Gayatri Bhasya
By Srila Sridhara Swami maharaja

The word gayatri is a combination of two Sanskrit words: ganat (what is sung) and trayate (gives deliverance). This means, “a kind of song by which we can get our salvation, relief, emancipation.” Gayatri is known as Veda-mata, the mother of the Vedas. And gayatri has produced the all Veda. If we examine the Vedic conclusion from its most condensed aphorism to its most extensive expression, we shall find that it begins with Omkara: the Vedic syllable Om. That truth is expressed as the gayatri mantra, then it appears in the form of the Vedas, and then as the Vedanta-Sutra. Finally the Vedic conclusion is given its fullest expression in the S. Bhag. Since the meaning, the purpose of Vedic knowledge, progresses in this line, the gayatri mantra must contain within it the meaning of S. Bhag. that is, that the Krsna conception of Godhead is the highest. This must be the meaning of the gayatri mantra, but the problem is how to extract S.Bhag. (the Krsna conception) from the womb of gayatri.

The general meaning of gayatri is ”that song which grants liberation.” Now liberation must have some positive meaning. Liberation means not freedom from the negative side, but positive attainment. This is the definition given in the S.Bhag. mukti hitvanyatha rupam sva-rupena vyavasthittih. until and unless we attain the highest possible positive position, mukti, salvation, has not been effected. Mere withdrawal from the negative plane cannot be called liberation. Hegel has said that the object of our life is self determination. We must determine our normal function in the organic whole--not mere emancipation from the negative side, but participation in a positive function in the domain of service. This is considered to be the highest attainment of life. This is the meaning of gayatri.

The word gayatri comes from two sanskrit roots: ganat and trayate. Trayate means positive attainment to the final stage( sva-rupena vyavasthitih), and ganat means not mere sound, but musical sound. That musical sound which grants us the highest positive deliverance indicates the sankirtana of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the flute-song of Sri Krsna.

The purport of the Brahma-gayatri-mantra is as follow: The first word is Om. Om is the seed mantra which contains everything within it. Bhur is were we are--Bhu-loka--the world of our experience. Bhuva is the world of mental acquisition. It is the support, the back ground of our experience. Our present position of experience is the effect of our mental acquisition. That we are here in the world of experience is not accident; we have acquired this position by our previous karma. The physical sphere, this present world of experience is only the product, the outcome, of our previous mental impulses. And the subtle world of our previous karma, the mental sphere, is known as Bhuva-loka.

The next word in the mantra is Svah. Above Bhuva-loka is Svah-loka. The mental world (Bhuvah-loka) means acceptance and rejection: what to do and what
not to do "I like this I don’t like that” Svah-loka however, is the plane of decision, the world of intelligence (buddhi-loka). Our intelligence tells us “you may like this, but don’t do that, for then you will be the loser.” That plane, the plane of reason, is known as Svah-loka. In this way this material world is composed of three general layers, Bhur, the physical world. Bhuvah, the mental world, and Svah, the intellectual world.

Of course amore detailed analysis will reveal seven layers: Bhur, Bhuvah, Shah, Maha, Jana, Tapa, and Satyaloka. This has been dealt with in detail by Sanatana Goswami in His Brhad-Bhagavatamrtam. Here, this seven strata have been summarised in three planes of existence: physical, mental, and intellectual. And this three planes of experience have been summarised in a word, tat.

The next word in the Brahma-gayatri is savitur. Savitur generally means Surya, the sun. And the sun means, figuratively, that which shows or illuminates, that by which we can see. The three gross and subtle strata within this world are shown to us by a particular thing, savitur. What is that? The soul. Actually the world is not shown to us by the sun, but by the soul. So really in the center is the soul. It is the soul who give light to this world, who give us an understanding of the environment, the world of perception. All perception is possible because of the soul. Here the word savitur which generally means sun, can only mean soul, for the soul like the sun. shows us everything.

All seven strata of our existence, represented by bhur, the physical plane. bhuvah, the mental plane, and svah, the intellectual plane, have been here reduced to one entity: tat “that”. “That” is shown by the “sun” which in this context indicate the soul. Here, “soul” means “ individual soul”. The individual soul is the cause of this world. Not that the mind is in this world, but that the world is in the mind. Berkeley has said that the world is in the mind. Here it is been expressed that everything is seen with the help of the sun. If there is no sun, everything is dark-- nothing can be seen. And in a higher sense, “Light” means the soul. The soul is the subject and the soul’s object is the seven planes of experience within this world.

The next word in the gayatri mantra is varenyam. Varenyam means puja : worshippable, venerable. This indicate that although within this plane - the objective world - the soul is the subject, there is another domain which is to be venerated and worshipped by the soul. That is the supersoul area.

That worshippable plane of transcendental existence is known as bhargo. Bhargo means the supersubjective area, the area of the supersoul. This is mentioned in the first verse of the S.Bhag.: Dhamna svena sada nirasta-kuhakam satyam param dhimahi. Srila Vyasadeva says that here he is going to deal with another world whose pristine glory is so great that, by it’s own ray all misconceptions are brushed aside. The subject is the soul, and its object is all this worlds of experience. And the supersubject is the venerable area which is superior to the subject, the soul; that is the supersubjective area.

The word bhargo means “more subtle than the soul” and “holding a more important position than the soul”. So this means the Supersoul, the Paramatma. In general of course the word bhargo ordinarily means light. just as an x-ray can show us what the ordinary eye cannot see, bhargo is svarupa-shakti, higher, more powerful light that can reveal the soul. And that energy bhargo belongs to whom? It belongs to deva. Deva means “ who is beautiful and playful” that is, Sri Krsna:
reality, the beautiful. He is not a nondifferentiated substance, but is full of lila, pastimes. Deva means pastimes and beauty combined, and this means Krsna.

His domain is bhargo, brilliant, and it is varenyam, to be venerated by the jiva soul. What is the nature of that svarupa-shakti? That is the vaibhava the extension of Srimati Radharani. She holds the full service responsibility and the energy to serve Krsna. Bhargo is not less than vaibhava, the extended body of Srimati Radharani, which contains everything for the service of Krsna. Bhargo represent Mahabhava, the predominated moiety, and Deva, Krsna is Rasaraja, the predominating moiety.

In the gyaatri mantra we are requested, bhargo devasya dhimahi:
“come meditate.” What sort of meditation is possible in that plane of dedication? No abstract meditation, but service cultivation, Krsnanusilanam. Dhimahi means to participate in the spontaneous flow, the current of devotion in Vrindavan. And what will be the result? ( dhiyo yo nah pracodayat ). The capacity of our cultivation will be increased. As we serve, a greater capacity and willingness to serve will be given to us in remuneration just as interest is added to capital in the bank.

(clasakari vetana more deha prema-dhana) In this way, our dedicating principle will be increased again and again. Dhimahi means aradhana, worship. It cannot but be explained in terms of aradhana, puja, seva, worship, adoration, loving service. “Dhi” is derived from the word buddhi which generally means that which we cultivate with the help of our intelligence. But here “dhi” is a reference to that venerable intelligence which descend into this plane to help us cultivate service. So Dhimahi does not mean abstract meditation, but devotional service. This is the underlying meaning of the gyaatri-mantra.

Gayatri the song for deliverance, also means sankirtan. Kirtana is also sung, and it also improved us towards the highest goal. The sankirtana of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also reinstates us in our highest serving position. So brahma-gayatri in connection with Mahaprabhu come to mean Krsna-kirtan. Then it reaches Vrindavan and the flute kirtana. And when we enter Vrindavan, we shall find that the sweet sound of Krsna’s flute helps to engage all the Lord’s servants in their respective duties. At night the gopi’s, hearing the sound of the flute, will run to the yamuna thinking, “Oh Krsna is there”. And when Yasoda hears the song of Krsna’s flute, she thinks, “My son is there. He is coming home soon.” In this way the sound of the flute engages all of the servants of the Lord in their respective positions and inspires them to be mindful of their service.

In my commentary on gyaatri-mantra, I have written, dhir aradhanam eva nanyad-iti-tad- radha-padam dhimahi: All other services are represented fully in Radhika. Like branches they are all part of her. Madhurya-rasa is the chief, or mukhya-rasa, the combination of all rasas. Srimati Radharani is Mahabhava, She represent the entire service attitude.

The flute song of Sri Krsna, expressed as the gyaatri-mantra, is reminding us and engaging s in our service. And what is our service? Our service must be to surrender ourselves in the service of Srimati Radharani. The gyaatri-mantra will excite us to be mindful about Srimati Radharani’s lotus feet, to obey Her orders. She is mainly representing the all service area. To try to engage ourselves in Her service, under Her order, to accept Her direction and to obey Her, that is the service of Sri Radha. In this way, the meaning of the gyaatri-mantra has been drawn to Radha-dasyam, self determination ( sva-rupena vyavasthitih ).
In the meantime, the partial representations in vatsalya and sakya-rasa are also part and parcel of the original mellow of conjugal love, madhurya-rasa. The vatsalya-rasa devotee will serve Nanda and Yasoda. The sakya-rasa devotee, Sridhama and Sudhama, but ultimately, the whole system in conception is included in Radharani.

Radha-dasayam, the service of Srimati Radharani is the ultimate meaning to be extracted from the gayatri-mantra. That is the supreme end of our life. It cannot be but so! Srimad-bhagavatam is the ultimate, or full fledged, theism to be extracted from the Vedas, Upanishad and so many other scriptures. All the revealed truth rises to its acme, to its highest position, in the conception given in the Srimad-bhagavatam. And Srimad-bhagavatam teaches us that the highest realisation, self determination, is to be found in the service of Srimati Radharani, that under Her guidance we may serve Sri Krsna. We must directly put all our energy at Her disposal and devote ourselves to Her service. She actually knows how to serve Krsna. We aspire for a direct connection with Her service.

What is the meaning of the purport of bhargo? Bhargo vai vrasbhanu-jatma-vibhavaikaradhana sri-puram. Bhanu means the sun, or “who shows us the light”. Radharani is the daughter of Vrsá“bhanu.” So I selected the word “Bhanu”, to represent Her personal extended self, I have given the word “vaibhava.” (what comes out as resourcefulness ) or “extended self.” Prabhava is the central representation, and vaibhava is the outer extension. The very gist of svarupa-shakti is Srimati Radharani and the all svarupa-shakti is Her extended self, the abode of Her beautiful service, the all svarupa-shakti.

Just as ray of light extend from the sun, the whole internal potency is an extension of Mahabhava, Sri Radhika. She has developed Herself into such a beautiful area of brilliance, of internal energy, and there by She serves Her Lord. All this necessary things have sprung from Her. To help Her in serving Her Lord, they all come out. When the entire internal energy is condensed in a concise form, it is Mahabhava, Radharani. And when Radharani want to serve, She extend Herself in limitless different ways. And with some contribution from Baladeva and Yogamaya, the all spiritual world including Vrindavan, Mathura, and Vaikuntha, evolves to assist Srimati Radharani in the service of Sri Krsna.

In this way, I have drawn out Radha-dasayam as the meaning of the gayatri-mantra and have tried to represent it in Sanskrit verse.