

Sai Ram

## RECOMMENDATION FOR STUDY CIRCLE

October 9 to November 25, 2011

With Swami's grace and guidance, devotees on the Global Akhanda Bhajan and 86<sup>th</sup> Birthday event committees have chosen the theme, "*Shine the Light Within*" for this year's celebrations.

To enhance understanding and to promote spiritual transformation, we suggest study circles to increase awareness on 1) Meditation and 2) Gayatri mantra. This document provides study circle material on the two topics. Please have your study circle participants read and put into practice, Swami's guidance. Thank you.

### MEDITATION

Reference: <http://www.sathyasai.org/devotion/meditation.html>

#### Prayer versus meditation

"There are two roads to fulfillment: prayer and meditation. Prayer makes you a supplicant at the feet of God. Meditation (dhyana) induces God to come down to you and inspires you to raise yourselves to Him; it tends to make you come together, not place one in a lower level and the other on a higher." □ Sathya Sai Speaks V, 'Lamps Lit from the Same Flame'

#### Teaching meditation

"Can anyone train another in meditation? Or claim to train? It may be possible to teach a person the posture, the pose, the position of the legs, feet, or hands, neck, head or back, the style of breathing, or its speed. But meditation is a function of the inner man; it involves deep subjective quiet, the emptying of the mind and filling oneself with the Light that emerges from the divine Spark within. This is a discipline that no text book can teach and no class can communicate" □ Sathya Sai Speaks VII, 'Questions Answered'

"You need not rely on another for success in mediation and soft repetition of the name (dhyana and japa) and await contact with some sage in order to get from him a mantra for recitation. Pray to the God within, and you will receive guidance." □ Sathya Sai Speaks VII, "The Commentary on the Message"

#### Schedule for meditation

Recommended time is before dawn (between 3 and 6 AM, 'auspicious time is 4:30-5:15 AM' □ Sathya Sai Speaks VI, 'Eyelids & The Pupil')

But regularity is most important. Swami also recommends a few minutes of meditation in the evening after dusk. Swami told the students that you have to look at any object --flame, idol, or picture for 12 seconds with total concentration and without blinking eyelids. This is concentration (dharana). Twelve dharana concentrations make one meditation (dhyana). This means that meditation should last for  $12 \times 12 = 144$  seconds. Thus, proper meditation

need not last more than 2 minutes 24 secs. Twelve meditations equal one samadhi, which amounts to 12x144 seconds = 28 minutes 48 seconds.

However, it is not something that one does by sitting for a couple of minutes or hours.

Contemplation of the Lord should be always at all places. Sri Ramana Maharshi was once asked, "How long should one practice meditation? 15 or 30 or 45 minutes or an hour?" His reply was, "You should continue doing it till you forget that you are meditating. As long as you are conscious (physically aware) that you are meditating, it is no meditation at all." The consciousness of body and mind and the thought of yourself should become totally extinct. The experience of only the object of your meditation should subsist, i.e. nothing else but the presence of divinity. The state of meditation is experiencing but without the consciousness that you are experiencing.

### **Posture for meditation**

Sit on a special mat/piece of cloth/cushion that you use for prayers. This acts as an insulation for not earthing the body currents. Sit straight because, "when the body is straight and quiet, the mind is also straight and quiet. If you cannot control your body, how can you control your mind"

Relax the hands in two ways: (a) place hands in lap, with one palm on top of the other with thumbs touching at the tips or (b) rest your arms on your knees with the palms facing upward and the fingers in chin-mudra posture as shown. The symbolism of the fingers in this posture is explained in the section on soft repetition (japa).

To regulate the breath for Soham session, keep "the tip of the tongue gently on the rear of the teeth." □ Sathy Sai Speaks XI, "Bhakti, Stage by Stage"

### **Concentration, contemplation, and meditation**

There are the three stages: concentration, contemplation, and meditation. Gearing all the senses into action is concentration. Right from dawn to dusk, whatever activities we perform, they are done with concentration. There is a border between concentration, which is below senses, and meditation, which is beyond senses. This border is known as contemplation. When contemplation deepens, it moves naturally into meditation.

Meditation is entirely above the senses; it transcends the senses.

A rose plant has leaves, thorns and flowers. Concentration helps you to identify as to where the thorns are and the flower is. To cut the love (rose flower) away from worldly desires (thorns) is contemplation. Concentration is identifying the various locations of the thorns and flowers by looking at the rose plant. To offer the flower, so cut, to the Lord is meditation.

In meditation, there are three aspects: the one who is doing the meditation (i.e. the subject), the object of meditation (i.e. God), and the act or process (i.e. the rapport that the subject is trying to establish with the object). Proper meditation or the culmination of meditation occurs when the three factors --meditator, object of meditation, and act of meditation-- coalesce and merge into one. In the state of meditation, the meditator, the object of his meditation and the process of meditation have fallen away and there is only One, and that One is God. All that may change has fallen away, and That Thou Art (Tat Twam Asi) is the state that exists. It is an experience of unity (without the meditator being conscious of himself). As one gradually returns to his customary and habitual state of consciousness, the lamp (jyothi) is again placed in the heart and kept lighted there throughout the day.

One should understand that what comes about in meditation as one moves deeply into it is

not the thinking of the light but the forgetting of the body and thereby the direct experience that the body is not oneself. This is the stage of contemplation, when the body is totally forgotten. It cannot be forced. It comes about by itself and is the stage that naturally follows concentration. Vivekananda said that in meditation he was unable to find his body.

□ Conversations with Sathya Sai Baba, XLIX, by John Hislop

Equipose (samadhi) is the culmination of meditation; it transcends all states of physical consciousness: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. It is a state that transcends the mind; it is super consciousness --the intelligence is steady. Sama means balanced state, and dheer means the intellect. Samadhi means a balanced and steadied condition of the intellect --equal-minded in all circumstances, heat or cold, good or bad, joy or sorrow.

References: Some of the material in this section is paraphrased from two discourses (1978 and June 1989) as described in Sathya Sai Baba American Bal Vikas manual and Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA respectively.

### **Practicing concentration, contemplation**

Assign the job of a watchman to the mind by following one of the practices described below in order to concentrate and contemplate more.

(1) Keep eyes half opened, and focused on the tip of the nose. Inhale through the left nostril, closing the right nostril with the right thumb. As the breath goes in, it utters So (meaning 'He'); then exhale through the right nostril, closing the left nostril. As the breath goes out, it utters Ham (meaning 'I'). Inhale and exhale slowly and deliberately, conscious of the identity of He and I (yourself), which it asserts, until the breathing and the awareness grow into an unnoticed process. Keep the mind as a watchman to note the incoming and outgoing breaths, to listen with the inner ear to the Soham that the breath whispers and to witness the assertion of your being the Divine, which is the core of the Universe. □ Sathya Sai Speaks VII, "Questions Answered"

You could also chant Soham, inhaling So and exhaling Ham. Harmonize the breath and thought. ... If you have some flour on your palm, hold it near the nostrils, it should not get fluttered in the least; the breath has to be soft as that. The mood of relaxation produced by Soham is a precondition for a profitable meditation session. □ Sathya Sai Speaks V, "Japa, Sadhana"

(2) First, when you sit for meditation, recite a few verses on the glory of God, so that the agitated mind may be calmed. Then gradually, while repeating the Lord's name, draw before the mind's eye the form that that name represents. When your mind wanders away from the recital of the name, lead it onto the picture of the form. When it wanders from the form, lead it onto the name. Let it dwell either on one sweetness or the other. Treated thus, it can be easily tamed. The imaginary picture that you have drawn will get transmuted into the emotional picture, dear to the heart and fixed in the memory. Gradually, it will become the sakshathkarachitra (coming face to face with the Lord) when the Lord assumes that form in order to fulfill your desire. This spiritual discipline is called (Name-and-form meditation (japasahita dhyana). I advise you all to take it up, for it is the best form of meditation for beginners." □ Sathya Sai Speaks X, 'Meditation'

(3) Alternatively, one should construe three types of pictures: imaginary, mental, and one based on feeling and actualization. When this Soham meditation has stabilized itself, you

may start stabilizing in your mind the form of the Lord of your choice. Picture the form from head to foot, taking at least 15 to 20 minutes for it, dwelling on each part of the body and imprinting it clearly on the heart, and then proceed from foot to head in similar way. This will help to fix the form in the altar of the heart. Then, you will see in everyone that Form only; in all beings, you will find Him only. You will realize the One manifold as Many. I am He, Only He is (Sivoham, Soham) □ Sathya Sai Speaks VII, "Questions Answered"

Hence, the meditation is that which would transform mind into the form and not vice-versa. (4) Choose some base 'lamp' as the point of concentration. Seeing the light and moving the light here and there, in the meditator's body, is to give work to the mind, to keep the mind occupied in the right direction, so that the mind will not be thinking of this and that and thus interfering with the process of becoming more and more quiet. Spreading the light into its universal phase, sending the light into every other body, and when one is so concentrated in that that he is no longer conscious of his body, is the stage of contemplation. As contemplation deepens, the stage of meditation comes about of its own volition. It cannot be forced. If the meditator remains conscious of himself and that he is engaged in meditation, then he is not meditating but is still in the preliminary stage at the beginning of concentration.

## **Light (jyothi) meditation**

### **Universality of light (jyothi)**

The flame never does diminish in luster, however many lamps may be lit therefrom. So, the flame is the most appropriate symbol of the eternal Absolute. Light symbolizes divinity in man. The importance of the light in contrast to other things is that other things are decreased by sharing, but the light remains shining in all its splendor even after a thousand or more have lit their candles or lamps by it. This explains the universal soul, from which all beings come as individual souls.

The idea of moving the light within the body and then into the universal stage, the idea of universality is that the same divine light is present in everyone and everywhere. To impress this universality on the mind, we do the spreading of the light outside one's own body. Conversations with Sathya Sai Baba, XLIX, by John Hislop.

### **Jyothi meditation details**

"As regards the technique of meditation, different teachers and trainers give different forms of advice. But I shall give you now the most universal and the most effective form. This is the very first step in spiritual discipline. At first, set a few minutes every day for meditation, and extend the time as you feel the bliss that you get.

"Let it be in the hours before dawn. This is preferable because the body is refreshed after sleep, and the dealings of daytime will not yet have impinged on you. Have a lamp or a candle before you with an open, steady, and straight flame. Sit in front of the candle in the lotus posture or any other comfortable sitting position. Look on the flame steadily for some time, and closing your eyes try to feel the flame inside you between your eyebrows.

Let it slide down into the lotus of your heart, illuminating the path. When it enters the heart, imagine that the petals of the lotus open out by one, bathing every thought, feeling, and emotion in the light and so removing darkness from them. There is no space for darkness to hide. The light of the flame becomes wider and brighter.

Let it pervade your limbs. Now those limbs can never indulge in dark, suspicious, and

wicked activities; they have become instruments of light and love.

As the light reaches up to the tongue, falsehood vanishes from it. Let it rise up to the eyes and the ears and destroy all the dark desires that infest them and which lead you to perverse sights and childish conversation.

Let your head be surcharged with light and all wicked thoughts will flee therefrom. Imagine that the light is in you more and more intensely. Let it shine all around you and let it spread from you in ever widening circles, taking in your loved ones, your kith and kin, your friends and companions, your enemies and rivals, strangers, all living beings, the entire world.

"Since the light illumines all the senses every day so deeply and so systematically, a time will soon come when you can no more relish dark and evil sights, yearn for dark and sinister tales, crave for base, harmful, deadening toxic food and drink, handle dirty demeaning things, approach places of ill-fame and injury, or frame evil designs against anyone at any time. Stay on in that thrill of witnessing the light everywhere.

If you are adoring God in any form now, try to visualize that form in the all-pervasive light. For Light is God; God is Light.

"Practice this meditation as I have advised regularly every day. At other times repeat the name of God (any Name fragrant with any of His many Majesties), always taking care to be conscious of His might, mercy, and munificence." Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol X (Old edition, pages 348-350)

## GAYATRI MANTRA

Reference: <http://www.sathyasai.org/devotion/prayers/gayatri.html>

### What it is

The Gayatri (Vedic prayer to illuminate the intellect) is the universal prayer enshrined in the Vedas (Divine Knowledge), the most ancient scriptures of man. It is addressed to the Immanent and Transcendent Divine, which has been given the name 'Savitha', meaning 'that from which all this is born.' [20-6-1977]

Gayatri is Annapurna, the Mother, the sustaining Force that animates all life. So do not neglect it. [20-6-1977]

The Gayatri is considered as Vedasara --"the essence of the Vedas." Veda means knowledge, and this prayer fosters and sharpens the knowledge-yielding faculty. As a matter of fact, the four mahavakyas or 'core-declarations' enshrined in the four Vedas are implied in this Gayatri mantra. [20-6-1977]

The Gayatri mantra (Vedic prayer to illuminate the intelligence) is a sacred mantra that demonstrates the unity that underlies manifoldness in creation. It is through the recognition of this unity that we can understand the multiplicity. Clay is one and the same thing, though pots of different shapes and sizes can be made from it. Gold is one, though gold ornaments can be multifarious. The Atma (Divine Self) is one, though the embodied forms in which it resides may be many. Whatever the colour of the cow, the milk is always white. [17-3-1983]

### What it consists of

The Gayatri may be considered as having three parts: (1) praise, (2) meditation, and (3) prayer. First the Divine is praised, then It is meditated upon in reverence, and finally an appeal is made to the Divine to awaken and strengthen the intellect, the discriminating faculty of man. [20-6-1977]

This mantra is the embodiment of all deities. It is not related to any particular sect, caste, idol, or institution. It is said to embody nine "colours": (1) Om (2) Bhuh (3) Bhuvah (4) Suvah (5) Thath (6) Savithur (powers) (7) Varennyam (8) Bhargah (9) Dhevasya. "Dheemahi" is related to the meditative aspect. "Dhiyo-yo-nah prachodayaath" relates to the aspect of prayer. The mantra as a whole thus contains three aspects: descriptive, meditational, and prayer. [17-3-1983]

### Triple aspects of Gayatri

Who is Gayatri? Gayatri is not a goddess. Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas (Gayatri Chandhasam matha) Gayatri, however, has three names: Gayatri, Savitri, and Saraswathi. These three are present in everyone. Gayatri represents the senses; it is the master of the senses. Savitri is the master of Prana (Life Force). Many Indians are familiar with the story of Savitri, who brought back to life her dead husband, Sathyavan. Savitri signifies truth. Saraswathi is the presiding deity of speech (vaak). The three represent purity in thought, word, and deed (thrikarana shuddhi). Although Gayatri has three names, all three



are in each of us as the senses (Gayatri), the power of speech (Saraswathi), and the life force (Savitri). [23-8-1995]

When one's intelligence and intuition are developed by recitation of the mantra, the activating deity is Gayatri. When the life-forces are protected, the guardian deity is called Savitri. When one's speech is protected, the deity is called Saraswathi. Because of the protective roles of Savitri, Saraswathi, and Gayatri in relation to life, speech, and the intellect, Gayatri is described as "the embodiment of all goddesses (Sarvadhevathaswarupini)". [17-3-1983]

Gayatri pervades everywhere. It consists of three deities, Gayatri, Savitri, and Saraswathi. Of these, the first one is master of the sense, the second is the teacher of truth, and the third is the master of speech. Hence it is a Trinity of the senses, the mind, and speech.[6-5-1995]

### **The five faces of Gayatri**

Gayatri is said to have five faces and hence is called Panchamukhi. Is there anybody in the world with five faces? No. In the Ramayana, Ravana is said to have ten heads. If really he had ten heads, how would he be able to lie in his bed or move about? This is not the inner meaning of this description. He is said to be ten-headed because he was the master of the four Vedas and the six Sastras.

Likewise, Gayatri is described as five-faced. The five faces are as follows.

1. Om (the Pranava). The Pranava Principle represents the eight different forms of wealth (ashta-aishvarya).
2. Bhur Bhuvah Suvah.
3. The third is: Thath-Savithur-varenyam.
4. Bhargo Dhevasya dheemahi.
5. Dheyo yo nah prachodayaath.

When the Gayatri mantra is understood in this way, it will be realised that all the five aspects of Gayatri are within each of us. [23-8-1995]

Gayatri represents in these five faces the five pranas (life forces). Gayatri is the protector of the five pranas in man. □ "Gayantham thrayathe ithi Gayatri (Because it protects the one who recites it, it is called Gayatri." When Gayatri acts as protector of the life-forces, she is known as Savitri. Savitri is known in the puranic story as the devoted wife who brought back to life her husband, Sathyavan. Savitri is the presiding deity of the five pranas. She protects those who lead a life of Truth. Gayatri has five faces and is the embodiment of all deities --Sarva devatha Swarupam.[6-5-1995]

### **The meaning of the Gayatri**

In the Gayatri Mantra, the unity of body, mind and soul is depicted in the first line, "Bhur-Bhuvah-Suvaha." The next line, "Bhargo Dhevasya Dheemahi", means "Throw away the darkness." "Dheeyo yonah Prachodayaath" means "Let the effulgence of the Divine dispel the darkness of ignorance." [6-5-1995]

Gayatri means 'that which saves, when repeated!' It is the torch of spiritual wisdom (jnana) [25-2-1965]

This is the prayer addressed to the Sun in the Gayatri mantra Dheeyo yo nah prachodayaath. (May the Sun illumine our intellects in the same way he sheds his effulgence). In this way, they came to regard the Gayatri mantra as Veda Matha (the Mother of the Vedas). This Gayatri mantra is not related to any particular time, place, or person.

The following indicates that it relates to the three aspect of Time --past, present, and future: Bhur Bhuva Suvah

The following says that light dispels darkness --without light, darkness will not go:

Tat Savitur Varenyam, Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi, Dheeyo yo nah Prachodayaath

The following signifies that the Sun is the dispeller of darkness: Bhargo devasya

In this manner, the ancients believed that there was a supreme power and looked upon it as God. [21.5-1991]

Stotra (description of the glory), dhyana (meditation), and prarthana (prayer) are all contained in the Gayatri Mantra. When does a prayer become meaningful? It is only when you stabilise your mind and turn it toward God. The basis for this is to meditate, pray, and experience. It is essential to achieve harmony in thought, word, and deed. Gayatri is teaching this great lesson. □[6-5-1995]

The Gayatri mantra has all three elements that figure in the adoration of God: description, meditation, and prayer. The first nine words of the mantra --Om-Bhur-Bhuvas-Suvah-Thath-Savithur-Varenyam-Bhargo-Dhevasya-- represent the attributes of the Divine. [23-8-1995]

Dheemahi pertains to dhyana (meditation).[23-8-1995]

Dheyo yo nah Prachodayath is the prayer to the Lord.[23-8-1995]

The mantra is thus a prayer to God to confer all powers and talents.[23-8-1995]

### **What the Gayatri does for you**

The Gayatri is considered as Vedasara --"the essence of the Vedas." Veda means knowledge, and this prayer fosters and sharpens the knowledge-yielding faculty. As a matter of fact, the four mahavakyas or 'core-declarations' enshrined in the four Vedas are implied in this Gayathri mantra. So the Gayatri mantra has been given to you as a third eye to reveal to you that inner vision by which you may realise Brahman.[ 20-6-1977]

It will protect you from harm wherever you are --traveling, working, or at home. Westerners have investigated the vibrations produced by this mantra and have found that when it is recited with the correct accent as laid down in the Vedas, the atmosphere around becomes visibly illumined. So Brahmaprakasha, the effulgence of the Divine, will descend on you and illumine your intellect and light your path when this mantra is chanted. Also repeat santhi thrice at the end, for that repetition will give santhi or peace to three entities in you -- body, mind, and soul.[ 20-6-1977]

Gayatri will protect your body, make your intellect shine and improve your power of speech. That is why Gayatri is considered to be very important for this second stage of your life, which you are entering today.[Editor: This discourse was given in connection with



Upanayam, the sacred thread ceremony for boys.] [6-5-1995]

It is essential to recite the Gayatri mantra at least three times during morning, noon, and evening. This will serve to reduce the effects of the wrong acts one does every day. It is like buying goods for cash, instead of getting them on credit. There is no accumulation of karmic (result of action) debt, since each day's karma (action) is atoned for that day itself by reciting the Gayatri mantra. [17-3-1983]

Brahmaprakasha, the effulgence of the Divine, will descend on you and illumine your intellect and light your path when this mantra is chanted. [20-6-1977]

Gayatri is the reliever of all diseases (Sarva roga nivaarini Gayatri).[23-8-1995]

Gayatri wards off all misery (Sarva dhukha parivarini Gayatri). [23-8-1995]

Gayathri is the fulfiller of all desires (Sarva vancha phalashri Gayatri). [23-8-1995]

Gayatri is the bestower of all that is beneficial. [23-8-1995]

If the mantra is chanted, various kinds of powers will emerge in one. Hence the Gayatri mantra should not be treated casually. [23-8-1995]

The attitude of surrender will grow in us as we recite regularly the Gayatri mantra. [17-3-1983]

Like sunrise after the night, the Gayatri mantra dispels the darkness of ignorance: Dhiyoyonah prachodayaath. The rays of the Gayatri mantra illumine the mind and intelligence and promote knowledge, wisdom and discrimination. [17-3-1983]

This Gayatri has the subtle power of removing evil tendencies and implanting virtuous habits. The Gayatri promotes the acquisition of Daivasakthi (God-power) [25-2-1965].

### **When you should say the Gayatri**

Never give up the Gayatri; you may give up or ignore any other mantra but you should recite the Gayatri at least a few times a day. [20-6-1977]

Do not sing cheap and defiling film songs. Instead, recite the Gayatri. When you bathe, the body is being cleansed; let your mind and intellect also be cleansed. Make it a point to repeat it when you bathe as well as before every meal, when you wake from sleep, and when you go to bed. And also repeat santhi thrice at the end, for that repetition will give santhi or peace to three entities in you --body, mind, and soul.[ 20-6-1977]

Chant the Gayatri morning, noon, and evening. You do so many things. Why don't you chant this Gayatri? I bless all of you that you may sanctify your life in this way, making it useful and meaningful. [6-5-1995]

It is essential to recite the Gayatri mantra at least three times during morning, noon, and evening. [17-3-1983]

Gayatri is a treasure you must guard throughout your lives. [ 20-6-1977]

The Gayatri can be recited even when one is taking a bath. It will mean also offering ablutions to the goddess. [17-3-1983]

At noon, if the Gayatri is recited before taking one's meal, the food will get sanctified and become an offering to the deity. [17-3-1983]

Supplying the calories for the spirit is as necessary a process for happy living as supplying calories for the body. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, morning worship, noon worship, and evening worship --all six are equally essential. You miss any one of the six at your peril. [25-2-1965].

The Gayatri mantra has to be recited three times a day: in the morning at sunrise, at noon, and at sunset. These are called "sandhya kalam" --the time of coming together of night and day, of morning and evening, and of day and night. [17-3-1983]

Time, like man, has three qualities: sathwa, rajas, and thamas (poised or pure or serenity, passion, and inertia). The day is divided into three parts:

- 4am to 8am and 4pm to 8pm have the sathwic (equanimous) quality;
- 8am to 4pm are rajasic (passionate);
- 8pm and 4am are tamasic (inaction).

The eight hours from 8pm to 4am are used mainly for sleep. The eight hours of the day (from 8am to 4pm) are employed by all beings, including animals and birds, in the discharge of their day to day duties and are regarded as rajasic (active pursuit). When the four sathwic hours of the morning are used for engaging oneself in good actions like worship, virtuous deeds, and keeping good company, one is sure to raise oneself from the human to the Divine level. It is during the sathwic period (4am to 8am and 4pm to 8pm) that the Gayatri mantra should be recited. [17-3-1983]

### **What to think when you are saying the Gayatri**

In the practice of the Gayatri mantra, one should realise that everything is within one and thereby develop confidence in the Self. [23-8-1995]