

William Quan Judge
Commentary on the Gayatri



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Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all return, that face of the true Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.

— *The Gāyatrī*¹

As the sun we see is not the true sun, so too the light of intellect is not the real sun of our moral being. Only by untiring devotion to the welfare of humanity, and unutterable aspiration to the Divine Self within, we can move closer to the true sun who is the source and object of our being, and the Light of Truth for All.

J HAVE ADOPTED a translation as above, which is excellent in its giving of the meaning of this verse. What is the Gāyatrī? It is the sacred verse of the Hindus and begins with Om, their sacred word and letter. Its first words are:

Om, Bhūr, Bhuvah, [Svah]!

The first word contains in it a declaration of the three periods of a Manvantara and the three powers of that great Being who alone Is. Of a Manvantara it is the beginning, the middle, and the end, and the three powers are Creation (or manifesting), Preservation (or carrying on), and Destruction. The first three words, *Om, Bhūr, bhuvah*, draw attention to and designate the three worlds. The whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense. Every Brahman at his initiation is further instructed in this verse, but from giving that I am necessarily excused, as I cannot give it in a way in which I have not received it.

Unveil is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth and who perceives that something hides it from him. It is hidden by his own Karmic effects, which have put him now where the brain and the desires are too strong for the higher self to pierce through so long as he² remains careless and ignorant. The cry is not made to some manmade god with parts, passions, and attributes, but to the Self above who seeth in secret and bringeth out to light. It is directed to that on which the Universe

¹ [These sacred verses, also called *Sāvitrī*, occur in the *Rig-Veda*, III, 62, 10. They are in Sanskrit: *Om bh bhuvah svah! Tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*. A more literal translation, following the invocation to the three worlds of earth (*bhūr*), sky (*bhuvah*), and heaven (*svah*): “Let us meditate on that excellent splendour of the divine sun; may it illumine our minds.” — *Dara Eklund*.]

² [*i.e.*, the lower self.]

is built and standeth — no other than the Self which is in every man and which sitteth like a bird in a tree watching while another eats the fruit.¹

From this the whole Universe proceeds out into manifestation. The ancients held that all things whatsoever existed in fact solely in the idea, and therefore the practitioner of Yoga was taught — and soon discovered — that sun, moon, and stars were in himself, and until he learned this he could not proceed. This doctrine is very old, but today is adopted by many modern reasoners. For they perceive on reflection that no object enters the eye, and that whether we perceive through sight or feeling or any other sense whatever, all objects are existing solely in idea. Of old this was demonstrated in two ways. First, by showing the disciple the actual interpenetration of one world by another. As that while we live here among those things called objective by us, other beings were likewise living in and among us and our objects and therein actually carrying on their avocations, perceiving the objects on their plane as objective, and wholly untouched by and insensible to us and the objects we think so material. This is no less true today than it was then. And if it were not true, modern hypnotism, clairvoyance, or clairaudience would be impossible. This was shown by a second method precisely similar to mesmeric and hypnotic experiments, only that to these was added the power to make the subject step aside from himself and with a dual consciousness note his own condition. For if a barrier of wood were erected in the sight of the subject which he clearly perceived and knew was wood, impervious to sight and an obstacle to movement, yet when hypnotized he saw it not, yet could perceive all objects behind it which were hidden in his normal state, and when he pressed against it thinking it to be empty air and feeling naught but force, he could not pass, but wondered why the empty air restrained his body. This is modern and ancient. Clearly it demonstrates the illusionary nature of objectivity. The objectivity is only real relatively, for the mind sees no objects whatever but only their idea, and at present is conditioned through its own evolution until it shall have developed other powers and qualities.

The request made in the verse to unveil the face of the True Sun is that the Higher Self may shine down into us and do its work of illumination. This also spreads forth a natural fact unknown to moderns, which is that the Sun we see is not the true sun, and signifies too that the light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being. Our forefathers in the dim past knew how to draw forth through the visible Sun the forces from the True one. We have temporarily forgotten this because our evolution and descent into the hell of matter, in order to save the whole, have interposed a screen. They say in Christian lands that Jesus went into hell for three days. This is correct, but not peculiar to Jesus. Humanity is doing this for three days, which is merely the mystical way of saying that we must descend into matter for three periods so immense in time that the logarithm of one day is given to each period. Logarithms

¹ [Cf. “Two birds [the individual soul and the Supreme Self], united always [the two are inseparable and interdependent companions, like an object and its reflection] and known by the same name [Atman], closely cling to the same tree [body]. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating. . . . Seated on the same tree, the jīva moans [as the result of his identification with the body], bewildered by his impotence. But when he beholds the other, the Lord worshipped by all, and His glory, he then becomes free from grief.” *Mundaka* iii, I, 1-2 & *Svetasvatara Upanishad* iv, 6-7. Same in *Rigveda Mantra* I, 164, 20. Also cf. “So we grew together, like to a double cherry, seeming parted, but yet a union in partition; two lovely berries moulded on one stem.” Shakespeare: *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, act III, scene 2. — ED. PHIL.]

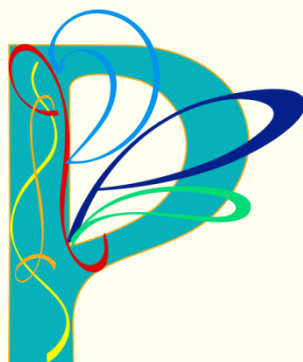
were not first known to Napier, but were taught in the pure form of the mysteries, because alone by their use could certain vast calculations be made.

The true Sun is now hidden by a vase of Golden Light.

That is, the light of the True Sun — the Higher Self — is hidden by the blood contained in the vase of the mortal body. The blood has two aspects — not here detailed — in one of which it is a helper to perception, in the other a hindrance. But it signifies here the passions and desires, Kāma, the personal self, the thirst for life. It is this that veils from us the true light. So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and to realize. The object of this prayer is that we may carry out our whole duty, after becoming acquainted with the truth, while we are on our journey to thy Sacred Seat This is our pilgrimage, not of one, not selfishly, not alone, but the whole of humanity. For the sacred seat is not the Brāhmanical heaven of Indra, nor the Christian selfish heaven acquired without merit while the meritorious suffer the pains of hell. It is that place where all meet, where alone all are one. It is when and where the three great sounds of the first word of the prayer merge into one soundless sound. This is the only proper prayer, the sole saving aspiration.¹

The Gayatri was composed by a Kshatriya, not by a Brahman.

The reformers they have had have been mostly among themselves, as, for instance, the great Brahman Śamkarāchārya. If Johnston's argument be right, then it is a very remarkable fact that the Gāyatrī, or that holy verse which is the “mother of the Vedas,” repeated every morning by thousands of Brahmans as they bathe in the Ganges, was composed by a Kshatriya and not by a Brahman. On this we have in the Upanishads these words: “The Brahman sat at the foot of the Kshatriya.” This upholds the spiritual dignity of the Rājanyas, who are the Kshatriyas and the Red Rājputs.²



¹ Dara Eklund (Comp.). *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. 2nd ed. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press: Vol. I, 2009; A COMMENTARY ON THE GĀYATRĪ, pp. 311-13.

² *ibid.*, THE RED RĀJPUTS, p. 429

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