate from the other Vedas. In fact it is latent and present in all the other Vedas. For all the mantras in the Vedas, there is a beginning and an end. The sound that is uttered in the beginning and the end is called as *Pranava*. That this *Pranava* is same as Atharva (*steady and unchanging*) has been declared in the Atharva Veda."

The *Gayatri* consists of:

The Pranavashabda,
The Mahavyahritis and
The Mantra.

ॐ
भूर् भुवः स्वः
तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यं
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्

Aum
Bhuh Bhuvah Svah
Tat Savitur Varenyum
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahe
Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat

The Mahavyahritis

BHUH, BHUVAH, SVAH

These are three mystic words meaning the three worlds, consisting of the earth (*Bhuh*), atmosphere (*Bhuvah*), and that which is beyond the atmosphere (*Svah*), also described as heaven. According to the ancient Rishis there are fourteen spheres (worlds) of experience for the individual Soul and these are the first three of the last seven higher spheres. It has been said that the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, takes place in these three lokas and chanting them constitutes an appeal to the Lord for deliverance from this cycle. However, the inner meaning of these mystic words is difficult to grasp unless one explores their deeper connotations and at the same time recognises the oneness of all their multiplicity. The *Tri-Loka* or the three worlds connote space. Now space cannot exist without time, so they are related to *Tri-Kalam* or past, present and future, or morning, noon and evening. As they are conditioned by time and space, they are related to *Tri-Gunam* or the three attributes or *Thamas*, *Rajas* and *Sathwa*, and also to the gross, subtle and causal aspects, with reference to each loka becoming progressively finer and lighter in density. Baba says that, "It is only when the unity and oneness of these aspects is recognised, that we will understand and realise that the words *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah* and *Svah*, are said in context of *Prajapati* (that is one who presides over or is at the head of creation). Individually they are represented by *Indra* (*Bhuh* or *Earth*), *Vayu* (*Bhuvah* or *Atmosphere*) and *Adithya* (*Svah* or *Heaven*), but the word *Prajapati* connotes the totality of all these three."

The Mantra:

The Gayatri is a universal prayer which does not ask for mercy or pardon but asks for a clear Intellect, so that Truth may be reflected therein without distortion. Baba *has said that it can be used by men and women of all climes and creeds*, for it calls upon the Glorious Power that pervades the Sun and the Three Worlds, to arouse, awaken and strengthen the Intelligence, so that it may lead one through intense Sadhana to success. In this context the following sayings of Baba are worth treasuring:

1. *"Faith must be such that it should withstand the ridicule of the ignorant, cavilling by the worldly and laughter of the low minded."*
2. *"Do not worry about ups and downs, loss or gain, joy or grief. You are the maker of these ups and downs and if you but care, it can all be one smooth level."*
3. *"Reason within yourself and get convinced of the Truth, Sarva Brahma-Mayam. This universe is pervaded by God."*
4. *"Be steady in Sadhana and never hesitate once you have decided on it."*
5. *"Plant Divine Wisdom in your heart. Water the sapling with Love, manure it with Faith and Courage, and keep off the pests with the insecticides of Bhajan and Sathsang."*

The Gayatri mantra is synonymous with Divinity and It has to be similarly approached with due humility, reverence, understanding, faith and love towards the mantra. Because the Vedas are the very breath of God and Gayatri is at the very basis of the Vedas. It is not something which is to be undertaken in a light- hearted manner, to satisfy a passing whim or

fancy. It is something profoundly sacred and has to be approached in the prescribed manner, if the promised fruits are to be experienced. Whatever has been written here concerning the Gayatri, has been learnt by the author through Baba's grace and compassion, and not derived from various scriptural texts. Baba as the Vedapurusha is the Supreme Authority.

The Gayatri is divided into three sections. The first section consists of Pranava and the Mahavyahritis:

Aum, Bhuh Bhuvah Svah

Here, the chanter contemplates the Glory of Light that illumines the three worlds or the regions of experience. The second section picturises the Glory, the Splendour, and the Grace which flows from the Light:

*Tat Savitur Varenyum
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahe.*

The Third section is a prayer for final liberation, through the awakening of the innate intelligence that pervades the Universe as Light:

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat

When one is taught to recite this mantra the person concerned is referred to as *Dwaija* or twice-born. The chanter is purified by the mantra and is transformed into a *Vipraha* (wise person, sage). The mind gets purged of all the impurities and he or she, is now entitled to study the Vedas. Thus the Gayatri confers the authority for studying the Vedas.

As Shabda Brahman is sound and sound is the basis of words, the words are the basis of Speech or *Vak*. The word *Vak* which is to be used only in context of the Vedas, is thus a carrier of Divine Wisdom. That aspect of God known as *Saraswati*, the Goddess of Speech, has been portrayed with *Hamsa* the Swan as Her carrier (*Hamsavahini*). She converts our thoughts and words into speech and for this purpose, She uses our breath as the carrier of these thoughts and words. The breathing process itself forms the word *Soham* and it also signifies thought or word riding on a swan. Since Gayatri is Shabda Brahman and is also connected with the immortal aspect of Chandass, the word *Soham* is sometimes referred to as *Hamsa-Gayatri*. Baba has said, "This sound of *Soham* is synonymous with the *Hamsa Gayatri* aspect emanating from the depths of our heart. Therefore, it is sacred and has the name *Vasuhu*. The three names *Vasu*, *Rudra*, and *Aditya*, are synonymous with each other. They appear different but they stand for one and the same thing. Whether it is Tri-Kala, Tri-Loka or Tri-Guna, they appear as one in all these aspects and perform the same function. It is only those people who have given their hearts to God and have their total attention fixed on God, that *Vakvani* takes the form of Veda and enters their hearts. For people to entertain useless and trivial ideas and cause harm to others, is contrary to the injunctions of the Vedas. In this short, transient human life of ours, to learn so many words and indulge in so many actions not prescribed in the Vedas is very unsacred, and such a conduct is not approved of by the Vedas. *Your mind has been given to you so that you may have sacred thoughts and your speech has been given to you so that you may utter only good words, which are useful and palatable to others.*"

Yet another aspect of the word *Soham* as a mantra related to Bhuh or Earth, has been explained by Baba. He says, "If a writer wants to produce a story or a drama, he first creates a mental picture, then he starts to write and finally builds the story with the picture as the basis. In the same manner when God wanted to create (in His aspect as Parabrahman), He first created the basis and that basis was Sound. This primordial Sound was the first picture that was created and because it is Sound, it has been called *Vachaspati, Brihaspati and Prajapati*. The very first in creation namely *Hiranyagarbha*, uttered the very first sound as 'BHOO'. After uttering this sound He created the form *Bhooradi* and therefore, our created earth is called *Bhoomi* or *Bhoomamu* according to the Vedas. It has also been referred to as *Sthirapravaham*, because it is a creation which has neither a beginning nor an end. *Bhoomamu* also means a mantra which is sacred and permanent. The inner meaning of this word is that *Bhoomi* or our Earth is born in the form of mantras and brahmanas. This is the reason why the sastras (scriptures) have created the three aspects of *Yantra, Mantra* and *Tantra* in man. The *Yantra* is the body, the *Mantra* is the breath, and the *Tantra* is the heart. We must understand how one's breath becomes a mantra. This is so, because the word *Soham* is contained in the breath itself and when we inhale and exhale breath, we are continuously uttering the word *Soham*. It means *I am God*. Therefore, this mantra is *Swa-Swarup*." It means the Form of our own self.

In June 1974, Baba performed the Upanayana ceremony for about four hundred children at Whitefield and gave a discourse on the Gayatri. He mentioned that the first nine words of the mantra contain a ninefold description of the Ultimate Reality, as follows:

1. Aum : Sound as the basis of Creation, Brahman.
2. Bhuh : The Earth, the Gross.
3. Bhuvah : The Atmosphere, the Ether, the Subtle.
4. Suvah : Heaven, the region beyond Bhuvah, the Casual.
5. Tat : Stands for That. The Ultimate Reality is simply referred to as That because *it defies description through speech or language*.
6. Savithur : Stands for Divine Savitri, equated with the vivifying power contained within the Sun.
7. Varenium : Adore.
8. Bhargo : Radiance, Lustre, Illumination.
9. Devasya : Divine radiance or Grace.

The remaining line constitutes the prayer:

Dheemahe : We contemplate.

Dhi: Stands for Intellect.

Nah Prachodayat : Requesting, Urging, Praying.

Baba said that this prayer is directed to the Divine Mother, "*O Divine Mother, our hearts are filled with darkness. Please make this darkness distant from us and promote Illumination within us.*"

Baba further said that the Gayatri is also referred to as *Panch-Mukhi* or the Goddess with five faces. These five faces or aspects He said, reveal and reflect the Brahman.

The five aspects are:

Aum;
Bhuh Bhuvah Suvah;
Tat Savitur Varenium;
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahe;
Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat.

Panch means five and these five aspects signify all that is contained within and made up of the *Panch-Bhutas* (Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Jalam, Prithvi) and the *Panch-Kosa*, or the five sheaths of the human body. To fully understand the significance of these five aspects and their relationship to the created universe, the reader is referred to the first two chapters of Prasnottara Vahini, contained in Baba's Gita Vahini. However, it will suffice to mention here that when the reader has grasped and understood all the interconnections of the panch-bhuthas within his body, he will be in a position to appreciate the inner significance of the five faces of the Gayatri and understand how this mantra is capable of affecting the totality of his being. Further he will also realise that this mantra is capable of purifying not only the inner equipment but also the external organs of work, *Karma-Indriyas*, and thereby sanctifying the work associated with them. Full faith in the power and potency of the Gayatri mantra will be generated in the seeker only when he has developed the requisite degree of enthusiasm, reverence and love towards the mantra. Baba says, *"Start Sandhya today with Gayatri Japa and continue it with increasing fervour. Do it cheerfully with evident relish, for your own sake and for the sake of the human community."*

The famous scientist J.B.S. Haldane, has written to say, *"The Gayatri mantra should be carved on the doors of every laboratory in the world."*

Baba's advice to the young children and students is, "Chant the Gayatri daily and it will lead you to the realisation of the Splendour of Brahman, by setting you free from the limitations which surround the three worlds, the three gunas and the triple aspects of time. The Gayatri should be chanted in order to purify the mind and like the Sun's rays It will dispel the darkness from within you. Open your hearts and recite the mantra and you will be successful in life. Just as the trunk supports a tree, the Gayatri supports the human system and without It, the Tree of Life would be sapless. If you chant the Gayatri and also respect your parents as God, then the effects of both these will work together, fuse into one and produce a great effect on your lives by giving you splendour and brilliance."

The pronunciation of certain words in the Gayatri mantra, is a little different from the way in which they are written in Sanskrit. The following is a guide for pronouncing the mantra:

Aum;
 Bhoor[^] Bhuvah[^] Suva[^]-ha;
 Tat[|] Savitur[\] Varé[^]-unyum[|];
 Bhargo[|]-O[^] Devasya[^] Dheemahi;
 Dhiyo[^]-Yo Nah[^]f Pracho[^]-dayaat[|].

- Sign (^) over, indicates that the letters have to be joined together.
 Sign (|) over, indicates an extra stress on that letter.
 Sign (—) under, indicates a lesser stress on that letter.
 Sign (é) over, the letter is to be pronounced as 'a' in *ancient*.
 Sign (\) under, the letter is to be cut short and only half pronounced.
 Sign (-) between letters indicates a very slight break or a pause.

Traditionally, a second AUM is interposed before TAT. However, as Baba says it is unnecessary, it has been deleted. The reader is advised to listen carefully to a recitation of the Gayatri by a competent person, as it is impossible to indicate the finer nuances of pronunciation in written words other than a rough guide, particularly in a different alphabet from the original. Baba advises *that each word should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, without undue haste or hurry*. He relates the story of a young boy, who had been given this mantra by his father and enjoined to recite it 108 times. After a while the father noticed that his son was finishing the recitation rather quickly and his suspicion was aroused. He decided to investigate and was greatly surprised to discover, that the boy was reciting the mantra only once and repeating "ditto... ditto...ditto" 107 times. The recitation should not be allowed to deteriorate into a routine chore.

When should one recite the Gayatri mantra? "As the utensils need to be cleaned every day, thrice a day, so our heart too needs to be cleaned thrice a day. It is called Tri-Kala Sandhya." This injunction has been given by Baba. The fixed occasions are dawn, noon and dusk and besides these times Baba has said that *It can be repeated anywhere at any time*, including night time. In addition, It should also be recited before taking food and while pouring water over one's head during a bath. Baba has explained that the mantra purifies the food and removes all the ill effects of the subtle vibrations such as bad thoughts, which may have been generated by the person responsible for the preparation of the food and further, it also protects one from the harmful effects of germs which may have got mixed up in the food. A sip of water should accompany the recitation. When one pours water over one's head it is an abhishek to the Shabda Brahman resident within oneself, and while the soap and water are responsible for cleaning the outside of the body, the mantra takes care of purifying the inner equipment of the individual . The mantra can also be repeated anywhere, regardless of whether one is travelling, walking, working, lying awake or dreaming in bed.

How many times should one recite the Gayatri mantra? Baba advises us to recite it three, nine or eleven times before meals. For Gayatri Japa, there is really no limit but traditionally one is required to repeat it 108 times. Unfortunately, when a target is fixed, the spontaneous nature of the effort degenerates into a forced fulfilment and the pleasure of contemplating the Might and Majesty of the mantra, is overshadowed by the effort required to keep track of the count. Love and reverence for the mantra and faith in its promised results are far more important than mere mechanical repetition while the mind wanders in other pastures. God can never be fooled by a 'ditto'. Nevertheless, the more one chants the mantra, the greater the benefit.

Finally, Baba has said, “Solar energy has to be drawn down to re-enforce the inner Vision of man, that is the Soul force latent in man. When this Soul force is strengthened, the intellect, the senses and the moral emotions are activated and guided along fruitful lines. Can darkness confuse the brain or hide the Truth, when the Sun shines? Can sorrow prevail; can ignorance confuse; can egoism blind, when the Divinity that shines as the Sun blesses you with Illumination? Therefore, rely on the Gayatri to draw down the Effulgence of the Sun so that it may impart Illumination to your Intellect.”

*“Namaste Devi Gayatri,
“Savitri Tripadhakshare Mazdai;
“Ajare Amare Sai Mata-ha,
“Loka Samastass Sukhino Bhavantu.”*

*“I bow to Thee O Divine Gayatri,
“O Savitri, O Three Syllabled Mazdai;
“O Eternal, Immortal Divine Mother of Mothers.
“Let all the World have Peace and Happiness.”*