

The Sāvitrī and the upāsanā of the Deva Savitṛ

Bhārgavaḥ

॥ भ॒द्रं नो॑ अ॒पि॑ वा॒तय॑ मनः॑ ॥
॥ दे॒व स॑वि॒तः प्र॑सु॒व ॥
॥ वि॒दा म॑घ॒वन् वि॒दो॑ऽम् ॥

1 The mantra-s

The Sāvitrī is the core mantra used in Savitrupāsanā. It also has other notable deployments, which will be described later. Its ṛṣi is Viśvāmitra of the clan of Gāthīn, the chandas is nicṛd gāyatrī and the devatā is Savitṛ. It is from the 3rd maṇḍala of the R̥gveda (RV 3.62.10). The meter is termed nicṛd gāyatrī because the syllable count is 23, one short of the usual 24 for a gāyatrī. This arises due to the intrinsic saṃdhi, which creates वरेण्यम् from वरेणियम् . The Sāvitrī goes thus:

तत् स॑वि॒तुर् वरे॑ण्यम् भ॒र्गो दे॒वस्य॑ धी॒महि॑ । धियो॒ यो नः॑ प्र॒चोद॑यात् ॥

Given the popularity of the Sāvitrī it is common to see numerous translations of the same; however, these often do not get certain aspects of the Old Vedic register of Sanskrit. It is important that one does the japa of this mantra with a proper grasp of its sense in the original language. Hence, we provide a translation of the mantra in full here.

tat= that; Savituh= of Savitā; vareṇyam= excellent or desirable; bhargah= radiance (neuter accusative); devasya= of the god; dhīmahi= may we fix [our mind]/ may we focus on; dhiyah= insights (plural of dhī); yah= who; nas= our; pracodayāt= may he inspire.

There are a few key points to make note of: first, the verb form *dhīmahi*; this is the *āśīr-liṅ* (benedictive) 1st person plural form of the root *dhā*, which belongs to class 3 (*juhotyādi gaṇa*). We are unaware of the occurrence of other *āśīr-liṅ* forms of the verb *dhā* in the RV. It is used symmetrically with the 3rd person singular *āśīr-liṅ* form of the verb *pra-cud* i.e. *pracodayāt*. These forms are not commonly used outside of such mantra-s suggesting that it was an ancient usage of a verb-pair presenting a relationship between the worshipers (*dhīmahi*) and the god (*pracodayāt*). Second, the name of the god *Savitṛ* is commonly combined with the word *deva* (god). This combination probably again has an ancient connotation, which is reflected in theonyms of other Indo-European branches like proto-Germanic **Tiwaz*>Tyr. It (theos) was probably also used in this sense for the Greek Hyperion¹, the likely cognate of *Savitṛ*, in the Homeric language. Third, the word *dhiyaḥ*, has been specifically chosen for alliteration with *dhīmahi*². It means not just any thought but specifically inspired thought or insight that leads to the “seeing” of special knowledge, such as that embodied in a Vedic mantra. Thus, we get,

May we focus on the excellent radiance of the deva *Savitṛ* who will inspire our insights.

The *Sāvitrī* is prefixed with the three *vyāhṛti*-s for the actual *japa*.

भूर् भुवः सुवः ।

The three basic *vyāhṛti*-s are to be understood as the three realms, the earth, the atmosphere and the heavens, which are pervaded by the light of the god *Savitṛ*. These are given above in the Yajurvedic form, which may also be followed in Atharvavedic tradition. In the Ṛgvedic tradition the internal *saṃdhi* is enacted and we have *स्वः* for *सुवः*. The mysteries of these *vyāhṛti*-s are explained, among other places, in the *Taittirīya-śruti*.

For the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, it is prefixed with the 7 *vyāhṛti*-s.

ॐ भूः । ॐ भुवः । ओम् सुवः । ॐ महः । ॐ जनः । ॐ तपः । ओम् सत्यम् ।

These may be understood as a larger set of 7 regions of space, which are pervaded by the light of *Savitṛ*. The nasals preceding *sa* are given as per the Yajurvedic tradition. They are rendered as the usual nasals in the RV and

¹A Titan, even as *Savitṛ* is also called *Asura* in the RV

²Word analysis suggests that *Viśvāmitra* had a particular propensity for alliterative or polyptotic usages such as the *āmreḍita*. See: A note on *āmreḍita*-s in the Ṛgveda and issues of word distribution <https://manasataramgini.wordpress.com/2018/05/14/a-note-on-amreḍita-s-in-the-rgveda-and-issues-of-word-distribution/>

AV traditions.

It suffixed by the incantation known as the brahmaśiras.

ॐ आपो ज्योती रसो ऽमृतं ब्रह्म भूर्-भुव-सुवरोऽम् ॥

Here, āpaḥ= waters; jyotiḥ= light; rasaḥ= life fluids; amṛtaḥ= immortality; brahma= mantra-power. bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ and suvaḥ and the three main vyāhṛti-s

Then there is the four-footed form which is a mystery teaching in the śruti of the Śukla-yajurvedin-s. This is obtained by adding the below.

प॒रो-र॑ज॒से ऽसाव॑दोऽम् ॥

This technically converts it into an anuṣṭubh due the addition of 8 additional syllables. In the mystery teaching it is termed the beautiful or the vivid foot that is beyond the immediate space (rajas: see section below for details). In the same teaching it is revealed that the 4th foot is a critical aspect of both abhicārika and vṛddhi deployments of the Sāvitrī. Indeed, combined with the teaching of Śaunaka it might be deployed along with the Sāvitrī with syllables inverted (viparīta-prayoga) for abhicārika purposes.

The Atharvan tradition gives a saṃpuṭikaraṇa of the Sāvitrī known as the Mahāsāvitrī. It goes thus:

ॐ भूः । ॐ भुवः । ॐ स्वः । ॐ महः । ॐ जनः । ॐ तपः । ॐ सत्यं । ॐ तत्
स॒वितु॑र् व॒रेण्य॑म् भ॒र्गो दे॒वस्य॑ धीमहि । धियो॒ यो नः॑ प्रचो॒दया॑त् ॥ ॐ आपो ज्योती रसो
ऽमृतं ब्रह्म भूर्-भुव-सुवरोऽम् ॥ ॐ भूर्-भुवः-सुवर्-महर्-जनस्-तपः सत्यं मधुं क्षरन्ति ।
ॐ आपो ज्योती रसो ऽमृतं ब्रह्म भूर्-भुव-स्वरोऽम् । ओम् तद्-ब्रह्म । ओम् तद्-वायुः
। ओम् तद्-आत्मा । ओम् तत्-सत्यम् । ओम् तत्-सर्वम् । ओम् तत्-पुरो नमः ॥

Some hold that deploying this form of the mantra 10× can be considered an equivalent of deploying the regular version 108×. This mantra is also seen as a combination of that of the gods Savitṛ and Vayu. These two are an ancient pair as indicated by the Mṛgāra mantra-s. Savitṛ pervades space with light, while the Vayu pervades it as the rarefied substance and the force which holds the celestial bodies together. These two thus form the foundation of existence.

The Atharvan tradition also teaches the mystery deployment, which adds the Atharvaśiras comprised of the Atharvanic high vyāhṛti-s.

ॐ भूर्-भुवः-स्वः । ॐ तत् स॑वितुर् वरे॑ण्यम् भर्गो॑ दे॒वस्य॑ धीमहि । धियो॑ यो नः प्रचो॒दयात् ॥
॥ ॐ भूर् भुवः स्वर् जनद् वृधत् करद् रुहन् महत् तच् छम् ओम् ॥

Here, the vyāhṛti-s janad, vṛdhat, karat, ruhat, mahat, tat, śam and om are the special vyāhṛti-s of the Bhṛgvāṅgiras. These are part of the secret teaching of the Atharvan. The knower of the Bhṛgvāṅgirasa-śruti may use this deployment to protecting himself while attacking his enemies with the stoma-bhāga-prayoga.

The viparīta-prayoga (inverse deployment) is specified for abhicārika purposes.

त्यादचोप्र नो यो योधि । हिमधी यस् व दे गोर्भ । म्यणिरेव तुर्विस त्त ॥

A variant inverse deployment involves merely inverting the three feet.

धियो॑ यो नः प्रचो॒दयात् । भर्गो॑ दे॒वस्य॑ धीमहि । तत् स॑वितुर् वरे॑ण्यो ॥

2 The mysteries

The śruti of the the Vājasaneyin-s provides a mystery teaching regarding the Sāvitrī, which associates the 3 feet of the core mantra with a triad of triads, which is summarized below.

| | | |
|--------|-------------|--------|
| भूमिः | अन्तरिक्षम् | द्यौस् |
| ऋचः | यजूषि | सामानि |
| प्राणः | अपानः | व्यानः |

The one who meditates on the Sāvitrī with this knowledge is understood as penetrating the realms of the universe with the first triad, the realms of Veda-s with the second triad and realms of life with the the third triad. The fourth foot is said to blaze beyond the expanse of the visible space, the “rajas” and its knowledge confers splendor.

The Atharvan tradition holds (the teaching of Maudgalya to Glāva Maitreya) that the Sāvitrī is pervaded by the god Deva Savitr and his consort Sāvitrī in the form of 12 pairs of forms corresponding to each syllable (Figure 1). In these forms the two deities pervade the universe and the ritual. This presentation in the Atharvan tradition is consistent with the statement of Vāmadeva Gautama in the RV: आप्रा॑ रजा॑सि दि॒व्यानि॑ पा॒र्यिवा॑ in RV 4.53.3,

i.e. celestial and the earthly realms. The three feet of the Sāvitrī are described giving rise to three sequences of emanations that culminate in the ritual observance of the brāhmaṇa (Figure 1; lower panel). The ritualist who performs the deployment of the Sāvitrī with the appropriate knowledge of the omniform manifestation of Savitṛ and his consort and the emanations of the three feet meets with success.

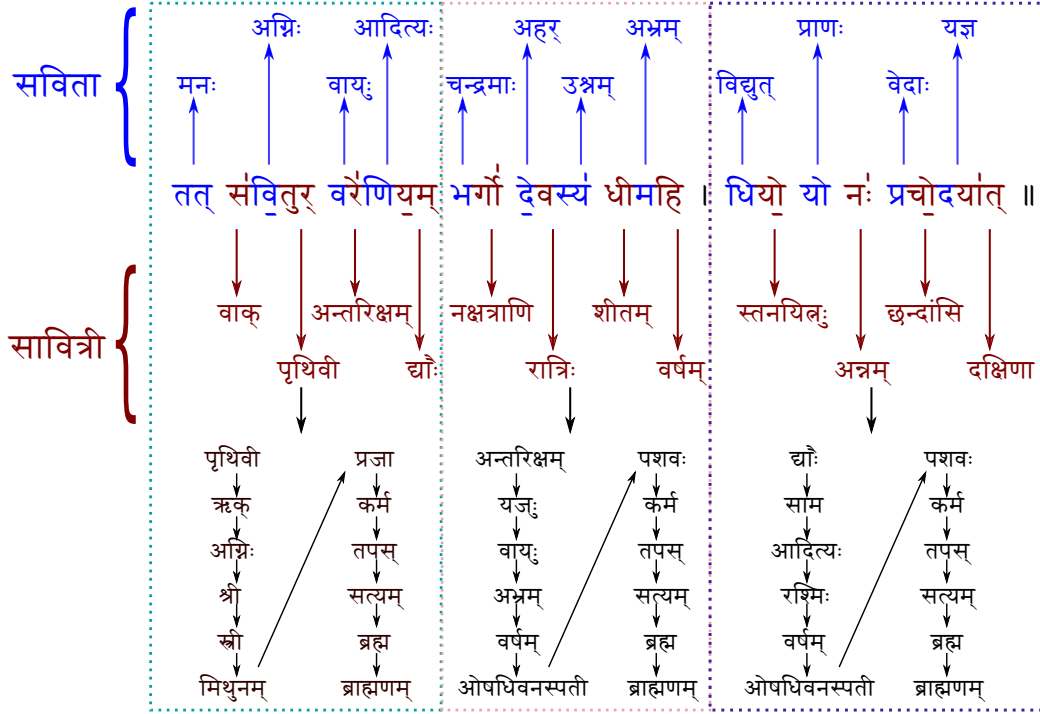


Figure 1: The structure and the emanations of the Sāvitrī as per the Atharvan tradition

3 The prayoga-s

1. The ritual of ācamana. He sips water 3× with the 3 feet of the Sāvitrī. Thereafter, he performs mārjanam at the appropriate spots on the face and one shoulder with the feet of the āpohiṣṭhiya mantra-s, at other

shoulder with the 7 vyāhṛtis, at the chest with the whole sāvitṛī and on the head with the brahmaśiras. He may use this ācamana for routine smārta and ekāgni purposes. The only exceptions are Atharvan rituals (where he should use the Atharvavedīya ācamana-vidhi) and the three-fire śrauta rituals.

2. The Sāvitṛī is the essential mantra for the twilight saṃdhyopāsanā or the worship of the god Savitr during the day. Every dvija has to receive this mantra from his father or male guardian during his upanayana. If a brāhmaṇa male does not perform this rite at all then the king who observes dharma may employ him a śūdra. He should first take a bath if he is in a state of impurity before performing the Savitropāsanā. Beyond a bath with water, a dvija should also perform prokṣaṇa. Having deployed the saṃdhyā preliminaries as ordained in his śruti or that ordained by in the Baudhāyana tradition, he can perform the mantra-practice. He does japa (inaudibly) of the Sāvitṛī 1008× or 108×. If he does not have the time he may perform prāṇāyāma with the 7 vyāhṛtis and the brahmaśiras 10×. The most simple form of prāṇāyāma involves inhaling with om bhūḥ. Retaining the breath with the rest of the mantra and exhaling with the brahmaśiras. After concluding the japa or prāṇāyāma he offers arghya 3 × +1 for expiation with his cupped palms or a shell. He then invokes Mitra (morning) and Varuṇa (evening) or both if he has missed one. Then he utters the purificatory incantation of Agni, Sūrya or the waters.
3. If a dvija has committed a ghora-pāpa, e.g. abortion, brāhmaṇī-gamanam, puṃścalī-gamanam etc, or has killed a dog, a beaver, a mongoose, a goose or a garden lizard, then he may purify himself after reciting the Sāvitṛī 8000× continuously starting before the sun rises. If a dvija has had his bath but is uncertain of his ritual purity due to activities he has performed since his bath, he may wear new clothes and perform a japa of the Sāvitṛī for a fixed number of times or do prāṇāyāma as described above. Then he recites the following incantation of Vasiṣṭha:

शुचीं वो हव्या मरुतः शुचीनां
 शुचिं हिनोम्य् अध्वरं शुचिभ्यः ।
 ऋतेन सत्यम् ऋतसाप आयञ्
 छुचिजन्मानः शुचयः पावकाः ॥

Pure oblations to you O Marut-s, the pure ones;
A pure ritual I offer to the pure ones;
By the ṛta the ṛta-knowers have attained truth,
of pure birth, they who are pure, the purifiers.

4. After the conclusion of upāsanā the ritualist must invoke Savitr̥ for protection. He sprinkles water on the place where he did is upāsanā and having touched the ground with his ring finger, he touches the spot between his eyebrows with the same finger. While doing this action he recites the following Sāvitra incantations of Śyāvāśva Ātreya:

अ॒द्या नो॑ दे॒व स॒वितः॑ प्र॒जाव॑त् सा॒वीः सौ॒भ॒गम् । परा॑ दु॒ष्प्र॒प्यं सु॒व ॥
वि॒श्वानि॑ दे॒व स॒वित॑र् दु॒रि॒तानि॑ परा॑ सु॒व । यद् भ॒द्रं तन् न॒ आ सु॑व ॥

Today, god Savitr̥, you have impelled to us a good share consisting of offspring. Impel away the bad dream.

O god Savitr̥ impel away all difficulties; what is auspicious, impel that here to us³.

5. The rite of the herb-mixture taught by the sage Uddālaka Āruṇi to his student Yājñavalkya Vājasaneya.
 - He performs the preparatory vrata of 12 days during which he controls his diet and observes celibacy.
 - The rite is done during uttarāyaṇa on an auspicious day of the waxing phase of the moon when it is in a male constellation after his regular evening rituals and before sleeping.
 - He takes all kinds of plants and fruits and grinds them into a mixture with a little bit of butter in a bowl made of fig-wood or metal
 - He then prepares the fire altar by cleaning and wiping. Then he

³These are also the mantra-s with which the Vaiśvadeva-śāstra is initiated in the śrauta ritual. The Hindu freedom fighter of Rām Prasād Bismil when being executed by the English was asked for his last wish. To which he replied: “The downfall of the British Empire.” Then he invoked Savitr̥ reciting these mantra-s as he was taken to the noose. They supposed to be for him to be reborn to fight the English again and the reborn Indian nation

makes the initial ghee offering using a darvi at the svāhā with the mantra:

यावन्तो देवास् त्वयि जातवेदस् तिर्यश्चो घ्नन्ति पुरुषस्य कामान् । तेभ्यो
ऽहं भगधेयं जुहोमि ते मा तृप्ताः सर्वैः कामैस् तर्पयन्तु स्वाहा । या तिरश्ची
निपद्यते ऽहं विधरणी इति । तां त्वा घृतस्य धारया यजे सग्राधनीम् अहगं
स्वाहा ॥

- He then makes the long series of ghee offerings with the yajus mantra-s:

ज्येष्ठाय स्वाहा श्रेष्ठाय स्वाहा ॥ प्राणाय स्वाहा वसिष्ठायै स्वाहा ॥ वाचे स्वाहा
प्रतिष्ठायै स्वाहा ॥ चक्षुषे स्वाहा संपदे स्वाहा ॥ श्रोत्राय स्वाहाऽऽयतनाय
स्वाहा ॥ मनसे स्वाहा प्रजात्यै स्वाहा ॥ रेतसे स्वाहा ॥ अग्नये स्वाहा ॥
सोमाय स्वाहा ॥ भूः स्वाहा ॥ भुवः स्वाहा ॥ स्वः स्वाहा ॥ भूर् भुवः स्वः
स्वाहा ॥ ब्रह्मणे स्वाहा ॥ क्षत्राय स्वाहा ॥ भूताय स्वाहा ॥ भविष्यते स्वाहा
॥ विश्वाय स्वाहा ॥ सर्वाय स्वाहा ॥ प्रजापतये स्वाहा ॥

After each distinct offering (marked by a double daṇḍa), whatever ghee remains behind in the darvi he pours into the herb mixture and stirs it up.

- Touching the bowl with the mixture with his right hand and holding his left hand to his chest he recites the following incantation:

भ्रमद् असि । ज्वलद् असि । पूर्णम् असि । प्रस्तब्धम् असि । एकसुभम्
असि । हिङ्कृतम् असि । हिङ्कियमानम् असि । उद्गीथम् असि । उद्गीयमानम्
असि । श्रावितम् असि । प्रत्याश्रावितम् असि । आर्द्रं संदीप्तम् असि ।
विभूर् असि । प्रभूर् असि । अन्नम् असि । ज्योतिर् असि । निधनम् असि
। संवर्गो ऽसि ॥ अथैनम् उद्यच्छृत्य आमगंस्य आमगं हि ते महि । स हि
राजेशानो ऽधिपतिः । स मागं राजेशानो ऽधिपतिं करोतु ॥

- He then consumes the mixture as an offering to Savitr within him in three courses each with the following incantation (the feet of the Sāvitrī are silently muttered in each case):

ॐ तत् संवितुर् वरेण्यम् । मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ।

माध्वीर् नः सन्त्स् ओषधीः । भूः स्वाहा ॥

भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि । मधु नक्तम् उतोषसि मधुमत् पार्थिवगँ रजः । मधु
द्यौर् अस्तु नः पिता । भुवः स्वाहा ॥

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् । मधुमान् नो वनस्पतिर् मधुमागँ अस्तु सूर्यः ।
माध्वीर् गवो भवन्तु नः । स्वः स्वाहा

He then recites (Sāvitṛī is muttered in silence):

ॐ भूर्-भुवः-स्वः । ॐ तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यम् भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि । धियो
यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥ मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः । माध्वीर् नः
सन्त्स् ओषधीः । मधु नक्तम् उतोषसि मधुमत् पार्थिवगँ रजः । मधु द्यौर्
अस्तु नः पिता । मधुमान् नो वनस्पतिर् मधुमागँ अस्तु सूर्यः । माध्वीर्
गवो भवन्तु नः । अहम् एवेदगँ सर्वं भूयासं भूर् भुवः स्वः स्वाहा ॥

He then sips some water and washes his hands and sleeps behind
the fire altar with his head to the East.

- He then wakes up the next day and utters the following incantation
looking at the sun.

दिशाम् एकपुण्डरीकम् असि । अहं मनुष्याणाम् एकपुण्डरीकं भूयासम् ॥

- He then silently recites the lineage of teachers of this rite:

उद्दालक आरुणिर् याज्ञवल्क्यो वाजसनेयो मधुकः पैङ्गुश् चूलो भागवित्तिर्
जानकिर् आयस्थूणः सत्यकामो जाबालिः॥

- If he has seen a beautiful woman in his dream that night then his
rite is a success.

4 Appendices

4.1 Alternative Sāvitrī-s?

Today the Sāvitrī is universally used by all dvija-s for their saṃdhyopāsanā/Savitrupāsanā. However, we know that the saṃdhyā rite goes back to at least the Indo-Iranian period. This raises the question as to whether there was a Savitrupāsanā before the extant Sāvitrī was composed by Viśvāmitra. It is notable that Viśvāmitra himself specifically mentions that the god is worshiped 3 times in a day.

हिरण्यपाणिः सविता सुजिह्वस् त्रिर् आ दिवो विदथे पत्यमानः ।
देवेषु च सवितः श्लोकम् अश्रेर् आद् अस्मभ्यम् आ सुव सर्वतातिम् ॥ RV 3.54.11

Golden-handed Savitṛ with a good tongue, three times a day in the ordained [ritual] being the lord,
among the gods you O Savitaḥ have set your call, now impel to us the totality [of prosperity].

Then again he states:

त्रिर् आ दिवः सविता सौषवीति राजाना मित्रावरुणा सुपाणी । RV 3.56.7

Thrice a day Savitṛ repeatedly impels [with] the two kings, Mitra and Varuṇa, of good hands.

We take the above references to the rite ordained thrice a day to be none other than an ancient version of the extant Savitrupāsanā, especially given that he mentions Mitra and Varuṇa, who also receive worship at the twilights along with Savitṛ. Now Viśvāmitra is not the only sage who mentions the rite of Savitṛ performed 3 times a day. Vāmadeva Gautama alludes to it too:

ये ते त्रिर् अहन् सवितः सुवासो दिवे-दिवे सौभगम् आसुवन्ति । RV 4.54.6

O Savitaḥ, thrice a day your impulsions are those which impel good fortune day after day

Hence, we suspect that the three-fold daily Savitrupāsanā was already a

prevalent form of worship even in the days of the RV and not started by Viśvāmitra for the first time. This mantra-practice was also likely associated with the repeated allusion to the śloka or the call of Savitr̥, which marked these transition points of the day. From a study of the RV it appears that several families might have originally had mantra-s comparable to the Vaiśvāmitra Sāvitrī, which later became universal. The mantra-s presented below are examples of themes parallel to the Sāvitrī in the compositions of other clans:

तद् राधो॑ अ॒द्य स॑वि॒तुर् वरे॑ण्यं व॒यं दे॒वस्य॑ प्रस॒वे म॑नामहे । RV 1.159.5

Today we shall meditate on that excellent favor/power of the Deva Savitr̥ at [his] impulse.

तत् स॑वि॒तुर् वृ॑णीमहे व॒यं दे॒वस्य॑ भो॒ज॒नम् ।
श्रेष्ठ॑ सर्व॒धात॑मं तुर॒म् भग॑स्य धीमहि ॥ RV 5.82.1

We chose that enjoyment of Deva Savitr̥; may we focus on Bhaga's best all-giving power.

दे॒वस्य॑ श्लो॒कं स॑वि॒तुर् म॑नामहे ॥ RV 7.82.10

We meditate upon the call of deva Savitr̥.

श्रेष्ठे॑ स्याम सवि॒तुः सर्वो॑मनि॒ तद् दे॒वाना॑म् अवो॑ अ॒द्या वृ॑णीमहे ॥ RV 10.36.12

May we be in the best impulsion of Savitr̥: that aid of the gods we choose today.

Some of these mantra-s use the word अ॒द्य, i.e. today, perhaps suggesting that the rite was done daily. They are conceptually similar to the Sāvitrī in choosing meditating or focusing on the impulsion or the power of the god.

4.2 Rajāmsi

The fourth foot of the Sāvitrī implies that Savitr̥ shines from beyond the rajas. What is this rajas, or more precisely the rajāmsi, since the Veda knows of a plurality of them. Vāmadeva Gautama says:

त्रि॒र् अ॒न्तरि॑क्षं सवि॒ता म॑हित्व॒ना त्री॑ रजा॑सि परि॒भुस् त्री॑णि॒ रोच॑ना ।

तिस्रो दिवः पृथिवीस् तिस्र इन्वति त्रिभिर् ब्रतैर् अग्नि नो रक्षति त्मना ॥

Savitṛ [encompasses] the atmosphere thrice by his greatness; he encompasses the three rajas realms and the three rocana realms.

He drives the three heavenly and the three earthly realms [and] with three-fold laws he protects us by himself.

While there is a clear emphasis on the tripartation in this mantra, the multiplicity of realms of the old Hindu cosmography is evident here. The rajāmsi are clearly distinct from the atmospheric realm (antarikṣa) and the realms of light (rocana). The rajas realms are also mentioned as being precisely measured out by the strides of Viṣṇu (e.g. RV 6.49.13; 1.154.1) and are again described as being 3 in number in this context (e.g. RV 6.49.13). In the sūkta of Śyāvaśva Ātreya (RV 5.81) it becomes clear that Savitṛ performs a similar function of mensuration of these realms. One may say that this function of Viṣṇu goes back to the beginning of cosmic time, while that of Savitṛ apparently happens on a daily basis. Indeed, the two deities are offered combined oblations in the Pratha-Sapratha offerings related to the super-heated gharma pot of the old Pravargya ritual (RV 10.181). From these references, we can infer that the old ārya-s saw the earthly realm as surrounded by the antarikṣa-s i.e. the atmospheric realms, followed by the rajāmsi “near space”, and then the still more distant celestial realms, the rocana-s and div-s. The light of the sun was seen as coming from beyond the rajāmsi and Savitṛ is explicitly associated with this light. Thus, the sun may be seen as marking the beginning of the rocana realms (see also RV 10.189.2) or those of light, which include the realms of the stars. The div-s are seen as three too. Of them two are explicitly described as being under Savitṛ (upastha) while one belongs to the death-dealing Yama (RV 1.35.6). The sun is alluded as being in one of these div-s. In RV 1.35.9 is stated that the div is reached via the black rajas realms. These allusions suggest that the rocana-s and the div-s are essentially equivalent. In conclusion, it might be mentioned that the Vedic cosmography was rather elaborate and has been poorly understood due to the assumption that it might have been unsophisticated (barring Lokamanya Tilak’s musings in this regard).

4.3 Deva Savitr

While the Sāvitrī remains a popular mantra among modern Hindus, most of them do not know its deity. Even of those who know Savitr to be the deity, few have a clear idea of the nature of this god. Most believe that he is none other than the Sun of our solar system. Yet, the RV is quite clear about him not being the same as the sun. The sun is merely one manifestation of his activity. In particular, he is specifically linked to the celestial lights, like the rays of the sun (e.g. RV 1.35.7; 4.14.2; 5.81.4; 10.139.1) ⁴. This relates to his golden color, which is often emphasized. The sage Hiranyastūpa Āngirasa uses the play on that word *hiranya* (golden) to encode his name in his upamaṇḍala. In RV 1.35.9 he is described as impelling the sun. Thus, he is not just the sun itself but also the force behind the diurnal motion of the sun.

He is repeatedly described as the apportioner (*vibhaktṛ*) and in this context is frequently coupled with the Āditya Bhaga. If Savitr apportions the shares, those shares are then distributed by Bhaga. Now the primary apportionment Savitr carries out is that of the time into days and nights. With each day Bhaga then distributes what has been ordained to the different beings. This apportionment carried out by Savitr is also allegorically described as the shares handed out in the game of dice described in the sūkta of the gambler (RV 10.34). This might also be a description of the probabilistic nature of the laws that Savitr represents. The other key function of Savitr, which is repeatedly mentioned, is that of the impeller. The celestial movements and transformations that are his manifestation are seen as impelling various entities from humans to the sun and the heavens themselves. In the process Savitr is seen as transforming into other gods like Mitra and Puṣaṇ (RV 5.81.4-5).

Like the associated deity Vāyu in the later Vedic tradition, Savitr too has a “gravitational” role, i.e. manifesting as the force holding the cosmic realms, in the early Vedic tradition. This is stated by Arcan Hairanyastūpa.

सविता यज्ञैः पृथिवीम् अरम्णाद् अस्कम्भने सविता द्याम् अदहत् ।

⁴It is in this context that the famed Vijayanagaran scholiast Sāyaṇa gives a large value that may be interpreted as the speed of these rays. It notably is comparable to the modern value of c

अश्वम् इवाधुक्षद् धुनिम् अन्तरिक्षम् अतूर्ते बद्धं सविता समुद्रम् ॥ RV 10.149.1

Savitṛ fastened the earth with a restrainer device; in the supportless [realm] Savitṛ held firm the heaven.

Savitṛ has milked the roaring atmosphere like a horse [and] bound the sea in unfathomable [depths].

While the solar manifestations of Savitṛ during daytime are clear, the śruti also repeatedly stresses that he is active at night. For example in RV 1.35.2 he is described as encircling the dark nightly realm bringing to rest all beings. In this context, another signal feature of his is often referred to: his great arms are mentioned as being stretched forth, signaling the beings to rest for night (e.g. RV 4.53.3). RV 7.45.1-2 mentions that these great arms of Savitṛ, which are extended when the sun cedes the world to him at night, are to be marveled and stretch up from the ends of the heaven. In RV 1.95, a parokṣa-sūkta relating to the ancient form of the pre-dawn rite of the kindling of the three fires, Kutsa Āngirasa compares the celestial manifestation of the god Agni to these arms of Savitṛ. While the ṛk in consideration is mostly difficult to understand, this aspect is quite clear.

उद् यंयमीति सवितेव बहू उभे सिचौ यतते भीम ऋञ्जन् ।

उच् छुक्रम् अत्कम् अजते सिमस्मान् नवा मातृभ्यो वसना जहाति ॥ RV 1.95.7;

He (Agni) repeatedly raises up, like Savitṛ, his two arms, he stretches himself to the two horizons [of the sky], the fierce straight-goer.

He impels his shining armor from his own self; he leaves new clothes for the mothers.

The first hemistich compares the rising Agni with the arms of Savitṛ and specifically their stretching from horizon to horizon. So what is the foundation of this shining manifestation of Savitṛ in the night sky that stretches from horizon to horizon? It is the Milky Way. Thus, this signal feature of Savitṛ, which repeatedly finds mention in ritual incantations relates this great stellar band of light of the night sky. Hence, both in his diurnal and nocturnal apparitions, Savitṛ is a deity of stellar manifestation par excellence.

4.4 The nivid-s of Savitr

The nivid-s are ancient ritual incantations uttered in ekaśruti during the soma-ritual. They are inserted just before the concluding verse of the short sūkta-s. In the case of Savitr this sūkta is RV 6.71 of Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya. The give a concise summary of the many characteristics of Savitr

सविता देवस् सोमस्य पिबतु । हिरण्यपाणिस् सुजिह्वः । सुबाहुस् स्वङ्गुरिः । त्रिर् अहन्
सत्य सवनः । यत् प्रासुवद् वसुधिती उभे जोष्ट्री सवीमनि। श्रेष्ठम् सावित्रम् आसुवन्
। दोग्ध्रीं धेनुम् । वोव्हारम् अनङ्वाहम् । आशुम् सतिम् । जिष्णुम् रथेष्ठाम् । पुरन्धिम्
योषाम् । सभेयम् युवानम् । परामीवाम् साविषत् पराघशंसम् । सविता देव इह श्रवद्
इह सोमस्य मत्सत् । प्रेमाम् देवो देवहूतिम् अवतु देव्या धिया । प्रेदम् ब्रह्म प्रेदम् क्षत्रम्
। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानम् अवतु । चित्रश् चित्राभिर् ऊतिभिः । श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत्
॥

May Deva Savitr drink the soma – golden-handed golden tongued – with good arms and good finger – thrice a day of true libations – who has impelled the the two wealth-holders – both delighters in the impelling – bringing quickly the best of Savitr – the milk yielding cow – the wagon-pulling bull – the swift horse – the victorious car-warrior – the fertile woman – the youth fit for the assembly. May he drive away the disease, [drive] away the evil. May the Deva Savitr hear this and delight with this soma. May the god protect the invocation of the gods with his godly wisdom. May the wonderful [god] protect the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya and the soma-pressing yajamāna with his wonderful aids. May he hear and come to the ritual with protection. (Translation following style of Scheftelowitz)