Dominik A. Haas

Gāyatrī

Mantra and Mother of the Vedas

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∴ GĀYATRĪ ∴
MANTRA AND
MOTHER OF THE VEDAS

तत्संवि॒तुर्व�रेँ॑ण्यं
भर्गो॑ दे॒वस्य॑ धीमहि।
धियो॒ यो नः॑ प्रचो॒दयात्॑॥

tát savitúr váreṇyaṃ
bhárgo devásya dhīmahi /
dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyāt //

May we obtain that desirable
splendor of the god Impeller,
who shall spur on our thoughts!

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Preface

The significance of mantras in global religious history has long been acknowledged, but many aspects of this phenomenon remain poorly researched. It has become increasingly clear that exploring mantras as only a genre of religious language is insufficient: Mantras are not merely utterances or means of communication, but can also manifest themselves in special ways on the auditive, visual, and physical planes. They may be embodied, personified, and even deified; moreover, they also often play important roles in defining religious authority and social identity. Exploring such aspects requires the adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective. To the extent that it is successful, the present study, which deals not only with the history of the popular Gāyatrī-Mantra, but also with the process of its deification, demonstrates that the pursuit of such an approach can be very illuminating.

But while attempting to look at mantras from more than one angle is certainly worthwhile, it is also more challenging than some might imagine, even when it involves only a single mantra. In 2018, having decided to embark on the dissertation on which this book is based (Haas 2022a), a number of people asked how it could ever be possible to write a few hundred pages about a ten-word text. In contrast, most of those familiar with the subject – first among them my benevolent supervisor, Marion Rastelli – advised me to narrow down the scope of my research as far as possible. Only then would I be able to pack it into a dissertation at all. As it turned out, the latter were even more right than they may have thought: following the tracks of the Gāyatrī-Mantra and understanding its metamorphosis into a goddess was indeed quite demanding. Although it is mentioned hundreds of times in the texts, this mantra has often moved through history below its surface, and I do not claim to have uncovered all of its channels and hidden paths.

As far as the two main research goals of the study are concerned, however, one can certainly say that some progress has been made: In three chapters each, the study provides a detailed account of, first, the historical process of the rise of the mantra, which took place primarily in the first millennium BCE, and second, its development into a goddess during the first millennium CE. Two introductory

chapters are concerned with the meaning and the designations of the mantra as a text.

work to fruition by responding to questions, sharing with me their expertise, offering advice and support, providing invaluable feedback, and generously commenting on lectures and drafts. These include Professor Karin Preisendanz, Elisa Freschi, Nickolas P. Roubekas, Velizar Sadovski, Professor Chlodwig H. Werba (†), Professor Klaus-Dieter Mathes, Vitus Angermeier, Christian Ferstl, Borayin Larios, Georgi Krastev, Ge Ge, Anja Vukadin, Magdalena Kraler, Nina Mirnig, Bernhard Scheid, Stefan Köck, Stephan Popp, Professor Mathilde Evelien Keizer, Johanna Buß, Hannes Fellner, Michael Wieser-Much, Markus Viehbeck, Thomas Kintaert, Oliver Frey, Alaka Chudal, Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek, Judith Starecek; Mieko Kajihara, Professor Joanna Jurewicz, Greg Bailey, Manya Saadi-nejad, Gustavo Benavides, Frank Köhler, Svevo D'Onofrio, Bruno A. V. da Silva, Lubomír Ondračka, Christoph Vielle, Guy St. Amant, Axel Michaels, Vlad Soravel, Walter Slaje, Adriano Aprigliano, Gérard Huet, Raphaël Voix, Raik Strunz, Marta Monkiewicz, Anja Šintić, Kenji Takahashi, and Dev Kumar Jhanjh. I am also indebted to Arturo Silva for his careful and very perceptive proofreading – needless to say, I alone am responsible for all remaining errors.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Marie-Therese Steidl for supporting me all these years with much love, and for putting up with my frequent absentmindedness so patiently. Whether successful or not, this study proves beyond doubt that I was often (very often, in fact) quite absorbed in my work.

Dominik A. Haas
Vienna, August 31, 2023

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Note on Spelling

To facilitate correct pronunciation, in this study words and texts in Indo-Aryan languages, including modern ones, have generally been *transcribed* rather than *transliterated* (e.g., *devá* instead of *dẹva*, Śaṅkarśāstrī Mārūlkar instead of Śaṃkaraśāstrī Mārūlakara). All transcriptions from Indo-Aryan languages, including modern ones, follow the standard of the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration.[i] Transliterations and transcriptions of texts following other systems have been tacitly adapted to this standard. I have also followed it when transcribing names and titles of works (e.g., Hari Nārāyaṇ Āpṭe instead of हरि नारायण आपटे), unless the authors or publishers have specified a romanization themselves (e.g., Bhattacharyya instead of Bhaṭṭācārya). Moreover, instead of transcribing them, I use the modern, anglicized or romanized versions of toponyms if such exist (e.g., Pune instead of पुण्याख्यपत्तन). A few common English loanwords are styled roman as well (e.g., mantra, yoga).

ṁ (sometimes written ँ in Devanāgarī) is used to indicate the nasal (*anunāsika*) pronunciation of a vowel. The placement of *daṇḍa*s (।, ॥; |, ||) within texts is generally adopted from the source texts. / and // indicate that the preceding text is metrical. Roman punctuation marks are only occasionally added to a transcription either to indicate syntactical units or to mark the end of a *pāda*.

Proper Vedic and Sanskrit names of persons, works, rituals, etc., are generally capitalized (e.g., Viśvāmitra, Ṛgveda). Words that could (in theory at least) be easily translated, are italicized (e.g., *svarga*/heaven, *loka*/world). For the special spellings of Gāyatrī/*gāyatrī* and Sāvitrī/*sāvitrī*, see Table 2 on p. 2 below. Elements of a mantra that are not part of any syntactical construction are sometimes written in small caps in the translation (e.g., EARTH for *bhūḥ*).

Hyphens in Sanskrit words have three functions: (1) they indicate that the word is a sandhi form (e.g., *tat savitur vareṇyaṁ-*, followed by *bhargo-* etc.); (2) as a mere reading aid, they indicate the boundary of compounds whenever the need arises (e.g., *ṛgvedaḥ* or *ṛg-vedaḥ*). (3) As is customary in the roman-

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i   The accent of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa is transcribed following the interpretation of Hoffmann (1975). For a summary of the various interpretations of the accent of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, see Coffie 1994: 4–16.

ization of titles of Vedic and Sanskrit works, hyphens are also used to separate the components of compounds and make them easier to read (e.g., Taittirīya-Saṃhitā). In these cases, it has become an established practice to dissolve vowel sandhis (e.g., Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad); consonant sandhis, however, are usually retained (e.g., Bhagava*d*-Gītā, Ṛ*g*-Veda).

Subscripted vowels (e.g., $_i$, $_u$) represent sounds which must have been there in the original text, but were lost due to the application of sandhi or other sound changes.[ii] In the case of versified texts, they generally indicate the original metrical structure. No attempt is made, however, to *fully* reconstruct the ur-form of a verse: without the subscripted vowels, a text has the form as given in the editions or manuscripts. To give one example: if justified by the metrical context, *vyáñjana* may be given as *v$_i$yáñjana*, though originally, it must have been **viáñjana*.

Quotation marks, brackets, and symbols are used in the following ways: " " mark translations, quotations, or indirect speech; ' ' are used in lieu of other quotation marks for text within quotation marks (e.g., "the following is 'a quotation' inside a quotation"). „ " and ‚ ' are used in the same ways as in German contexts. In primary texts and translations, ( ) indicate additions or alternatives that are based on or can be derived from the text.[iii] [ ] generally mark "external information," that is, comments in primary texts and bibliographical entries, or explanatory additions to or modifications of quotations and translations; if they are part of original quotations, this is indicated. Irrespective of their normal functions, [ ] are also used in lieu of ( ) within round brackets, and vice versa. The symbol $^+$ indicates that a correction has been made in the following text up to the next space. $^×$ indicates a conjecture. = is used to mark identity between words or texts; ≈ to mark similarity between words or texts. When a slash / is used to mark alternatives, a space indicates that the respective alternative consists of more than one word. (e.g., lightning/thunder/ rain cloud).

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ii   In providing them in the case of the Ṛgveda, I have taken into consideration the metrical reconstruction provided by van Nooten & Holland (1994). Using this reconstruction as an actual edition of the Ṛgveda is problematic; see, for instance, Smith 2006: 329.

iii   Many translators of Vedic and Sanskrit texts mark information that they believe is not in the source text with square brackets. This concerns, for example, words such as the definite or indefinite article or forms of "to be," which indeed often have no literal equivalent in the original. In my opinion, however, supplying such words in square brackets suggests that they are *missing* from the original. Since I find that this is rarely the case, I aim to indicate only additional information that can usually be omitted or read over without affecting the structure of the sentence. For reflections on the (excessive) use of brackets in English translations of philosophical Sanskrit texts (which in many respects are also relevant to non-philosophical texts), see Mcrea & Patil 2010: 34–40.

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Note on Sources and Translations

Abbreviations of cited or quoted primary sources (such as ṚV or Rām.) are generally introduced at their first occurrence, except when they occur as references or within lists; all such abbreviations can be looked up in the section "Primary Sources and Translations" in the Bibliography. References to translations can generally be looked up under the respective source text in the same section; bibliographical entries are either given there (if taken from a dedicated translation of a work, or of a portion of a work) or in the "Secondary Literature" section of the Bibliography. Hyperlinks in the PDF should always lead to the right target.

To facilitate access to the original texts, this study contains numerous references to existing translations (usually in brackets and marked with "tr." or "trs."). However, I have not included these references systematically or for all texts. There are therefore two important points to note here: First, reference to a translation does not imply that it was the basis for a claim made – the study is based throughout on my own reading of the sources – or that it is a particularly good or accurate translation. Second, the absence of a reference does not mean that no translation exists for a particular passage.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. Since I am not a native English speaker, they may sometimes appear clumsy or stylistically unattractive. I hope, however, that the reasons for my deviations from existing translations will become clear once the background of my argumentation and the secondary literature are considered.

Map
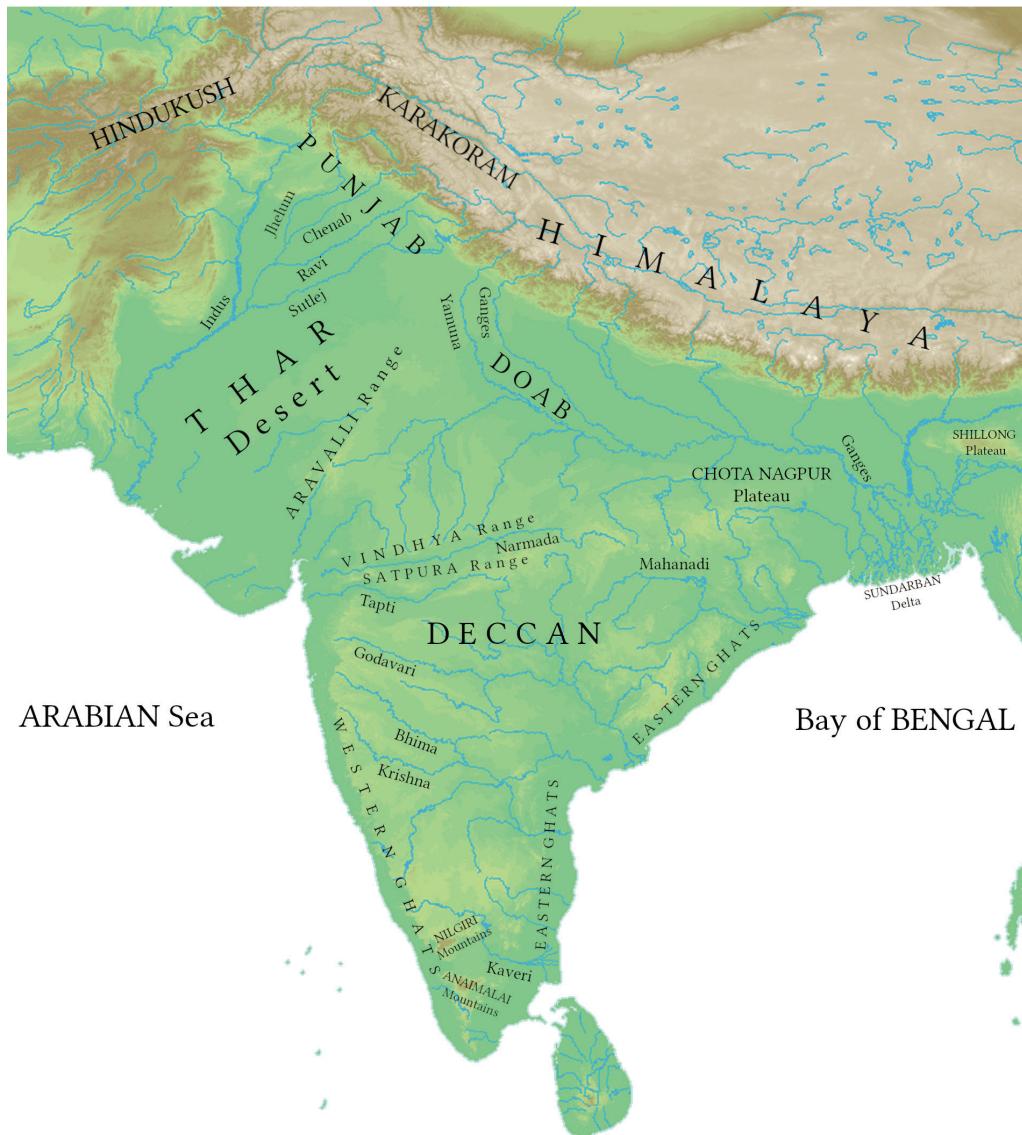
Figure 2: Topographical overview map of the Indian Subcontinent (based on a modern public domain map from the Demis Map Server)

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Source Periodization

Vedic religion	1600–1000 BCE	Vedic Saṃhitās
	1100–600 BCE	Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas
	800–500 BCE	Early Upaniṣads
	600–300 BCE	Śrautasūtras
Early Hinduism	500 BCE – 200 CE	Middle Upaniṣads
	400 BCE – 400 CE	Gṛhyasūtras
	400 BCE – 400 CE	Sanskrit Epics
	300 BCE – 100 CE	Dharmasūtras
Classical Hinduism	200–800 CE	Smṛtis, Dharmaśāstras
	400–1000 CE	Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas
Tantric/Purāṇic Hinduism	500–800 CE	Early Tantric texts
	600–1000 CE	(Early) Purāṇas

Table 1: Periodization and approximate dating of the various types of source texts

Abbreviations

ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
AG	*Altindische Grammatik*
ĀgnGS	Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra
Ait.	Aitareya
AitĀ	Aitareya-Āraṇyaka
AitB	Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa
Ān	Āndhra (rec.; see MNārU)
ĀpDhS	Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra
ĀpGS	Āpastamba-Gṛhyasūtra
App.	Appendix (in references to passages in the MBh or the Rām., App. designates Appendix I of the respective critical editions)
ĀpŚS	Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra
AS	*Altindische Syntax*
Asiat. Soc.	Asiatic Society (Calcutta; from 1832: The Asiatic Society of Bengal; from 1936: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal; from 1951: The Asiatic Society)
Āśv.	Āśvalāyana
ĀśvGS	Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra
ĀśvGSPar	(Āśvalāyana-)Gṛhyasūtra-Pariśiṣṭabhāga
ĀśvŚS	Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra
Āth	Ātharvaṇa (rec.; see MNārU)
AV	Atharvaveda (the abbreviation is used both for the text tradition and the Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā; see Primary Sources and Translations → AV)
AVP	(Atharvaveda)-Paippalāda(-Saṃhitā)
AVPar	Atharvaveda-Pariśiṣṭa
BaudhDhS	Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra
BaudhGS	Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra
BaudhGŚS	Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra
BaudhŚS	Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra
BEH	*Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*
BhagG	Bhagavad-Gītā
BhāgP	Bhāgavata-Purāṇa
BhārGS	Bhāradvāja-Gṛhyasūtra
BhārŚS	Bhāradvāja-Śrautasūtra
BNP	*Brill's New Pauly*

BrahmP	Brahma-Purāṇa
BṛhĀU	Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (Kāṇva rec.)
BṛhĀUM	Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, Mādhyandina rec.
Brill	Koninklijke Brill NV (Leiden)
Brockhaus	F. A. Brockhaus (Leipzig/Mannheim)
C	Calcutta ed. (see Primary Sources and Translations → TaittĀ)
CarS	Caraka-Saṃhitā
ChāndU	Chāndogya-Upaniṣad
Clarendon Press	Clarendon Press (imprint of OUP)
CUP	Cambridge University Press (Cambridge)
Dr	Drāviḍa (rec.; see MNārU)
ed(s)./éd.	editor(s), edition(s), edited (by) / éditeur(s), édition, édité (par)
EFEO	École française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris)
Egbert Forsten	Egbert Forsten Publishing (Groningen)
EJVS	*Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies*
ER	*The Encyclopedia of Religion*
EWA	*Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altinodarischen*
f.	feminine
GarP	Garuḍa-Purāṇa
GautDhS	Gautama-Dharmasūtra
GM	Gāyatrī-Mantra = ṚV III 62.10 (see Table 2 on p. 2 below)
GobhGS	Gobhila-Gṛhyasūtra
GopB	Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa
Har.	Harivaṃśa
Harrassowitz	(Otto) Harrassowitz (Wiesbaden)
Harṣ.	Harṣacarita
HirGS	Hiraṇyakeśi-Gṛhyasūtra
HirŚS	Hiraṇyakeśi-Śrautasūtra
HR	*History of Religions*
Hrsg(g).	Herausgeberin(nen)/Herausgeber ("editor(s)")
HUP	Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass.)
IPS	Index of Primary Sources
IE	Indo-European
IIJ	*Indo-Iranian Journal*
JaimB	Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa
JaimGS	Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra
JaimUB	Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JayS	Jayākhya-Saṃhitā
JIPh	*Journal of Indian Philosophy*
K	Kāṇva (rec.; see Primary Sources and Translations → BṛhĀU and ŚatBK)
Karm.	Karmapradīpa
KaṭhB	Kaṭha-Brāhmaṇa
KāṭhGS	Kāṭhaka-Gṛhyasūtra
KaṭhS	Kaṭha-Saṃhitā

KātyŚS	Kātyāyana-Śrautasūtra
Kauṣ.	Kauṣītaki
KauṣB	Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa
KauṣGS	Kauṣītaki-Gṛhyasūtra
KauśS	Kauśika-Sūtra
KauṣU	Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad
KhādGS	Khādira-Gṛhyasūtra
KūrmP	Kūrma-Purāṇa
KYV	Kṛṣṇa ("Black/Dark") Yajurveda
LiṅgP	Liṅga-Purāṇa
M	Mādhyandina (rec.; see Primary Sources and Translations → BṛhĀU, ŚatB, and VājS)
m.	masculine
MaitrS	Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā
MaitrU	Maitrāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad
MānGS	Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra
MānŚS	Mānava-Śrautasūtra
MārkP	Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa
MatsyP	Matsya-Purāṇa
MBh	Mahābhārata
MCI	*Mahābhārata–Cultural Index*
MER	Macmillan's *Encyclopedia of Religion*
MLBD	Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House (Delhi)
MNārU	Mahānārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad
MuṇḍU	Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad
NārSm	Nārada-Smṛti
OUP	Oxford University Press (Oxford)
P	Pune ed. (see Primary Sources and Translations → TaittĀ)
Pa	Paris ed. (see Primary Sources and Translations → MNārU)
PañcB	Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa
PañcBh	Pañcārthabhāṣya
PañcT	Pañcatantra
PAPhS	*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PārGPar	Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra-Pariśiṣṭa
PārGS	Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra
ParSm	Parāśara-Smṛti
PāśS	Pāśupata-Sūtra
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
pos.	position(s)
PraśnU	Praśna-Upaniṣad
PW	Petersburger *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*
Rām.	Rāmāyaṇa
rec(s).	recension(s)
Routledge	Routledge (Milton Park), Taylor & Francis (London)

ṚV	Ṛgveda (the abbreviation is used both for the text tradition and the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā; see Primary Sources and Translations → ṚV)
ṚVidh	Ṛgvidhāna
s.v(v).	*sub verbo/verbis* ("under the word(s)")
ṢaḍvB	Ṣaḍviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa
ŚāṅkhĀ	Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka
ŚāṅkhGS	Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra
ŚāṅkhŚS	Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra
Sarv.	Sarvānukramaṇī
ŚatB	Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (Mādhyandina rec.)
ŚatBK	Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, Kāṇva rec.
SāvU	Sāvitrī-Upaniṣad
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East*
SDN	Sammlung De Nobili (Vienna)
SGB	*Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners*
SGS	*Sanskrit Grammar for Students*
ŚivDhŚ	Śiva-Dharmaśāstra
SkandP	Skanda-Purāṇa
SS	*Sanskrit Syntax*
SUNY	State University of New York (New York)
SV	Sāmaveda (the abbreviation is used both for the text tradition and the Sāmaveda-Saṃhitā; see Primary Sources and Translations → SV)
ŚvetU	Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad
SVJ	Sāmaveda(-Saṃhitā), Jaiminīya rec.
ŚYV	Śukla ("White/Bright") Yajurveda
Taitt.	Taittirīya
TaittĀ	Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka
TaittB	Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa
TaittS	Taittirīya-Saṃhitā
TaittU	Taittirīya-Upaniṣad
TAK	*Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*
tr(s).	translator(s) / traducteur(s) / translation(s) / traduction(s) / translated (by) / traduit (par); also used to refer to translations (Übb.) into German
Trübner	Verlag von Karl J. Trübner (Strasbourg)
Üb(b).	Übersetzerin(nen)/Übersetzer ("translator(s)") / Übersetzung(en) ("translation(s)")
UVC	*Updated Vedic Concordance*
V&R	Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (Göttingen)
v.l.	*varia lectio* ("different reading")
VādhŚS	Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra
VaikhGS	Vaikhānasa-Gṛhyasūtra
VaikhŚS	Vaikhānasa-Śrautasūtra
VaiṣṇDhŚ	Vaiṣṇava-Dharmaśāstra
Vāj.	Vājasaneyin
VājS	Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā

VārGS	Vārāha-Gṛhyasūtra
VasDhS	Vasiṣṭha-Dharmasūtra
VG	*Vedic Grammar*
VGS	*Vedic Grammar for Students*
VIA	*Verba Indoarica*
ViṣṇDh	Viṣṇudharmāḥ
ViṣṇSm	Viṣṇu-Smṛti
VÖAW	Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Wien) / Austrian Academy of Sciences Press (Vienna)
WRV	*Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*
WZKS	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*
YājñSm	Yājñavalkya-Smṛti
YV	Yajurveda (divided into KYV and ŚYV)
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

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Introduction

The short mantra on page v above is among the most frequently recited religious texts of mankind.[1] Since its composition by a poet called Viśvāmitra Gāthina[2] more than 3,000 years ago somewhere in the northwest of South Asia, generations of people have repeated it on a daily basis, often more than one hundred times in a row. Over time, it has developed into what has variously been called the most important, most efficacious, and holiest mantra of all,[3] and has been placed on a par with other eminent religious texts, such as the Christian Lord's Prayer,[4] or the Buddhist mantra *oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*[5].

The mantra is popularly called Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī, ambiguous terms possessing several denotations (see Table 2 below). First, *gāyatrī* is a Vedic poetic meter. Second, there is a specific verse set in the *gāyatrī* meter, often designated by its source reference, "ṚV (Ṛgveda) III 62.10," or a variant of it. Mentioning the deity Savitṛ, the verse is a so-called *sāvitrī*, one among several "Savitṛ verses" that are found in the Vedic texts. Over the course of time, the verse came to be viewed as the epitome of the *gāyatrī* meter and as the most important *sāvitrī*. As a result, both *gāyatrī* and *sāvitrī* came to be used interchangeably as names of the verse: *the* Gāyatrī and *the* Sāvitrī, so to say.[6] Hereafter then, the verse will be designated the "**Gāyatrī-Mantra**" (GM). Only occasionally will I also call it "the *sāvitrī*" (or "the *sāvitrī* verse/mantra"), but always with the definite arti-

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1   The translation given above is based on the text of the Ṛgveda (ṚV) and is my own; for a collection of other translations, see Appendix 1 (pp. 275–283).

2   For Viśvāmitra, see generally Sathaye 2015; see also n. 575 on p. 135 below.

3   The excellence and pre-eminence of the mantra is routinely emphasized in both the primary and secondary literature. The following characterization, taken from a contemporary encyclopedia of religion, is typical: "Within the set of sacred scriptures, a single passage may stand out as the holiest of all, and therefore the most efficacious. Hinduism recognizes the mystic syllable *oṃ* as the essence of all the Vedas, and the hymn known as the Gāyatrī (*Ṛgveda* 3.62.10), has achieved a place of preeminence among all mantras." *MER* VIII: 5304.

4   See, for instance, Basham 1959: 162 and Anonymous 1902: 115.

5   Martinengo-Cesaresco 1902: 102. For this mantra, see Studholme 2002.

6   See Chapters 2 and 4. Because Sanskrit does not use a definite article (or a similar device) to designate unique entities (as for instance "*the* Scripture" is used in English to refer to the Bible), in the source texts it is not always immediately apparent whether these words are used in that sense or not.

cle.[7] Table 2 offers an outline of the various designations that will be used here (including some that have not yet been mentioned, but will soon become clear).

gāyatrī	(1) the *gāyatrī* meter
	(2) a verse set in the *gāyatrī* meter
GM	= the Gāyatrī-Mantra = the verse ṚV III 62.10 (as a mantra)[8]
Gāyatrī	(1) the personification/deification of the GM (occasionally, the GM itself)
	(2) the personification/deification of the *gāyatrī* meter
sāvitrī	(1) a "Savitṛ verse"
	(2) anything relating to Savitṛ (in the feminine grammatical gender; e.g., an *iṣṭi* or "oblation")
the *sāvitrī*	= the GM
Sāvitrī	(1) the personification/deification of the GM (occasionally, the GM itself)
	(2) Savitṛ's/Prajāpati's/Brahmā's daughter
	(3) Aśvapati's daughter

Table 2: Disambiguation of designations used in this study

Originally, the GM was simply the last verse in a short and unsophisticated hymn dedicated to Savitṛ, a god who is responsible for various types of motion in the universe (literally, his name means "Impeller").[9] During its long

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7   The most popular name nowadays is Gāyatrī or Gāyatrī-Mantra. It is due to its popularity and widespread use that these are the designations that will be used throughout this study, even in Vedic contexts. This is undeniably anachronistic (see Chapter 2), but it has the great advantage of consistency. Moreover, in a study where the mantra is referred to on virtually every single page, "GM" is preferable over the much more cumbersome "ṚV III 62.10." (Yet another option would be "Gāyatrī-Sāvitrī," which is somewhat more precise, but rarely used; see below p. 79).

8   "GM" is used for the verse in its redacted form, both with and without the accents, which in practice are often neither pronounced nor written: *tát savitúr váreṇyaṃ bhárgo devásya dhīmahi / dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyāt //*. In ritual practice and recitation, this verse is often supplemented by the syllable *om* and three special words, the so-called Vyāhṛtis (*bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ*), which are combined with the mantra in various ways to form a new mantra in itself (most often, they are recited before the verse). However, these are not part of the GM proper, as is sometimes assumed (see Rao 2019: 3, n. 2 [see p. 11]). Probably the earliest text to combine the GM with the Vyāhṛtis is the Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā (VājS XXXVI 3); see below p. 100 (#13). For *om* (or *oṃ, oṁ*, etc.), see Gerety 2015 and 2016; for the employment of the Vyāhṛtis, see, for instance, Gonda 1980a: 226.

9   See below pp. 43–44.

life, however, it was employed for a wide array of functions and ascribed a variety of meanings. The mantra was used as a typical Savitṛ verse in several Śrauta rituals, where it often served as the first mantra in a sequence.[10] Towards the end of the Vedic period, it was chosen to be the primary initiation mantra, and was imparted to the young students as part of the **Upanayana** ritual.[11] Recitation of the GM also became an essential component of the **Sandhyā**, a composite ritual performed in the morning and in the evening (sometimes also at noon).[12] Due above all to its employment in the Upanayana and the Sandhyā, the GM became in many ways the "first and foremost" Vedic verse. As Brahminism evolved, it even came to be seen as the epitome or essence of all the Vedas, and as such became a hallmark of Vedic or Brahminical orthopraxy.[13] Around the second or third century CE, the author of the famous Mānava-Dharmaśāstra (MānDhŚ) concluded that "nothing is higher than the *sāvitrī*."

Brahminical culture continued to exert a lasting influence on the emerging Hinduism[14] throughout the first half-millennium CE. The Vedic system of elaborate rituals, however, declined. New forms of religion developed that often placed more emphasis on personal devotion and adherence to a single deity.[15] The worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu in particular spread widely throughout all strata of society, with kings and rulers officially declaring themselves as the "supreme devotee of the Lord" (i.e., of Viṣṇu), or "of the Great Ruler" (i.e., of Śiva), respectively.[16] An interesting side effect of these developments was the creation of a number of adapted or strongly modified versions of the GM.[17] While these modified GMs are inspired by the form of the original GM, they are directed not at the god Savitṛ, but at a deity revered by the tradition that adapted the mantra,

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10   See Chapter 3.

11   See Chapter 4.

12   See below pp. 146–152.

13   See Chapter 5.

14   With a view to its very diverse manifestations in antiquity and the medieval period, I pragmatically define "Hinduism" as a heterogeneous umbrella category comprising all known religious traditions and systems of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, excluding, however, Buddhism and Jainism. This definition is derived, on the one hand, from an emic view (some) Hindus had of their own traditions around the tenth century CE (see Sanderson 2015: 198), and, on the other, from an etic understanding of non-Islamic religions cultivated by Muslim authors between the tenth and fifteenth centuries CE (see Sanderson 2015: 156, n. 2). Notwithstanding its late origin, I believe it can be usefully applied to earlier phases of South Asian religious history.

15   Cf. Mirnig & Rastelli forthcoming.

16   *paramabhāgavata* or *paramamāheśvara* (cf. Sanderson 2013b: 223, who translated the latter as "completely devoted to Maheśvara"); see Mirnig & Rastelli forthcoming. See also generally Sanderson 2009.

17   These modified GMs have attracted even greater scholarly attention than the GM itself; see Kajihara 2019: 17–24, Bisschop 2018a: 2–4, Beck 1994, Mirashi 1975: 56–59, and Krishan 1990.

such as Rudra or Viṣṇu.[18] Even so, the modified GMs drew most of their "potency" from the fact that they were similar to the GM, thus testifying to the high status of the original version.

With the ascendancy of new deities and shifting religious landscapes, the GM evolved as well. While remaining a prominent Vedic mantra, during the first centuries of the Common Era it gradually also came to be considered a **goddess** itself. The history of this deity, called Sāvitrī as well as Gāyatrī, is quite convoluted. Personifications of the mantra are first found in the late or early post-Vedic period.[19] However, an actual "mantra goddess" literally appears for the first time in the famous Sāvitrī story in the Mahābhārata (MBh),[20] in which the *sāvitrī* seems to be identified with the epic successor of the Vedic goddess Sūryā Sāvitrī, here only called Sāvitrī. In later texts, the Purāṇas in particular, Sāvitrī regularly appears as a mantra goddess. Already in the MBh she came to be seen as the consort of Brahmā and was soon also identified with Sarasvatī. Being the personification of the first mantra of the Vedas, she also received the epithet *vedamātṛ*: the "**Mother of the Vedas**."[21]

Little is known about the history of the GM and its manifestation as a goddess throughout the medieval and the early modern period, but it – and she – seem to have retained their status.[22] In the nineteenth century, the GM came to be used by Hindu reform movements to convert people to Hinduism or even transform them into Brahmins, a practice started by Swami Vivekananda.[23] The so-called All World Gāyatrī Parivār, a religious movement founded in 1958 by Śrīrām Śarmā Ācārya, believes the mantra to be the core of Hindu civilization. In a "Vedic" ritual invented by its founder, the mantra is chanted by thousands of people, many of them converts.[24]

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18 The modified GMs are generally based on the pattern *tat* X *vidmahe*, Y *dhīmahi* / *tan naḥ* Z *pracodayāt* //, with X and Y being divine names in the dative or genitive and Z in the nominative, as for instance in *tat puruṣāya vidmahe*, *mahādevāya dhīmahi* / *tan no rudraḥ pracodayāt* //. The translation of these mantras, especially of the first two *pāda*s, has proven difficult. They are frequently translated as "may we know X, let us contemplate Y" (e.g., in Beck 1994: 51); "let us know X, let us contemplate Y" (e.g., in Gonda 1963a: 292); "we know X, we meditate on Y" (e.g., in Bühnemann 1988: 178); or in a similar fashion. Brereton & Jamison (2020: 214) translated them as "we know this [mantra, dedicated] to X, we contemplate it to Y" (square brackets in the original). Bisschop & Griffiths (2003: 330) translated "we strive for X, we meditate for Y." (The translation variants listed here are not to be understood as direct quotations.)

19 See Chapter 6.

20 See Chapter 7. While the MBh's earliest contents possibly go back to the fourth century BCE, many of its components only came into being in the course of the following eight or more centuries; see Fitzgerald 2018.

21 For a portrait of the mantra goddess, see Chapter 8.

22 Among the few studies known to me are Gupta 1972, Chemburkar 1976, and Goldman & Sutherland Goldman 2016.

23 Cf. Larios 2017: 192.

24 See Bechler 2013 and Heifetz 2021.

As a consequence of the popularization by Vivekananda and reform movements such as the Arya Samaj, the GM has become "a mantra that in contemporary Hindu practice may be chanted by anyone, including those traditionally forbidden even from hearing Vedic mantras, such as women, Śūdras, and Dalits."[25] It has even become part of some cultural currents outside South Asia: Numerous spiritual manuals in various languages are devoted exclusively to explaining what the mantra means and how it is to be used.[26] It is printed on clothes, set to music, chanted in yoga studios, taught in spiritual seminars, and explained and interpreted on numerous websites.[27]

In all these modern contexts, the deification of the mantra is mostly taken for granted. While she is often depicted in a similar fashion as Sarasvatī, there is also a form peculiar to the deification of the mantra, showing her with five heads and ten arms. With its distinct symbolism, this form is reserved for the mantra goddess. In spite of her popularity, however, there are only few temples where the goddess is worshipped nowadays. Most important among them is Pushkar, a town located near Ajmer, which houses one of the few temples dedicated to Brahmā.[28] In a number of places in the area, his consorts, Sāvitrī and Gāyatrī (here they are discretely distinguished) are worshipped as well. The temple of Sāvitrī, who in this case is Brahmā's first wife, is located on a hill behind Brahmā's temple, while that of his second wife Gāyatrī (who is a shepherd girl, not the personified meter) is situated on a lower hill on the opposite side of the lake. Since Gāyatrī is much dearer to Brahmā, however, she also has a place by Brahmā's side in his own temple.[29]

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25   Sathaye 2015: 247.

26   To name but three books in English: Iqbal Kishen Taimni, *Gāyatrī. The Daily Religious Practice of the Hindus* (Chennai: The Theosophical Publishing House, repr. [10]2014 [[1]1978]); Sadguru Sant Keshavadas, *Gāyatrī. The Highest Meditation* (repr. of the 3rd rev. ed.: MLBD, 2000 [New York: [1]1978]); S. Viraswami Pathar, *Gayatri Mantra* (Chennai: Sura Books, 2006).

27   For one such website, see https://siddhayoga.org/gayatri-mantra/exposition/invoking-the-divine (retrieved on February 2, 2022). A number of other examples testifying to the global popularity of the GM in modern times can be cited. Thus, there is an annual "Gayatri Festival," organized by Miten and Deva Premal (*https://devapremalmiten.com/holidays/gayatri-festival-corfu-greece* retrieved on October 13, 2018). The GM is also engraved on the belt of the statue of former Beatle George Harrison, located at the Pier Head in Liverpool. It also gained further popularity as a result of occurring in the introduction of *Battlestar Galactica* (2003–2009), a successful science-fiction television series.

28   Cf. Bailey 1983: 21–26.

29   An interesting aspect of the story behind this cult is that Gāyatrī, a shepherd girl, could only be married to Brahmā after she had been purified by being put into the mouth of a cow and then being pulled out from its anus. For the various versions of this story, see Malik 1996.

1. The present study

1.1 Aims and state of research

Among many others, the question arises of how the GM could rise to such prominence, even to the point of becoming a deity itself. What caused this mantra to attain the status of one of the most important Hindu texts? How could this mantra – basically a sequence of sounds – come to be revered as a deity? How did a text that is unambiguously addressed to a male god become a goddess? How was this goddess imagined and visualized? During the entire history of their development, the various entities called Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī – the meter, the mantra, the goddess(es), the literary character(s) – were conflated in a multitude of ways, but also continued to exist independently on their own. Most of this entangled history, however, is unknown.

The present study is an attempt to contribute to filling this research gap by focusing on two key aspects of the history of the GM: its early development and rise as a mantra, and its personification and deification. The two **aims** of the study are:

 (I) to find out how and in what sense the mantra gained prominence as a religious text;

(II) to investigate how it was personified and became an anthropomorphic goddess.

The study thus aims to disentangle the histories of the following elements: (1) the *gāyatrī* meter; (2) the GM as a mantra; (3) its ritual applications; (4) its personification and (5) deification; (6) the goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī; and (7) her "offshoot," the princess Sāvitrī.

Although a large number of casual citations are found in secondary literature, very little attention has been paid to the history of the mantra itself or to its deification. For this reason, the **current state of research** directly relevant for these topics is easily surveyed. Only a few scholars have dealt with aspects of the mantra in more detail, among them Krishna Lal ("Sāvitrī – from Saṃhitās to Gṛhya-Sūtras" [1971]) and Harry Falk ("Savitṛ und die Sāvitrī" [1988]). In recent years, research on the GM has been resumed by Mieko Kajihara ("The Sacred Verse Sāvitrī in the Vedic Religion and Beyond" [2019]); Joanna Jurewicz ("Cognition Begins in the Morning: An Analysis of *Ṛgveda* 3.62" [2021]); and

Joël P. Brereton ("How the Gāyatrī became the Gāyatrī" [2022]).[30] However, the process of its ascendancy, especially in the post-Vedic period, has remained largely unexplored.

Even less research has been published on the GM's deification. Only rarely are more than a few lines dedicated to the mantra goddess.[31] Even studies on goddesses or literary characters that have certain ties to the mantra (such as Sarasvatī or the princess Sāvitrī) do not usually go any further than mentioning it. To be cited here are a chapter and a long essay by Asko Parpola ("Sāvitrī and Resurrection" [1998], "The Religious Background of the Sāvitrī Legend" [2000]); Renate Söhnen-Thieme's overview article on Sarasvatī (2018); and Catherine Ludvik's book *Sarasvatī. Riverine Goddess of Knowledge* (2007).[32]

1.2 Scope and sources

While making extensive use of the available secondary literature, including translations, the present study is directly based on primary sources. These comprise a great variety of Vedic and Sanskrit texts that were composed in, and often even across, several historical periods. The point of departure was naturally determined by the GM's first attestation in the ṚV, whose hymns were composed before the twelfth century BCE.[33] However, many Vedic texts (including the ṚV itself)[34] only attained their final form in the following, first millennium BCE. The end point – or better end period – was determined by the time when the mantra began to be regularly and widely worshipped as an anthropomorphic goddess, which began only after the mantra had already been elevated to a certain status. While the origins of this development go several centuries further back, it is not until the third or fourth century CE that we can speak of a true mantra goddess. The "career" of this goddess reached an initial peak in the last third of the first millennium CE, when Tantric elements were integrated into her worship – a significant and lasting innovation.

The **scope** of the study thus essentially covers the period between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE (neither end point, however, is to be understood as a sharp boundary).[35] The number of Vedic and Sanskrit texts from this long time-frame is con-

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30 These studies are discussed in detail in the individual chapters; see Section 1 in Chapter 3 and Section 1 in Chapter 4. For general overviews of the GM, see also Kane II(1): 302–304; Gonda 1963a: 259–261, 274, 276, and especially 284–294; and Brereton & Jamison 2020: 213–217. Cf. also Hatcher 2019.

31 See, for instance, Hopkins 1915: 86 (§41); Leeming 2001: 150; Varenne, *EU*; and Timalsina 2018.

32 Parpola's and Ludvik's studies are addressed in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively.

33 See Witzel 1997b: 263.

34 See Witzel 1997b: 324–326.

35 For reasons of time as well as for the sake of a concise presentation, I have only briefly examined some of the later sources or have dispensed with textual analyses altogether.

siderable. In total, a selection of more than one hundred texts have been taken into account, many of them mentioning the mantra more than once. Most of them can be roughly divided into the following categories:[36]

- **Vedic literature**: e.g., Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads

- **Ritual manuals**: e.g., Śrautasūtras, Gṛhyasūtras, Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas; including also Tantras as well as Tantricized and Smārta texts

- **Dharma literature**: e.g., Dharmasūtras, Dharmaśāstras, Smṛtis

- **Epic and (early) Purāṇic literature**: e.g., the MBh and its appendices; Purāṇas

The sources and the criteria for their selection are treated in more detail in the individual chapters; for their approximate dates, see Table 1 on page xviii above.

1.3   Approach and methodology

In view of the great variety of sources and the aims of this study, the following three primary tasks emerged for its implementation:

(a)   locating relevant text passages in the available Vedic and Sanskrit literature

(b)   reading and interpreting them against their textual and historical backgrounds

(c)   analyzing and evaluating their role in the history of the GM and its deification

The three tasks required the deployment of a variety of **methods**. To accomplish the first task **(a)**, a range of research techniques were utilized. Many passages could easily be found by means of searching keywords or collocations of keywords such as *gāyatrī*, *sāvitrī*, *tat savitur*, and others in digitized texts. The number of digitized Vedic and Sanskrit texts has grown exponentially since the 2010s, and a number of tools were employed to search through them. To be mentioned here are, above all, *GRETIL* (*Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages*; http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/); *SARIT* (*Search and Re-*

→   The latter applies in particular to the Devī-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa (see Śrīkṛṣṇadās 1983 and Vijnananda 1922) and the Gāyatrī-Tantra (= Devī-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa XII), two long texts that deal extensively with the mantra goddess but lie at the extreme edge of the scope of the study (c. tenth century CE or later).

36   For a general and concise overview of the identity, role, and function of the texts belonging to these categories, see Leach 2014.

trieval of Indic Texts; https://sarit.indology.info); and *DCS* (*Digital Corpus of San-skrit*; http://www.sanskrit-linguistics.org/dcs/index.php).

However, since there are also many texts that are not digitally accessible, indices in (and of) primary and secondary texts were used as well. Moreover, due to the fact that digitized texts are often unreliable and/or do not include secondary (but relevant) information, many passages had to be looked up in their original – that is, printed or scanned – editions. Due to the fact that slight differences in wording can have an impact on how a single word or phrase is understood – and often passages concerning the GM do not exceed one or two sentences – different manuscript readings, when included in the editions, were also taken into account. The results of this research have been recorded in several internal databases and reference lists.

As regards the second task **(b)**, the collected text passages were subse-quently assessed by a **close, philological-historical reading** of those sources. Since the GM is more often simply cited or quoted and only rarely the sole subject of longer explanations or expositions, taking the context and the im-mediate textual environment thoroughly into account was crucial. Sometimes the use of certain words would indicate the esteem in which the mantra was held, or whether it was just viewed as one mantra among many others. Espe-cially in the case of liturgical texts, it is the combination of the GM with other mantras as well as its placement among them that gives access to the meaning or significance of the mantra itself. From a more distant vantage point, the sta-tistical frequency of citations and reuses in certain sub-corpora also provided some clues as to the relative prominence of the GM, especially when compared with other, similar mantras.

In the case of the goddess, attributes, epithets, and qualifiers (such as *vedamātṛ* or *devī*) naturally play an important role. Despite the apparent clarity of such words, however, in many cases it is difficult to distinguish between the personification of the mantra and outright deification.[37] For these reasons, it became even more important to give complete attention to textual details in order to fan out the full range of possible interpretations of the texts. This, in turn, made it possible to draw inferences about the religious realities reflected in the texts.

Retracing the paths of the GM and its deification **(c)** involved, above all, **establishing the chronological order** of the relevant text passages by means of wide reading and the use of whatever secondary literature proved available. As is well known, establishing the absolute dates of Vedic and Sanskrit texts is often extremely difficult and tracing of precise chronological developments

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37   I will return to this issue in Section 3.4 (pp. 30–34) below.

is often nigh impossible.[38] In view of the fact that many of these texts contain passages from different time periods, awareness of implicit assumptions about the date of *a* text was essential: not infrequently, later developments are reflected in textual interpolations that are tacitly added to the original material.[39] In many cases, however, it is indeed feasible to distinguish between earlier and later phases, at least among different texts; this allowed for deliberations concerning intermediate developments.

In order to understand the GM's rise to a prominent mantra (even so far as its becoming a deity) against the wider religious background (as opposed to its being an isolated phenomenon), it was above all necessary to gain a good understanding of two crucial topics: mantras and deification. The background knowledge concerning these topics that has informed my analyses is introduced in the next two sections, where I also delve deeper into theoretical and methodological aspects. Following that, I briefly outline the structure and contents of this study.

Because both mantras and deification are very large topics, I have selected a number of key aspects that I discuss in greater detail (especially for the former). In the first section, which is devoted to **mantras**, I focus on four aspects: the relationship between mantras and language (2.1); how Vedic mantras are employed in Gṛhya and Śrauta rituals (2.2); the rise of several individual mantras to so high a status that they are given names (2.3); and the deification of mantras in Tantric contexts (2.4).

Continuing from the last point, I turn to the topic of deities and **deification**. Here, I focus on the nature of deities, the conditions of their emergence, and the deification of humans, natural objects and phenomena, and abstractions (3.1); the meaning of the term personification in the context of deities and deification, including the question of the perceived fictitiousness or realness of such personifications, and their path to becoming actual deities (3.2); then I present a compact scheme to explain the process of deification (3.3); and finally offer a few methodological considerations (3.4).

In developing my theory of deification, I have to some extent followed an **interdisciplinary approach** that combines philological research with perspectives and insights from religious studies. Because the deification of mantras – and, indeed, the process of deification in general – has been little researched, I have also drawn on research on personification and deification in Greek, Roman, and other ancient religions. It should be emphasized that the present study

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38   As dates and the divisions of texts into earlier and later "layers" continue to be a subject of debate, writing about them is a very difficult task. As Feller (2004: 47) aptly puts it, "at times the feeling is rather like that of walking in a mine-field, where one's smallest step should be watched."

39   The prime example for this is the development of the "Gāyatrī passage" in the various versions of the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad (MNārU); see below pp. 184–193.

does not claim to offer a full-fledged analysis of the deification of the GM from the perspective of religious studies. By tentatively situating the deification of GM within a broader framework, however, I hope to have facilitated such an approach.

2. Mantras

2.1 Mantras and language

Being a salient feature in almost every major religious tradition originating in South Asia, the concept of mantra has become widely known.[40] The word "mantra" has even become a part of the English language. Many definitions have been given, but none has found general acceptance. One of the most universal is that of André Padoux:

> a mantra is a formula or a sound with a fixed and prescribed form, to be used according to certain rules and in prescribed circumstances, and empowered with a general or a specific efficacy acknowledged by the tradition wherein it is used.[41]

Most mantras could indeed be called "potent formulae,"[42] in the sense that they are fixed sequences of words that, when recited or written, are expected to yield a certain result. Many of them are used like – or as – prayers, spells, incantations or commands. The relationship between mantras and linguistically meaningful utterances, however, is by no means straightforward. A mantra may contain meaningful words or a meaningful sentence (or sentences), but it may also be a combination of completely meaningless – that is, non-lexical – sounds, as for instance in the case of *hsṣmlraṃ*, known variously as the "Vyāpaka-Mantra," "Saptākṣara-Mantra," or "Piṇḍa."[43]

But even when they are made up of "normal" words, one often has the impression that mantras are not used in the same way as language as it is normally

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40 For general introductions, see Gonda 1963a, Alper 1989: 1–14, and Burchett 2008: 813–818; for Vedic mantras in Śrauta/Gṛhya ritual, see generally Gonda 1977: 502–508 and 565–581; for Tantric mantras, see generally Padoux 2011.

41 Padoux 1990: 379. At the same place, Padoux also points out that the origin plays a crucial role in defining whether such a formula is a mantra or not: "a mantra is what is pronounced as such by the revealed tradition and the teaching of the masters: it is a formalized utterance declared to be a mantra, 'revealed' by those texts and masters who are entitled to do so, that is, who are recognized as holding authority in this matter by the group to which they belong."

42 Attributes such as "potent" or "powerful" are preferable to the much more elusive and loaded adjectives "sacred," "religious," or "magic"; cf. Burchett 2008.

43 For more on this mantra, see Rastelli 1999: 137–139.

understood, that is, as a means of communication. For instance, the three words *bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ*, known as "the Vyāhṛtis," taken together constitute a mantra that is used in a great number of ritual contexts.[44] While they can be translated as EARTH, INTERSPACE, SKY, this literal meaning plays no role at all; the mantra is not meant to "tell" anyone anything, not even the reciters themselves.[45] The question is therefore: What in fact is the linguistic status of mantras?

The scholarly debate regarding this question has above all been driven by Frits Staal, who argued that rituals as well as the mantras recited in them are essentially meaningless.[46] His fundamental observation concerning mantras is that while they may *consist* of language or language elements – and most often do – they *are not* language (as, for instance, prayers or poems are,[47] though they, too, may be used *as* mantras). The linguistic utterances a mantra contains undeniably have a meaning of their own: a mantra may even consist entirely of perfectly intelligible semantic content, which can also be translated into other languages. One may even try to determine the "linguisticality" of a certain mantra in terms of the degree to which it contains intelligible content.[48]

The function of the mantra or the meaning attributed to it, however, do not necessarily depend on this content directly (which may also be incomprehensible due to its being enigmatic or archaic). A certain effort or even special knowledge is very often needed to construe the meaning or purpose of a mantra in a given context. However, in most contexts known from South Asian religions, the reciters of a mantra are by no means required to always make this effort, nor are they obliged to have such knowledge. Meaning, therefore, is not necessarily an essential feature of many mantras, and in this sense they may indeed be called "meaningless."[49]

This as well as many of Staal's other theories have been the subject of controversy, with most scholars feeling the urge to argue against them.[50] Indeed, it

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44   See, for instance, Gonda 1980a: 226.

45   It is also impossible to interpret all mantras as speech acts; cf. Staal 1989b: 66: "[A]ll speech acts involve intention; since all mantras do not, mantras cannot be speech acts." Cf. also Wilke & Moebus 2011: 406–407.

46   For a summary and references, see Staal 2008: 191–241. Staal was not the first to make this claim: "Even some within the Sanskrit tradition, including Kautsa in Vedic times and the fifth century Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu, argued for the meaninglessness of mantras. In modern Bengal as well, the phrase *mantra-tantra* (or *tantra-mantra*) is frequently used in the pejorative or dismissive sense of 'mumbo jumbo'" Yelle 2003: 15.

47   Cf. Padoux 2011: 9.

48   As proposed by Alper 1989: 6–8.

49   Nevertheless, it should also be mentioned that the Sanskrit tradition in general strongly associates mantras with *vāc*, that is, "speech" or "language." Mantras may even be considered the highest form of language. According to Padoux (1989: 299–300), this is above all to be explained by the peculiar theories and notions about language in this tradition, rather than by what language actually is.

50   See, above all, Penner 1985; see also the various contributions in Thompson & Payne 2016 as well as Alper 1989: 10–12; cf. also Patton 2005: 61–62.

is no exaggeration to say that Staal overemphasized the formal – in themselves semantically meaningless – aspects of mantras. In my view, however, one of his basic insights – namely that mantras, like songs, should be considered *containers* rather than *content* – remains a good starting point for further reflections.[51] Above all, it allows us to think about their semantic content independently from their use and purpose – and the other way round too. Mantras belong to a category of their own. Just as it would be insufficient to study songs *only* as texts, mantras must not simply be analyzed as manifestations of language. Because most of them consist of language, however, linguistic concepts are indispensable to fully understanding them.[52] In fact, in the following it will become clear that the content of a mantra usually does play a major role in its application.

2.2 Mantras in Gṛhya and Śrauta ritual

Since the end of the nineteenth century, there have been repeated efforts to understand how mantras come to be used in certain contexts, with early scholars focusing especially on Vedic mantras. Frequently, the relationship between mantras and the ritual acts they accompany was viewed more in terms of quantity rather than quality. The perceived gap between semantic meaning and ritual practice often gave rise to judgements about the degree of their applicability – or, much more often, inapplicability – in certain contexts.[53] In the following survey, I will review some of the most important theories regarding the application of mantras. In doing so, I will focus on "practically oriented" theories concerned with Vedic mantras (as the GM is Vedic), dealing first with Gṛhya and then with Śrauta ritual.[54]

Among the first to study the application of mantras was Edwin W. Fay. In his 1890 dissertation, which dealt with the occurrences of Ṛgvedic mantras in **Gṛhya ritual and mantras**, he distinguished above all between "general" and "specific" applicability.[55] A mantra belongs to the first category if it "has a merely general applicability, and would serve on almost any conceivable occasion as well as for the one in which we find it employed."[56] Specific applicability,

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51 Gerety (2015: 25), too, has recently made an effort to rehabilitate Staal's theory; cf. also Lubin 2016c: 146–148.

52 Cf. Davidson 2014: 5–10.

53 Cf. Apte 1939: 14–15.

54 For similar surveys, see Patton 2005: 76–83 and Lamers 2012: 4–9.

55 See especially Fay 1899: 26. As he studied the occurrences of mantras in a Sūtra, he further distinguished "homonymous citations" ("Here the m a n t r a cited is utterly out of relation to the ritual, but lugged in because the m a n t r a accidentally contains some word inherent to the S ū t r a" p. 22) and "warranty citations" ("Sometimes the m a n t r a is cited as a warranty for a belief, much like legal citations now, or like proof-texts in the doctrinal study of the Bible" p. 25).

56 Fay 1899: 14.

on the other hand, is given if the content of the mantra has a specific link to the ritual act it accompanies.

This distinction turned out to be problematic. Directly referring to Fay's work, Vinayak M. Apte remarked that "such a classification is, in my opinion, too general, too superficial to do justice to the *definite principles* underlying the citation of a mantra in a particular rite."[57] In fact, Fay himself already noted that

> [b]etween the opposing poles […] of general and specific applicability, lies a class of quotations hard to refer absolutely to either extreme […] One difficulty that will meet us in testing the specific applicability of a m a n t r a is of this sort: a verse of a purely general sense may contain some word that has suggested a specific rite to accompany it.[58]

Fay tried to solve the problem by creating a catch-all category (entitled "A"), which includes mantras with either general or specific applicability.[59] This category, however, only indicates that a certain mantra is applicable – an insight already established by the fact that the mantra evidently *was* used in a ritual.

As Apte recognized, applicability is more a matter of kind rather than degree. In his study of the application of mantras in the Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (ĀśvGS), he proposed five distinct categories:

- The **sacramental** class: "When a Ṛgveda mantra has the same sacramental setting or context in the RV. [= ṚV] itself, as it has in the ĀG. [= ĀśvGS] where it is cited, I call that citation '*sacramental.*'"

- To the **invocational** class belong "[v]erses or hymns containing prayers for blessings in general […] or for some special blessings connected with the particular rite under description."

- The **mythological** class "of citations […] become appropriate in a rite mainly because they are addressed to a deity who is associated with that rite."

- **Oblational** citations "become appropriate to a ritual act through *oblations to Agni* or in other words because the act is accompanied by oblations to the domestic fire […] These are naturally all 'Agni verses'."

- The **superficial** class: to this class belong "citations […] whose only link with the ritual context is some superficial resemblance in the form of a common word or phrase without any relationship to its meaning […] Even in these few cases […] the choice of the mantra is not purely arbitrary,

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57   Apte 1939: 15.
58   Fay 1899: 17.
59   Another category, "B," includes mantras with general or specific applicability as well as homonymous citations.

but is dictated either by earlier liturgical employment or some striking metaphor."[60]

In a very similar manner, Laurie L. Patton (2005) distinguished four general functions:

- **Consecratory** function: "mantras that make sacred a particular act, such as [a] wedding or a funeral."

- **Oblational** function: "mantras that refer to the power of Agni as the oblation is poured into the domestic fire."

- **Purposeful** function: "mantras that comment briefly on the larger purpose, or significance of the act they are to accompany, such as the gaining of progeny of wealth."

- **Benedictions** or **aversions**: "mantras that are expressions of wishes, such as for future health, as well as for avoidance of an evil spirit."[61]

For **Śrauta ritual**, the second type of Vedic ritual, a number of categories have been proposed as well. As a rule, mantras are not used here in an isolated fashion, but forged together in litanies. In a single ritual, these litanies can comprise hundreds of different mantras, all taken out of their original contexts and arranged in a new order. In some cases, mantras or their components are also expanded, compressed, taken apart, or rearranged.[62]

Among the first to study this subject was Viman Ch. Bhattacharyya (1953), who analyzed the application of mantras in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (AitB).[63] In contrast to Apte, Bhattacharyya's basic assumption was that most mantras recited in Vedic rituals were actually misapplied, and that the aim of the commentarial literature, the Brāhmaṇas, was to explain this misapplication away by means of certain "devices." The devices identified by him are the following:[64]

- The **single word** device: the occurrence of a certain word (or sometimes a number of words) in a mantra or hymn is said to justify its recitation.

- The **pattern** device: a prominent refrain entails the employment of the entire hymn.

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60   All quotations are from Apte 1939: 16–17; cf. also Gonda 1977: 568–571.
61   All quotations are from Patton 2005: 66–67.
62   For examples, see Staal 1989b: 48–58.
63   Summarized in Gonda 1979a: 236–237; see also Bhattacharyya 1955.
64   See Bhattacharyya 1953: 300–305.

- The **analogy**, **simile**, or **symbol** device: an analogy or correspondence is assumed between certain elements mentioned in a mantra and ritual or real-life elements.

- The "**sage**" or "**school** device" (as it could be called): the use of a hymn or verse is explained to be authoritative in another Vedic school or to have been effective in the case of a well-known Vedic sage.

- The "**Ākhyāna**" or narrative device: mantras are related to a myth or legend that is in some way connected with a ritual detail.

- The "**Ṛk**" or "**gāthā** device": an authoritative Ṛgvedic text or popular saying is drawn upon in order to show the prevalence of a certain ritual practice.

Bhattacharyya's main aim was to "dismantle" these devices and to show their ineptitude to explain the connection between the recited texts and ritual events. I would argue, however, that the devices may in many cases reflect the principles according to which the mantras were selected and put together in the first place. Rather than assuming a general failure on behalf of the commentators, I think it is more probable that they often followed a ritual logic whose foundations had been laid long before.

I would even suggest adding two further principles to Bhattacharyya's list. As Jan Gonda noted, "mantras are often said to be suitable for reasons that are foreign to their contents, for instance their metrical structure."[65] Second, the "deep structure" of the ritual or litany itself may determine the need for a mantra calling upon a particular god.[66] The fact that a mantra is addressed to a certain deity can be decisive as well, even if that deity is not explicitly named in the mantra.[67] Thus, the list could be extended by the "**metrical**" and the "**deity**" principles (the latter, in fact, corresponds to the "mythological class of citations" Apte postulated for Gṛhya ritual and mantras).[68]

Only some of the principles, functions, devices, and categories already identified – most prominently, Bhattacharya's "analogy device" – presuppose a connection between the semantically meaningful elements of a mantra and actors, actions, and objects, in the world. As scholars such as Laurie L. Patton have shown, however, it is often not too difficult to find such connections if the ritual context is thoroughly taken into account – especially in the case of Gṛhya ritual. These generally follow an associative logic.[69] As one of many examples,

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65   Gonda 1979a: 236.
66   As shown, for instance, by the structure of the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, see below p. 93.
67   As is the case of ṚV V 50.1 in the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, see below p. 93 (#6).
68   The deity principle was also recognized by Yāska, the author of the Nirukta (c. fourth–third century BCE); see Visigalli 2016.
69   Patton (2005: 75) has also called them "metonymic connections." For a review of her study, see Smith 2006.

one may look at the use of a certain Ṛgvedic hymn, ṚV III 33, in Gṛhya ritual.[70] This hymn, which is also known as the "River Hymn," is essentially a dialogue between the poet, Viśvāmitra, and the two rivers Vipāś and Śutudrī, which are asked to cease their flow in order to allow the Bharata forces to cross. According to the Ṛgvidhāna (ṚVidh) and the Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (ŚāṅkhGS), the hymn or, in the latter case, only its last verse, should be recited as a mantra by someone who is crossing a river. As Patton pointed out, the reciter of the hymn is in these cases associated with its poet; the river to be crossed, in turn, "is likened to the gracious primordial rivers, Vipāś and Śutudrī, who acceded to the sage's request."[71] Thus, the reason for which this mantra is recited is not just a loose thematic appropriateness; rather, it is possible to establish very concrete, associative linkages between the elements in the text of the mantra and the elements of reality.

The way in which a creator or performer of a ritual mentally establishes such linkages, however, may vary.[72] Many reciters may not mentally engage with the mantras they utter and the ritual acts they perform at all, either because they do not try to or simply cannot understand their purport. But although these linkages may not be as obvious as other principles, looking for them is not superfluous. As Bhattacharya remarked, the analogy device – or, as I would suggest calling it, the "**associative** principle" – "is the most commonly accepted device of all."[73]

The associative principle can indeed be found both in Gṛhya and Śrauta rituals. This fact as well as the various examples to be discussed in this study suggest that the use of mantras in the two related ritual systems are often guided by the same, or similar, principles. This means that, when analyzing mantras in one system, it would be inappropriate to rule out the presence of a trait of the other system. Rather, it is advisable to take into account as many aspects as possible. I propose to pay attention to the following four aspects in particular: the meter; the mention of possibly relevant words; the deity to whom the particular mantra is dedicated (it is important to note that the name of this deity is not always explicitly mentioned); and any associative linkages that may be established between the actors, actions, etc. mentioned in the mantra and those of the real/ritual world. Moreover, it should also be taken into account who composed the mantra, what position it occupies in its hymn of origin, and how it was used in other contexts. Based on this information, it is usually possible to explain why a mantra was used in a particular context.

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70   For an analysis, see Patton 2005: 161–164.

71   Patton 2005: 164.

72   Cf. Patton 2005: 62.

73   Bhattacharyya 1953: 303. In fact, this principle also plays a major role in the system of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā; see Lamers 2012.

As the above survey illustrates, mantras may be "legitimately" used in a variety of contexts (the recognition of this fact even led to the creation of the term "hyperapplicability"[74]). The application of Vedic mantras is clearly not haphazard, but follows certain principles. An important aspect, especially in Vedic ritual, is that mantras are most often *selected* according to these principles (or a combination of them) and are then adaptively reused[75] rather than modified and adapted to a particular ritual context.[76] Although variations are not at all uncommon, most mantras are used as they are. The process of their selection, however, is not always straightforward – especially when considering that there are so many mantras to choose from.

2.3 Pre-eminent mantras

The total number of Hindu mantras in existence is traditionally given as 70 million.[77] The actual number is certainly much smaller, but still very large. The *Updated Vedic Concordance*, for instance, contains close to 90,000 entries, each of which can theoretically be called a Vedic mantra.[78] The number of Tantric mantras is far more difficult to count, but certainly does not fall behind that figure. In practice, any particular tradition (Vedic, Tantric, or other) preserves and uses only a subset of mantras, but always acknowledges them as being parts of limited, yet vast corpora. To give an overview of the composition and structure of even one of these corpora – that is, identifying groups or subsets according to their similar wordings or applications – is not an easy task. However, when looking at the bulk of mantras from a distance, one thing quickly becomes clear: a very small number of them clearly stand out from the crowd. Within and also across the various traditions, we can observe that a few mantras have become far more prominent or popular than the others.

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74   Patton 2005: 67.

75   Freschi & Maas (2017: 14) distinguish "adaptive" from "simple" reuse as follows: "In contrast to simple re-use, adaptive reuse is not merely the repetition of a previous use; it implies more than an item just being used again. In adaptive reuse, the reuser expects his or her audience to recognize the reused elements in order to achieve a well-defined purpose, as for example adding prestige, credibility, etc., to the newly created item. Adaptive reuse may involve a more substantial change in the usage."

76   Nevertheless, mantras were modified in some cases. There are even special rules for this procedure; see, for instance, Lamers 2012 and Bronkhorst 2007: 188–191.

77   Padoux 1989: 310.

78   The *UVC* can indeed be called "a comprehensive index of all mantras" (p. xxii); it should be noted, however, that not all of them were actually used as individual mantras. Thus, the majority of b-*pāda*s – all of them indexed as separate entries – were only recited together with the rest of the verse. According to Gonda 1963a: 266, "The number of Vedic mantras included in the ritual handbooks for the performance of the domestic rites (*Gṛhyasūtras*) comes, for instance, approximately to 2,500."

This is shown, for instance, by some of them being given proper names. A number of examples are easily given. The verses ṚV X 9.1–3, for instance, are called "Abliṅgas," because they are addressed to the personified Waters – *abliṅga* literally means "whose characteristic are the Waters." The verses are prescribed by a number of Dharmasūtras as a means for purification.[79] While there are of course many verses in the Vedic corpus that mention the Waters, these three verses were used so frequently that the designation *abliṅga* was established as their name.

A similar example is that of mantras that are typically associated with a certain deity, which may then be directly named after that deity. Perhaps the most prominent example for this is, indeed, "the *sāvitrī*" (i.e., the GM), which mentions Savitṛ.[80] In other cases, a prominent ritual application played a role in naming. The verse ṚV VII 59.12, for instance, is often used in rituals whose purpose is to overcome death. Accordingly, it is not only called "Tryambaka" (after its first word, which is also its deity), but also "Mahāmṛtyuṃjaya-Mantra," the "Great Death-Conquering Mantra."[81]

The practice of giving prominent mantras names was continued throughout all historical phases, both for Vedic and Tantric mantras. One of the most important mantras among the devotees of Viṣṇu is the "Twelve-Syllable" or "Dvādaśākṣara-Mantra": *oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*, "ОМ – obeisance to Lord Vāsudeva."[82] While there are also other mantras of twelve syllables, this designation is most often used for this mantra. Similarly, the "Five-Syllable" or "Pañcākṣara-Mantra" usually designates one of the most important mantras dedicated to Śiva:[83] *namaḥ śivāya*, "obeisance to Śiva." While both terms are also used to designate other mantras, in most contexts (especially, of course, within the respective traditions) they are effectively used as proper names.

In several cases, pre-eminent mantras also play a crucial role in how a tradition defines itself. A good contemporaneous example for this is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), which is also known as the "Hare Krishna movement," after the mantra to which they attach supreme

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79   *UVC* I *s.v.* "abdaivatam"; cf. also n. 237 on p. 62 below.

80   Note, however, that this only became a proper name in the course of time; originally, the word could also refer to other verses; see Chapter 2.

81   For this mantra, see especially Einoo 2005b; see also Wilke & Moebus 2011: 723–729. Its application is in consonance with its semantic content: "We worship Tryambaka, the fragrant increaser of prosperity. Like a cucumber from the stalk, may I come loose from death, not from deathlessness!" *tr₍yàmbakaṃ yajāmahe, sugándhim puṣṭivárdhanam / urvārukám (i)va bándhanān, mṛtyór mukṣīya mámṛtāt //* (originally, it must have been *urvārukáṃ va*, which was later normalized to *urvārukám iva*); cf. the translation by Jamison & Brereton 2014: 954.

82   Cf. Rastelli 2006: 205.

83   Cf. Rocher 1989: 180. As it is frequently preceded by *om*, the mantra is also called "Six-Syllable" or "Ṣaḍakṣara-Mantra"; see Sanderson 2013a: 88; cf. Bisschop 2018b.

significance, the "Hare Krishna mantra" or "Mahāmantra."[84] The GM, likewise, has always strongly been associated with Brahminical Hindu traditions, and in particular with the Vedic tradition.

The status of individual mantras varied over time and across traditions, and not every mantra that was once deemed worthy of a name continued to enjoy pre-eminence. Conversely, not every significant mantra received its own name. What the practice of giving names to mantras very well illustrates, however, is that mantras as a rule do not form a homogeneous, anonymous mass. Rather, a select few mantras are recited much more often than all the others or are praised as especially powerful or sacred. As I will argue throughout this study, this status tended to perpetuate or even increase itself: once a mantra was reused more often and associated with certain functions and purposes, it also was more likely to be selected for the same or similar purposes in other ritual contexts, and indeed, beyond them too.[85]

2.4   Deification of Tantric mantras

So far, I have almost exclusively dealt with Vedic mantras. While the scope of this study does not allow me to elaborate on Tantric mantras in the same way, there is a specific aspect that pertains directly to the subject of this study, and therefore must not be overlooked: the deification of mantras, something that is known to be a particularity of Tantric traditions.[86] In contrast to the Vedic case, mantras are here generally considered to be deities themselves. Accompanying their recitation, they are often visualized, usually in an anthropomorphic form. Frequently the individual body parts of a mantra deity have a mantric manifestation as well. The so-called *aṅgamantra*s or "limb mantras," in particular, form a predefined set of elements associated with a deity or mantra.[87]

The intermediate goal of the repetitive recitation of a Tantric mantra is to manipulate or even "master" (*sādh*, *siddhi*) it, that is, to gain control of the deity it represents, or rather, the deity that it *is*.[88] This is above all done by repeated recitation (generally known as *japa*), combined with visualization and offerings. The ultimate goal of the practice is to achieve and obtain whatever one desires. The texts of the mantras used to this end are, as a rule, addressed to the deity that is being invoked. Let me offer one example to illustrate this. In the Pañcarātra

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84   *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa*, *kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare*, *hare rāma hare rāma*, *rāma rāma hare hare*; see Neubert 2018.

85   See especially Chapter 4.

86   For an overview, see Timalsina 2018; see also Brunner 2001.

87   See below p. 250.

88   Interestingly, the *gāyatrisiddhi*, the "mastery of the Gāyatrī," is already mentioned in one of the oldest extant Śaiva Tantras (c. seventh century CE), the Niśvāsamukha (NiśvMukh IV 13; see Kafle 2020: 338).

tradition, the Jayā-Mantra is used to address the goddess Jayā, one of the four *śakti*s or "powers" of Vaikuṇṭha. The mantra can be translated as: "oṃ jāṃ – obeisance to Jayā! To the one who is fixed in the abode of the Unconquered One [i.e., of Vaikuṇṭha] – jāṃ jrīṃ svāhā."[89] When the Jayā-Mantra has been visualized and finally mastered, it appears to the reciter in anthropomorphic form,[90] saying: "You have mastered me well, Son. Free from fear and affliction perform the action that is desired with my *mantra*."[91] This account is exemplary of other practices in which Tantric mantras are used: the mantra, an audible entity, is mastered and subsequently appears – or is expected to appear – in a visible form.

The relationship between mantras in their sonic forms and their divine aspects is explained in various ways. On the one hand, mantras are frequently said to be that which expresses or signifies the deity (i.e., mantras are the *vācaka*s of their *vācya*s, the deities),[92] or they are thought of as manifestations or the powers (*śakti*s) of deities. On the other hand, they are also imagined as consisting of or even being identical with the mantra's sound, in which case the mantras really *are* deities themselves.[93] However, if a mantra has a name, this name is not necessarily that of its divine aspect. The Dvādaśākṣara-Mantra mentioned above, for instance, is not the manifestation of a god "Dvādaśākṣara," but of Vāsudeva. In contrast, the GM can be understood as the sonic manifestation of the goddess Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī, but not of Savitṛ, who is actually mentioned in the text of the mantra.

How exactly the deification of mantras began to hold sway has barely been explored. As the GM was one of the first mantras (possibly even the first) that were consistently thought of as being a deity, studying its history promises to contribute to our understanding of the process of mantra deification. It should be emphasized, however, that the GM is not a Tantric mantra, but a Vedic one. It would be ill-advised to view its deification as a mere foreshadowing or prefiguration of much later developments, nor would it be permissible to study it with the help of Tantric categories. Deification in the Vedic and Early Hindu periods must be understood in their own frameworks. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to offer a few preliminary considerations on the nature of gods, and on the implications of what it means to become one.

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89   *oṃ ⁺jāṃ jayāyai namaḥ, ajitadhāmāvasthitāyai ⁺jāṃ ⁺jrīṃ svāhā* (Krishnamacharya 1967: 31 [no. 4]); see Rastelli 1999: 130, n. 496.

90   She is said to look like Lakṣmī; cf. Rastelli 2000: 360, where the following attributes are listed: "no definite colour, white garments, beautiful, various adornments, with a crescent on the forehead, two arms, holding a noose and a hook J[ay]S 6.85–91b."

91   JayS 27.119: *susiddhāsmi ca te putra manmantreṇa samācara / yad abhīṣṭaṃ tu vai kāryaṃ niśśaṅko vigatajvaraḥ //*; tr. Rastelli 2000: 335.

92   Cf. Rastelli 1999: 120.

93   Padoux 2001: 398–399.

3. Deification

3.1 The nature of deities

Across the world's religions, countless deities are worshipped. Some of them, such as Yahweh, have continued to be the object of veneration for thousands of years, and some have even procreated. In other cases, two or more of them have merged into a single deity, as was the case with Skanda and Murukaṉ in South India. Some, like Kronos, no longer attract much attention. Occasionally, gods and goddesses are also revived or even invented anew, as is the case with Odin in Neo-Paganism, or with Bhārat Mātā, the personification of the Indian nation.[94] Historically, pantheons around the globe have been in a constant flux.[95] The question is: how do gods emerge, and how do they develop? Do they come into existence by themselves, or are they "invented" – or perhaps, both?

From the perspective of the human sciences, a key condition for the "**production of divinity**," as Gustavo Benavides has called it, is the ability to recognize other beings of whatever sort as conscious and intentional agents.[96] Another factor is the general disposition in humans to understand reality in a "teleological manner," that is, to perceive it as consisting of entities that have purposes. These qualities may be attributed to all kinds of entities, be they human or non-human, animate or inanimate, objects or phenomena, real or imagined. As a result, all kinds of agents may be suspected behind reality: gods as well as spirits, ghosts, demons, and so on. In the case of gods in the classical sense of the word, another disposition can be observed: the tendency to think of them as more or less human-like beings, or persons, in the widest sense.[97] Indeed, most of them are imagined to be endowed with bodies, minds, desires, thoughts, etc.; in many cases, they are anthropomorphic, which includes having a gender.[98] Many of them even demand offerings and sacrifices for their sustenance, or at least for their benevolence.

On the other hand, gods are also generally "believed to be largely, but not fully, free from the physical, psychological, and moral constraints that limit the agency of humans."[99] Being clairvoyant, omniscient, unageing, immortal, etc., they are in many respects superior to ordinary humans, and in many ways *super*-human. By way of their divinity, they often belong to, or partake in, an-

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94 For Kronos, see Baudy 2006. For Murukaṉ, see Clothey 2018. For the revival of Norse paganism (e.g., Ásatrú and Odinism), see Schnurbein 2016. For Bhārat Mātā, see McKean 1996.

95 For an overview of Hindu deities, see Narayan 2018.

96 See Benavides 2016: 564–566.

97 Guthrie (1993) even argued that anthropomorphism is the key feature not only of gods in particular, but of religion as a whole.

98 This was the case, for instance, in the PIE pantheon; see West 2007: 138.

99 Benavides 2016: 561.

other, "transcendent" domain. Gods are thus simultaneously – and often also contradictorily – defined both by their strong similarities to humans and by their otherness from human beings, generally in terms of superiority.[100]

This, however, does not mean that gods are necessarily non-human or supernatural, nor are they always only products of imagination in the way that literary characters are. From the historical perspective, it is clear that many of them have their origin in very real beings and phenomena that then become subject to **deification**. This term, together with its near-synonyms "divinization" and "apotheosis," usually refers to the elevation of heroes, emperors, and eminent religious persons.[101] Famous examples of this kind of deification are found in ancient Egypt, where Pharaohs were considered living gods, or ancient Rome, where emperors were often posthumously deified by their successors.[102] Cases of deification of the dead are also known to come from South Asia, both ancient and modern.[103]

In most polytheistic religions, however, the range of subjects or objects susceptible to deification is even wider: virtually anything can become a deity. Besides humans, natural and especially celestial objects and phenomena have been particularly prone to deification. The Vedic god Agni, for instance, is generally called "the god *of* fire" – while in fact his name itself means "fire" (accordingly, it is sometimes also rendered as "Fire").[104] The deification of the sun in many religions is well known; the Egyptian god Ra, whose name also means "sun," is a prime example.[105]

Deification may also affect much more abstract entities. In the ancient Greek and Roman religions, for instance, the seasons, the hours of the day, and even virtues and principles such as Justice (Dike/Justitia) or Fortune (Tyche/Fortuna) were also deified, many of them having their own cult[106] – even including diseases and negative powers such as Fever, Mildew, and Misfortune, all of which were deified and worshipped.[107] Other entities were personified in a similar manner, but were not necessarily worshipped or considered deities: in

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100 Cf. also Barrett 1998.

101 Cf. *ER* IV: 259–262 and Benavides 2016: 570–571. For the divinization of kings in particular, see Strathern 2019: 155–218.

102 See, for instance, Lipka 2009: 129–132.

103 See, for instance, the various contributions in Dimitrova & Oranskaia 2020; see also Blackburn 1985.

104 Words such as *agni* can thus function as common nouns and theonyms at the same time; cf. Elizarenkova 1995: 105.

105 See, for instance, Kahl 2007.

106 For a general overview of personification in ancient Greek and Roman religion, see Bendlin & Shapiro 2006. For the deification of impersonal notions in Roman religion, see Lind 1974, Feeney 1998: 85–92, Stafford 1998: 59–65, and Lipka 2009: 127–129; for personification (and deification) in the Greek world, see the collected articles in Stafford & Herrin 2017.

107 Febris, Robigus, and Mala Fortuna; see Bendlin & Shapiro 2006.

ancient Rome, for example, Death (Mors) was personified, but not considered a god; his Greek counterpart Thanatos, on the other hand, was considered a deity (albeit one that "had practically no cultic significance"[108]).

3.2 Personification

The above examples raise the question as to how real entities (such as fire and death) and their deifications (Fire and Death) – or personifications, as they are often called – relate to each other. Let me begin with the terms "person" and "personification," which in the descriptions of polytheistic religions are usually meant to imply a "human-like being."[109] Superficially, using these terms seems justifiable in most cases: While deities such as Viṣṇu, Athena, or Odin have the ability to act in superhuman ways, they are generally anthropomorphic (or even "super-anthropomorphic" – the many hands and heads of Hindu gods can be interpreted as a manifestations of their superhuman abilities). They could very well be called "divine persons." Deities such as Agni and Fortuna, being divine personifications, inevitably take on human features too (see below).

A crucial characteristic of real human persons, however, is that they are tied to their corporeal, carnal existence, that is, to their spatially and temporally limited bodies. Human individuals can be distinguished from each other first and foremost by their corporeality. While the body is obviously liable to change and modification, seen from a pragmatic perspective, it remains the anchor point in establishing a person's identity, that is, their sameness-with-themselves through time. Since gods generally do not have such a locus, individuality and self-identity are often much less pronounced than in the case of humans.

Aspects of divine individuality and identity may significantly vary or change. In ancient Greece, for instance, different manifestations of Zeus were worshipped at different places (e.g., Zeus Aetnaeus on Mount Aetna or Zeus Lykaios on Mount Lykaion). The same was the case with his Roman equivalent, Jupiter,[110] with whom he was essentially considered to be identical (an impossible relationship among human individuals). Another deity, Yahweh, in the course of time developed from a local Semitic storm-god into the almighty god of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, keeping his name (as YHWH, Jahweh, or Jehovah) in the former two religions. Whether he should be considered to be one and the same in all three monotheistic religions – let alone be identified with the ancient god Yahweh – is debatable, however.

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108 Kunz 2006; cf. Bendlin & Shapiro 2006. For the deification(s) of death in the ancient Greek religion, see also Burton 2017.

109 For a different approach to the concept of personhood and especially personality in the context of gods, see Hick 2004: 264–266.

110 See Lipka 2009: 132–133.

The individuality of gods, their self-identity, and the bonds to their manifestations or bodies are subject to change. This is the reason why the terms "person" and "personification" can and indeed have been used only somewhat loosely. In most studies concerned with deification, these terms appear to denote any being that, in its intentionality, agency, and abilities, and often, but not necessarily also in its form, bears some resemblance to a human being.[111] In this definition, what is deducted from the concept of being human is primarily its physical or corporeal aspect.

If we accept this usage then,[112] a number of questions arises. When characterizing the god Agni as the personification of fire, we have to ask to what extent physical fire is actually being personified, that is, made or thought of as a person. Is the fire its body, or is "Fire" only the name of the deity governing fire? Similarly, we could ask about the relationship between luck as we experience it and its personification as the goddess Fortuna. If this goddess only works through luck, to what extent can she herself "be" luck? Turning to the subject of this study, we might ask: To what extent is the goddess Sāvitrī the audible sounds of her mantra? Are they her manifestation, or even her body? If so, how can this be reconciled with her visual manifestation?

When looking at the host of deifications – or "personification deities," as we might also call them – it soon becomes clear that answers to these questions vary from case to case. The personal "constitution" of a deified entity may be determined by a number of factors. In cases where the deification is based on an entity that is perceptible to the senses (especially a visible one), this entity is indeed often described as the body of the deity. Agni's flames, for instance, are frequently described as his body parts.[113] If a language has a gender system, the gender of the deity is usually determined by the grammatical gender of its name: Fortuna is female, Mṛtyu is male, and so on. This often results in a deity being conceived of as a woman or a man, especially in cases of personifications of abstractions. Also, the features of such deities are often determined by their

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111 Cf., for instance, Stafford's (1998: 25–26) definition of "personification" as "an anthropomorphic representation of any non-human thing."

112 One alternative would be to introduce other terminology, such as "agent" and "agentization." "Person" and "personification" are preferable because, as explained above, the frame of reference for the definition of deities most often is the human being, even in the case of theriomorphic deities (who, such as Garuḍa, have a name, quite human emotions, use language, etc.). It should however be noted that my definition of "person" does not automatically entail anthropomorphism, which consequently also affects my definition not only of "personification," but also of "deification." Cf. Strathern (2019), who uses the term "personhood" (pp. 29–30) "to refer simply to motivated agency," while also noting that "emic theories of what exactly personhood is and how exactly matter relates to non-matter, may vary enormously and are often composite."

113 See Feller 2018. Rochberg (2011) discusses in detail how gods in ancient Mesopotamia may be either thought of as manifesting by means of celestial bodies, or as being the celestial bodies themselves; cf. also Pongratz-Leisten 2011b.

nature or function: Dike, the goddess (of) Justice, for instance, is depicted as a woman carrying a scale.

In several cases, gods originally came into being by way of personification, but then developed in such a way as to no longer be recognizable as such. This was probably the case with Zeus, whose predecessor in PIE religion was the personification of the bright diurnal sky – that is, he was the sky (*$di̯éu̯$) itself.[114] Zeus continued to be associated with the sky. Over time, however, he became much more than a mere personification deity, as he was much more often envisaged and worshipped as the lightning-flinging ruler *of* the sky than as the sky itself. On the other hand, gods may also acquire new – personified – aspects. The Vedic god Savitṛ, for instance, first appears to have been a more or less independent, anthropomorphic, functional or agent god.[115] One of his many activities included impelling the sun to rise. Probably due to this function, he later came to be almost completely identified with the sun – that is, he became its personification.

It is thus often difficult to sharply distinguish between personification deities and "normal," independent deities. The relationship of both types of deities to their respective effects, manifestations, or embodiments (e.g., visible phenomena or special occurrences, ranging from events such as equinoxes up to "wonders" of all sorts) is often equally difficult to determine.[116] Transitions and overlaps are the rule rather than the exception, and essentialism is best avoided (see Figure 3).
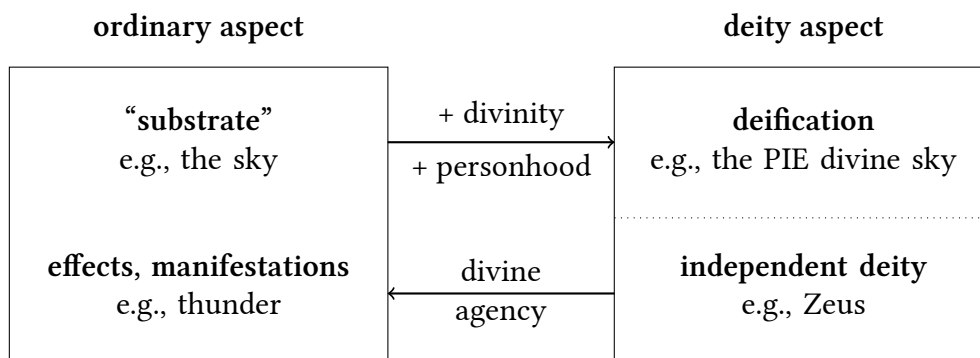

Figure 3: Deifications and independent deities

114　Cf. Jackson 2002: 71–73 and West 2007: 166–173. For personification deities in PIE religion, see also West 2007: 135–136. Witzel (2004a: 586) rightly emphasizes that even "deities of nature," such as the divine sky, "had acquired, in PIE and even in pre-PIE times, their own 'personal' biographies, as seen in a number of more or less inter-connected, common IE myths."

115　See Haas 2020. Being an agent god, the early-Vedic Savitṛ can be characterized as a deification of a certain force, namely his "impulse" (*prasavá*), which is frequently mentioned.

116　For the different ways in which deities make themselves present or become embodied in the world, see Descola 2013; cf. also Werner 1982.

By definition – theoretical as it may be – personification deities are strongly tied to their "substrates" (i.e., that which is being personified), which as a rule are firmly rooted in everyday human experience. (In contrast, a divine person such as Athena may be the goddess *of* wisdom – somewhat imprecisely, she has even been called the *personification* of wisdom – but this does not necessarily delimit her being.) There is always a component whose existence is beyond doubt, even in the case of abstractions. At the same time, there also is "something extra" – the divine person – that ultimately exists only on the mental plane.[117] However, insofar as this divine person often stands out clearly from and transcends what has been personified, the question arises as to what extent it is perceived as being real or fictitious. Is the being behind a personification, even if divine, always felt to be as real as its substrate?

Jon Whitman proposes that two general kinds of personification need to be distinguished, "fictional personification" and "real personification."[118] Fictional personification – also called "prosopopeia" – is a rhetorical, literary device. This kind of personification may be limited to a single sentence ("the sun smiles"), or have the form of a "personification characterization" (as James J. Paxson termed it), if the trope is employed for "the narrational invention of actual characters, objects, or places that occupy the material space-time of the fabular, or 'story' level of a narrative text."[119] This is the case, for instance, in the Late Antique Latin allegory Psychomachia, where vices and virtues are personified and battle each other; or in Kṛṣṇamiśra's Prabodhacandrodaya from the eleventh century CE,[120] a Sanskrit play in which many types of entities (including not only virtues, but also texts like the Bhagavad-Gītā [BhagG]) are personified.

In both cases of fictional personification, the speaker or author and the recipients (readers, viewers, etc.) are aware that the personification is just a product of fantasy. Real personification, on the other hand, according to Whitman

> refers to the practice of giving an *actual* personality to an abstraction. This practice has its origins in animism and ancient religion, and is called "personification" by modern theorists of religion and anthropology.[121]

This type of personification would be given in the cases of deities such as Agni or Fortuna mentioned above.

In the case of religion, however, one wonders where "reality" ends and "fiction" begins,[122] and whether the theoretical distinction between real and fic-

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117　Depending on the perspective, this may also be called the transcendental or divine plane.
118　Whitman 1987: 271–272; cf. Paxson 2009: 6. For the history of the term "personification," see Whitman 1987: 269.
119　Paxson 2009: 35.
120　See Śāstrī 1936 and Kapstein 2009.
121　Whitman 1987: 271.
122　The phenomenon that fictional stories can contribute to and, in fact, inspire real religious beliefs has been mostly studied in the context of contemporary religions; see, for

tional personification is always valid. For most people, gods do not become known by way of direct experience. Rather, knowledge about their character and appearance is often transmitted by way of verbal testimony in stories, myths, religious texts or scriptures, and the like. Religious and literary texts, however, are clearly not two categories opposing each other in the sense that one provides truthful (religious) information, while the other is only meant to entertain and not to be taken seriously. It hardly needs to be argued that works of fiction, such as the Iliad or the MBh, have often served – or have even been explicitly proclaimed – as sources for religious imagination and belief.[123]

In the ancient Greek and Roman religions, it is indeed the case that "[t]he boundary between literary personification and those personifications which were the objects of cultic adoration is indistinct and permeable."[124] It is even possible to collect entire lists of such "in-between deities."[125] Hinduism, too, is known for a host of personifications, not all of which are consistently considered real, divine persons.[126] (I will return to the subject of deification in Hinduism in the next section.) A deity, be it a personification or a "normal" deity, can have a life in the realm of "fictional" literature and, at the same time, be perceived as a real being and be worshipped. The two modes of existence may easily influence each other – in fact, it is most often impossible to disentangle them in the first place, especially in hindsight. Due to their nature, personification deities in particular may in many cases be called "fringe deities": their status as deities can increase or decrease depending on a variety of circumstances.[127]

3.3   The deification process

Continuing from and building on the observations made above, I propose to understand the production of deifications as a complex, entangled interplay of intra- and interpersonal creation, appropriation, and modification of information and ideas. While deification may start as a "theophany," or a one-off vision of the divine (e.g., in a dream), there are usually many preconditions and circumstances that help to form the idea of a deity, and also contribute to filling

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→   instance, the contributions in Davidsen 2016, especially Petersen 2016. At this point mention should also be made of Max Müller's outdated theory that mythology originates from a "disease of language," in which personifications originally meant metaphorically were later misunderstood as real; see Yelle 2013: 50–55.

123   For the role of (South Asian) fictional literature in conveying information about, or valid in, the real world, see Ferstl 2020: 19–34.

124   Bendlin & Shapiro 2006; cf. Paxson 2009: 7: "the distinctions among gods, ghosts, genii, fantastic creatures, and personification characters were not always clear even to the principal theorists of classical, medieval, or Renaissance rhetoric."

125   At least in the case of the ancient Roman religion; see, for instance, Lind 1974: 111.

126   See Michaels 2006: 225–226.

127   Cf. Lipka 2009: 127: "At any rate, all deifications in Rome were in fact partial, with a (new) divine aspect added to a (hitherto) profane notion, rather than replacing it."

this idea with content. Throughout an individual's life, a plurality of sources, factual as well as fictional, may contribute to the production of a deification. If, for instance, a person has the conviction that a certain mountain is divine and begins to envision its deification, information about its name, its identity, its powers, and so on is often gathered or derived from an external source (another person, a text, an anecdote, etc.). Similarly, if someone comes to believe that death is a personal entity, their imagination might very easily be influenced by the way death is personified in literature, or art in general.[128] The existence or prevalence of deification in a particular culture is another important factor. Simply put, in most cases personification deities do not arise out of thin air.

On the other hand, when it comes to religion, individual creativity plays a much greater role than is often assumed. Arguing against a somewhat mechanical, but quite widespread understanding of religion, D. Jason Slone emphasized that people do not simply believe and reproduce what they have learned as children, but "are continuously engaged in the construction of novel thoughts and in the transformation of culturally transmitted ideas."[129] Thus, what people actually think, believe, and do may differ strongly from the ideas or ideals prevalent in their own culture. This variability may consequently also affect the conviction that a certain entity is (or is not) a deity, especially in religions where there is no centralized power that determines what is a correct and what is a wrong belief. Deification, therefore, is not always simply decreed by certain authorities, such as priests or prophets, and then acknowledged by those who accept those authorities.[130] The origin of a deification is rather often to be located in a non-isolated, but nevertheless largely intrapersonal, creative process.

The further development and, most importantly, *establishment* of a deification, on the other hand, has to be understood as an interpersonal process. The idea that a particular entity is a deity is, as mentioned above, often retrieved from an external source. In the interpretation of such a source – be it a human being or a text – "misunderstandings," or rather, different understandings, may play an important role. One may imagine, for example, one person referring to a certain entity (such as fate) as a deity in a purely rhetorical manner, while another person might understand such a statement quite literally.[131]

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128 Perceiving death as a personal entity has indeed always been common, with the Grim Reaper being a quite popular personification in modern times; see, for instance, Tamm 1996.

129 Slone 2004: 121.

130 In the Roman religion, the divinity of certain abstractions was evidently questioned by some, or was even joked about. For the analysis of deified abstractions in Roman religion by the ancients themselves, see Stafford 1998: 56–59; see also Feeney 1998: 87–88. I am not aware that any such survey of the opinions of ancient South Asian thinkers regarding the status of personifications and deifications (be they abstractions or other) exists.

131 The proverb *audentes fortuna iuvat*, "Fortune favors the bold," has been repeatedly used as a slogan or motto, for instance in the United Statess military. But while a modern soldier

Such processes are naturally difficult to document and reconstruct. What we can observe are only snapshots of what is in in reality a highly complicated and not necessarily linear or continuous process. However, when analyzing deification as a historical and cultural process, we can forage for traces in the products of authors, artists, or teachers, and try to determine how they may have been understood by their recipients, their audience, students, etc. Indeed, in the case of South Asian religious history, the abundance of textual witnesses and especially too of reworkings over several centuries offers a comparatively good basis for such an investigation.

3.4 Methodological considerations

In this final section, I offer some thoughts on how the observations made above can be applied in practice, with a particular focus on examples from ancient South Asia. In order to be able to trace deification processes on the basis of the sources, I believe it makes sense to orientate oneself toward the result. Deities have been defined here as superhuman persons, that is, divine human-like agents. If this definition is accepted, deification can be analyzed as a combination of two processes: one that involves divinization, and another involving personification.

I define divinization as the attribution of superhuman or "supernatural," divine qualities, such as (among others) indestructibility, the power to heal instantaneously and to bestow blessings of all kinds. Divinity can thus also be ascribed to the manifestations or effects of a deity (such as thunder, or an earthquake), and does not necessarily entail personification.[132]

Following Whitman and Paxson, personification can be divided into metaphorical personification and "personification characterization." In both cases, personhood is attributed to a non-personal entity. In contrast to the ascription of divinity, this quality is frequently fictitious, that is, personification is often only an artistic device. Regardless of whether it occurs in fictional or factual contexts, however, it may very well become real, both in the story-world and in the real world. Literary and actual personification should therefore be understood as non-exclusive, and in fact often interacting categories.

→ will most likely only understand it as an exhortation to be bold, a soldier in ancient Rome (whom we, for the sake of the argument, might imagine standing in front of Fortuna's temple near the Tiber), might have taken it quite literally. Stafford (1998: 28–33) lists many examples of metaphorical personifications bordering on deification.

132 The divinization of human beings (especially while still alive) is a case *sui generis*. Clearly, not every person who is attributed superhuman powers is also considered a deity – limited, as they are, by their physical bodies and other earthly constraints. However, there are many shades between "divine" and "non-divine," and at least in ancient South Asia, some persons were considered (or considered themselves) "divine enough" so as to be called *deva* or *devī*; cf. my remarks below pp. 32–33.

Thinking about divinization and personification as two aspects of deification is not as theoretical as it may sound. In the following, I will give examples of divinization and personification from the context of ancient and medieval South Asia. The examples will illustrate that divinity and personhood are not always equally attributed. What they will also show is that the boundary between reality and fiction can be quite permeable, and can shift in the course of time. Moreover, they will demonstrate that there are many shades, on the one hand, between the divine and the non-divine and, on the other hand, between personal beings and inanimate objects or notions.[133]

Most personifications that were evidently believed to be real may be easily characterized as deifications, but not all of them partook in divinity to the same degree.[134] While trees and other plants have been regularly worshiped and asked for blessings in rituals up to the present day,[135] their categorization as animate beings has not always (and not by everybody) been taken for granted.[136] As such, they did not belong to same category of divine persons as Indra or Śiva. The same can be observed of purely fictional personifications. Kālidāsa's famous Meghadūta, for instance, is about a personified cloud who is asked by a *yakṣa* to convey a message to his wife. In Hinduism, individual clouds are not usually recognized as persons, let alone worshiped as deities.[137] The personification of the cloud messenger is thus purely fictional, its personhood fictitious.

Just as personification does not automatically lead to divinization, divinity can also be attributed to non-personal entities.[138] In several Gṛhya rituals, for

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133 Perhaps the most prominent example for this in the context of Hinduism is that of Brahmā vs. *brahman*; cf. Bailey 1983: 6: "Making clear distinction [sic] between personal and impersonal in relation to a concept like *brahma* was not the Indian way of doing things. It is more accurate to say that in some 'idealistic' circles *brahma* was completely divested of any personal attributes; whereas in other circles (represented in many passages of the oldest Upaniṣads) personal portrayals of *brahma* were interwoven with impersonal ones."

134 For personifications/deifications in the ṚV, see Elizarenkova 1995: 83–105.

135 See Smith 2018.

136 See, for instance, Hara 2003 and Ferrari & Dähnhardt 2016.

137 The cloud's non-divine status in the poem may be subject to debate. After all, it has the superhuman power to fly, and to change its shape. However, the cloud itself is asked to worship Śiva on its way and does so in a very human way; cf. Feller 2012: 321: "Of course, due to its nature, the cloud can (or is at least asked to) perform certain extraordinary deeds of worship which are inaccessible to the common mortals (like turning into a cloud of flowers or a flight of steps). On the other hand, playing the drum, bathing, bowing, showering with flowers, circumambulating, are ordinary acts of worship, and we see that the cloud is actually performing a complete *pūjā* of Śiva and his family on the way to its destination." For a similar personification of a cloud in a MBh story (XII 263), see Bedekar 1960.

138 Divinity may, of course, also be ascribed to fictitious entities. In a story of the Pañca-Tantra (PañcT VIII; tr. Ryder 1925: 89–104) a carpenter constructs a mechanical bird made of wood, similar to Garuḍa. Disguised as Viṣṇu, the carpenter's friend uses this machine to seduce a princess. In the course of the story, the real Garuḍa causes the apparatus to actually fly, which thus becomes divine.

instance, a great variety of entities – such as insight, intelligence, meters, and melodies – are offered oblations, that is, they are "satisfied" (*tṛp*). In these rituals, powerful and divine, non-personal entities may stand side by side with proper gods such as Indra. While they are worshipped and to some extent considered divine, they generally do not appear as full-fledged persons. They are abstract divinities rather than actual gods.

Nevertheless, from a historical perspective we observe that divinization indeed often has entailed personification. A good example is given by Puṣpaka, Rāma's divine chariot. While generally described as a magnificent vehicle in the earlier strata of the Rāmāyaṇa (Rām.), in the comparatively late Uttara-kāṇḍa, Puṣpaka also becomes an animate being, having the ability to speak, to bow down, and so on.[139] Similarly, nowadays the Vedas themselves even have dedicated temples (most importantly the Ved Mandir in Nashik, Maharashtra), where they (taken together as "the Veda") are worshipped as an anthropomorphic *bhagvān ved / bhagavān vedaḥ*, or "Lord Veda."[140]

As we can see, divinity and personhood are often, but not always, inter-twined. If an entity is both divinized and personified – say, in a story or a myth (written or told), an inscription, a ritual manual – it is appropriate to speak of a personification deity, that is, a deification. But how can we know if this deifica-tion was really believed to exist, or was perhaps even worshipped? Of course, if there is an actual temple or shrine dedicated to a certain being who is regularly worshipped there in the form of an effigy (perhaps even as an anthropomorphic one), then there can be little doubt that this being is understood as an actual de-ity by a certain community. If, however, the only evidence to work with are some passages from ancient texts, then determining the reality or factuality of deification becomes much more difficult.[141]

First of all, it should be noted that the terms defined above – personifica-tion, deification, and so forth – have no (or no exact) equivalents in Vedic or Sanskrit. Moreover, the presence of words such as *devī* "goddess," *deva* "god," *devatā* "deity/divinity," or *daivya* "divine" does not allow the conclusion that the entities qualified by them actually were considered *fully* identical with deities. They may, for instance, simply be used for the purpose of (self-)praise, as in the case of kings or Brahmins.[142] For this reason, individual text passages have to

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139   See Feller 2020.

140   See Larios 2011 and 2021; cf. also below pp. 236–237.

141   Cf. Gombrich's (1971: 255) enlightening illustration: "Don't we all pretend every year that Christmas personified will arrive in a sledge pulled by reindeers, or at least that our children believe that he will? What will a future historian make of our beliefs when he examines our Christmas cards? And what, to return more closely to the core of our problem, would be the conclusions of a visitor from Mars whose data are confined to our language habits but who could not know where figures of speech end and figures of thought begin?."

142   For the origins of this practice, see Falk 1994: 313–324.

be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The theoretical considerations made above can only be applied after, and not before, a close reading and analysis of the texts.

Second, the nature of the sources hardly allows for straightforward conclusions. One may be tempted to assume that, for instance, the authors of ritual manuals presupposed that deities exist. While this was certainly the view of most of them, it would not necessarily have been shared, for instance, by the proponents of the Mīmāṃsā, the most important intellectual tradition dedicated to the interpretation of rituals and the ritual texts. For the Mīmāṃsakas, the efficacy of Vedic rituals did not depend on the gods. Gods were only secondary – in fact, it was even thought that "it ultimately does not matter if the deities exist apart from the Veda, their 'linguistic reality'."[143] While this may be an extremist view, it very well illustrates that we should not rashly accuse the ancient South Asians of being credulous: even those who were entirely dedicated to the worship of gods did not necessarily take their existence for granted.

On the other hand, stories that would nowadays be most often categorized as fiction were (and are), in some cases, considered authoritative in religious matters. The MBh and the Rām. in particular have risen to this status.[144] Danielle Feller observes that

> the Epics never make explicit truth-claims with regard to the tales they narrate (as far as this can be affirmed with any certainty of such voluminous texts). Not, however, because these were assumed to be fictitious, but rather because everything narrated in the Epics is implicitly true. The idea that any narrative could be fictitious never occurs at all.[145]

At the same time, it is more than doubtful that the recipients of these texts – as well as their composers – would have believed *everything* the Sanskrit Epics contain to be truthful statements about reality. Nor would they have understood all the rituals described therein as actually feasible and worthy of imitation. Rather, we have to assume that beliefs and convictions are more often backed up by, rather than mechanically derived from, the texts.

As we can see, ascertaining the perceived fictitiousness or reality of deities on the basis Vedic and Sanskrit literature is a difficult task. What one frequently ends up with is a *range of possibilities* rather than a definitive conclusion about the ontological status attributed to an entity. It is therefore vital to heed Emma Stafford's advice: "Rather than attempting to define a figure's exact status on an imaginary scale, it might be more helpful to take a broad overview of her/his

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143   Clooney 1988: 284.
144   Cf. below p. 202.
145   Feller 2004: 34–35.

incarnations in various media to gain a general indication of more or less widespread recognition."[146]

But even if there are cases where we can be quite certain that the divinity of an entity was established and widely recognized, further difficulties arise from the historical dimension. Writing about the development of a single deity over the millennia always involves major risks. Stephanie W. Jamison succinctly summarized these in her review of Ludvik's book (2007) on Sarasvatī (a figure who was widely recognized as a goddess and was indeed very close to the deified GM):

> There is, on the one hand, an understandable tendency to select and over-emphasize aspects in one stratum that can be related, one way or the other, to material in another stratum, and in particular to "read back" into earlier texts what is going to be prominent in later ones. On the other hand, given the concentrated focus on a single issue (in this case, a single divinity) in a text that treats manifold matters, there is the danger of interpreting things found associated with that divinity as significantly unique to her, rather than being broadly characteristic of divinities in general.[147]

Heeding these warnings, we should not assume any unbroken "biographical" (or "theographical") coherence for a particular deity. Especially in the case of "fringe deities" – such as the Gāyatrī/Sāvitrī – it is better to assume that their identity was reconstituted to a not inconsiderable extent in the various historical phases. Moreover, when adopting a historical perspective, it is imperative to take countermeasures against the natural tendency to regard everything that has the same name as somehow belonging together (even to the point of being identical). Accordingly, it may be useful to pay more attention to differences than to similarities, perhaps even if one thereby runs the risk of undermining the (perceived) coherence of historical developments.

4. Content outline

In presenting the results of my research, I have generally tried to outline specific historical developments rather than to narrate a continuous, linear "biography." Simply dealing with all text passages one after the other in a chronological order would have led to an essentially unreadable study. Instead, I have chosen to bundle them in thematically concentrated chapters, each devoted to a certain aspect, or sometimes process or phase, in the development of the GM and its

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146   Stafford 1998: 28.
147   Jamison 2009: 354.

deification (see Figure 4 below). However, since many passages are relevant to several topics, I have sometimes had to go beyond the respective topic. Occasionally, therefore, I have chosen a more text-oriented approach.

In accordance with its aims, this study is divided into two parts. In each part, there are two main chapters dedicated to analyzing historical processes, while the final chapters focus more on the results of those processes.

Part I ("The Mantra") is dedicated to the early history of the mantra. It follows this history through the first millennium BCE up to around the third century CE. Notwithstanding certain variations, after the third century CE the ritual uses and functions of the GM remained largely stable, as did its status as the first and most important Vedic verse. The most salient and significant innovation in the first millennium CE is clearly the deification of the mantra, which is treated in **Part II** ("The Mother of the Vedas").

The first two chapters of Part I deal with two basic issues: first, the meaning of the text of the mantra (**Chapter 1**); and second, its various designations, or names (**Chapter 2**).[148] Both chapters are mainly based on pre-medieval sources. However (to my knowledge), there is nothing to suggest that either the meaning(s) of the text – in the linguistic sense – or its designations have changed significantly up to today.

The first main **Chapter 3** ("Adaptive Reuse in Śrauta Ritual") deals with the ritual employment of the mantra in the large and "solemn" Śrauta rituals during the mid-and late-Vedic period (c. eleventh–fifth centuries BCE) and analyzes the motivation behind its recitation in specific Śrauta rituals. How these adaptive reuses might relate to each other against the chronological and geographical background is also explored here.

In **Chapter 4** ("Selection as Initiation Mantra"), I show how the functions already associated with the mantra in the Śrauta rituals influenced its selection as the primary Brahminical initiation mantra. This selection possibly took place as early as the eighth century BCE. However, for the most part, the principles that guided this selection have to be inferred from Gṛhyasūtra passages, which as a rule come several centuries later. By moving backwards in time up until the ṚV, and by reconstructing earlier developments on the basis of later sources, I deviate (to an extent) in this chapter from the usual, linear direction of argumentation.

In the final chapter of Part I, **Chapter 5** ("Status in Early Hinduism"), I explore how and in what sense the GM became one of the most important mantras of Hinduism. My focus here lies on the Gṛhya and Dharma literature produced in the period between c. 500 BCE and 300 CE (for simplicity's sake, I will refer to

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148   The various names and identities of the mantra goddess are dealt with below pp. 239–240.

this period as "Early Hinduism").[149] This chapter, therefore, deals with a period before which the GM had already been in use as an initiation mantra for some time.

Part II, which is dedicated to the goddess, has a somewhat less linear structure. In studying how the mantra was transformed into a goddess, I have identified two distinct, developmental strands: first, from personification and divinization until finally deification of the mantra itself; and second, its association with the goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī.

The first developmental strand is dealt with in **Chapter 6** ("Personification, Divinization, Deification"), which tracks down how, over the course of time, various texts contributed to the emergence of a personified and divine mantra. A number of passages in these texts are ambiguous and allow for readings with or without a "mantra goddess," so to speak. For this reason, a large part of this chapter is devoted to the philological analysis of the sources and their various reworkings and recensions.

The second strand is discussed in **Chapter 7** ("Identification with Sāvitrī"), which is above all concerned with the prehistory of the goddess(es) called "Sāvitrī," and with the role this goddess and the homonymous mantra came to play in the Sāvitrī story. My core argument here is that the deification of the mantra was significantly advanced by its identification with a pre-existing goddess.

Both chapters 6 and 7 focus on developments that took place in the centuries around the turn of the Common Era. In order to explain those changes however, Vedic and medieval texts are taken into consideration as well.

The last chapter of Part II, **Chapter 8** ("The Mantra Goddess"), aims to outline a portrait of the mantra goddess as she appears in the Sanskrit literature up to the end of the first millennium CE. The chapter looks at three different aspects of the goddess: her role as the "Mother of the Vedas"; her close relationship with the famous goddess Sarasvatī; and her worship in the Sandhyā, where she came to be treated (almost) like a Tantric mantra, or mantra deity.

In the **General Conclusion** ("From Verse to Deity"), I summarize the results of the two parts with reference to the individual chapters and the relevant sections of the Introduction.

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149   In this periodization, Hinduism is followed by what has been called "Classical Hinduism," which is especially associated with the Gupta period (c. 350–550 CE). For my definition of Hinduism, see n. 14 on p. 3 above.
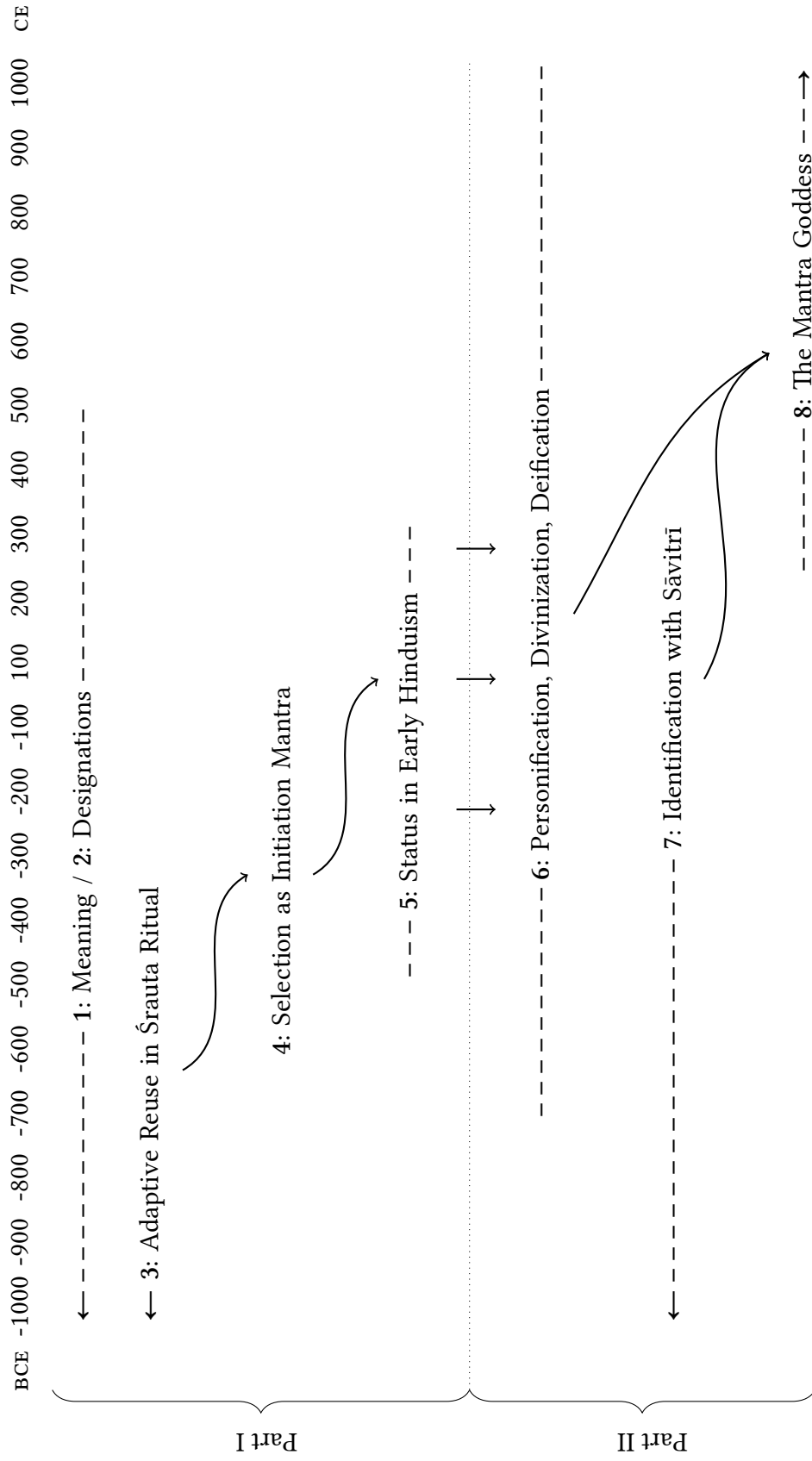
Figure 4: Chronological overview of the individual chapters

BCE -1000 -900 -800 -700 -600 -500 -400 -300 -200 -100 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 CE

1: Meaning / 2: Designations

3: Adaptive Reuse in Śrauta Ritual

4: Selection as Initiation Mantra

5: Status in Early Hinduism

6: Personification, Divinization, Deification

7: Identification with Sāvitrī

8: The Mantra Goddess

Part I

Part II

∴ PART I ∴
THE MANTRA

∴   **CHAPTER 1**   ∶·

Meaning

Introduction

How should we understand the text of the Gāyatrī-Mantra, and how can we translate it? The list of more than seventy translations given in Appendix 1 illustrates that many writers have felt the need to create their own rendition of the mantra. No single standard translation of the GM has ever become widely accepted. In my view, the primary reason for the existence of so many translations and paraphrases is not that the GM itself allows for such a great variety of different readings, but rather, when it comes to the GM, many authors seem to have felt that a famous mantra such as this one must have, or allow for, several interpretations and translations, and that their own rendition may therefore easily be included among them.

When it comes to mantras especially, this position is indeed not without justification.[150] Texts in general can only be understood with a view to their context. In the case of mantras, however, the context changes with the text in which they are reused and, much more frequently, with the liturgical or ritual situation. A mantra must almost inevitably be translatable in different ways, depending on the context.

On the other hand, it is obvious that many "translators" of the GM (including numerous scholars) actually had no command of Sanskrit, let alone Vedic, and would have shied away from any other Ṛgvedic verse. One can hardly avoid the impression that many translations are not based on a divergent reading of the original text, but simply vary the wording of other translations. The respective textual, liturgical, or ritual context is very rarely taken into consideration, and almost never used to justify the creation of a new translation. Moreover, the historical aspect – the fact that the semantics and grammar of a language change over time – is hardly ever accounted for. Considering that in cultural studies of many kinds, translations are key tools, these are by no means trivial observations.

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150   Cf. Bühnemann 1988: 67–68.

The aim of this first introductory chapter is to remedy this situation. It provides grammatical, morphological, etymological, lexical, and semantic analyses of the textual content of the GM against the background of the linguistic changes that took place during the transition from early to late Old Indo-Aryan. In other words, this chapter explores how the GM would be understood by users of Vedic and Sanskrit.

This exploration is based primarily on pre-medieval sources. As will be seen, only few texts from this period provide explicit information on how the text of the mantra was understood, and we largely have to base our analysis on inferences. The meanings of the individual words of the mantra and its purport as a text only began to receive more attention from medieval commentators.[151]

- The chapter begins by presenting the GM in its original textual environment (**Section 1**; pp. 43–44). Then, each textual component is analyzed in dedicated sections (2–5). The semantic range of each word is discussed against the background of its usage in the primary literature. This is done in the rough chronological order of the selected text genres (for instance: Vedic Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, the Epics, etc.; see also Table 1 on page xviii above) by comparing the usages of each word in their original contexts.

- **Section 2** (pp. 44–46) is dedicated to Savitṛ. The manifestation of this deity changed significantly over time. Contrary to what one might expect, however, little attention was paid to the role he played as the deity addressed in the GM.

- **Section 3** (pp. 47–53) turns to a more complicated issue: the nature of the object of the main sentence of the mantra, Savitṛ's *bhárgas*, and the role it plays in the syntactical construction of the mantra. As we will see, the word *bhárgas* became the subject of a significant semantic change.

- **Section 4** (pp. 54–56) analyzes the word *dhīmahi*, the main verb of the text, but an archaic form that fell out of use early on. In this case, later recipients had to deal with a significant change in the grammar of the language and it became necessary to find other ways of understanding it.

- **Section 5** (pp. 57–58) briefly deals with the relative sentence at the end of the mantra. As in the case of *dhīmahi*, the grammatical form of the verb *pracodáyāt* at some point became obsolete. In this case, however, this had little effect upon how it was understood.

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151   In accordance with the scope of this part of the study, their sometimes quite fanciful interpretations are not covered in this chapter; cf. above p. 35. However, these interpretations would certainly be worth a study of their own.

- **Section 6** (pp. 58–60) offers a few concluding remarks on what needs to be considered when translating the text of the mantra. I then summarize the grammatical analyses and possible translations of each word, and propose English and German translations of the entire mantra.

1. Original context

The earliest testimony of the GM is given in a textual context, namely in the ṚV, where it is part of a hymn dedicated to several gods at the end of the third book (ṚV III 62). The Anukramaṇīs (or traditional indices) attribute most of the hymns in the third book to Viśvāmitra Gāthina[152] (or to members of his family), as also the tenth verse of ṚV III 62, that is, the verse commonly known as Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī.

The hymn containing the GM is composed in *tṛca*s, groups of three *ṛc*s or "verses of praise" that are frequently set in the *gāyatrī* meter. In sum, ṚV III 62 comprises six *tṛca*s (i.e., eighteen verses). Formerly, these *tṛca*s or "triplets" probably were each counted as hymns themselves and were only later conflated into a single hymn.[153] Most of them are very simple and straightforward. This might have been a reaction to the sophisticated style of much of the third book: Jamison and Brereton interpret the first triplet of the hymn as a suggestion that, in the view of the poets, a simpler style is needed to make the hymns effective again.[154] They conclude that the "hymn would not be especially noteworthy, except that verse 10, dedicated to Savitar, is the Gāyatrī mantra, the best-known verse in the Ṛgveda."[155]

The GM, which at the time of its composition did not yet enjoy its name and reputation, is the first verse of the fourth triplet of the tripartite hymn. This triplet (ṚV III 62.10–12) is here given as a whole:

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152   See n. 2 on p. 1 above.
153   Jamison & Brereton 2014: 553.
154   Jamison & Brereton 2014: 553.
155   Jamison & Brereton 2014: 464.

tát savitúr[156] *váreṇᵢyaṃ*[157] *bhárgo devásya dhīmahi* /
dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyāt /10/
devásya savitúr vayáṃ vājayántaḥ púraṃdhiyā /
bhágasya rātím īmahe /11/
deváṃ náraḥ savitā́raṃ víprā yajñáiḥ suvṛktíbhiḥ /
namasyánti dhiyéṣitā́ḥ /12/

May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall spur on our thoughts! /10/
Competing for the generosity of the god Impeller, we ask for the gift of the Apportioner.[158] /11/
To the god Impeller do the men, as inspired ones, give reverence with sacrifices and well-twisted verses, when driven by (inspired) thought. /12/[159]

In the following I will concentrate on the text of the GM itself, but in the course of the analysis I will also come back to the two subsequent verses.

2. *savitṛ*

In the Vedic language, *savitṛ́* is an agent noun derived from the root *sū́* (or secondary *su*) "to impel," which has to be distinguished from the homophone *sū́* "to give birth to."[160] *savitṛ́* thus literally means "impeller, initiator, arouser, instigator," or "stimulator." In the ṚV he is not only the god who sets everything into motion, but he also puts everything to rest again.[161] These two activities become

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156   Van Nooten & Holland (1994: 608) note that this opening is metrically uncommon.

157   The subscripted *ᵢ* can only be reconstructed from the meter, which requires eight syllables per *pāda*. In a process called the orthoepic diaskeuasis of the ṚV, the original sequence of the two vowels *ia* was subjected to the so-called Kṣaipra sandhi, a rule which requires the vowels *ĭ*, *ŭ*, and *ř̆*, to turn into their respective semi-vowels (*sc. y*, *v*, and *r*) before dissimilar vowels. As can be seen also in the case of the GM, later authors were well aware of the missing syllable: in the much later Atharvaveda-Pariśiṣṭa (AVPar) XLI, to give but one example, *ṇi* and *yaṃ* are treated as discrete syllables; see below p. 253. Regardless of its actual phonetic form, the GM was always considered a mantra that consists of twenty-four, rather than twenty-three, syllables.

158   While Bhaga, the "Apportioner," is one of the Ādityas and a deity in its own right. Brereton points out that the term *bhága* may also be an epithet of Savitṛ (Brereton 1981: 309–310). Since both the first and the last verse of the hymn refer to Savitṛ only, it is most likely that *bhága* is indeed just a title of Savitṛ: he is the "Apportioner" who distributes fortune and goods.

159   For another translation, on which the present translation is partially based, see Jamison & Brereton 2014: 554.

160   For these roots, see *VIA* I: 324–325.

161   For a very short introduction to Savitṛ in the ṚV, see Jamison & Brereton 2014: 44–45 and Oberlies 2012: 159–161; for a more comprehensive description, see Macdonell 2002:

manifest in a range of ways and domains. Thus, Savitṛ impels gods, humans, and animals to action; he causes the change of day and night as well as the seasons and is also responsible for the movement of rivers and the wind. After the fulfillment of his daily work he brings all beings to rest, but at the same time continues his impelling activity by stimulating the procreation of offspring.

His outer appearance is sometimes described as well: Most conspicuously, he has a golden tongue and complexion, in addition to golden arms, hands, and eyes. He has a golden coat and is equipped with a golden chariot. Savitṛ was thus not simply an abstract "agent god," but rather an anthropomorphic deification of what was perceived as a certain "cosmic" or "natural" force.[162] This force was especially to be observed at the beginning and end of the day and night – at the transition from darkness to light and *vice versa* – and was felt as the drive to awaken and be active at daybreak and to rest at night.

Savitṛ's etymologically clear name defined him throughout the entire Vedic period. Being the archetypical initiator, Savitṛ was thought to be the god who sets things in motion and gives them a good start. Hermann Oldenberg had already observed that it was a widespread practice to call on Savitṛ at the beginning of Vedic rituals, in both the Śrauta and the Gṛhya domains,[163] and he continued to be known for his function as the divine impeller even in the post-Vedic period.

Over time, however, his anthropomorphic characteristics faded into the background, as did his association with the night. On the other hand, his association with the time before sunrise became stronger from the YV onwards,[164] until he was even identified with the rising sun itself.[165] The (probably) earliest complete identification of Savitṛ with the rising sun is found in the Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa (KauṣB), where we learn that "Savitṛ is verily the one over there – the one who gives heat over there."[166] "The one who gives heat over there" – that is in the sky – is a typical characterization of the sun, which was often simply called *asau*, "the one over there" or "the one yonder." This does not mean, however, that Savitṛ instantly merged with the sun god, Sūrya. While in later Sanskrit literature, the sun came to be seen as his only manifestation, and the

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→ 32–35 (with a caveat). For Savitṛ in the (AV), see Shende 1949: 239–231. For the various theories about Savitṛ's manifestations in nature, see Haas 2020.

162 See Haas 2020, where I also argue that in the early-Vedic religion, Savitṛ cannot be easily connected with any single celestial object or phenomenon.

163 Cf. Oldenberg 1897: 479 and 1905: 256–257. Savitṛ is the first deity to be invoked in many rituals and litanies, for instance in the Śukla-Yajurvedic (ŚYV) litanies of the New and Full Moon rituals (VājS I) as well as the Vājapeya (IX), Agnicayana (XI), Pitṛyajña (XXXV; however, other gods are mentioned too), and the Pravargya proper (XXXVII). In Chapter 4, I argue that this practice was decisive for the choice of the GM as an initiation mantra.

164 See Falk 1988: 14.

165 See Falk 1988: 8–9.

166 *tad asau vai savitā yo 'sau tapati* KauṣB XXVII 7.28; cf. also ŚatB III 2.3.18.

word *savitṛ* was frequently used as a synonym of *sūrya*, he remained a distinct (Vedic) god.[167] Thus, Savitṛ continued to function as a god of fecundity and procreation – an "impeller of new life" – at least until the time of the early Upaniṣads.

But eventually this, too, would change. In the mid-Vedic period, he came into close contact with another deity, one who would gain the upper hand as god of procreation: Prajāpati. The "Lord of Progeny" became one of the most important deities of the Vedic religion. While in the ṚV *prajā́pati* was just one of the epithets of Savitṛ,[168] the new creator deity of the same name in many respects became his successor. The two gods were even identified with each other in some texts; that is to say, Savitṛ came to be seen as one of Prajāpati's many manifestations.[169]

In the post-Vedic period, Savitṛ continued to lose much of his profile. In the Sanskrit Epics, for instance, he most often simply appears as the sun in the sense of a celestial luminary – rising, shining, and setting.[170] While he is sometimes mentioned in a list together with other (usually Vedic) gods,[171] little of his former glory remained. While continuing to appear in ritual contexts, as an individual god he became insignificant, at least outside the domain of Vedic ritual. As will be seen throughout this study, the texts mentioning or interpreting the GM do not show much concern for him. Instead of elaborating his role as a sun god, they rather focus on his light or, even more frequently, on the mantra or its deification itself.[172]

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167   See nn. 170–171 below.

168   See, e.g., ṚV IV 53.2.

169   See, for instance, PañcB XVI 5.17 (tr. Caland 1931: 433) and JaimUB I 5 (tr. Bodewitz 1973: 30); cf. Falk 1988: 22–23.

170   See, for instance, MBh I 161.20; III 133.18; V 27.6; VII 170.47; VIII 26.73; IX 31.17; XII 163.22; XIII 141.7; XIV 8.10; Rām. III 28.23, 67.28; VI 4.52, 57.20. This was also the case in the Gṛhyasūtras; the ĀśvGS, for instance, prescribes as part of the Upanayana that "the teacher makes him look at the sun, saying: 'O god Impeller (/ O Sun god), this is your *brahmacārin*, protect him, he shall not die!'" ĀśvGS I 20.7: *ādityam īkṣayed deva savitar eṣa te brahmacārī taṃ gopāya sa mā mṛtety ācāryaḥ.*

171   MBh I 59.15, 114.55, 218.35; II 7.19; III 3.18, 118.11, 249.4; VI 116.38; XIII 16.22.

172   In the AVPar, it is even the *sāvitrī* itself – rather than the god to whom it is dedicated – that is identified with the sun: "Verily, the *sāvitrī* is the sun, together with the sun the *sāvitrī* praises, impels – in the morning (*prātar*) it impels forth (*pra+sū*), hence the *sāvitrī*-ness" AVPar XLI 5.5: *ādityo vai sāvitry ādityena saha sāvitrī stauti suvati prātaḥ prasuvati tasmāt sāvitrīt<v>am.*

3. *tad, vareṇya, bhargas*

3.1 Vedic literature

The object of the main clause of the mantra is expressed in three words. As a first peculiarity, it is invoked with *tád*, a usually anaphoric pronoun that can only refer back to something already known either from the preceding text or from the context.[173] In the case of the GM, which was originally placed at the very beginning of the originally independent, brief hymn ṚV III 62.10–12, an antecedent clause is lacking, and *tád* must therefore refer to something that is well known. Hence *tád* in this case may be translated either with the pronoun "that,"[174] which has indeed been chosen by most translators, or with the definite article "the."[175] Just like the word "that," *tád* in the mantra can appeal to shared cultural knowledge: both the poet and his audience are familiar with Savitṛ's famous *bhárgas*.

Before *bhárgas* is mentioned, however, it is qualified as being *váreṇya. váreṇya* is basically an adjectivized participle optative passive derived from the verb root *vṛ* (or *vṝ*), "to choose" or "to desire."[176] The meaning of this word is agreed upon: "worthy to be chosen" or "desired," that is, "desirable" or, in a more general sense, "best" or "excellent."[177] Both *tád* and *váreṇya* (losing their accent in later Sanskrit) retain the same function and meaning in the later literature.

But what kind of light is *bhárgas*? And why would one want to obtain it? The etymology of the word *bhárgas* is not completely clear. It is probably derived from PIE *$*b^helg$* or *$*b^herHǵ$*[178] and basically means "splendor, effulgence," or simply "light." Its likely cognate *bhrāj* (from *$*b^herHǵ$*) suggests that it may denote a kind of light that evokes the impression of (1) an unsteady flicker as in the case of flames, or (2) movement and effulgence as in the case of the sun, which in the ṚV is often equated with metallic objects.[179] In the ṚV, the term *bhárgas* appears only three times;[180] two of those times it is connected with Agni, the god of fire.

Ulrike Roesler has pointed out that in the ṚV, Savitṛ is never the agent of any verb belonging to the semantic sphere of "shining."[181] Although having

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173   *VGS* 293–294 (§195 [A3]).
174   For this function of the English word "that," see Chen 1990: 143.
175   Against this background then, the occasional translation of the word with "this" (or German *dies*) is problematic.
176   For this root, see *VIA* I: 378–379.
177   Thus, even Savitṛ himself can be called *váreṇya*; see AVP XX 12.10 (tr. Kubisch 2012: 80) ≈ AV VII 73.6 (≈ ŚāṅkhŚS V 10.10, with *damūnā-* instead of *váreṇyo-*).
178   See *EWA* II: 252; for *bhrāj*, see also *VIA* I: 467 ("(er)glänzen, strahlen").
179   See Roesler 1997: 150.
180   ṚV I 141.1, III 62.10, X 61.14.
181   Roesler 1997: 229.

a golden or shiny complexion himself, Savitṛ is primarily the one who *brings* light. In view of Savitṛ's association with the early morning and evening, it is conceivable that *bhárgas* in the GM indeed denotes some kind of physical light, such as, perhaps, the gentle gleam of the sky before sunrise and after sunset. As a matter of fact, in the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (JaimB), the "heavenly light" (*dyumna*) visible at these times is even explicitly connected with Savitṛ.[182]

If one assumes that this light is identical with Savitṛ's *bhárgas*, it is possible to establish some sort of coherence between it and those parts of the hymn ṚV III 62.10–12 that refer to inspiration. To do so, it is necessary to consider the cultural background of early-Vedic poetry. For the composers of the ṚV, light, intuition, inspiration, and the act of composing hymns were integrally related. First, Vedic poets thought that hymns appealing to the gods should be inspired by something already existent, rather than being created "out of nothing." They considered their ideas and inspirations to be something that must be received, not produced. Second, they felt inspiration and insight to be a kind of sight or vision. Sight requires light, and the gods are consequently often asked to bestow this visionary light, which was also generally associated with the sacral world and the states of beatitude and bliss.[183]

The reception of inspiration is often associated with a special time, the early morning. Jan Gonda observed:

> Now, the visions or inspiration of the Vedic poets are often said to be transmitted early in the morning (cf. e.g., ṚV 3, 39, 2; 7, 79, 5; 10, 172, 2 ff.). This inspiration (*dhīḥ*) belonged to those power-concepts which appear or reappear before daybreak. In the transmission of *dhī* a definite activity of gods of light and the early morning was a determinant factor.[184]

Since Savitṛ, too, is associated with the morning, this fact may also pertain to the GM. Being, in a very general sense, a prayer for inspiration, it might even have been composed and used just at that time. Thus, the verses following the GM could indicate that Savitṛ is being asked to bestow his light *in order* to inspire the thoughts of the poets, which are needed to create hymns of praise (and to perform sacrifices) in honor of the gods. The gods, in turn, are then besought to provide worldly goods to the poets.

However, another interpretation – for which some justification can be found in later literature – appears to be just as plausible. In the ṚV III 62.10–12

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182 "… after sunset, before darkness; at dawn, before sunrise. Now in these the heavenly light is the Impeller." *astam ite purā tamisrāyai suvyuṣṭāyāṃ purodayāt | atho haiṣu savitaiva dyumnaḥ* JaimB I 6. Cf. the translations by Bodewitz 1973: 30, Parpola 1998: 226, and 2000: 202. For more on *dyumna*, see Bodewitz 1973: 32–33, n. 13, and 2019 ['1974]: 35.

183 Gonda 1975: 68.

184 Gonda 1981: 7. For a collection of early passages showing the importance of the morning time for ritual purposes, see Gonda 1981: 6–7.

hymn, Savitṛ, who is also given the epithet "Apportioner" (*bhága*), is asked to be generous to those who strive for his *púraṃdhi,* his "plenitude," and hanker after his *rātí*, his "generosity" or "gift." It has to be stressed that it is not the light but Savitṛ himself (*dhíyo* yó- [m.]) who inspires the poets, and it is quite possible that the somewhat elusive *bhárgas* of the GM is not so much an "inspirational" as it is a more "profane" light (as can be found in later texts). Thus, it may rather belong to the same category as *púraṃdhi* and *rātí*, two words that do not really belong to the domain of inspiration.

The answer to the question of what kind of light *bhárgas* might be is partly dependent on how one understands the syntactic construction of the GM. In 1954, Vishva Bandhu published a paper in which he argued that the word *yó-* "who" in *pāda* c should be interpreted as a variant neuter form of *yád* "which," and was correlated to *tád* and *bhárgas*.[185] In this way, *bhárgas* becomes the agent of *pracodáyāt,* "shall inspire" or "set in motion." Since Bandhu was apparently convinced that it cannot be Savitṛ who is to inspire the poets, he suggested a rather cumbersome – and ultimately unacceptable – distortion of the grammar of the text. Most other translators continued to accept Savitṛ as the agent of *pracodáyāt.*

In turn, Walter Slaje argued for a reading of the verse that – while being grammatically possible – again suggested that there could be a causal or at least a temporal relationship between *bhárgas* and the inspiration referred to in the last *pāda*.[186] Slaje interpreted *tád* as an adverb with the meaning "thus, so"[187] and read *pāda* c as a final clause ("in order that..."). Read this way, Savitṛ would first be asked to confer his *bhárgas*, in order that *he* shall inspire the poets. The logical coherence of these events is not entirely clear: if Savitṛ's *bhárgas* is interpreted as an entity that has the power to invoke inspiration, it is strange that the text is formulated in such a way as to indicate that it is Savitṛ – *yó-* – and not the *bhárgas* who is expected to stimulate the thoughts of his worshippers.

Of course, it might not be advisable to expect too great a degree of logical order in a work of poetry. It might be significant, however, that in two other verses similar in wording to the GM, *tád* is most likely not used as an adverb. In ṚV I 159.5, *tád* is a qualifier of the neuter noun *rā́dhas*, "largesse," following it immediately afterwards, and in V 82.1, of the neuter *bhójana*.[188] While this does

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185   Bandhu 1954; cf. Bandhu 1969.

186   Slaje 2007: 3, n. 6.

187   Slaje 2019: 205: "So laßt uns denn / Das strahlend helle Licht / Des Gottes Savitar emp-fangen / Auf daß er unser Denken / Vorwärts treibe!" (the slashes inserted here stand for line breaks in the original). Cf. also Slaje 2007: 3 ("Wir wollen uns dies strahlende Licht des Gottes Savitr verschaffen, dass unsere Gedanken er beflügle.") and the similar translation in Slaje 2009: 525, n. 11 ("Wir wollen uns das ersehnte Licht [...]").

188   ṚV I 159.5: "The desirable largesse of Savitar shall we think upon today at the impulse of the god. For us, o Heaven and Earth, through your kind attention establish wealth consisting of goods and a hundred cows." *tád rā́dho adyá savitúr váreṇ¡yaṃ, vayáṃ de-*

not rule out that *tád* could be an adverb – it is, in any case, grammatically possible to translate *tád* with "so" – I would argue that in the GM, too, *tád* qualifies the neuter noun *bhárgas*.

There are further reasons to interpret *bhárgas* as an object of desire rather than as a source of inspiration. In several Brāhmaṇas, *bhárgas* (sometimes in the form *bhárga*) is equated with *vīryà* "heroic power" or "vigor," which the personified Waters take from Varuṇa when he is consecrated.[189] It is also frequently associated or mentioned alongside *várcas* "luster," *yáśas* "fame," *ójas* "vigor," *bála* "strength," *máhas* "greatness," *śrī* "splendor," *yajñasya yad yaśas* "that which is the fame of the sacrifice," *yajñásya yát páyas* "that which is the essence of the sacrifice," *bhaga* "portion," and *stoma* "praise."[190] This makes it likely that in the ṚV, too, the word does not necessarily denote the inspiring "gleam" of Savitṛ in the early morning, but a somewhat less sublime "splendor" or "glory."

3.2 Post-Vedic literature

Turning to the post-Vedic period, we observe that the word *bhargas* almost dropped into desuetude. Only a few sources employ it, most notably the Maitrāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad (MaitrU) and the Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad (ŚvetU).[191] As it is one of the few texts dealing with the meaning of the actual text of the GM, the testimony of the **MaitrU** is especially intriguing. Evidently, the author had a particular interest in Savitṛ's *bhargas* (here perhaps better translated as "effulgence"), even more than in Savitṛ himself. After explaining every *pāda* of the verse, he even adds a separate comment just on this word. I here translate

→ *vásya prasavé manāmahe / asmábhyaṃ dyāvāpṛthivī sucetúnā, rayíṃ dhattaṃ vásumantaṃ śatagvínam //*; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 338. ṚV V 82.1: "This we choose of Savitar's: the sustenance of the god – the Apportioner's best vanquishing power, which best confers wholeness – (that) would we acquire." *tát savitúr vṛṇīmahe vayáṃ devásya bhójanam / śrₐéᵢṣṭhaṃ sarvadhátamaṃ túraṃ bhágasya dhīmahi //*; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 765; see also below pp. 123–124. The verbal similarities between these verses and the GM have been discussed in Brereton 2022: 76–77.

189 ŚatB V 4.5.1 (tr. Eggeling, *SBE* XLI: 113) and PañcB XVIII 9.1 (tr. Caland 1931: 493). Cf. also JaimB II 101 and MaitrS IV 3.

190 AV VI 69.3 (*várcas, yáśas, yajñasya yát páyas*), XIX 37.1 (*várcas, yáśas, ójas, váyas, bála*); TaittB II 5.7.1.10 (*várcas, yáśas, ójas, bála*); JaimB II 258 (*śrī*); ŚatB XII 3.4.7 (*bhárgas, máhas, yáśas*); ŚāṅkhĀ VII 1.4, XII 1.5 (*yajñasya yad yaśas*); BaudhŚS XVII 43 (*mahas, bhaga, yáśas*); PañcB I 1 (*mahat, yaśas, stoma, bhukti, sarva*), IX 8 (*bhargayaśasī*); GopB V 15 (*mahas, yaśas, sarvam*).

191 According to van Buitenen (1962: 71) one should put the original MaitrU "not too much later than the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, while some portions, like 6.33 are definitely older"; according to Olivelle (1998: 13), the TaittU can be assigned to the sixth or fifth centuries BCE. Oberlies (1988: 54), on the other hand, placed the MaitrU *after* the ŚvetU, a text dated by Olivelle (1998: 13) to the "the last few centuries BCE" and by Sanderson even to after the second century CE (for references, see Okita 2017: 259, n. 6). The MaitrU may in fact be several centuries younger; cf. Mallinson 2014: 170.

the relevant passage (excluding a portion that can be safely considered a later interpolation):[192]

> [With regard to *pāda* a] "That desirable [effulgence] of the Impeller": the Impeller is yonder sun. He is thus to be preferred by someone who desires the Self – thus the Veda exegetes say.

> Next [with regard to *pāda* b] "we visualize[193] the Effulgence of the god": the god is the Impeller. Therefore, I think on him who is called his [i.e., the god's] Effulgence[194] – thus the Veda exegetes say.

> Next [with regard to *pāda* c] "who may inspire our insights": the insights are thoughts. "...who may inspire" them for us – thus the Veda exegetes say.

> Next [with regard to the **word**] "**Effulgence**": he who is placed in yonder sun or is the star in the eye, he is called Effulgence. "Effulgence (*bhargas*)" because his movement (*gati*) is by means of the beams of light (*bhā*), or he is called Effulgence because he roasts (*bharjayati*) – thus the Veda exegetes say. [...]

> He, it should be known, is the lord of the Self, he is Śambhu, Bhava, Rudra, the Lord of Progeny, the all-creator, Hiraṇyagarbha, the truth, the vital force, the goose, the preceptor, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, the sun, the Impeller, the Placer, the Ordainer, the sovereign, Indra, Indu. He, the one who gives heat like fire hidden by fire, by the thousand-eyed Golden Egg,[195] he is to be looked for, to be sought after.[196]

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192 See van Buitenen 1962.

193 See below p. 56.

194 Cf. the misleading tanslations by Gonda 1963a: 286: "Because Savitar is God (*devaḥ*) I meditate (*cintayāmi*, explication of *dhīmahi*) upon that which [!] is called his light (*bhargaḥ*)" and van Buitenen 1962: 136: "deva is savitā. The One who is its [!] bhargas, on Him I think."

195 In Hindu cosmogony, the Golden Egg is the original source of the entire universe; it is occasionally identified with Brahmā, Prajāpati, and the Vedic Puruṣa, who has a thousand eyes; see Gonda 1974, especially pp. 46–47.

196 MaitrU VI 7–8: *tat savitur vareṇyam ity asau vā ādityaḥ savitā | sa vā evaṃ pravaraṇīya ātmakāmenety āhur brahmavādinaḥ | atha bhargo devasya dhīmahīti savitā vai devaḥ | tato yo 'sya bhargākhyas taṃ cintayāmīty āhur brahmavādinaḥ | atha dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayād iti buddhayo vai dhiyaḥ | tā yo 'smākaṃ pracodayād ity āhur brahmavādinaḥ | atha bhargā iti yo ha vā ⁺amuṣminn āditye nihitas tārako 'kṣiṇi vaiṣa bhargākhyaḥ | bhābhir gatir asya hīti bhargaḥ | bharjayatīti vā eṣa bhargā ity āhur brahmavādinaḥ |7| [...] eṣa khalv ātmeśānaḥ śambhur bhavo rudraḥ prajāpatir viśvasṛg ghiraṇyagarbhaḥ satyaṃ prāṇo haṃsaḥ śāstā viṣṇur nārāyaṇo 'rkaḥ savitā dhātā vidhātā samrāḍ indra indur | ya eṣa tapaty agnir ivāgnināpihitaḥ sahasrākṣeṇa hiraṇmayenāṇḍenaiṣa vai jijñāsitavyo 'nveṣṭayaḥ. Also translated by van Buitenen 1962: 136.

This passage is instructive in a number of ways. First, a close reading shows that the text is not really interested in Savitṛ. Rather, it elaborates on the *bhargas*, which it takes to be a masculine word ending either in *a* or *as*,[197] even though it is impossible to analyze *bhargo-* in the GM in this way. The reason for this is that it assumes a male god in the background of the mantra "who is called his Effulgence" (*yo 'sya bhargākhyas-*): it is this "Effulgence" who is at the center of the mantra and is worthy of visualization or contemplation. As the following text shows, a great number of deities are identical with (or, rather, manifestations of) this single great god, among them not only Rudra, Viṣṇu, and Indra, but even Savitṛ himself! Thus, instead of focusing on Savitṛ – the sun – directly, the author chose to twist the grammar of the text in order to arrive at the god who is not only located within the sun and moves by means of its rays but is the sunlight itself.

Turning to the **ŚvetU**, a theistic text dedicated to the god Rudra/Śiva, we observe that here, too, the object of the mantra was valued higher than the god in possession of that object. The reference to the GM is found in the following verse, which also alludes to another famous Vedic text, the Nāsadīya Hymn (ṚV X 129):[198]

> When there was darkness, then there was neither day nor night, neither the existent nor the non-existent – Śiva alone was there.
> He was the imperishable / the Syllable,[199] he was "that desirable [effulgence] of the Impeller," and from him has come forth the ancient insight.[200]

In this verse, only the first *pāda* of the GM is quoted; the word *bhargas* itself is missing. It is, however, instructive to observe how this *pāda* is embedded in the sentence: both the first *tad* and the second one in *tat savitur vareṇyaṃ*-refer to the aforementioned Śiva and should be translated as "he."[201] This means that the verse not only quotes from the GM, but even reinterprets its structure and integrates it into the new sentence, a technique also employed in other

197 As in *bhargākhyaḥ* and *bhābhir gatir asya hīti bhargaḥ* or as in *bharjayatīti vā eṣa bhargā ity āhur brahmavādinaḥ.*

198 For this and other Vedic quotations (or paraphrases) in the ŚvetU, see Salomon 1986 and Oberlies 1988.

199 The word *akṣara* means "imperishable" as well as "syllable." Since the time of the Brāhmaṇas, it has been associated with the syllable *om* (as "the Great Syllable"; see Gerety 2015: 129–135 and van Buitenen 1959), which is not only significant as a sacred syllable itself, but also frequently precedes the GM. It is very likely that both meanings are intended in the verse.

200 ŚvetU IV 18: *yadā tamas tan na divā na rātrir, na san na cāsac chiva eva kevalaḥ / tad akṣaraṃ tat savitur vareṇyaṃ, prajñā ca tasmāt prasṛtā purāṇī //*; cf. the translations by Olivelle 1998: 427 and Oberlies 1998: 89–90.

201 Cf. Oberlies 1998: 90, nn. 78–79; contra Salomon 1986: 174, n. 18 (see p. 178).

Upaniṣads.[202] Although the quotation stops before it, I would argue that the *bhargas* is nevertheless present: the beginning of a verse (a so-called *pratīka*) such as *tat savitur vareṇyam* is often used to bring the verse back to mind – an easy feat in the case of the GM. As a consequence, it must have been clear that "that which is desirable" is indeed Savitṛ's *bhargas*.

But why cite the GM in the first place? According to Richard Salomon,

> it is precisely because of the authority of the verse (and perhaps for no other reason, since it is not particularly relevant in and of itself) that the composer chose to quote it here. In fact, this is only one more instance of a pronounced pattern throughout the *ŚU* of choosing verses for citation from the Vedas, and particularly from the *ṚV*, more on account of their popularity or perceived authority than because of any particular relevance to the context or theme of the Upaniṣad itself.[203]

However, while the GM certainly was a renowned text at the time of the ŚvetU, I doubt that this was the only reason why the author selected it.[204] Rather, I would argue that there is a contrast between the "darkness" in the first half of the verse and the implicit *bhargas* in the second: in the beginning, there was darkness, and Śiva was the only light, from which everything emerged. The *pāda* following the GM quotation, in turn, possibly continues another aspect of the *bhargas*: "from him/it [Rudra = *bhargas*] has come forth the ancient insight (*prajñā*)." This would mean that Rudra – particularly in the form of Savitṛ's *bhargas*, his "inspirational light" – is the primordial fountainhead of wisdom and insight.

Irrespective of whether one accepts this interpretation or not, it is clear that *bhargas* here does not denote the worldly "splendor" or "fame" that was coveted by the Ṛgvedic poets. Rather, it is presented as a much more powerful entity, the divine source of the universe. In this respect, the ŚvetU is similar to the MaitrU, where the *bhargas* is even reinterpreted as a male deity.

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202 A similar case is given in KaṭhU 2.17, where the word *brahmajajñam* is used both to denote the sun and, at the same time, to refer to a specific Vedic verse beginning with *bráhma jajñānáṃ-* (given, for instance, in TaittS IV 2.8.8d); cf. Haas 2019b: 1036 with n. 73 (cf. Haas 2018a: 20 and 39).

203 Salomon 1986: 172.

204 This argument was already criticized by Oberlies, whose own explanation (Oberlies 1998: 90, n. 80), however, is incomprehensible to me: "Anders als Salomon, der die Ansicht vertritt, daß der Verfasser unseres Verses den ṛgvedischen ausschließlich wegen des hohen Ansehens [...], das dieser genoß, zitiert, glaube ich, daß dieses erweiterte Prädikatsnomen eine konkrete Aussage macht: Rudra ist der Antrieb, der Impuls, der aus der Urmaterie (*akṣara-*) die Schöpfung entstehen läßt." No "Antrieb" or "Impuls" is ever mentioned.

4. *dhīmahi*

4.1 Vedic literature

In the Vedic language, the main verb of the mantra is either an aorist injunctive[205] or an aorist optative[206] form of the root *dhā* "to put."[207] Used in the middle voice (or medium), it means "to take, to receive" or "to obtain." The aorist optative is usually taken to denote a *wish,* that is, it has a cupitive function.[208] The injunctive on the other hand "originally expressed an action irrespective of tense or mood, the context showing which was meant."[209]

According to Peter-Arnold Mumm, the injunctive is used to denote situations or actions that are for some reason obvious to the hearer, because it expresses a fact or an action that is either (1) already known ("as everybody knows"); is (2) according to common sense logically preceding/following the present situation ("it's obvious/self-explanatory that now..."); or (3) coincides with its expression ("I now proclaim").[210] In his analysis of the aorist injunctive,[211] Eystein Dahl, too, concluded that the aorist injunctive "is underspecified with regard to tense and modality,"[212] but further remarked that because of its being an aorist it denotes the perfective aspect.

The perfective aspect conveyed by the aorist simply expresses that an action is seen as a complete (and sometimes also completed) whole, that is, not as continuous or habitual. In the case of the aorist injunctive and optative, this often means that an action is causally and temporally prior to another contextually salient situation.[213] This is in any case also valid in the context of the GM, which ends with a verb pointing to a future event.

But how should *dhīmahi* be analyzed in the hymn of the ṚV? The question is whether Savitṛ should be asked to bestow his light or whether he will give it himself. In most hymns that are (at least partly) directed at Savitṛ, it is the very first verse that extols his appearance.[214] They describe how he has arrived, how he has raised his golden arms, and how he has brought his light. It is only then that he is asked for protection, wealth, progeny, etc.

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205 *VGS* 171 (§148 [3]) = *VG* 369 (§503 [3]). *dhīmáhi* ← *dhī* (weak root aorist stem) + *mahi* (secondary ending in the 1st person plural).

206 *VIA* I: 298; cf. Meier 1922: 58. *dhīmáhi* ← *dhī* + *ī* (optative suffix) + *mahi*.

207 For this root, see *VIA* I: 298–299.

208 For an analysis of the aorist optative, see Dahl 2010: 308–314.

209 *VGS* 350 (§215B).

210 Mumm 1995. For (1), see p. 178; for (2), pp. 187 and 182; for (3), p. 180.

211 Dahl 2010: 320–333.

212 Dahl 2010: 333.

213 Dahl 2010: 311 and 326.

214 Cf. ṚV IV 54.1, VI 71.1, VII 39.1.

As I imagine it, many of these hymns were created and recited in the presence of the god, that is, just before daybreak, or just following sunset. In this case, the poet reciting the hymn simply states the obvious: all who are present "have now received" the light of Savitṛ, who will now inspire the creation of hymns, as the last verse of the hymn indicates. Mumm adduces three cases in which an injunctive (one time an aorist injunctive) may be used for the immediate past in order to express something relevant to the present situation,[215] and it cannot be ruled out that this is also true for the GM. If that is the case, we could then translate the GM thus: "We have (obviously) obtained the desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall (now) spur on our thoughts."[216]

The *communis opinio*, however, is to analyze *dhīmahi* as an optative. Berthold Delbrück thought it to be an injunctive, in this case one that denotes a wish whose fulfillment is outside of the power of the speaker.[217] This use would eventually be equivalent to the cupitive use of the optative. Arthur A. Macdonell, too, analyzed it as an aorist injunctive, which for him is dependent on context,[218] but generally expresses a desire.[219] The verbal form in the next verse of the hymn – the present indicative *īmahe* "we ask" or "beg" – may indeed suggest a cupitive reading of *dhīmahi*. Karl Hoffmann, lastly, properly called it an optative. In the instances he refers to, *dhīmahi* can be found to be in close proximity to unambiguous optative forms.[220] In addition, the co-occurrence of *dhīmahi* with voluntative and cupitive verbs such as *vṛ/vṝ* "to choose, to desire"[221] or *yā/ī* "to ask, to beg"[222] is conspicuous.

In the case of the GM, the optative (i.e., cupitive) reading is indeed the more natural one.[223] Thus, in the ṚV, *dhīmahi* in all likelihood expresses a wish, that is, something that cannot be achieved by the speakers themselves. It is used in the meaning of "appropriation" rather than "reception": even though Savitṛ's light can be seen, it has yet to become the property of the poet, it does not yet infuse him. This means that it can be translated, for example, as "may we make our own" or "may we obtain."

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215 ṚV X 86.18, VII 58.5, and 73.2; see Mumm 1995: 17–18.

216 Cf. Geldner's (I: 410) translation; see below p. 279.

217 *AS*: 356. He refers to ṚV V 82.6, VII 66.9, and X 36.5.

218 *VG* 369 (§503 [3]), n. 6.

219 *VGS* 350 (§215B).

220 Hoffmann 1967: 254, n. 286. He refers to ṚV I 17.6 (*sanéma*), II 11.12 (*vanema*), V 21.1 (*idhīmahi*), and VII 66.9 (*syāma*).

221 ṚV V 82.1 X 36.5d (= X 36.7d).

222 ṚV X 35.4.

223 However, one may doubt that all instances of *dhīmahi* in the ṚV have to be interpreted as optatives. This is not the place to pursue the subject further; however, in several instances it seems plausible to me to understand it as an injunctive used in one of the functions outlined by Mumm: e.g., ṚV I 131.2; III 29.4, 30.19; V 21.1, 82.6; VII 15.7, X 16.12, 36.7, 66.2, 87.22.

Since the injunctive died out in the mid-Vedic language, understanding it as anything other than an optative became impossible. As I will show in Chapter 3, the Vedic texts that were composed after the ṚV generally do not show any concern for the meaning of the GM, let alone for the word *dhīmahi*. We may nevertheless assume that, in the mid- and late-Vedic periods, the form continued to be understood as being derived from *dhā*.

4.2 Post-Vedic literature

As the language evolved, aorist optatives, too, went out of use. While aorist forms continued to be used in Epic and Classical Sanskrit, these are always in the indicative. This means that – some time in or after the late-Vedic period – the form *dhīmahi* could no longer be easily understood as part of the contemporary language. As a consequence, those who pondered the meaning of the text came up with new interpretations.

On account of its similarity with the word *dhiyo-*, "insights" or "thoughts," the form *dhīmahi* was reinterpreted as being derived from the root *dhī*, which means "to see, to think" or "to conceive of,"[224] a root that may also be related to *dhyā*/*dhyai*, which has a similar meaning.[225] It is not clear whether the form *dhīmahi* was understood to be an indicative or optative of either of these roots – that is whether it meant "we contemplate/visualize" or "may we contemplate/visualize." The correct optative form would be *dīdhīmahi for *dhī* (and *dhyāyemahi* for *dhyā*/*dhyai*). We may speculate, however, that in either case the "aberrant" form *dhīmahi* was simply thought to be a peculiarity of the Vedic language.[226]

One of the earliest texts hinting at such an interpretation might be the MaitrU translated above, where, in his explanation of *pāda* b, the author explains that "I think (*cint*) on him who is called his [i.e., the god's] Effulgence." Insofar as the author seems to paraphrase the text of the mantra, he probably understood *dhīmahi* in the sense of "we contemplate/visualize." This interpretation became very popular with medieval commentators such as Sāyaṇa,[227] and has remained extremely popular up to the present day. However, I do not know of any other pre-medieval texts that attest to it.

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224 Cf. *EWA* I: 793 and *VIA* I: 299–300.
225 Cf. *EWA* I: 777–778 and *VIA* I: 433.
226 See, for instance, Joshi 1964: 379.
227 Cf. the gloss *vayaṃ dhyāyāmaḥ* in his Ṛgvedabhāṣya; see Müller 1854: 773.

5. *dhī, pra+cud*

The beginning of the third *pāda* shows what the Ṛgvedic poets expected Savitṛ to do. *dhī* is derived from the verbal root *dhī*, which we already met with above. Its primary meaning is "thought," but it is also thought that is qualified in a certain way, namely "visionary thought" or "inspiration."[228] The alliteration with *dhīmahi* is, therefore, not the corollary of a *figura etymologica* – as we saw, *dhī* and *dhīmahi* are unrelated – but should rather be interpreted as a pun made by the poet.[229]

In the GM, Savitṛ is expected to "stimulate" or "inspire" – *prá+cud*,[230] literally "to cause to move forward" – the thoughts of the praying poets. *prá+cud* is also used, for instance, for the action of setting a car into motion or driving it (ṚV VIII 12.3). In the Ṛgvedic language, *pracodáyāt* is a subjunctive form of a causative formed from *cud*, combined with the preverb *prá*. The subjunctive form probably does not express a wish, but something that is expected to happen in the future.

Since the subjunctive began to die out in the times of the Brāhmaṇas, many reciters of the GM must have had some difficulties in understanding this form (just as they must have had problems with *dhīmahi* a little later). The most prominent forms containing the suffix *yā* by the end of the Brāhmaṇa period were the optative and its close cousin, the benedictive, also known as precative. However, it is impossible to categorize the form *pracodáyāt* as either an optative or benedictive: the optative of *pracodáyati* would be *pracodáyet*.

Forming the benedictive of causative verbs, on the other hand, is a far more difficult matter. The main characteristic of the benedictive is the insertion of *s* between the modal suffix of the optative and the ending (in the very rare forms in the middle voice, it is sometimes the other way round: *sī[y]*).[231] Most often, this form is made from aorist stems, and is thus very close to the aorist optative (lacking the *s* of the benedictive). The aorist of causatives is usually the reduplicating aorist, and the aorist optative would therefore be **pracūcudét*.[232] Apparently, no active benedictive form of a reduplicating aorist is attested (in the middle voice, we only find *rīriṣīṣṭa* [ṚV VI 51.7]), and it would be rather speculative to postulate **pracūcudyás* or **pracūcudyāt*.

These grammatical problems notwithstanding, it is plausible that the recipients of the GM actually did categorize *pracodáyāt* as a special, "archaic"

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228   See above p. 48; see also generally Gonda 1975: 65–73.
229   This pun, however, was already recognized by Ṛgvedic poets; see Brereton 2022: 76–77.
230   *VIA* I: 276.
231   See *VGS* 175 (§150).
232   Cf. *VGS* 174 (§149.4). This form is not attested.

optative (or benedictive) – just as in the case of *dhīmahi*.[233] Unlike *dhīmahi*, however, reinterpreting *pracodáyāt* as an optative or benedictive did not involve major semantic innovations. Again, to my knowledge, pre-medieval texts generally remain silent on this word.

6. Translating the mantra

The analyses above have demonstrated that translating the text of the GM is by no means a straightforward task. When translating verse from a Bronze-Age text such as the ṚV, this may seem obvious. But given the numerous translations available – and the many more we can expect in the future from both scholars and laypersons – it is worth repeating. At the same time, it should also be underscored that there cannot, and indeed need not be, a single correct translation: any translation may be deemed accurate if it is based on the linguistically arguable meanings of the word-forms of the text, and is in line with the context.

When viewing ṚV III 62.10 as a verse contained within a hymn, the textual context has to be considered. When viewing it as a mantra, the ritual context has to be taken into account. Moreover, when translating historical texts, we need to be aware that a mantra may not have had the same meaning for its recipients as it did four centuries earlier or later. It may be the case that a word no longer had a linguistically clear meaning at all, and that those recipients were more or less forced to reconstruct or invent a meaning ad-hoc. For some of them only parts of it were relevant, for others the meaning of the mantra may not have mattered at all. For these reasons, one has to be very cautious with copy-and-paste translations.

The following table summarizes those translations I consider suitable for the individual words, purely in view of the general linguistic context. The table also sums up the grammatical analyses and indicates semantic or grammatical changes between Vedic and Sanskrit (a transition that was by no means abrupt):[234]

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233 At least in theory there are even rules for forming a benedictive from the present stem of secondary verbs. Both Whitney (2008: 384 [§1049]) and *SGB*: 112 [§385], n. 2 [see p. 113]) explain that in the benedictive active of causative verbs, the suffix *ay* is replaced by the suffix *yā-s*. Neither offer any further references; Whitney even regards this formation "as purely fictitious."

234 Note that Epic and Classical Sanskrit do not use accents.

tát-	"that" sandhi form of *tád*, accusative singular in the neuter of the pronoun *sá/tá* (*tád*)
savitúr	"of Savitṛ/ the Impeller/Initiator/Instigator"; Sanskrit also "of the Sun" genitive singular of the masculine noun *savitṛ́*, agent noun derived from the root *sū*
váreṇyaṃ-	"desirable, excellent" sandhi form of *váreṇyam*, accusative singular of the neuter form of *váreṇya*, adjectivized participle optative in the passive voice derived from *vṛ/vṝ*
bhárgo-	"splendor, effulgence, radiance" sandhi form of *bhárgas*, accusative singular of the neuter noun *bhárgas*
devásya	"of the god / the divine" genitive singular of the masculine noun *devá*
dhīmahi	"may we / would we / we wish to" + "obtain/attain/receive/ make our own" (or: "we have obtained" etc.), Sanskrit also "(may) we contemplate/visualize" first person plural in the middle voice of the aorist optative or injunctive of *dhā*; Sanskrit-speakers also interpreted it as a "Vedic" first person plural of the present indicative or optative of *dhī*
dhíyo-	"thoughts, inspirations" sandhi form of *dhíyas*, accusative plural of the feminine noun *dhī́*, root-noun derived from *dhī*
yó-	"who" sandhi form of *yás*, nominative accusative of the masculine form of the relative pronoun *yá*
naḥ	"our" enclitic form of *asmā́kam*, genitive plural of *asmá* (*asmád*)
pracodáyāt	"shall/will" + "spur on /inspire/stimulate" third person singular in the active voice of the conjunctive of the causative of *prá+cud*; Sanskrit-speakers also interpreted it as a "Vedic" optative, that is "(may) spur on" etc.

Table 3: The individual words of the GM

Even more valid translations can certainly be found for the individual words, and there is also more than one way to put them together. I here propose the following two pairs of English and German translations (the German translations are somewhat less literal, but emulate the *gāyatrī* meter), based, on the one hand, on the Ṛgvedic reading and, on the other, on a general Sanskrit reading (which has to be adapted depending on the context). One could say that the Ṛgvedic and the Sanskrit translations present extremes; for many recipients, the sense of the text must have been in the middle, so to speak, or a mixture of both:

> "May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall spur on our thoughts!" (ṚV)

> "We visualize that excellent effulgence of the Sun god, who may inspire our thoughts!" (Sanskrit)

> "Jenen begehrten Glanz des Gotts
> Antreiber mögen wir empfahn,
> der unsre Geister vorwärts bringt!" (ṚV)

> "Das wünschenswerte Leuchten des
> Sonnengottes erschauen wir,
> der unser Denken inspiriert!" (Sanskrit)

∵ **CHAPTER 2** ∴

Designations

Introduction

As outlined in the Introduction, the verse ṚV III 62.10 is known under two names: *sāvitrī* (Sāvitrī, Savitri, Savitree, etc.) and Gāyatrī (other spellings include *gāyatrī*, Gayatri, Gaayatree, or even Gayutree). As will be seen, *sāvitrī* is the older of the two names. The history of this name is closely connected to the early history and rise of the mantra itself, which will be discussed in detail in the remainder of Part I.[235] In the following, I will only briefly summarize some of the basic facts about the designation *sāvitrī*. For reasons that will soon become clear, the history of the designation "Gāyatrī" is a much more contested topic, and reconstructing it will indeed be the main task of this chapter.

sāvitrī́ is the nominalization of *sāvitrá/í*, a relational adjective derived from the word *savitŕ̥*, the name of a Vedic god. As such, this adjective simply means "belonging/relating/related to Savitr̥," as in the case of the *sāvitrá gráha,* a ritual "cup" containing a portion of Soma "for Savitr̥." Apart from ritual paraphernalia, *sāvitrī́* and *sāvitrá* also became names for mythical and literary characters. Most importantly, the name *sāvitrī́* was given to the goddess Sūryā, when the idea that she is Savitr̥'s daughter took hold.[236] Since Savitr̥ became more or less identified with the sun already during the time of the Brāhmaṇas, *sāvitra* could also become an epithet of the epic character Karṇa, whose father is the sun god.

Typically, and especially in its feminine form ending in *ī*, *sāvitra/ī* became the designation for any *ŕ̥c* (f.) or "verse" addressing or mentioning the deity Savitr̥ (a "Savitr̥ verse" or "Impeller verse") even without the addition of the word *ŕ̥c*. This basic meaning of the word was never really lost. Unless the context indicated it, it was therefore sometimes necessary to specify which of the many *sāvitrī* verses was meant. Especially in ritual texts, this is usually done by way

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235   See especially below pp. 119–120.
236   See below pp. 204–212.

of citing the beginning of the verse (a part known as the *pratīka*),[237] in the case of ṚV III 62.10, " '*tat savitur' iti*" or " '*tat savitur vareṇyam' iti.*"[238]

Already towards the end of the Vedic period, however, ṚV III 62.10 virtually became the most frequently recited and most important of all *sāvitrī*s.[239] As a consequence, it was in most cases no longer necessary to specify the verse, but rather to indicate if any other *sāvitrī* than ṚV III 62.10 was meant. As we will see in Chapter 7, this also made it possibly to associate it with the deity Sāvitrī or Sūryā Sāvitrī, Savitṛ's daughter, who originally had nothing to do with the mantra of the same name.

Let us now turn to the second name of ṚV III 62.10, its "cognomen," as it might be called. The word *gāyatrī́* literally means "belonging to the song," or "song-related," but in Vedic literature is more often used as the name of a meter.[240] As we know, at some point the word also became the proper name of a specific verse set in the *gāyatrī* meter. The questions are then how, why, and when was this use of the word introduced. My main aim in this chapter is to answer these questions. In order to do so, I analyze the source texts chronologically, beginning with the earliest and working my way forward.

- **Sections 1.1** and **1.2** (pp. 63–72) review the Vedic passages that have been thought to use *gāyatrī* as a designation of the verse. In fact, only few Vedic texts were read in this way, above all the Atharva-Veda (AV) and the Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (BṛhĀU). In these texts the word *gāyatrī* is always used to denote the meter, and never the GM itself.

- **Section 2.1** (pp. 72–78) analyzes the usage of the words *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* in the MBh. I demonstrate that the early portions of the Great Epic generally only use the word *sāvitrī* when speaking about the mantra.

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237 In the Vedic context, mantras are generally cited by means of giving their *pratīka*, that is by quoting their first few words. Sometimes, a suffix *īya* is added, as in *āpohiṣṭhīya* = ṚV X 9.1, which begins with the words *ápo hí ṣṭhā́ mayobhúva-*; cf. Quillet 2011: 359–360. The rest of the mantra is then inferred by the reciter, who is expected to know the relevant mantras by heart.

238 Or possibly even *tad*; see n. 377 on p. 91 below.

239 See Chapter 4, especially pp. 130–133.

240 The derivation of the word *gāyatrī́* can be explained in two ways: (a) it is the feminine form of **gāyatrá,* a relational adjective with the meaning "belonging to the song" that is derived from the noun *gāyatrá* (m./n.) "song" (cf. *AG* II,2: 402 [§250ζ]). In its feminine form, this adjective came to be used as the proper name of a specific meter, the *gāyatrī* meter. Alternatively, (b) it is a direct feminine derivative of *gāyatrá* "song" (*AG* II,2: 383 [§247]), motivated by the fact that meters are generally feminine. Either way, from the proper name *gāyatrī́* a relational adjective was derived by strengthening (*vṛddhi*) the first vowel. Since this vowel was strong already, the resulting adjective was homophonous with the original adjectival from which *gāyatrī́* had been derived: *gāyatrá.* This adjective qualifies something that is composed in the *gāyatrī* meter. It can also be easily used as a noun (*gāyatrī*) in the meaning of a "*gāyatrī* verse." As I argue below, however, such an understanding of the word can lead to far-reaching problems; see pp. 71–72.

Only later additions, such as the Vaiṣṇava-Dharmaśāstra (VaiṣṇDhŚ), also use the word *gāyatrī* for the mantra.

- **Section 2.2** (pp. 78–81) argues that the new designation *gāyatrī* became popular as a consequence of the introduction of modified GMs. The creation of these mantras led to the revival of an obsolete category, that of *gāyatrī* verses, among which the GM immediately emerged as the typical representative.

1. Meter or mantra?

1.1 Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā

As a simple word search quickly reveals, the text of the mantra cannot be found in any form in either of the two recensions of the AV. The *pratīka* of the mantra is not mentioned either. While the word *sāvitrī́* does appear two times, it is used exclusively for the goddess Sūryā, to whom we shall return in Chapter 7. The word *gāyatrī́*, the other possible designation of the mantra, is mentioned more often. This means that if the mantra is present in the Saṃhitā, it is referred to either implicitly or by means of the name of its meter.

Several scholars[241] were inclined to see references to the GM in four AV passages: AV XIII 1.10; X 8.10 and 41; and IX 10.19. Further, there is one late passage – XIX 71 – which conspicuously calls upon a *vedamātṛ́*, a "Mother of the Vedas," one of the most common epithets of the mantra deity in later times. As the interpretation of X 8.10, 41, and IX 10.19 more or less depends on AV XIII 1.10, I will discuss this verse first. The discussion of AV XIX 71, however, is found in Chapter 6, where I will show that this verse is considerably younger than most of the other parts of the AV.[242]

The first verse to be discussed is located in *kāṇḍa* XIII of the AV. This *kāṇḍa* was probably composed during the period of the later Saṃhitās (such as the Taittirīya-Saṃhitā [TaittS]),[243] and is dedicated to *róhita*, the "reddish," rising sun (or "raised" sun – this would be the literal translation of the almost homophonous *rohitá*). Throughout this book, the red morning sun symbolizes

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241   Louis Renou (1956), Franklin Edgerton (1962), Subhash Anand (1988), and Thomas Oberlies (1998, 2012).
242   See below pp. 193–197.
243   Witzel 1997b: 281.

royal power.[244] *róhita* also appears in our first verse, **AV XIII 1.10**, where it qualifies a "calf":

> *yā́s te víśas tápasaḥ saṃbabhū́vúr, vatsáṃ gāyatrī́m ánu tā́ ihā́guḥ /*
> *tā́s tvā viśantu mánasā śivéna, sáṃmātā vatsó abhᵢyètu róhitaḥ //*

> Your folk (subjects), which have assembled out of fervor, have come here, following the Calf, the *gāyatrī́*.
> Let them enter into you with well-disposed thought; let the Ruddy Calf come hither with his mother.[245]

The overall context makes clear that the person spoken to in this verse is the king. His subjects have united under him, following a "calf" or "young one" (*vatsá*), which, *pāda* d suggests, is Rohita. While the king is sometimes even identified with Rohita in the remainder of the *kāṇḍa*, he and Rohita / the Ruddy Calf are clearly discrete in this case. Rohita is probably characterized as "young" or a "calf" because he is the new-born, rising sun.

Besides the king, his subjects, and Rohita, mention is also made of Rohita's mother. The juxtaposition of *vatsá* and *gāyatrī́* in *pāda* b is probably best read as an asyndeton, that is, the connector "and" can be supplied: "the calf *and* the *gāyatrī́*." The word *sáṃmātṛ* should probably be understood as "together with the mother" – as opposed to the more common and differently accented *saṃmātṛ́*, which means "having the same mother"[246] or, in the dual, "two mothers together."[247] If the verse is construed in this way, it stands to reason that Rohita's mother is called *gāyatrī́*.

Following a suggestion of Louis Renou, Franklin Edgerton argued that the *gāyatrī́* is the GM, recited at dawn in the Sandhyā, which is regularly performed before sunrise (and after sunset).[248] As the *gāyatrī́* (mantra) thus precedes the rise of the sun god in the daily cycle, she could be conceived of as his mother: "This sacred stanza was the necessary beginning of the morning service, the start of the ritual day. It was recited at dawn, just at or just before the sunrise. What more natural than to call it (as elsewhere the dawn is called) the sun's mother?"[249]

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244 For further literature, see Witzel 1997b: 267, 279–280.
245 AV XIII 1.10; tr. Edgerton 1962: 56. Cf. the translations by Whitney 1905: 711; Renou 1956: 205; and Oberlies 2012: 481, n. 419.
246 ṚV X 117.9 (tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1587).
247 AV XIII 2.13 and VIII 7.27 (tr. Whitney 1905: 721 and 501).
248 Renou 1956: 205, n. 16 (see p. 271); followed by Edgerton 1962; in turn followed by Oberlies 1998: 313, n. 802, and Oberlies 2012: 301, n. 419 (see p. 481).
249 Edgerton 1962: 58. Following the same logic, the night is said to be Rohita's mother in AV XIII 3.26; cf. Edgerton 1962: 57, n. 3. A similar case would be that of Savitṛ, who originally was a more or less nocturnal deity and came to be called the father of Sūryā, a morning goddess; see below p. 204.

In many AV passages, however, the *gāyatrī́* is mentioned alongside other meters such as the *triṣṭúbh* or the *jágatī*.[250] Although this does not preclude the word *gāyatrī́* from being used not only for the meter but also for the mantra, I would argue that in the passage under discussion, it only denotes the meter. In fact, the verse can be very well understood in this way.

Since Edgerton's paper, several scholars have demonstrated that in the system of Vedic religion the *gāyatrī* was often thought to be the "first" and "primary" among meters. The *gāyatrī* is the shortest of all Vedic meters and the most frequently used meter in the ṚV after the *triṣṭubh*. It was regularly associated with other first or most important things: On the level of social stratification, with the Brahmins; on the cosmic and ritual levels, with fire and its deification, Agni; on the textual level, with the ṚV, and so on.[251] On the level of time, there existed a rather strong association between the *gāyatrī́* meter and the morning, the beginning of the day.[252] According to Thite, this meter is said to be the "excellence" or greatness of the morning pressing of Soma, and "[t]herefore, whatever meter may be used at the time of that pressing, it is called, mystically, Gāyatrī."[253] As opposed to the other pressings, the morning pressing could be "legitimately called *gāyatra* i.e. belonging to the Gāyatrī-metre."[254] We will come across similar associations throughout this study.

Understood against this background, this association with the morning perfectly explains the verse: the *gāyatrī́* meter precedes the rising of the sun, as it were, and can therefore be conceived of as its mother. A parallel passage in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (TaittB) supports this reading wherein we read *gāyatrám vatsám* instead of *vatsám gāyatrī́m*. Adapting Edgerton's rendition, I translate its first half: "your folk (subjects), which have assembled out of fervor, have come here, following the Calf belonging to the *gāyatrī́* (*gāyatrá*)."[255] Unlike *gāyatrī́*, *gāyatrá* is never used as a name of the GM – at least nobody has ever argued that it does. Rather, *gāyatrá* in this case is probably an adjective qualifying the calf, "the calf belonging to the song-meter."[256] In this passage, it is impossible to detect the presence of the GM, indicating that it might not be present in AV XIII 1.10 either.

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250 E.g., in AV VIII 9.14,20: *gāyatrī́ṃ triṣṭúbhaṃ jágatīm anuṣṭúbhaṃ-, gāyatrī́ ... triṣṭúp- ... jágatī ... anuṣṭúp-*, XVIII 2.6: *triṣṭúb gāyatrī́ chándāṃsi*, XIX 21.1: *gāyatry ùṣṇíg anuṣṭúb bṛhatī́ paṅktís triṣṭúb jágatyai.*

251 For further details and references, see below p. 120.

252 Cf. Thite 1987: 438–441, Smith 1993: 80, and Fujii 2010: 3–4.

253 Thite 1987: 438.

254 Thite 1987: 439.

255 TaittB II 5.2.2: *yás te víśas tápasā saṃbabhūvúḥ / gāyatrám vatsám ánu tā́s ta ā́guḥ / tā́s tvā́viśantu máhasā svéna / sáṃmātā putró abhyètu róhitaḥ //.*

256 Cf. n. 240 on p. 62 above.

In his paper, Edgerton also refers to three other AV verses that possibly refer to the GM.[257] Two of these verses are part of the eighth hymn in *kāṇḍa* X, a long and loose collection of "mystic" verses.[258] In the first passage, **AV X 8.41ab**, Mātariśvan, a mythical, winged being that brought the fire to the earth, is said to have "strode out almost higher than the *gāyatrī́*, upon the immortal."[259] This refers to the story of the flight of the *gāyatrī́* meter, which flew to heaven in order to procure Soma.[260] Against the backdrop of this story, it becomes clear that Mātariśvan does not "surpass" the GM, but really reaches a place almost a bit higher than the *gāyatrī́* meter.

The other two relevant verses mentioned by Edgerton both revolve around a similar topic: **AV X 8.10** poses a riddle, asking, in brief, which one of the *ṛ́c*s or "verses of praise" can be universally applied.[261] Again following a suggestion made by Renou, Edgerton suggests that this verse could be the GM. The second verse, **AV IX 10.19**, speculates about the *pāda*s constituting a verse. Three "feet" (*pad*) are mentioned, so the verse most likely is a verse in the *gāyatrī́* meter. The verse asserts that when the *pāda*s are put together to form a verse, the entire living world is created. As only one verse is mentioned, Edgerton concluded that a specific *ṛ́c* must be meant: the GM.[262]

These two passages could, at best, only offer additional confirmation for a result that would have to be reached by other means. The question posed in the first passage, X 8.10, might even be a rhetorical one. There are, as far as I can see, no indicators allowing us to conclude that the verse in question is the GM: it is, for instance, not clear how the GM could be said to "extend the ritual forward" (*yáyā yajñáḥ práṅ tāyáte*). The second passage, IX 10.19, probably implies a verse in the *gāyatrī́* meter, but there is little reason to assume that any specific verse is meant: the passage simply adds the word *ṛcás* "of a verse of praise" to the word *pad* in order to clarify that by *pad*, "foot," the *pāda* of a verse is meant.

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257 Again following suggestions made in Renou 1956: 167, n. 11 (see p. 264) in the case of AV X 8.10 and 41.

258 Tr. Whitney 1905: 595–601.

259 *úttareṇeva gayatrím amṛté ʼdhi vícakrame*; cf. Whitney 1905: 601.

260 See below p. 191.

261 In Edgerton's (1962: 57) translation: "(The Rigvedic stanza) which is employed in front and behind, which is employed in all cases and in every case, by which the sacrifice is extended forward (or perhaps, with Renou, in the east), that I ask you: which of the stanzas (*ṛcám*) is it?" *yā́ purástād yujyáte yā́ ca paścā́d yā́ viśváto yujyáte yā́ ca sarvátaḥ / yáyā yajñáḥ práṅ tāyáte tā́m tvā pṛcchāmi katamā́ ⁺sárcám* (← °*ā́* + *ṛ*°) [instead of °*ā́ ṛ*° in Roth & Whitney 1856: 234; see Whitney 1905: 597] //; cf. the translations by Renou 1956: 167 and by Whitney 1905: 597.

262 "Fashioning by measurement (one) (verse-) "foot" of the stanza, with a half-stanza (i.e., two verse-"feet") they fashioned all that stirs; with (all) three (verse-) "feet" the *bráhman* (here Holy Word, Vedic utterance = *ṛ́c*) spread out many-formed; by that the four directions live." *ṛcáḥ padám mā́trayā kalpáyanto ʼrdharcéna cakḷpur víśvam éjat / tripā́d bráhma pururūpaṃ vítasthe téna jīvanti pradíśaś cátasraḥ* //; tr. Edgerton 1962: 57.

To summarize: Both AV XIII 1.1, the verse about the reddish calf, and its variant in the TaittB can be explained if *gāyatrá/ī́* is taken to refer to the meter. It is difficult to show that the other three AV passages, the "Mātariśvan verse" X 8.41, the riddle posed in X 8.10, and the speculation about the *pāda*s of a verse in IX 10.19, refer to the GM. Edgerton concluded that they did. He did this because he assumed that the GM was, at that time, already as "famous" as it would later become. However, considering the general use of the words *sāvitrī́* and *gāyatrī́-* in the AV and other Vedic texts as well as the role of the GM in Śrauta ritual,[263] this assumption can no longer be upheld.

1.2 Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad

While scholars obviously did not consider it self-evident that the GM was already important in the AV, this has been taken for granted in the case of the BṛhĀU. In this text, most of whose contents were probably composed in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE,[264] the GM occurs in two passages – or rather, in only one (to be explained momentarily). The first passage, BṛhĀU VI 3.6, will be dealt with in Chapter 4.[265] It prescribes the preparation of a mixture of fruit and herbs for a man who wants to attain "greatness" (*mahat*); the man has to drink the mixture while reciting a combination of the *pāda*s of the GM, the ṚV verses I 90.6–8, and the Vyāhṛtis. As I will argue, the use of ṚV V 82.1 (another *gāyatrī sāvitrī*) in similar rituals indicates that the category to which these verses belong was more important than the textual content of the verses. It is difficult to elicit much more information about the GM from this passage (which is in fact the only one in the Upaniṣad specifying the use of ṚV III 62.10), and indeed, few scholars have attempted to do so.[266]

The second passage, BṛhĀU V 14,[267] on the other hand, has been interpreted more than once as a full-fledged exposition of the GM. Jan Gonda, for instance, stated "that this famous and important mantra had already at an early moment become the object of esoterical speculation and 'mystic' explanation. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad (5, 14) the sacred Gāyatrī is esoterically explained."[268] Similarly, Mieko Kajihara, who otherwise carefully distinguished between the *gāyatrī* meter and the *sāvitrī* verse(s), concluded that "the words

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263   For the role of the GM in Śrauta ritual, see Chapter 3.

264   For the date of the Upaniṣads, see generally Olivelle 2018b.

265   See below p. 129.

266   E.g., Gonda 1963a: 285–286 and Lal 1971: 226.

267   BṛhĀU(K) V 14 ≈ BṛhĀUM V 15 = ŚatB(M) XIV 8.15 (see Olivelle 1998: 35); cf. Kajihara 2019: 7, n. 24. Cf. also ChāndU III 12 (tr. Olivelle 1998: 207), which also deals with the *gāyatrī* meter.

268   Gonda 1963a: 287; cf. also Gonda 1963a: 248, n. 6, and Gonda 1975: 52. This reading has been accepted time and again and has been the basis for a great number of misinterpretations; see, for instance, Slaje 2009: 523, n. 8.

Sāvitrī and Gāyatrī came to function to represent one and the same verse,"[269] specifying that this "tendency is seen already in the mid-Vedic texts."[270] As I will show in the following, this assessment needs to be adjusted: as in the AV, the word *gāyatrī* here only denotes the meter.

In the first half of BṛhĀU V 14, there is a lengthy speculation concerning the *pāda*s of the *gāyatrī* (no word indicating a "verse" is mentioned). The three *pāda*s of the *gāyatrī* are associated with different sets of words, each having eight syllables in total.[271] In addition, there is a fourth (imaginary) *pāda* that is beyond the sky. In a typically Upaniṣadic fashion, the text then elucidates what this fourth *pāda* is "based" upon, then on what this basis is based, and so on. Thus, the fourth *pāda* is based on "truth" (*satya*), which in turn is based on "strength" (*bala*), which in turn is based on "breath" or the "vital force" (*prāṇa*). Tied to the last link of this chain is an explanation of the word *gāyatrī*, which also mentions two kinds of *sāvitrī*s.

For the sake of the following discussion, I will not give as the base text the standard version of the **BṛhĀU**, which is that of the Kāṇva (K) recension, but that of the **Mādhyandina (M) recension** (the variant readings in the K text are given in brackets):

> *sā́ haiṣā́ gáyāṃs tatre | prāṇā́ vái gáyās tát prāṇā́ṃs tatre | tád yád gáyāṃs tatre tásmād gāyatrī́ nā́ma sá yám evā́múm (evāmū́ṃ sāvitrī́m) anvā́haiṣáivá sā́ sá yásmā anvā́ha tásya prāṇā́ṃs trāyate |7|*

> *tā́ṁ háike (tā́ṃ haitā́m eke) | sāvitrī́m anuṣṭúbham ánvāhur vā́g anuṣṭúb etád vā́cam ánubrūma íti | ná táthā kuryāt | gāyatrī́m evā́nubrūyāt (gāyatrī́m eva sāvitrī́m anubrūyāt) |*

> *yádi ha vā́ ápi (apy evaṃvid) bahv ìva pratigṛhṇā́ti ná haivá tád gāyatryā́ ékaṃ caná padáṃ práti |8| sá yá imā́ṃs trī́ṁl lokā́n | pūrṇā́n pratigṛhṇīyāt sò 'syā etát prathamáṃ padám āpnuyād-*

It [i.e., the *gāyatrī́*] protects (*tatre* [← *trā*]) possessions (*gaya*). Clearly, one's possessions are the vital forces, so it protects the vital forces. And because it protects one's possessions, it is called *gāyatrī*. That (K adds "Savitṛ verse") which he recites, that is exactly the one [that has just been mentioned]. Because he recites it, he/it protects his [i.e., another person's] vital forces. |7|

Some recite this Savitṛ verse as an *anuṣṭúbh*, saying: "the *anuṣṭubh* is

269   Kajihara 2019: 11.
270   Kajihara 2019: 11, n. 37.
271   First *pāda*: *bhūmi, antarikṣa, d(i)yau*; second *pāda*: *ṛcas, yajūṃṣi, sāmāni*; third *pāda*: *prāṇa, apāna, v(i)yāna*.

speech – in this way we teach speech."[272] One should not do so, one should recite only a *gāyatrī* (K adds "Savitṛ verse").

Even if one (K adds "who knows it in this way") gains quite a lot, it is nothing against even a single foot of the *gāyatrī̀*. |8| If someone were to gain these three worlds in full, he would [only] obtain its first foot.[273]

As mentioned, the occurrence of both *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* in one and the same passage has been the cause of some confusion. Patrick Olivelle, for instance, variously translated the word *gāyatrī* in this passage with "Gāyatrī" and "Gāyatrī verse."[274] Gonda and several other scholars understood it in this way, too. I would argue, however, that there is little reason to assume that the word *gāyatrī* in this passage refers to anything other than the meter, which, in my view, was of primary interest to the authors and redactors. In contrast to the *gāyatrī* meter, the *sāvitrī* verse is only mentioned in a brief digression. As I will argue in the following, there are good reasons to assume that this part is an insertion in an otherwise monothematic text.

The passage beginning with *tā́ṁ háike* up to *evā́nubrūyāt* (the middle paragraph in the translation above) has a parallel passage elsewhere in the **Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa** (ŚatB) proper. The passage is placed within a section dealing with the Upanayana:

> *tā́ṁ haitā́m éke | sāvitrī́m anuṣṭúbham ánvāhur vā́g vā́ anuṣṭúp tád asmin vā́caṁ dadhma íti ná táthā kuryād yó hainaṁ tátra brūyā́d ā́nvā́ ayám asya vā́cam adita mū́ko bhaviṣyatī́tī́śvaró ha táthaivá syāt tásmād etā́ṁ gāya-trī́m evá sāvitrī́m ánubrūyāt |*

Some recite this Savitṛ verse as an *anuṣṭúbh*, saying: "Clearly, the *anuṣṭúbh* is speech – in this way we put speech into him [i.e., the student]." One should not do so. If, in that case, anyone was to say of him: "Indeed, he [i.e., the student] has taken his speech – he will become dumb!" the master [i.e., the teacher] might become so. Therefore, one should recite it only as a *gāyatrī́* Savitṛ verse.[275]

The passage in the BṛhĀU, which I will henceforth call the "Upanayana passage," reuses some of the formulations of this ŚatB passage. In the following I will show that the Upanayana passage is only loosely connected to its surrounding text.

First, in the M version of the BṛhĀU passage that is translated above, the word *sāvitrī́* is mentioned only once; the K text, on the other hand, inserts it

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272   Cf. below p. 120 and 123.
273   BṛhĀUM V 15 = ŚatB(M) XIV 8.15.7–9 ≈ BṛhĀU(K) V 14.4–5; cf. the translation by Olivelle 1998: 139 and 141. The text proceeds in a similar fashion with the other feet.
274   Cf. his note on the translation of BṛhĀU V 14.1 (see Olivelle 1998: 525).
275   ŚatB(M) XI 5.4.13; cf. the translations by Kajihara 2019: 8 and Eggeling, *SBE* XLIV: 89.

two times. Without the insertion in the first paragraph, nothing indicates that "that which he recites" (*sá yā́m evàmū́m*) should be understood to refer to the *sāvitrī́* in the context of the Upanayana. Rather, in the M text the sentence simply clarifies that the *gāyatrī́* meter that one recites in practice really is the same as the *gāyatrī́* that protects a person's property and that is ultimately based on the "mystic" fourth foot beyond the sky and the vital force within oneself, as the preceding text elaborates. The next sentence says more or less the same (though using other words): because he recites it, it protects his vital forces. Only then does the Upanayana passage (the middle paragraph) begin in the M text too.

Moreover, the paragraphs surrounding the inserted Upanayana passage can be well read together (above all in the case of the presumably earlier M reading): The *gāyatrī́* meter protects one's property, but however much one might gain (even if it is "quite a lot"), nothing can be greater than the four feet of the GM. In this context, mention of the potentially even dangerous practice of teaching an *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* appears to be little more than a brief digression.

While it is difficult to establish which one of the recensions of the BṛhĀU is older or more original,[276] in this case, it is more likely that the variant readings are the result of K *additions* rather than M *omissions*. The M text is coherent even without the additions. Upon close examination, it turns out that the insertion of the word *sāvitrī* in the explanation of the meaning of the word *gāyatrī́* in the sentences preceding the Upanayana passage interrupts the flow of argumentation. The addition was motivated only by the fact that the teaching of a *sāvitrī́* in the Upanayana is the most famous case in which the recitation of a verse in the *gāyatrī́* meter is preferable.

But what does this somewhat microscopic analysis tell us about the GM itself? As mentioned above, it would be a grave mistake to equate the *gāyatrī́* with the GM, and to read the passage as a speculation about the GM. While the role and significance of the *gāyatrī* meter was certainly important in the selection of the initiation mantra in the context of the Upanayana, that is a separate topic. The meter, after all, was only one of the criteria used for this selection.[277]

Second, the passage does not corroborate the view that the expression *amūṃ sāvitrīm* – in which *sāvitrīm* is probably secondary – suggests "that no identification is needed, because it was established well enough as to which verse is the Sāvitrī."[278] Admittedly, given its frequent employment in Śrauta ritual and its predominance in later times, there is little reason to assume that at the time of the BṛhĀU the *gāyatrī sāvitrī* used in the Upanayana was *not* ṚV III 62.10. Nevertheless, it is the category "*gāyatrī sāvitrī*" that is emphasized, even

276 Caland 1926: 103.
277 See below pp. 126–128.
278 Kajihara 2019: 7, n. 24.

in the case of the K recension. The evidence does not warrant the conclusion that any special significance was (yet) attached to a specific verse in this category. The corollary of this is that the BṛhĀU does not use the word *gāyatrī* to designate ṚV III 62.10.

As we can see, passages dealing with the *gāyatrī* (meter) are frequently mistaken to be passages about the GM, no doubt because it is often assumed that the GM had always been a central component of Vedic and Hindu culture. But while the system behind the associations of meters with times, deities, etc., was studied in detail only in the second half of the twentieth century, the peculiar nature of meters in the Vedic culture had already been well known before that time. A question that is not entirely incidental to this study is, therefore: How could this mix-up have happened so easily?

In order to clarify the confusion, I suggest taking a step back to reconsider the relationship of verses and meters. Although already in Ṛgvedic times, relational adjectives such as *tráiṣṭubha* were introduced for texts set in the respective meters,[279] an individual verse was rather said to be a *triṣṭúbh* than a *tráiṣṭubha* or *tráiṣṭubhī*. In Vedic poetry, a verse is always set in a meter, and a meter can only become manifest as a verse. Just like rhythms, which one can clap or drum, for example, one can also make meters audible with the help of a variety of verses. Contrary to what one might expect, there is, to my knowledge, no indication that Vedic meters are ontologically subordinate to verses.

It must not be forgotten that in an oral and aural culture, a meter is primarily a sonic entity, not merely an abstract sequence of long and short syllables, "revealed" by scansion and symbolic mark-up such as – u u. As sonic entities, meters belonged much more to the domain of experience rather than abstraction, they were heard rather than thought or analyzed, a fact that possibly also facilitated their reification, or even personification and deification, as in the case of the *gāyatrī* bird.[280] In Vedic poetry, it is more the case that a verse is a manifestation of a meter, than that a meter is merely the underlying pattern of a

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279 In the case of the meter *triṣṭúbh* we also start with a word that means "song": According to Grassman (*WRV*: 560) the word originally meant "praising three times [i.e., very much]" ("ursprünglich wol [sic]: dreifach (d.h. sehr) preisend, stúbh"; possibly by way of *triḥṣṭubh* [?]). By way of metonymy, the word for "song" simply came to be used as the word for a meter as well, and no derivation (as in *trá → trí*) was necessary. In *tráiṣṭubha*, however, the accent is on the first syllable, whereas in *gāyatrá* it remains on the last; cf. *AG* II,2: 134 (§40c–d). The placement of the accent on the first syllable is quite frequent in relational adjectives, and it is not entirely clear why *gāyatrá/í* (← *gāyatrī́*) is not analogously formed (*gáyatra/í*). Possibly, the accent remained on the final syllable because barytonic derivatives ending in *tra* usually denote a means or instrument, whereas abstract nouns derived from verbal roots are regularly oxytonic (i.e., they end in *trá*); see *AG* II,2: 701–705 (§517a–b). *gáyatra/í* (either as adjective or noun) may have given the impression that the word does not mean "song," but "a means to sing," and was therefore avoided. For the root *gā/gī(/gai)* "to sing," see *VIA* I: 283 (no. 278); cf. also *EWA* I: 482–483.

280 See below p. 191.

verse. While in practice, reproducing a meter generally involves the recitation of a text set in that meter, the quite common practice of supplying the word "verse" when translating from Vedic or Sanskrit can be somewhat misleading: the verse to be recited might not be that important.

The importance and peculiar nature of meters must always be borne in mind, especially, of course, in the case of the GM. That the *gāyatrī* and the GM could be confused was, in part, a consequence of ignoring this special role. On the other hand, the name of the mantra really is somewhat bewildering. How could this *gāyatrī* verse become known as *the* Gāyatrī verse? I will deal with this question in the second part of this chapter.

2. From meter to mantra

As we saw above, the word *gāyatrī* was not used as a name of the GM in the AV and in the BṛhĀU. In fact, these are the only Vedic texts for which this use of words was either argued or taken for granted. To the best of my knowledge, all other texts from the same period as well as the (older parts of the) Gṛhya- or Dharmasūtras generally use the word *sāvitrī* or the *pratīka*, but never the word *gāyatrī*, to refer to the mantra. As it turns out, the first texts that unambiguously use the word in this sense are found in the late strata of the MBh and the Dharmasūtras. Above all due to the ample material it provides, the MBh therefore becomes the primary source for the study of the development of the name "Gāyatrī."

2.1 *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* in the Mahābhārata

In the voluminous MBh the words *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* taken together occur more than 180 times. Depending on the context, they may refer to the GM, to the *gāyatrī* meter, to the personification or deification of either the mantra or the meter, to the literary character Sāvitrī, or to her eponym, the goddess Sāvitrī.[281] In several cases, the boundaries are either unclear or blurred. An analysis of all of the relevant passages reveals that in the main text of the MBh, the word *gāyatrī* in all probability always denotes the meter.[282] The mantra, on the other

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281   See Appendix 2 (pp. 285–286). Cf. *MCI* I: 218–219. Note that in this index, the referents of the words *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* are not (clearly) differentiated.

282   Occurring seven times in the main text and nineteen times in the star passages and appendices.

hand, usually goes by the name of *sāvitrī*.[283] Since the relevant passages are only few, they can all be dealt with here.

In the first passage, VI 32.35b (= BhagG X 35b), Kṛṣṇa proclaims that "among the meters, I am *gāyatrī*" (*gāyatrī chandasām aham*). As outlined above, the *gāyatrī* was considered the first and best of meters.[284] In the present context, this passage therefore requires no further explanation.

In the second passage, VI 5.9–21, Sañjaya presents a categorization of all living beings in the world. He counts nineteen of them "within the five elements" (*mahābhūteṣu pañcasu*). Somewhat unexpectedly, he then asserts that

> The twenty-four that have been shown are known as a *gāyatrī* by the world. Whoever truly knows this meritorious *gāyatrī* possessed of every virtue, does not lose the world, O best among the Bharatas.[285]

The mention of the number suggests to me that, in all likelihood, the meter is meant: the main characteristic of the *gāyatrī* meter is that it has twenty-four syllables in three lines (the GM at that time was already reduced to twenty-three syllables, but this was certainly not taken too strictly).

In the third passage, XIV 44.1–16, the god Brahmā gives a long list of beings and things that are "first, foremost," or "highest." In the middle of this list, he mentions both the *sāvitrī* and the *gāyatrī*. The passage is more or less self-explanatory:

> After that, I shall explain next that which is first and highest among things: the sun is the first of lights, fire is taken to be the first among all elements; /4/ among the knowledge-branches / the mantras,[286] the *sāvitrī* [is the first]; among the deities, the Lord of Progeny; among all Vedas, the sound *om*; and among the utterances, it is breath. If it is fixed in this world, it is said that it all belongs to Savitṛ [?]. /5/ The *gāyatrī* is first among meters; among cattle, it is said to be the goat. Among the quadrupeds [i.e., animals], cows are first; among humans, the twice-born. /6/[287]

A special case is given if a text states that a *gāyatrī* should be "muttered" or "recited" (*jap* or *paṭh*). In the Tīrthayātraparvan, Pulastya mentions a place

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283 MBh II 11.25; III 177.29, 277.9; III 80.4; V 106.10; XII 326.7, 36.33, 43.14; XIII 24.25, 24.28, 85.6, 92.14, XIV 44.5.

284 See above p. 65.

285 MBh VI 5.18cd–19: *caturviṃśatir uddiṣṭā gāyatrī lokasammatā // ya etāṃ veda gāyatrīṃ puṇyāṃ sarvaguṇānvitām / tattvena bharataśreṣṭha sa lokān na praṇaśyati //*.

286 For the translation of *vidyā*, see below p. 192.

287 MBh XIV 44.4–6: *ataḥ paraṃ pravakṣyāmi bhūtānām ādim uttamam / ādityo jyotiṣām ādir agnir bhūtādir iṣyate /4/ sāvitrī sarvavidyānāṃ devatānāṃ prajāpatiḥ / oṃkāraḥ sarvavedānāṃ vacasāṃ prāṇa eva ca / yady asmin niyataṃ loke sarvaṃ sāvitram ucyate /5/ gāyatrī chandasām ādiḥ paśūnām aja ucyate / gāvaś catuṣpadām ādir manuṣyāṇāṃ dvijātayaḥ /6/*; cf. the translation by Deussen & Strauss 1906: 970–971.

of pilgrimage holy to the *gāyatrī*. After describing the place, Gokarṇa, he continues:

> From there to the place of the *gāyatrī*, renowned in the three worlds. Having stayed for three nights, one obtains the reward of a thousand cows. There is an obvious indication of Brahmins, O lord of men: if someone of mixed parentage recites a *gāyatrī*, it turns into a *gāthā* or song for him, O king.[288]

The mention of the term *gāthā*, which is especially used for non-Vedic metrical texts, and *gītikā* or "song" in this passage probably suggests that *gāyatrī* refers to the meter. The point is that the meter, if recited by someone who is not a full-blooded Brahmin, does not sound like a proper Vedic one, but more like a popular stanza. In this context, it must not be forgotten that like *gītikā* and *gāthā*, the word *gāyatrī* is derived from the root *gā/gī(/gai)* and could also be translated as "the song-meter." Nevertheless, the passage easily makes one think of one specific verse, the GM, and it is certainly one of those passages where the meter and the verse can easily be confused. As a matter of fact, some manuscripts of the Northern recension also add the line: "but if a non-Brahmin recites the *sāvitrī*, he perishes."[289] While this clarification suggests that the passage might *imply* the recitation of the GM, it would be going too far to assert that the word *gāyatrī* actually *denotes* the verse.

These, then, are all the passages in the main text where the word *gāyatrī* occurs, and as we can see, in all of them the word most likely simply denotes the meter, and not the verse. This situation quickly changes, however, in the star passages and appendices. These contain textual material that is found in one or more manuscripts, but was not included in the main text. These passages are dealt with in the following.[290]

In several cases it is clear that the word *gāyatrī* again simply denotes the meter. In II 35.25*358.1, for instance, it is plainly stated that "the *gāyatrī* is chief among meters" (*gāyatrī chandasāṃ mukham*).[291]

In another passage, VIII 24.66–84,[292] we find the description of a divine chariot made by (and at least partly even of) the gods for Mahādeva (the horse-

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288 MBh III 83.26–27: *tata eva tu gāyatryāḥ sthānaṃ trailokyaviśrutam / trirātram uṣitas tatra gosahasraphalaṃ labhet /26/ nidarśanaṃ ca pratyakṣaṃ brāhmaṇānāṃ narādhipa / gāyatrīṃ paṭhate yas tu yonisaṃkarajas tathā / gāthā vā gītikā vāpi tasya saṃpadyate nṛpa /27/*; for another and similar translation, see van Buitenen II: 394.
289 III 83.27*439.1: *abrāhmaṇasya sāvitrīṃ paṭhatas tu praṇaśyati /.*
290 These are II 35.25*358.1; VI 40.78*113.5, App. 3A36, 3B111, 3B36; VIII 24.76*262.1; XII 274.60 App. 28.283; XIII 107.62*491.3; 113.13*569.4; 80.45 App. 9B146–147; XIV 96.15 App. 4.1544, 1552, 4.3121, 4.3126, 4.3201, 4.494 (the latter six passages are dealt with below).
291 Interestingly, this passage has a parallel in Buddhist texts; see Shults 2014: 119.
292 Tr. Bowles 2006: 323–329 (including the appendix).

horses of this chariot are Indra, Varuṇa, Yama, and Kubera).²⁹³ This passage is part of the main text. The list of the chariot's components (elaborated in the appendix) goes on and even includes elements that are not part of the chariot itself. The equipment that comes with it includes, for instance, a goad (in the case of this divine chariot; this is the ritual utterance *vaṣaṭ*) at whose tip a strap is fixed. This strap is called *gāyatrī*.²⁹⁴ Already the next verse specifies that the bow-string used by Mahādeva is the *sāvitrī* (the bow itself is the "year," *saṃvatsara*), thereby showing that (as in XIV 44.4–6 translated above) the two are distinct. A parallel case is found in VII 173.56 App. 25.10, where the *gāyatrī* and the *sāvitrī* are both made the reins of the chariot.²⁹⁵

In IV 5.31 App. 4G1–66, Yudhiṣṭhira praises the goddess Durgā in a *durgāstava*, or "eulogy of Durgā." In doing so, he calls upon her by many different names, among them *gāyatrī sāvitrī*.²⁹⁶ While it is most natural to read this expression as a combination of the meter and the mantra, it cannot be ruled out completely that they were intended to be synonymous.

In several other passages, the context suggests that *gāyatrī* can only denote the mantra, and not the meter. The first passage, XIII 113.13*569, contains a list of meritorious deeds that save a twice-born from crimes causing a loss of caste (known as *pātakas*), among them readings of the Vedas, satiating a thousand cows or the recitation of 100,000 GMs.²⁹⁷ The repetition indicates that the GM is meant, as it is typically recited in this way as a means of purification.²⁹⁸

The passage XIII 107.62*491.3 states that "one should regularly exercise reflection on the Gāyatrī, concentrating on the Sandhyā(/ Juncture worship)."²⁹⁹ In this case, it is the mention of the Sandhyā that suggests that one should reflect on the primary mantra used in this ritual.

In a third passage, the "beginning and the end of the gods are the Gāyatrī and the sound *om*."³⁰⁰ The typical combination with *om* again suggests the GM.

In other cases, determining the meaning of the word is less easy. At the end of the BhagG (MBh VI 40.78), a number of manuscripts add a passage in which the Gaṅgā, the Gītā, the Gāyatrī, and Govinda are presented together as a set.³⁰¹

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293 Bowles 2006: 556.

294 VIII 24.76*262.1–3: *vaṣaṭkāraḥ pratodo 'bhūd gāyatrī śīrṣabandhanā / yo yajñe vihitaḥ pūrvam īśānasya mahātmanaḥ / saṃvatsaro dhanus tad vai sāvitrī jyā mahāsvanā /*. Cf. VII 173.56*1457.2 and XIII 145.27.

295 *gāyatrīṃ pragrahaṃ kṛtvā sāvitrīṃ ca maheśvaraḥ /*.

296 IV 5.31 App. 4G22: *namo gāyatri sāvitri namas te jātavedasi*. For another *durgāstava* and early Durgā worship in general, see Lubin 2020, especially pp. 41–43.

297 *pārāyaṇaiś ca vedānāṃ mucyate pātakair dvijaḥ / gāyatryāś caiva lakṣeṇa gosahasrasya tarpaṇāt //*.

298 See below pp. 164–166.

299 *gāyatrīmananaṃ nityaṃ kuryāt saṃdhyāṃ samāhitaḥ /*. For the Sandhyā or "Juncture (worship)," see below pp. 146–152.

300 XII 274.60 App. 28.283: *ādiś cāntaś ca devānāṃ gāyatry oṃkāra eva ca /*.

301 VI 40.78*113.5: *gaṅgā gītā ca gāyatrī govindeti hṛdi sthite /*.

A similar statement is found in the so-called Gītāsāra, a text of fifty-one verses preserved only in Kashmiri manuscripts (App. I 3 of MBh VI).[302] This "summary" of the BhagG also has another passage, stating that "this should be recognized to be the highest Gāyatrī: the one known as the unmuttered one (*ajapā*)."[303] The line could refer to the idea that the GM is most effective when repeated only mentally.[304] As we saw above, in the BhagG itself the word *gāyatrī* is only used for the meter. Considering, however, that the word *ajapa* is mentioned (mental *japa*, too, is a kind of recitation), it is most likely that these passages follow the new trend of using the name of the meter for the mantra.

The last passage is XIII 80.45 App. 9b146–147, which is part of an explanation of the six types of so-called *kapilā* cows.[305] Each cow is associated with a certain deity, depending on her characteristics. In view of the other associations, it seems likely that *gāyatrī* here refers to a divinity as well. As I will argue in Chapter 8,[306] this divinity is most likely the deification of the mantra, and not of the meter.

Looking at the bulk of the epic evidence, we see that the transition from the meter to the mantra may have been, in many cases, fluid. In general, however, it is clear that the use of the word *gāyatrī* for the mantra only becomes common in the later strata of the MBh (I will return to the issue of the date below). This question then arises: *Why* was this alternative designation introduced in the first place? Why did the mantra ṚV III 62.10, already well known as (*the*) *sāvitrī*, additionally receive the name (*the*) Gāyatrī?

What this survey reveals is that most sources use either *sāvitrī* or *gāyatrī* to denote the mantra, but they do not as a rule replace one with the other. In other words, the two are rarely used in one and the same text as synonyms in the sense of an "elegant variation." The only exception to this rule that I have found is in the MBh, in Appendix I 4 of the Āśvamedhikaparvan, a rather long text of roughly 1,700 verses. This little-studied text is known under the name **VaiṣṇDhŚ**,[307] and is in many ways similar to the so-called ViṣṇDh (or Viṣṇudharmāḥ).[308] In the VaiṣṇDhŚ, the mantra is generally called *sāvitrī*, fourteen times

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302 App. 3A110/B111: *gītā gaṅgā ca gāyatrī govindo hṛdi saṃsthitāḥ* /.

303 MBh VI 40.78 App. 3B36: *gāyatrī sā parā jñeyā ajapā nāma viśrutā* /.

304 In medieval texts, *ajapa gāyatrī* is also used to designate the mantra *haṃsa* (or *so 'ham*); see Mallinson & Singleton 2017: 134. The present passage can also be understood in this way (in this case the word definitely refers to a mantra); however, the mention of the Sandhyā in the preceding line, VI 40.78 App. 3B35, probably indicates that the GM is meant.

305 *gāyatryāś ca vṛṣaṇayor utpattiḥ ṣaḍguṇā smṛtā / evaṃ gāvaś ca viprāś ca gāyatrī satyam eva ca //.*

306 See below pp. 239–240.

307 See generally Rastelli forthcoming-b; cf. Rastelli 2019: 181–182 and 2017.

308 See Grünendahl 1984: 51–54.

in all. Four times, however, the author chooses to use *gāyatrī* instead of *sāvitrī*. Let us look briefly at these four passages.

In the first passage, the context is the Sandhyā:

> Those who in the morning and in the evening correctly and regularly per-
> form the Juncture (worship), pass and lead across [that is, they attain and
> bring salvation] by making a boat consisting of the Veda. If someone softly
> recites the purifying goddess Gāyatrī, the Mother of the Vedas, he does not
> sink down while taking possession of the earth and the sea.[309]

We will return to this passage, which presents one of the clearest examples of deification of the mantra, in Part II of this study.[310] For now, it will be sufficient to observe that *gāyatrī* here essentially refers to the GM recited in the Sandhyā. That it is really not the meter, but the verse that is intended is corroborated by the second and third passages that mention the *gāyatrī*. In both of them, the Lord gives prescriptions for bathing. Among other texts, the *gāyatrī* should be recited, "accompanied by the Vyāhṛtis and the Humming [i.e., the syllable *om*]."[311] This leaves little doubt that the GM, which is frequently accompanied by this introductory formula (generally in the order *oṃ bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ*), is meant.

The fourth and last passage of the VaiṣṇDhŚ to be taken into account here mentions that the GM should accompany the drinking of a cow's purifying urine.[312] The mention of other Vedic verses in this context confirms that nothing other than the GM is meant. As it thus turns out, in the Śāstra the word *gāyatrī* always refer to the mantra, and is not once used for the meter.

But the text goes even further. In three passages we learn that Lord Viṣṇu has his own GM.[313] This Gāyatrī is, with little doubt, a so-called Viṣṇugāyatrī, a modified GM dedicated to Viṣṇu.[314] As already mentioned, a great number of these modified GMs exists, and their history has attracted even greater scholarly attention than that of the GM itself.[315] For our current purposes, we shall stay

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309   MBh XIV 96.15 App. 4.492–495: *sāyaṃ prātas tu ye saṃdhyāṃ samyaṅ nityam upāsate // nāvaṃ vedamayīṃ kṛtvā tarante tārayanti ca // yo japet pāvanīṃ devīṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamā-taram // na sīdet pratigṛhṇānaḥ pṛthivīṃ ca sasāgarām //*; cf. ViṣṇDh 51.1: *sāyaṃ prātaś ca yaḥ saṃdhyām upāste 'skannamānasaḥ / japan hi pāvanīṃ devīṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamā-taram //*.

310   See below p. 239.

311   XIV 96.15 App. 4.1544: *savyāhṛtiṃ sapraṇavāṃ gāyatrīṃ ca japet punaḥ /*, 4.1552: *savyāhṛtiṃ sapraṇavāṃ gāyatrīṃ vā tato japet /*.

312   XIV 96.15 App. 4.3201; cf. BaudhDhS IV 5.12 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 337) and ParSm II 11.32.

313   XIV 96.15 App. 4.2778: *gāyatrīṃ mama vā devīṃ sāvitrīṃ vā japet tataḥ /*, 4.3121: *bhagavaṃs tava gāyatrī budhyate tu kathaṃ nṛbhiḥ /*, 4.3126: *japtvā tu mama gāyatrīm atha vāṣṭākṣaraṃ nṛpa /*.

314   See Beck 1994: 53; cf. below p. 79.

315   See n. 17 on p. 3 above.

with the topic by only asking what these modified verses might reveal about the GM and, more specifically, about the development of its designations.

2.2 The modified Gāyatrīs and *the* Gāyatrī

The earliest sources for the modified GMs are generally understood to be, first, the Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā (MaitrS II 9.1), and, second, *prapāṭhaka* X of the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka (TaittĀ X 1.5–7), which is also known as the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad (MNārU).[316] In none of the available editions of these texts are the modified verses called *gāyatrī*s, as they are in the MBh. In fact, they are not called by any name at all. One of the earliest non-epic texts do so is probably the Pāśupata-Sūtra (PāśS), which must have been composed before the fourth century CE.[317] The text mentions a modified GM, the Rudragāyatrī, and in doing so uses the expression *raudrī gāyatrī*.[318] The parallel usage in texts like the VaiṣṇDhŚ (*mama gāyatrī*, said by Viṣṇu) suggests that the verses modelled after the GM were indeed called *gāyatrī*s,[319] even though not all of them strictly follow the rules of the *gāyatrī* meter.[320]

Calling the new verses *gāyatrī*s made sense: *sāvitrī*, after all, means "Savitṛ verse," and as such was not well suited for the purpose.[321] The fact that *sāvitrī* was the name of a goddess and a princess might also have played a role. Metrical accuracy was, in any case, of little interest to the creators and the preservers of the modified GMs. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that the *gāyatrī* meter had already gone out of fashion by the end of the Vedic period. At the time of the great Sanskrit Epics, virtually no one composed verses in the *gāyatrī* meter any more. For most people, every verse that resembled the most renowned verse in the *gāyatrī* meter could also be called *gāyatrī*.[322]

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316   There also exists an independent recension of this text associated with the AV; cf. Bisschop 2018a: 4. For the various recensions of the MNārU, see below p. 184.

317   PāśS I 17; see Kajihara 2019: 17–18. The earliest commentary on the PāśS has been dated to the fourth/fifth century CE (Bisschop 2014: 27), which suggests that the Sūtra already existed before that time.

318   For the Rudragāyatrī in particular, see Kajihara 2019: 17–22.

319   The Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra (BaudhGŚS), for instance, generally uses *sāvitrī* for the GM, but occasionally also *gāyatrī*. However, it also knows of other *gāyatrī*s, which it specifies as *rudragāyatrī* (II 18.9, 19.2) and *vaiṣṇavī gāyatrī* (V 3.6).

320   Three of the eleven modified GMs in the MaitrS are hypermetric (II 9.1: 119.7–120.15; the fifth, eighth, and eleventh); among the twelve modified GMs of the TaittĀ, five are hypermetric (X 1.1–7; the first, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth, and tenth) and one is hypometric (the eleventh). At least in the ṚV, hypermetric *gāyatrī*s are extremely rare; see Arnold 1905: 161–162.

321   Nevertheless, designations such as *rudrasāvitrī* were used as well, if only rarely; see, for instance, AVPar XL 2.5–6 (cf. Kajihara 2019: 19). See also n. 579 on p. 139 below.

322   Cf. Kajihara 2019: 20: "Within the terms Raudrī Gāyatrī and Rudra-Gāyatrī, the word *gāyatrī* refers not only to 'a verse in the *gāyatrī* meter' in general, but also more specifically to 'the particularly sacred verse Gāyatrī,' just as in the case of the Vedic Gāyatrī."

I would argue that this development in turn influenced how the original GM was called. Clearly, the GM was the best-known *gāyatrī* verse, and merely mentioning the word would have easily brought the GM to mind. But its use as an actual synonym must have been pushed, or perhaps even triggered, by the introduction of new *gāyatrī* verses. While Sanskrit does not generally make use of a definite article (in the strict sense) to indicate that a word denotes a specific entity, it must have been clear that the *gāyatrī* verse *par excellence* is ṚV III 62.10.

In a few cases, authors nevertheless felt the need to clarify that it is really the famous GM that is meant by combining the words *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī*. The Vaikhānasa-Gṛhyasūtra (VaikhGS), for instance, uses both *sāvitrī* and, less frequently, *gāyatrī*, for the GM. One time it also designates it as *gāyatrī sāvitrī*.[323] Similarly, the TaittĀ uses the word *gāyatrī* for the GM without further specification,[324] but also uses *sāvitrī gāyatrī*.[325] It is, in my view, no coincidence that both texts also recognize the existence of modified GMs: the VaikhGS mentions a Viṣṇugāyatrī,[326] and the TaittĀ is even known as a source of the modified GMs. Only under this circumstance does it make sense to distinguish between several, apparently easily confused mantras.[327]

This raises the issue of chronology. The prevalent view is that the Vedic texts were the sources for later, post-Vedic traditions, in which the modified GMs, such as the Viṣṇugāyatrī or the Rudragāyatrī, became quite prominent. Peter Bisschop, however, argued that some of the mantras used in Pāśupata Śaivism, among them the Rudragāyatrī, were not taken from the ancient Vedic texts, but rather inserted into them long after the end of the Vedic period.[328]

If this is correct, it shows that in the centuries around the Common Era, texts like the TaittĀ were not yet fixed.[329] Indeed, considering their language, the faulty (one is even tempted to say: "amateurish") accentuation, and their content, the conclusion that many passages in the TaittĀ are post-Vedic is un-

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323 VaikhGS VI 1 (tr. Caland 1929: 151; omitting *sāvitrī*).

324 TaittĀ II 2; cf. below p. 149.

325 TaittĀ II 16; see below p. 160.

326 VaikhGS X 10 (tr. Caland 1929: 222).

327 The use and the order of words do not seem to directly depend on the *immediate* presence of modified GMs; cf. MBh IV 5.31 App. 4G22, see above p. 75. In the case of the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa (GopB I 1.31), which generally uses the word *sāvitrī* to designate the GM, the expression *sāvitrī gāyatrī* is once used in order to turn one's attention to the meter: "Teach [me], sir, the *sāvitrī gāyatrī*, which has twenty-four wombs, twelve couplings" (*adhīhi bhoḥ sāvitrīṃ gāyatrīṃ caturviṃśatiyoniṃ dvādaśamithunām*; also translated by Patyal 1969: 33); cf. also BaudhDhS IV 4.6 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 335), where several manuscripts add the word *gāyatrī* most often before, and sometimes also after *sāvitrī*; see Olivelle 2000: 626.

328 Cf. Bisschop 2018a: 2–5; cf. also von Schroeder's (1900) n. 8 on KāṭhS XVII 11: 253.20–21.

329 Bronkhorst (2016: 32, n. 96) remarks that the TaittĀ "may date in its present form from the beginning of the Common Era."

avoidable.[330] While most of the MaitrS is no doubt ancient, there is little reason to assume that the case of MaitrS II 9, which contains the modified GMs, is much different.[331] The MNārU, in turn, has been placed by Doris Srinivasan between the fourth/third century BCE and the third/fourth century CE.[332] As Bisschop concluded: "Not everything that is found in the Vedas is necessarily old."[333]

The testimony of the Epics and the Dharmasūtras, too, points to a relatively late date both for the modified GMs and, most importantly in the present context, for the designation "Gāyatrī" itself. As we saw, in the constituted text of the critical edition of the MBh, the word *gāyatrī* is practically never used to denote the mantra. This only happens in passages relegated by the editors to the footnotes and appendices. Their placement within the edition does not allow to directly infer their age: it is very well possible that an older text had been preserved outside the epic manuscript tradition, but was then found suitable by a redactor, who then chose to insert it. It is, at least in theory, also possible that an older text was pushed back or replaced by a younger one.[334] Fortunately, however, we do not have to rely on the epic manuscript tradition alone.

Looking outside the epics, we find that the earliest datable texts calling the GM "Gāyatrī" are the metrical portions of the Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra (BaudhDhS) and the Vasiṣṭha-Dharmasūtra (VasDhS).[335] The metrical portion of the BaudhDhS "are probably not earlier than the third to fourth centuries CE."[336] The VasDhS, on the other hand, is the youngest Dharmasūtra, and can possibly be dated even to the first century CE;[337] its metrical portions, however, are probably younger.

Interestingly, while the word *gāyatrī* is used as a name of the mantra in the late strata of the Dharmasūtras, no modified GMs are ever mentioned (this

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330 Regarding language and content of the TaittĀ, see below p. 148 and 160 as well as Srinivasan 1973: 173, n. 63. The word *sandhyā*, for instance, is to my knowledge not attested in any (other) Vedic text.

331 Further research on this issue is needed, and I have to confine myself to a few remarks and references. Gods like Gaṇeśa (mentioned in the MaitrS; cf. Krishan 1990) do not even play an important (if any) role in the MBh itself. The language, too, is only pseudo-Vedic: in the modified Gāyatrīs of the MaitrS, *pracodáyāt* is always accented, despite the fact that it is now the verb of a main clause (cf. Mirashi 1975: 58); the accent of the preceding word is always on the final syllable regardless of the correct accentuation (*viṣṇú* instead of *víṣṇu*, *vahní* instead of *váhni*, *sṛṣṭí* instead of *sṛ́ṣṭi*). Similarly, the ending °*áya* always bears the accent before *dhīmahi*, even in Bahuvrīhis such as *hastimukhá* "elephant-faced."

332 See generally below p. 184 and Cohen 2018.

333 Bisschop 2018a: 5. In a similar vein, Bronkhorst (2007: 198) argued that "much of Vedic literature was still in a state of flux" even in the time of Pāṇini, concluding (p. 206) that "Vedic texts were still being modified, perhaps even produced, down to the time of Patañjali, and perhaps beyond."

334 Regarding the improbability of this case, see Mehendale 2001: 193–194.

335 BaudhDhS IV 1.27–28, V 12, 31, VI 1 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 329, 337, 341, 341); VasDhS XXV 9, 12–13 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 451).

336 Olivelle 2000: 7, n. 10.

337 Olivelle 2000: 10.

is true for all strata). A number of even later Dharma texts do mention a mantra called *durgāsavitri*,[338] *durgāsāvitrī*, or simply *durgā*.[339] It is unknown, however, to which verse or verses these words refer. According to several commentaries, it is ṚV I 99.1 or a combination of ṚV I 99 and the *sāvitrī* "*devasya tvā savituḥ...*"[340] In any case, the *durgāsāvitrīs* – if they actually were modified GMs, which is doubtful[341] – only appear in late strata of the Sūtras. Considering that these Sūtras are not "sectarian," however, the absence of modified GMs is not really telling. In fact, it would be surprising if they prescribed the recitation of any other than the original, Vedic *gāyatrī sāvitrī*.

Lastly, it is also possible to adduce a piece of negative evidence. Contrary to what one might expect, the MānDhŚ, presumably composed in the second or perhaps third century CE,[342] uses only the word *sāvitrī* to denote the GM.[343] While this might be a coincidence (or a corollary of the fact that it is a strictly Brahminical text whose allegiance lies with the Vedic tradition), it is perfectly in line with the development outlined in this chapter.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show, little points to the existence – let alone the widespread use – of modified GMs before the second century CE at the earliest, the time when Pāśupata Śaivism (possibly) came into existence.[344] Most texts making use of the modified GMs are, in fact, younger. The VaiṣṇDhŚ, for instance, was probably composed at least three centuries later. While it is difficult to establish

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338 The transfer of a stem ending in *ī* to one ending in *i* is quite common in Epic Sanskrit; see Oberlies 2003: 79–82.

339 See Kajihara 2019: 24–26.

340 This formula is quoted in many texts; see, for instance, VājS I 24.

341 BaudhDhŚ IV 3.8 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 335) has *durgā*(-), which is followed by *vyāhṛtayo-* or *mahādoṣavināśanāḥ* (depending on the manuscript) and could therefore be either singular or plural. The form *durgāḥ* is attested in an edition of the Parāśara-Smṛti (ParSm; see Kajihara 2019: 25, n. 82) and explained by a commentator to refer to the hymn (and not only the first verse of) ṚV I 99. In other instances, only ṚV I 99.1 is meant. VasDhŚ XXVIII 11 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 459) has *durgāsāvitrir eva ca*. Despite these uncertainties, for Kajihara (2019: 25–26) the existence of the terms "suggests that, at the time of the Dharma texts, some people worshipped Durgā, and called their sacred formula by the name Sāvitrī. The most probable reason why it was called by the name Sāvitrī would be that it could express the formula's sacredness by invoking that of the Vedic Sāvitrī proper." For the early use of the term *durgā* to designate the (Warrior) Goddess, see Yokochi 2004: 16–18.

342 See Olivelle 2018a: 24 and Bronkhorst 2012.

343 Here again, the designation Gāyatrī for the verse is found in additional passages in several manuscripts; see MānDhŚ II 83 in the critical edition (Olivelle 2005: 418). In the constituted text itself, the word is not mentioned.

344 See Sanderson 2013a: 8.

the date of the first creation of the modified GMs, the belief that they must be "ancient" merely because they have been transmitted in Vedic texts, is questionable. Their designation as "Gāyatrīs," in any case, cannot be shown to be earlier than the third or fourth century CE.[345]

The introduction of the designation "Gāyatrī" for the verse ṚV III 62.10 occurred, therefore, more or less simultaneously to the emergence and spread of the so-called modified GMs. In my view, this is not coincidental. Rather, I would argue that the creation of the modified forms of ṚV III 62.10 led to the revival of, or renewed the attention to, a category that had, by that time, become obsolete: the category of *gāyatrī* verses. Among this group, the Vedic GM was naturally considered the original one – *the* Gāyatrī, as it were – but was nevertheless sometimes specified as a *sāvitrī gāyatrī* or *gāyatrī sāvitrī*. Considering that already in the early Gṛhyasūtras the use of the word *sāvitrī* was sufficient to denote ṚV III 62.10, the addition of the word *gāyatrī* can best be explained by the fact that this category had regained significance.

The cumulative evidence therefore suggests that the practice of calling the verse ṚV III 62.10 or its modified forms "Gāyatrīs" only became common after c. 200 CE. This means that the GM acquired its popular name more than a thousand years later than was previously thought. As we have also noted in passing in Section 1.2, the word *sāvitrī* was not always used as a name for the GM either. (I will come back to this issue in Chapter 4.) That the mantra literally made a name (or rather, two names)[346] for itself only centuries after its composition suggests that its career was not preordained, as traditional and even scholarly texts often seem to assume. This impression will be further reinforced in the following chapter, which deals with the early reuses of the mantra.

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345   The new name was apparently in need of an explanation. Kauṇḍinya (fourth/fifth century CE [Bisschop 2014: 27]), for instance, made the following comment: "And why Gāyatrī? Because the song (*gītā*) saves (*trāyate*) the singer (*gātṛ*), or because the Gāyatrī[-Mantra!] is set in the *gāyatra* meter." PañcBh I 17.10–12: *gāyatrī ca kasmāt | gītā gātāraṃ trāyata iti | gāyatre vā chandasi vartata iti gāyatrī.*

346   The development of the two designations of the GM is, in a way, similar to that of the designations of the Bible, which is also known as "the Scripture." The designation "Bible" ultimately goes back Koine Greek τὰ βιβλία – "the books." The Latin word *scrīptūra* (from which "scripture" is derived), on the other hand, could originally be used for any kind of written text, but is nowadays restricted to sacred texts – primarily that of Christianity, but also of other religions.

∴ **CHAPTER 3** ∴

Adaptive Reuse in Śrauta Ritual

Introduction

The Gāyatrī-Mantra had already been adaptively reused[347] in Śrauta rituals since at least 1100 BCE, when the Yajurvedic mantra texts were composed.[348] The aim of this chapter is to show how the GM was employed in those rituals and how that employment developed over time and across the various Vedic schools. (Domestic ritual, which certainly must have existed in one form or another when the elaborate Śrauta ceremonies were devised,[349] is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.) To this end, I have surveyed a great number of Vedic texts, using the mantra corpus provided by the *UVC* as a basis.

Up to the present day, there has been much speculation about the nature and significance of the GM, and very often this is also projected back onto its early history. Thus, the GM is sometimes said to be a particularly well-composed piece of poetry,[350] a spiritual prayer for inspiration, or a prayer to a universal sun god.[351] This chapter shows that these readings cannot be upheld for the early history of the mantra. Rather, for the most part of its "adolescence," the GM was primarily and rather simply known as one among many verses that are set in the *gāyatrī* meter and mention Savitṛ, the god "Impeller." As such, the GM was only one among a variety of other so-called *sāvitrī*s. As we will see, however, this specific verse was comparatively prominent and often employed in similar ways in Śrauta ritual across various Vedic schools.

The chapter consists of four sections:

- **Section 1** (pp. 84–85) summarizes the current state of research.

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347   For the distinction between simple and adaptive reuse, see n. 75 on p. 18 above.

348   "A rough and ready estimation of the absolute dates of the vedic texts puts the ṛgvedic compositions 1600–1200 BCE, the yajurvedic *mantra* texts 1200–1100 BCE, the expository prose 1100–600 BCE, and the descriptive prose of most of the Sūtras 600–400 BCE." Proferes 2018a; see also Proferes 2018b.

349   For the relationship between the Gṛhya and the Śrauta ritual, see Smith 1986a.

350   Prabhakar (1974: 63–66), for instance, argued that the mantra already stood out in the ṚV because of the unique combination of its components.

351   See below pp. 114–119.

- **Section 2** (pp. 85–103) contains my analysis of the employment of the GM in Śrauta ritual. Every mention of the GM is discussed against the textual and reconstructed ritual and liturgical backgrounds. As this part is very technical, the general reader might want to jump ahead to Section 3.

- **Section 3** (pp. 104–105) summarizes the results of the analysis in Section 2.

- **Section 4** (pp. 106–109) discusses how the results can be contextualized within the chronological and geographical frames of the relevant texts and attempts to outline the development of the reuses of the GM.

1. State of research

Until very recently, the history of the GM outside and prior to its becoming a part of the Upanayana has been almost entirely ignored. While speculations concerning possible reasons for the use of the GM in the Upanayana abound, it has regularly been taken for granted that Śrauta ritual never played an important role in its development. One of the few studies exclusively devoted to the early history of the mantra is that of Krishna Lal (1971), who marshalled most (but not all) occurrences of the GM in the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Śrautasūtras. Lal, however, did not go any further than observing that the GM did not enjoy any special importance in most of these texts.

In 1988, Harry Falk published an important study of the role of Savitṛ in early-Vedic religion, in which he suggested that it was the nature of this deity that had been decisive for the employment of the GM in the Upanayana. The GM itself, however, was only marginally addressed in this paper, which was primarily concerned with the nature of Savitṛ and his manifestation in nature.[352] Three decades later (at the same time that the present study was in the process of being written) two scholars independently turned to the beginnings of the famous mantra and studied it from different perspectives: Mieko Kajihara (2019) and Joël P. Brereton (2022).

In her concise and diligent study, Kajihara dealt with the questions of "how and from when a verse called Sāvitrī is related to the knowledge of the Veda" and "from when the word *sāvitrī́-* refers to ṚV 3.62.10 in particular."[353] After addressing these questions, however, she concentrated on the modified GM in

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352   For a critical review of Falk's theories, see Haas 2020: 155–161.
353   Kajihara 2019: 2.

later traditions.[354] Her article thus did not deal with the *earliest* reuse of the GM. No attempt was made to elucidate why and as a result of what developments the specific verse ṚV III 62.10 became *the sāvitrī* as we know it.

Brereton, on the other hand, completely honed in on the early history of the mantra. In his paper, he followed the path the GM had taken through the Vedic texts and contexts. He discussed the verbal similarities of the GM with other verses in the ṚV (V 82.1 and I 159.1, 5), and concluded that it was probably the GM that was the source of inspiration for these other verses. However, he also noted that as "the Ṛgveda shows frequent intratextualities, […] it is difficult to know just how significant the Gāyatrī was held to be."[355] In the remainder of the paper, Brereton turned to the employment of the GM in Śrauta ritual, discussing many of the text passages also collected in this chapter. His general conclusion was that the GM first occurs "in marked positions representing ritual transitions and beginnings" in the tradition of the Śukla-Yajurveda (ŚYV), and that it was this special function that was responsible for its employment in the Upanayana. Since the analysis presented here is more comprehensive than that found in Brereton's study of this part of the history of the GM, his findings will be discussed at the appropriate places. The analysis presented here confirms most of his conclusions. However, by approaching the subject from a different angle, it also shows that the GM was also employed in very similar ways outside and even prior to its reuse in the ŚYV tradition.[356]

2. Employment in Śrauta ritual

The structure of the following analysis, which has to cope with a great amount of textual material, is determined by two different categories. The first category is the tradition and Veda to which a given text belongs, e.g., "Taittirīya (ŚYV)," "Aitareya (ṚV)," etc. The second category subsumes similar or otherwise inter-related instances of a given way of employment in ritual and/or interpretation, for instance the Agnihotra or Puruṣamedha. A given combination of these categories is manifested in an "instance," marked by a number sign # and consecutively numbered throughout the entire section. For a clearer overview, the reason why the GM is employed ("deity principle," "metrical principle," etc.) is indicated beside the title of the instance. In the presentation of litanies, the

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354 Answering the questions of "(3) how the variations of the Sāvitrī are produced in the Vedic and the post-Vedic texts, and (4) how and why the idea of the sacred verse Sāvitrī is adopted into the religious traditions beyond the ancient Vedic religion." Kajihara 2019: 2.

355 Brereton 2022: 77.

356 For more details, see below pp. 106–109.

meter of a verse and the author to whom a verse is attributed (in the following simply: "poet") is always given for the sake of completeness; in most cases, they are not relevant to the purposes of this study.

In sum, the GM is used in more than eight different ritual contexts (which will be treated in this order): in several versions of the Agnyupasthāna (#1–4); in the tertial Vaiśvadeva Ritual (#5); in several Vaiśvadeva-Śastras within the context of the Soma ritual (#6–10); in the Aśvamedha (#11) and the Puruṣamedha (#12); in the Pravargya (#13); in the Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi (#14, also in the context of the Soma ritual); and in the daily Agnihotra (#15).

#1–4 The Agnyupasthāna: deity principle

The Agnyupasthāna is a non-obligatory adjunct of the Agnihotra and is usually only performed in the evening.[357] It is performed after the Agnihotra and generally comprises the recitation of various litanies before the Āhavanīya and Gārhapatya fires, the so-called Agnihotrī cow (whose milk is used in the ritual), and her calf. Virtually all text passages relevant to the Agnyupasthāna were collected by Gonda (1980b) who, however, for the greater part only reproduced the information given in the sources without further analysis. Thus, it has never been investigated how the litanies of the ritual were assembled and how they evolved. As we can see below, there are some verses (**ṚV VIII 51.7** to Indra, **IV 9.8** and **X 87.22** to Agni, **I 18.1** to Brahmaṇaspati, all of them marked bold in the following instances) which can be found in most of these litanies, among them also the GM. Together with **ṚV VIII 51.7**, the GM is present in all of them, and therefore, we may assume that these two as well as some of the other verses were already used in that form of the Agnyupasthāna litany from which all of the others were presumably derived.

It is not entirely clear whether the longer litanies were derived from a basic structure according to certain principles or whether the shorter ones resulted from a process of simplification, in which some verses were dropped (though the former appears to be more likely). In the Vājasaneyin litany, for instance, the verses of the much simpler Kauṣītaki litany are simply preceded by two groups of three verses, each directed at Brahmaṇaspati and the Ādityas, respectively. In other cases, the addition of verses seems to follow certain principles. In Āpastamba's and Hiraṇyakeśin's elaborate litany, the verse TaittS I 4.22.a, beginning with the words **kadā́ caná** *starī́r asi* (**ṚV VIII 51.7**), is followed by TaittS I 4.22.c, a verse that begins similarly with **kadā́ caná** *práyucchasi.* The last verse of the same litany (TaittS I 4.22.p), addressing Agni, begins with **pári tvā́gne** *púraṃ vayáṃ-,* a beginning that is similar to that of the frequently reused verse to Agni, **ṚV IV 9.8** (**pári te** *dūḷábho rátho-*). We also see that the deities ad-

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dressed in the litanies follow a certain pattern: usually, but not always, Savitṛ–Brahmaṇaspati–(Mitra–)Indra–Agni. The resemblances of the verses employed in the litany and their order thus suggest some kind of development that had either started with one of the extant litanies or with another (now lost) source.

A detailed examination of the Agnyupasthāna litanies will have to be the subject of another study. For now, it is sufficient to note that the GM is an integral part of the ritual procedure. Its selection cannot be explained by any resemblance or relation to the other verses. While the other "original" verses appear to have at least some verbal resemblance with each other (**VIII 51.7** and **IV 9.8** both mention the *dāśús* or "worshipper"; **IV 9.8** and **X 87.22** both begin with *pári*), the GM stands apart. Its presence may simply be explained by the fact that it is a verse mentioning Savitṛ: like many other rituals,[358] the Agnyupasthāna was originally supposed to begin with an invocation of Savitṛ, and this was done with the help of a *sāvitrī* verse.

#1 The first Taittirīya Agnyupasthāna (KYV)

In most Śrautasūtras of the Taittirīya tradition, the GM is prescribed as the first verse for addressing the Āhavanīya.[359] The verses used are addressed to Savitṛ, Brahmaṇaspati, Indra, and Agni:

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1[360]	TaittS I 5.6.m (**GM**)[361]	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra
2	TaittS I 5.6.n (**ṚV I 18.1**)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
3[362]	TaittS I 5.6.o (**ṚV VIII 51.7**)	Indra	*bṛhatī*	Śruṣṭigu Kāṇva
4[363]	TaittS I 5.6.p (**ṚV X 87.22**)	Agni	*triṣṭubh*	Pāyu Bhāradvāja

Table 4

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358   Cf. Oldenberg 1897: 479 and 1905: 256–257.

359   TaittS I 5.6.m–p (tr. Keith 1914: 75–76); BaudhŚS III 9 (tr. Kashikar 2003: 139–141); BhārŚS VI 3 (tr. Kashikar 1964/II: 139); VādhŚS I 6.1.20; and VaikhŚS III 7 (where the GM is called *sāvitrī*). The verses are preceded and followed by prose mantras not reproduced here.

360   The numbers in the leftmost columns indicate the relative position of a mantra within the immediate liturgical sequence.

361   In the following, I will include references to identical or similar verses in the ṚV in curved brackets in order to facilitate the identification of structures and patterns. (Determining and recording the exact relationship between Ṛgvedic verses and their cognates or variations in other Vedic texts would have gone beyond the scope of this chapter.)

362   According to the BaudhŚS, the last two verses (pos. 3–4) are said not to be directed at the Āhavanīya but are used to worship the "night" (*rātrī*) and the Gārhapatya.

363   See n. 362.

The corresponding Brāhmaṇa section in the TaittS merely informs us that the GM is used *prásūtyai*, that is, "for impulsion" or "procreation," alluding to the etymology (or morphology) of the word *savitṛ́*, and possibly also referring to the initial position within the litany.[364] Inasmuch as this rather simple litany is already documented in this form in the earliest Taittirīya text, the TaittS, it is likely that it is older than the second, augmented Taittirīya litany, to which we will turn next.

#2 The augmented Taittirīya Agnyupasthāna (KYV; Āpastamba and Hiraṇyakeśin)

In two other Śrautasūtras of the Taittirīya tradition, that of Āpastamba and Hiraṇyakeśin, the GM is the fourth of ten verses recited at the beginning of the Agnyupasthāna.[365] The GM again initiates the sequence Savitṛ–Brahmaṇaspati–Indra–Agni after three preceding verses taken from the Kaṭha-Saṃhitā (KaṭhS). In comparing these prescriptions with those of the other Taittirīya texts, we observe that new verses are added to the litany, especially verses to Mitra (TaittS III 4.11.p,r).[366] Another verse to Indra, TaittS I 4.22.c, was most likely chosen because of its similarity with the preceding verse I 5.6.o.

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	KaṭhS VII 2: 64.1–2 (ṚV I 18.3)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
2	KaṭhS VII 2: 63.20–21 (ṚV I 18.2)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
3	KaṭhS VII 2: 64.5–6 (**ṚV IV 9.8**)	Agni	*gāyatrī*	Vāmadeva Gautama
4	TaittS I 5.6.m (**GM**)	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
5	TaittS I 5.6.n (**ṚV I 18.1**)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
6	TaittS III 4.11.p (ṚV III 59.6)	Mitra	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
7	TaittS III 4.11.r (ṚV III 59.2)	Mitra	*triṣṭubh*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
8	TaittS I 5.6.o (**ṚV VIII 51.7**)	Indra	*bṛhatī*	Śruṣṭigu Kāṇva

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364 TaittS I 5.8.4 (tr. Keith 1914: 77). For the etymology of *savitṛ́*, see above p. 44.
365 ĀpŚS VI 18 (tr. Caland 1921: 202; Dumont 1939: 77–78) and HirŚS VI 6.19.
366 Cf. Gonda 1980b: 41–42.

→ table continued from previous page

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
9	TaittS I 4.22.c (ṚV VIII 52.7)	Indra	*bṛhatī*	Āyu Kāṇva
10	TaittS I I 5.6.p (**ṚV X 87.22**)	Agni	*triṣṭubh*	Pāyu Bhāradvāja

Table 5

#3 Vājasaneyin Agnyupasthāna (ŚYV)

In the Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā (VājS), we find many of the verses given in the texts of the KYV.[367] Here, however, the order of the addressed deities and their verses is different, and the litany does not start with the GM, which only occupies the penultimate position. The last three verses are the same as those in the Agny-upasthāna of the Kauṣītaki and most Taittirīya Śrautasūtras (though here, too, the order differs).

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	VājS III 28 (**ṚV I 18.1**)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
2	VājS III 29 (ṚV I 18.2)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
3	VājS III 30 (ṚV I 18.3)	Brahmaṇaspati	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
4	VājS III 31 (ṚV X 185.1)	Mitra, Aryaman, Varuṇa	*gāyatrī*	Satyadhṛti Vāruṇi
5	VājS III 32 (ṚV X 185.2)	Mitra, Aryaman, Varuṇa	*gāyatrī*	Satyadhṛti Vāruṇi
6	VājS III 33 (ṚV VIII 18.5)	Ādityas	*uṣṇih*	Sadhvaṃsa Kāṇva
7	VājS III 34 (**ṚV VIII 51.7**)	Indra	*bṛhatī*	Śruṣṭigu Kāṇva
8	VājS III 35 (**GM**)	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
9	VājS III 36 (**ṚV IV 9.8**)	Agni	*gāyatrī*	Vāmadeva Gautama

Table 6

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367   See also KātyŚS IV 12 (trs. Ranade 1978: 128 and Dumont 1939: 22–25).

Brereton remarked that in this litany, "the Gāyatrī functions to introduce the concluding mantra that states the sacrificer's requests of the god,"[368] an interpretation that could indeed be valid. It should in any case be noted that this is the only version of the Agnyupasthāna litany in which the GM does *not* occupy a formally recognizable first position.

The corresponding passage in the ŚatB explains the use of the GM thus: "Then a *sāvitrī́*. Verily, Savitṛ is the impeller of the gods, and thus, all desires are fulfilled for him, only when they are impelled by Savitṛ."[369] In terms of its content, this passage could be characterized as one of the many and typical "ad-hoc explanations" found in the Brāhmaṇas. However, it also suggests that it was the literal meaning of Savitṛ's name that was taken to be the most prominent component of the mantra. This is corroborated by the way the ŚatB refers to it: the verse is primarily a *sāvitrī́*, that is, a verse mentioning Savitṛ. As the authors of the Brāhmaṇa were probably well aware, the deity principle was the determining factor in this litany (as in the following ones).

Michael Witzel pointed out that the VājS is probably a late-Vedic text (c. eighth century BCE or later), whose compilation and consolidation was perhaps inspired by the well-ordered final redaction of the ṚV, or was undertaken to emulate the Saṃhitās of the KYV.[370] Possibly, it was even dependent on the existence of the ŚatB. Considering the age of the VājS, its Agnyupasthāna litany is probably the most recent, with the possible exception of the Kauṣītaki/Śāṅkhāyana litany.

#4 Kauṣītaki Agnyupasthāna (ṚV)

In the rather short litany of the Kauṣītaki tradition, the GM occupies the first position followed by two verses directed at Indra and Agni:[371]

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	**GM**	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
2	**ṚV VIII 51.7**	Indra	*bṛhatī*	Śruṣṭigu Kāṇva
3[372]	**ṚV IV 9.8**	Agni	*gāyatrī*	Vāmadeva Gautama

Table 7

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368   Brereton 2022: 78.

369   *átha sāvitrī́ | savitá vái devā́nāṃ prasavitá tátho hāsmā eté savitṛ́prasūtā evá sárve kā́māḥ sámṛdhyante* ŚatB II 3.4.39. Cf. the translations by Eggeling, *SBE* XII: 356; Gonda 1963a: 285, 1980b: 45, and 1988: 79.

370   Witzel 1997b: 326–329.

371   See ŚāṅkhŚS II 11–13 (tr. Dumont 1939: 200–201).

372   This last verse is recited three times.

The Śāṅkhāyana school is usually (but, perhaps without justification)[373] associated or even identified with the Kauṣītaki school. With regard to the Agnyupasthāna, the earlier KauṣB only prescribes the recitation of the so-called Vātsapra hymn.[374] The origin of the Agnyupasthāna litany presented in the Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra (ŚāṅkhŚS) is unknown. As its litany is the shortest and the verses contained in it are present in all of the others, we may surmise that the Śāṅkhāyana version is either very close to or even identical with the original Agnyupasthāna litany, or that it is a simplified version of the Taittirīya litany – *non liquet*.

#5 The Vaiśvadeva ritual (KYV): deity principle; metrical principle

The three rituals that are performed at the beginning of the hot season (*grīṣma*), the rainy season (*varṣa*), and the cold season (*hemanta*), each lasting four months, are called Cāturmāsyas or Tertial Rites.[375] The first of them is called Vaiśvadeva (not to be confused with the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra) and should be performed on the full-moon day of the months Phālguna or Caitra, that is, around the vernal equinox.[376] In this ritual, the gods are offered oblations placed on potsherds. Savitṛ receives the third of five oblations after Agni and Soma. The two verses directed at him are found in the TaittS and the MaitrS.[377] The entire litany comprises the following verses:

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	TaittS IV 1.11.c (ṚV VIII 44.16)	Agni	*gāyatrī*	Virūpa Āṅgirasa
2	TaittS IV 1.11.d (ṚV X 8.6)	Agni	*triṣṭubh*	Triśiras Tvāṣṭra
3	TaittS IV 1.11.e (ṚV I 91.8)	Soma	*gāyatrī*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
4	TaittS IV 1.11.f (ṚV I 91.4)	Soma	*triṣṭubh*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
5	TaittS IV 1.11.g (GM)	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
6	TaittS IV 1.11.h (ṚV IV 54.3)	Savitṛ	*jagatī*	Vāmadeva Gautama
7	TaittS IV 1.11.i (ṚV I 3.11)	Sarasvatī	*gāyatrī*	Madhucchandas Vaiśvāmitra
8	TaittS IV 1.11.k (ṚV VI 49.7)	Sarasvatī	*triṣṭubh*	Ṛjiśvan Bhāradvāja

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373 Cf. Witzel 1997b: 321, n. 324.

374 KauṣB II 4 (tr. Keith 1920: 353). According to Keith (1920: 353, n. 45), this hymn is ṚV X 45. However, the verses VājS III 11–36 are also called "Vātsapra hymn"; cf. Eggeling, *SBE* XII: 349.

375 See Einoo 1988; Kane II(2): 1091–1108.

376 BaudhŚS V 1.

377 TaittS IV 1.11.g–h and MaitrS IV 10.3: 149.14–15. Cf. MānŚS V 1.3.8 and 2.4.43 (tr. van Gelder 1963: 136 and 164). The *pratīka tad-* in KāṭhS XX 15: 35.21 possibly also refers to the GM (Fushimi 2013: 93, n. 65).

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
9	TaittS IV 1.11.l (ṚV VI 54.5)	Pūṣan	*gāyatrī*	Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya
10	TaittS IV 1.11.m (ṚV VI 58.1)	Pūṣan	*jagatī*	Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya
11	TaittS IV 1.11.n (ṚV I 85.7)	Maruts	*jagatī*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
12	TaittS IV 1.11.o (ṚV VI 66.9)	Maruts	*triṣṭubh*	Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya

Table 8

Here we observe that the litany is primarily structured by the order of deities addressed (two verses are dedicated to each deity) and a metrical pattern. The first verse of a pair is usually a *gāyatrī*, while the second one is a *triṣṭubh* or a *jagatī* (with some exceptions). Sometimes, the two were even composed by the same poet (or at least hail from the same Ṛgvedic hymn). In the case of Savitṛ's pair of verses, the first one, the GM, is followed by another verse from the ṚV in the *jagatī* meter. The content of the verses does not seem to have played any role, at least it is difficult to connect the GM with the following verse.[378] When the creators of this litany were looking for a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter, their choice fell on the GM. The decisive factors for its inclusion in the litany were arguably that it mentions Savitṛ and is set in the *gāyatrī* meter.

#6–10 Vaiśvadeva-Śastra: deity principle

One of the rituals dealt with in the Ṛgvedic Śrautasūtras and Brāhmaṇas is the Soma ritual. In this ritual, a litany called Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, a "Praise to All Gods," recited by the Hotṛ, who is responsible for reciting the Ṛgvedic verses, is used in several variations.

In the AitB and the Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra (ĀśvŚS), the GM is found in four of the Vaiśvadeva-Śastras recited during the so-called Ṣaḍaha, the "Six-Day" Soma ritual. While the AitB and the ĀśvŚS often diverge from each other with regard to the verses used in the litanies, the GM (as well as of some other verses and hymns) is quite consistently employed.

The Ṣaḍaha has two forms, the Abhiplava and the Pṛṣṭhya; the GM is used in the litanies of the Pṛṣṭhya form. According to the AitB and the ĀśvŚS, on the

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378   ṚV IV 54.3 (TaittS IV 1.11.h, MaitrS IV 10.3: 149.15): "Whatever we have done to the divine race, because of heedlessness, or scant skills, or excess of power, or our sheer human nature, o Savitar, among both the gods and the sons of Manu, impel us to be without offense here." *ácittī yác cakr̥mā dáiv₍ye jáne, dīnáir dákṣaiḥ prábhūtī pūruṣatvátā / devéṣu ca savitar mánuṣeṣu ca, t₍uvā́ṃ no átra suvatād ánāgasaḥ //*; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 639.

second, fourth, and eighth days of the Pṛṣṭhya Ṣaḍaha, the GM as well as the following ṚV verse (III 62.11) are combined with ṚV V 50.1 to form a triplet. The latter verse, which begins with a reference to an anonymous deity called *netṛ́*, "Leader," has traditionally been interpreted as being directed at Savitṛ because he is also mentioned in the previous hymn (ṚV V 49).[379] This verse is a rather frequently used "*sāvitrī*," and is also cited in Yajurvedic texts.[380]

In the following, the Vaiśvadeva-Śastras for the second, fourth, and eight days are presented; the sixth day, which shows some peculiarities, will be treated after these three days. The version of the AitB is always given before the younger ĀśvŚS. As will be seen, the order of the deities addressed in the Śastras is almost invariably Savitṛ–Heaven and Earth–Ṛbhus–All Gods (Viśve Devas). Interestingly, this order can also be found in the collection of Nivids, eleven similarly structured prose texts that are inserted into particular Śastras.[381] While the pattern was thus not peculiar to the Vaiśvadeva-Śastras, the verses vary in each litany.

#6 Aitareya and Āśvalāyana Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, second day (ṚV)

For the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra of the second day, the AitB prescribes the following verses and hymns:[382]

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	ṚV V 50.1	*netṛ́* (≈ Savitṛ)	*anuṣṭubh*	Svastyātreya Ātreya
2	GM + ṚV III 11	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
3	ṚV V 82.7–9	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Śyāvāśva Ātreya
4	ṚV VI 71	Savitṛ	1–3: *jagatī*; 4–6: *triṣṭubh*	Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya
5	ṚV I 160	Heaven & Earth	*jagatī*	Dīrghatamas Aucathya

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379 According to Jamison & Brereton 2014: 725, in the Ṛgvedic hymn itself, this identification "is not necessary."

380 TaittS III 5.11.3; MaitrS I 2.2: 10.15, II 7.7: 82.10, II 6.5: 65.8; KaṭhS II 2.2, XVI 7, XXIII 2; ŚatB III 1.4.18, VI 6.1.21, XIII 1.8.8. See also AitB IV 8, XI 67, XXII 21; KauṣB VIII 1, XXII 5, XXVI 17.

381 Scheftelowitz (1919) maintained that the Nivids are the oldest Vedic prose texts. This has been relativized by Proferes (2014), who argued that while containing several archaic linguistic forms, their structure and organization presupposes the existence of the entire Ṛgvedic collection.

382 AitB IV 32.2 (tr. Keith 1920: 222).

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
6	ṚV I 111	Ṛbhus	*jagatī*; 5: *triṣṭubh*	Kutsa Āṅgirasa
7	ṚV X 92	All Gods	*jagatī*	Śārysāta Mānava

Table 9

According to the ĀśvŚS, the litany of the second day is like that of the so-called Caturviṃśa day,[383] but is introduced by the same additional verses as given in the AitB.[384] The litany is thus almost the same as that of the AitB, but only omits ṚV I 111, the hymn dedicated to the Ṛbhus.

#7 Aitareya and Āśvalāyana Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, fourth day (ṚV)

For the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra of the fourth day, the AitB again starts with the same introductory verses (ṚV V 50.1, GM, ṚV V 82.7–9 = positions 1–3 above).[385] It then prescribes the following:

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
4	ṚV VII 45	Savitṛ	*triṣṭubh*	Vasiṣṭha Maitrāvaruṇi
5	ṚV VII 53	Heaven & Earth	*triṣṭubh*	Vasiṣṭha Maitrāvaruṇi
6	ṚV IV 33	Ṛbhus	*triṣṭubh*	Vāmadeva Gautama
7	ṚV VII 34	All Gods	1–21: *dvipadā*, 22–25: *triṣṭubh*	Vasiṣṭha Maitrāvaruṇi

Table 10

The ĀśvŚS (VIII 8.4; tr. Mylius 1994: 362) does not include the GM in this Śastra.

#8 Aitareya and Āśvalāyana Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, eighth day (ṚV)

For the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra of the eighth day, the AitB again starts with the same introductory verses.[386] It then prescribes the following:

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383   See ĀśvŚS VII 4.12 (tr. Mylius 1994: 310).
384   ĀśvŚS VII 6.6 (tr. Mylius 1994: 316).
385   AitB V 5.6 (tr. Keith 1920: 228).
386   AitB V 19.8 (tr. Keith 1920: 243).

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
4	ṚV I 22.5–8	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
5	ṚV I 22.13–15	Heaven & Earth	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
6	ṚV I 20.4–6	Ṛbhus	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
7	ṚV X 157[387]	All Gods	*dvipadā triṣṭubh*	Bhuvana Āptya / Sādhana Bhauvana
8	ṚV VIII 83	All Gods	*gāyatrī*	Kusīdin Kāṇva

Table 11

The ĀśvŚS has the same verses and hymns, but again omits the introductory verses as well as the interspersed hymn ṚV X 157.[388]

#9 Aitareya and Āśvalāyana Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, sixth day (ṚV)

In the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra of the sixth day, which has special importance,[389] the two verses ṚV III 62.10–11 are preceded by another verse, found, among others, in the AV (VII 14.1–2), but not in the ṚV itself. The two verses are, as in the litanies of the other days, at the very beginning of the Śastra. While the accompanying verse was replaced by another one, the GM remained.

The Śastra of the AitB comprises the following verses:[390]

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	AV VII 14.1–2[391]	Savitṛ	(*aticchandas*)[392]	Nakula[393]
2	GM	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
3	AV VI 1.1–3[394]	Savitṛ	?	–
4	ṚV II 38	Savitṛ	*triṣṭubh*	Gṛtsamada

table continued on next page →

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387 This hymn is mentioned in connection with the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra in ĀśvŚS VIII 7.24; it is not clear to me why it is inserted in the AitB.

388 ĀśvŚS VIII 10.2 (tr. Mylius 1994: 366).

389 Cf. Keith 1920: 58.

390 AitB V 13.8 (tr. Keith 1920: 235–236).

391 *abhí tyáṃ deváṃ savitā́ram oṇ₍i₎yòḥ kavíkratum / árcāmi satyásavaṃ ratnadhā́m abhí priyáṃ matím /1/ ūrdh₍u₎vā́ yásyāmátir bhā́ ádidyutat sávīmani / híraṇyapāṇir amimīta sukrátuḥ ⁺kṛpā́* [for *kṛpāt*, cf. Whitney 1905: 398] *s₍ú₎vàḥ /2/*.

392 Cf. Whitney 1905: 398: "The metrical definition by the Anukr[amaṇī] of the first two verses as *anuṣṭubh* is bad; they are really four *jagatī* padas, to each of which are added four syllables that encumber the sense."

393 Cf. Oldenberg 1888: 364.

394 With ⁺*doṣā́gād* (the *pratīka* given in the AitB and ĀśvŚS) instead of *doṣó gāya* (AV); cf. Whitney 1905: 282.

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
5	ṚV I 185	Heaven & Earth	*triṣṭubh*	Agastya Maitrāvaruṇi
6	ṚV I 161	Ṛbhus	1–13: *jagatī*; 14: *triṣṭubh*	Dīrghatamas Aucathya
7	ṚV IV 37	Ṛbhus	1–4: *triṣṭubh*; 5–8: *anuṣṭubh*	Vāmadeva Gautama
8	ṚV X 61	All Gods	*triṣṭubh*	Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava
9	ṚV X 62	All Gods	various meters[395]	Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava

Table 12

The litany given in ĀśvŚS (VIII 1.18) diverges from the litany in the Brāhmaṇa. However, it also starts with the same verses from the MaitrS, ṚV, and AV, after which the following verses are recited:

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
4	ṚV X 61.1–25	All Gods	*triṣṭubh*	Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava
5	ṚV X 62.1–4,5–10,11	All Gods	various meters[396]	Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava
6	ṚV X 61.26–27	All Gods	*triṣṭubh*	Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava
7	ṚV V 51.11–13	All Gods	*jagatī*	Svastyātreya Ātreya

Table 13

#10 Kauṣītaki Vaiśvadeva-Śastra (ṚV)

In the Kauṣītaki texts, the GM and the two verses following it in the ṚV are used in the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra of the Dvādaśāha, the "Twelve-Day" Soma ritual. The GM is recited on the fifth day and all three verses are recited on the seventh day. The KauṣB and the ŚāṅkhŚS agree much more with each other than the AitB and the ĀśvŚS, and they can usually be considered together.

According to the KauṣB as well as the ŚāṅkhŚS, which adds a hymn at the end, the litany of the fifth day contains the following verses:[397]

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395 1–4: *jagatī*; 5: *anuṣṭubh*; 6: *bṛhatī*; 7: *satobṛhatī*; 8–9: *anuṣṭubh*; 10: *gāyatrī*; 11: *triṣṭubh*.

396 1–4: *jagatī*; 5–7: *anuṣṭubh, bṛhatī, satobṛhatī*; 8–9: *anuṣṭubh*; 10: *gāyatrī*; 11: *triṣṭubh*. 5–10 are recited by hemistichs, see ĀśvŚS VIII (= *uttarārdha* II) 1.22: "From this [hymn], the verses are recited by hemistichs before the last [verse, i.e., X 62.11, and] after the fourth [verse]." *tasyārdharcaśaḥ prāg uttamāyā ūrdhvaṃ caturthyāḥ*.

397 KauṣB XXIII 6 (tr. Keith 1920: 476, section XXIII 3), where mention is also made of Viśvāmitra, the poet of the GM hymn; ŚāṅkhŚS X 6.18 (tr. Caland 1953: 264–265).

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	GM + ṚV III 62.11–12	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
2	ṚV VI 71.4–6	Savitṛ	*triṣṭubh*	Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya
3	ṚV IV 56(.1–4)[398]	Heaven & Earth	1–4: *triṣṭubh*; (5–7: *gāyatrī*)	Vāmadeva Gautama
4	ṚV IV 34	Ṛbhus	*triṣṭubh*	Vāmadeva Gautama
5	ṚV V 41	All Gods	various meters[399]	Atri Bhauma
(6)[400]	ṚV V 41	All Gods	*triṣṭubh*; 17: *ekapadā virāj*	Atri Bhauma

Table 14

The seventh day of the Dvādaśāha is the first day of a series of days called the Chandoma days, which are distinguished by the peculiar character of their litanies. A Vaiśvadeva-Śastra is recited, containing the following verses:[401]

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	GM + ṚV III 62.11–12	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
2	ṚV II 41.19–21	Heaven & Earth	*gāyatrī*	Gṛtsamada
3	ṚV I 20.1–3	Ṛbhus	*gāyatrī*	Medhātithi Kāṇva
4	ṚV I 90.1–5	All Gods	*gāyatrī*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
5	ṚV X 172	Dawn	*dvipadā virāj*	Saṃvarta Āṅgirasa
6	ṚV I 3.7–9	All Gods	*gāyatrī*	Madhucchandas Vaiśvāmitra

Table 15

For this Vaiśvadeva-Śastra, several verses are explained as being "characteristic" (*rūpa*) of the first day because of various words they contain (KauṣB XXVI 10). Referring to the GM, for instance, the Brāhmaṇa says the following: "'That desirable [splendor] of the Impeller…' is directed at Savitṛ; 'who shall spur on / move forward our thoughts' contains [the word] 'forward' – verily, that which

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398 The Sūtra specifies that only the first four verses should be recited.
399 *triṣṭubh*; 16–17: *atijagatī*; 20: *ekapadā virāj*.
400 This hymn is only prescribed by the Sūtra; cf. Caland 1953: 265.
401 For the seventh day, see ŚāṅkhŚS X 9.16 (tr. Caland 1953: 272) and KauṣB XXVI 10 (tr. Keith 1920: 501).

contains 'forward' is the characteristic of the first day."[402] The alliteration of *pra* "forward" and *prathama* "first" gives further emphasis to this explanation.[403]

#11 Vājasaneyin Aśvamedha (ŚYV): deity principle, metrical principle, significance of the GM

In the Aśvamedha section of the VājS, the GM is the first of six verses addressing three different "manifestations" of Savitṛ (as explained in the Kātyāyana-Śrautasūtra [KātyŚS])[404] after the consecration of the horse. Their translation is given here in full:

> May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall spur on our thoughts! /9/.
> I call upon the golden-palmed Impeller for help. Through divinity he is the watchman of the track. /10/[405]
> We invoke the great benevolence of the attentive god, the Impeller, which brings true gifts. /11/
> We ask for the good praise of the increaser of benevolence, for the favor of the Impeller, the mind-reading god. /12/
> I call upon the one who bestows favors, the true lord, for joy, (I call upon) the Impeller for impulse, for the sake of the gods' enjoyment/feast. /13/
> We shall think upon the thought of the god Impeller, his impulse toward all the gods, with inspiration; (we shall think) upon the Apportioner. /14/[406]

All of these verses are in the *gāyatrī* meter. As observed by Brereton, they were intended as a coherent composition:

> After the first two verses of this hymn (VSM [= VājS] 22.9 and 10), the next four verses are linked by words or word segments beginning *su-* or *sa-*, echoing the name of Savitar. They are also linked by concatenation: verse 12 repeats *sumatí-* from verse 11, verse 13 repeats *rātí-* from verse

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402   KauṣB XXVI 10: *tat savitur vareṇyam iti sāvitram | dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayād iti pravat | pravad vai prathamasyāhno rūpam.*

403   Interestingly, the Vedic as well as the English words are cognates; see *EWA* II: 179.

404   *savitṛ prasavitṛ, savitṛ āsavitṛ,* and *savitṛ satyaprasava*; see KātyŚS XX 2.6 (tr. Ranade 1978: 535); cf. Gonda 1988: 61.

405   Cf. the translation of this verse by Jamison & Brereton 2014: 114.

406   VājS XXII 9–14 (9 = GM; 10 = ṚV I 22.5): *tát savitúr váreṇyaṃ bhárgo devásya dhīmahi / dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyat /9/ híraṇyapāṇim ūtáye savitā́ram úpahvaye / sá céttā devátā padám /10/ devásya cétato mahī́ṃ prá savitúr havāmahe / sumatíṃ satyárādhasam /11/ suṣṭutíṃ sumatívṛdho rātíṃ savitúr īmahe / prá deváya matívíde /12/ rātíṃ sátpatiṃ mahé savitā́ram úpahvaye / āsaváṃ devávītaye /13/ devásya savitúr matím āsaváṃ viśvádevyam / dhiyā́ bhágaṃ manāmahe /14/;* cf. the translation of the last verse by Brereton 2022: 79.

12 (and echoes *sumatí-* by *sátpati-*), and verse 14 repeats *ā́savá-* from verse 13. These formal features establish the coherence of the hymn.[407]

We also see that in the GM as well as in almost every other verse (except 13), the objects, genitive and/or dative forms, alternate with each other in patterns, for instance in verse 12: "the good praise of the increaser of benevolence – the favor of the Impeller."

Apparently there was a rather strong connection between the Aśvamedha and Savitṛ, as verses to this (impelling) god had to be recited and *iṣṭi*s performed every day while the horse was roaming across the land. It is possible that this connection also inspired the creator of the Savitṛ hymn translated above. The deity was thus again primary. The new Savitṛ hymn was begun with two well-known *sāvitrī*s, followed by other verses that are only found in the VājS and are modelled on the first two. While significantly occupying the first position, the GM is nevertheless only one of two leading *sāvitrī*s.

#12 Puruṣamedha (YV): deity principle, word principle (*prá*, *sū*, and *cud*)

In the Puruṣamedha, which in many respects resembles the Aśvamedha, Savitṛ is invoked as the first deity on the third day of the ritual according to the VājS (ŚYV) as well as the Hiraṇyakeśi-Śrautasūtra (HirŚS [KYV]).[408] The GM is here used as the second of three verses accompanying oblations to the god.[409] All of them are called *sāvitrī*s, which again illustrates that at that time, the term was not yet used as the proper name of the GM. Furthermore, the GM is not recited at the very beginning of the Puruṣamedha and is not the first mantra in the litany.[410] It is, however, the first metrical text to be recited on this day.

The two verses surrounding the GM, which are recited when the human sacrifices are brought to the place of the sacrifice, are the following:

> God Impeller, impel the sacrifice, impel the lord of the sacrifice to the share! The heavenly Gandharva, the enlightener of the banner, shall enlighten our intention, the Lord of Speech shall sweeten our prize! /1/
> May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall spur on our thoughts! /2/
> All difficulties impel away, god Impeller. Impel to us here what is beneficial. /3/[411]

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407 Brereton 2022: 79, n. 10.

408 An *atirātra* day; see KātyŚS XXI 6 (tr. Ranade 1978: 550).

409 VājS XXX 2 and HirŚS XIV 6.4.

410 Cf. Brereton 2022: 78–79.

411 VājS XXX 1–3 (VājS XXX 1 = IX 1 = XI 7 = TaittS I 7.7.1 = IV 1.1.2; VājS XXX 2 = GM; 3 = ṚV V 82.5): *déva savitaḥ prásuva yajñáṃ prásuva yajñápatiṃ bhágāya | divyó gandharváḥ ketupū́ḥ kétaṃ naḥ punātu vācáspátir vā́jaṃ naḥ svadatu | (GM) /2/ víśvāni deva savitar*

The ŚatB only briefly comments on these three verses: "thus he [i.e., the officiant] pleases the Impeller, and pleased, he [i.e., the Impeller] impels these men[412] forward to him [i.e., the officiant], impelled by him [i.e., the Impeller], he seizes them."[413]

The mantras used here are supposed to propitiate Savitṛ, who is obviously expected to impel the human victims to the officiant who is about to sacrifice them. Understandably, Gonda remarked that the recitation of the GM in this context, which for him "essentially is a prayer for spiritual illumination,"[414] is "an improper use of this prayer."[415] As has been shown in Chapter 1 – and as one may already conclude from the material presented so far – there is little reason to think that the practitioners of Śrauta ritual understood it as such a prayer at all. The ritual context, the combination with the other verses, and the comment of the Brāhmaṇa all show that the decisive factor for their inclusion was the fact that they contain the word *prá* "forward" along with a form of *sū* "to impel" or, in the case of the GM, with *cud* "to set in motion."

#13 Vājasaneyin Pravargya (ŚYV): Upanayana?

Originally, the Pravargya was a simple ritual in which milk was offered to the Aśvins in a heated and glowing vessel.[416] In later times, this vessel was identified with the sun and with the god Rudra Mahāvīra, and the Pravargya was incorporated into Śrauta ritual and apparently performed in the morning and evening of the second, third, and fourth days of the Soma ritual.[417] At this time, the Pravargya had become a more mysterious and elaborate ritual that also required the priest or the person performing the sacrifice to undergo a very specific initiation, the so-called Avāntaradīkṣā.

Interestingly, the (later) Pravargya, which may have been meant to reinforce the sun against the monsoon rains,[418] has a special connection with Savitṛ. Even though it cannot be performed by and for all, it is especially mentioned in the Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra (ĀpŚS XI 2.6–10) that it may be performed for a "bad Brahmin" (*durbrāhmaṇa*). Van Buitenen surmised that this refers to a Brahmin who does not regularly perform the Sandhyā, and "that this particu-

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→   *duritáni párāsuva / yád bhadráṃ tán na ásuva /3/.* Cf. also the translation of ṚV V 82.5 by Jamison & Brereton 2014: 765.

412   Lal (1971: 226) mistook them for animals.

413   *íti savitáram prīṇāti sò 'smai prītá etán púruṣān prásauti téna prásūtān álabhate* | ŚatB XIII 6.2.9.

414   Gonda 1988: 79.

415   Gonda 1988: 80.

416   For the Pravargya in general, see van Buitenen 1968. For the Pravargya of the Kaṭhas, see Witzel 2004b.

417   Staal 1983/I: 53–54. However, the prescriptions for the time of performance are inconsistent; cf. van Buitenen 1968: 2–4.

418   Van Buitenen 1968: 29–31.

lar exception is made to afford to such a one the opportunity of paying Savitar through the Pravargya the respect that he otherwise had neglected."[419] However, it is questionable whether the Sandhyā was already performed by adults at the time when the ĀpŚS was composed.[420]

The mantras used in the Śrauta Pravargya as given in the VājS (XXXVII) are preceded by twenty-four preliminary verses. They also contain the GM. Here, the GM (VājS XXXVI 3) is preceded by the three Vyāhṛtis, as is also often the case in the Upanayana. Considering the relatedness of the Upanayana and the Avāntaradīkṣā,[421] a connection between their uses of the GM seems likely.[422] But since neither the ŚatB nor the KātyŚS or other Śrautasūtras mention them, it is not clear to me when and how these verses were used, or whether they were part of the Pravargya proper or of the preceding Avāntaradīkṣā.

#14 Kauṣītaki Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi (ṚV): deity principle, word principle (*prá*), (metrical principle)

In the Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi, a preparatory ritual for the Soma ritual, the deities Pathyā Svasti, Agni, Soma, Savitṛ, and Aditi are one after the other addressed with various mantras.[423]

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
1	ṚV X 63.15	Maruts[424]	*triṣṭubh*	Gaya Plāta
2	ṚV X 63.16	the gods[425]	*triṣṭubh*	Gaya Plāta
3	ṚV I 189.1	Agni	*triṣṭubh*	Agastya Maitrāvaruṇi
4	ṚV I 189.2	Agni	*triṣṭubh*	Agastya Maitrāvaruṇi
5	ṚV I 91.1	Soma	*triṣṭubh*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
6	ṚV I 91.4	Soma	*triṣṭubh*	Gotama Rāhūgaṇa
7	GM	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Viśvāmitra Gāthina
8	ṚV V 82.9	Savitṛ	*gāyatrī*	Śyāvāśva Ātreya

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419 Van Buitenen 1968: 7.
420 See below p. 150.
421 See Kajihara 2002: 389–390.
422 Cf. Lubin 1994: 205–207.
423 See ŚāṅkhŚS V 5.5.
424 This verse was associated with Pathyā Svasti because it begins with the words *svastí naḥ pathyā̀su*.
425 This verse was associated with Pathyā Svasti because it follows the preceding verse in the original hymn and begins with the words *svastír íd dhí*.

pos.	verse	deity	meter	poet
9	X 63.10	Aditi (Earth & Heaven)	*jagatī*	Gaya Plāta
10	(AV VII 6.2)	Aditi	*triṣṭubh*	–

Table 16

Savitṛ is addressed with the GM and ṚV V 82.9.[426] We observe that each deity (or group of deities) is generally addressed with two verses of the same meter (the Maruts and Aditi deviate a little from the pattern), most often by the same poet and usually even from the same hymn. The KauṣB explains that these verses have been chosen because they mention specific words; in the case of the GM and the verse following it, this is the word *prá* "forward."[427]

In the earlier AitB, the verses given for this litany differ slightly.[428] Among other changes, the place of the GM is taken by ṚV V 82.7, which hails from the same hymn as the verse following it in both litanies (V 82.9). ṚV V 82.7 is another frequently reused[429] *gāyatrī sāvitrī*,[430] which, however, does not contain any of the words specified by the AitB itself (I 10 mentions *pra*, *netṛ*, *pathi*, and *svasti*).[431]

#15 Kauṣītaki Agnihotra (ṚV): deity principle? (Upanayana?)

The use of the GM in the Agnihotra is only prescribed by the Kauṣītaki tradition. In ŚāṅkhŚS II 6–10, we find injunctions for the Śrauta form of the Agnihotra. At the end of the ritual, four libations are offered into the Gārhapatya fire with simple formulae directed at Prajāpati and Agni. After these oblations, one is to offer another four libations into the Dakṣiṇāgni, reciting the GM in three parts for the first three libations in a rather peculiar way:

> "That desirable [splendor] of the Impeller"; EARTH; SPEECH;
> may more and more be mine, SVĀHĀ!
> "the splendor of the god may we obtain"; INTERSPACE; BREATH;
> may more and more be mine, SVĀHĀ!

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426 "Who makes all these creatures hearken with his signal-call and will impel (them) forth: Savitar." *yá imā́ víśvā jātáni āśrāvá̄yati ślókena / prá ca suvā́ti savitā́ //*; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 765.

427 KauṣB VII 8 (tr. Keith 1920: 387–388).

428 AitB I 9 (tr. Keith 1920: 113).

429 See below p. 130.

430 Cited also in Yajurvedic texts: TaittS III 4.11.2, MaitrS IV 12.6: 196.14, and ŚatB XIII 4.2.13. It is also cited in AitB IV 32, V 5, XIX 8; and KauṣB XX 3.

431 ṚV V 82.7: *ā́ viśvádevaṃ sátpatiṃ sūktáir adyā́ vṛṇīmahe / satyásavaṃ savitā́ram //*.

"who shall spur on our thoughts"; SKY; NAME;
may everything be mine, SVĀHĀ![432]

The following, fourth libation is again accompanied by a short formula directed at "Agni, the giver of food, the lord of food" (*agnaye 'nnādāyānnapataye*).

In this recitation, the GM can hardly be understood as a coherent text at all. Its combination with the Vyāhṛtis – the words *bhūḥ*, *bhuvaḥ*, and *svaḥ* – reminds one of the Upanayana, where the verse is frequently accompanied by this formula, sometimes also in a disjointed form. Considering that the Upanayana was probably also responsible for the employment of the GM in the Sandhyā, the other famous (and otherwise unrelated) Hindu morning ritual,[433] it is interesting to observe that this is the only version of the Agnihotra where the verse is recited. In light of the fact that the mode of recitation even resembles that of the Upanayana and taking into account the young age of the ŚāṅkhŚS in comparison to the other Śrauta texts, it is very likely that the Upanayana did not only influence the Sandhyā, but possibly also this Śrauta form of the Agnihotra.

#16 Sāmaveda

Contrary to the assertion of Staal,[434] the GM is contained in all recensions of the Sāmaveda (SV).[435] It is used, for instance, in the Viśvajit.[436] Judging from the sources known to me, it seems clear that the focus of the tradition was on the *gāyatrī*, the "song-meter," and not the verse. Thus, the so-called *gāyatra-sāman* enjoys particular importance.[437] While it is also sung with the GM, according to Wayne Howard, this was not the original version.[438] The tradition only began to pay greater attention to the GM towards the end of the Vedic period: the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa (JaimUB), also known as the "Gāyatra-Upaniṣad,"[439] for instance, deals with the *sāvitrī* in a later addition to the text.[440]

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432 ŚāṅkhŚS II 10.2: *tat savitur vareṇyaṃ bhūr vāg bahu bahu me bhūyāt svāhā | bhargo devasya dhīmahi bhuvaḥ prāṇo bhūyān bhūyo me bhūyāt svāhā | dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt svar ṇāma sarvaṃ sarvaṃ me bhūyāt svāhā*; also translated by Caland 1953: 39.

433 The earliest sources mentioning the Sandhyā are the Gṛhyasūtras; see below pp. 146–152.

434 Staal 1986a: 56.

435 See SV 812 and SVJ IV 3.8.

436 PañcB XVI 5.5–6 (tr. Caland 1931: 433). It stands to reason that the Sāmavedins also used it in other ritual contexts. Further research is needed.

437 For references, see Fujii 2010. The *gāyatrī-sāman* was later also reused outside Śrauta rituals proper, e.g., during a consecration ceremony according to several Pāñcarātra texts, see Hikita 2005: 173–174.

438 Howard 1987: 162–164; cf. Howard 1983.

439 Howard 1987: 161.

440 See below p. 175. According to GobhGS III 3.3, the *sāvitrī* is taught along with its *sāman* in the context of the Upākaraṇa; see also Kajihara 2019: 24, n. 78.

3. Summary

To summarize the ways the GM was reused (as just described in detail), and in order to facilitate the presentation of the material, I will first focus simply on how and why the verse is used in a given ritual from a "synchronic" and synoptic perspective. Then I will contextualize the results against the chronological and geographical backgrounds of the relevant texts and the schools that produced them. In doing so, I will retrace the way the GM took through the various rituals and how its usage developed in the course of time.

An analysis of all of the textual occurrences that are relevant to Śrauta ritual shows that the fact that the GM mentions Savitṛ was very often the key factor for the history of its employment. Usually it is Savitṛ's role as "initiator" and "impeller" that is revealed by the structure of litanies and rituals or is even explicitly stressed, while the notion that the GM is a prayer for light, fame, or inspiration is, in fact, never paid any attention at all.

The most prominent use of the GM in Śrauta ritual is that in the **Agny-upasthāna** (#1–4). Several texts of the KYV, ŚYV, and ṚV prescribe its recitation in the ritual, which could be performed daily and was particularly associated with the evening. The GM is consistently used in all Agnyupasthāna litanies as the verse directed to Savitṛ. While most of the verses used in these litanies are in the *gāyatrī* meter, this is not a general rule. Thus, in this case, the fact the verse is in the *gāyatrī* meter was not primary. Most likely, it was not the meaning of the verse, but the mere mention of Savitṛ, the impeller of rituals, which was taken to be the most important property of the verse.

The GM has probably been part of the Agnyupasthāna ritual since the very beginning. While there are also some other verses that can be found in almost all litanies, the GM is one of two verses (the other being ṚV VIII 51.7) that are present in all of them, and it is highly improbable that these verses were introduced into the several versions only after they had already been assembled. We may even suspect that to some degree this reflects the fact that the GM was (or, in the course of time, came to be) seen as the "typical" *sāvitrī* – or, at least, a very good *sāvitrī*, which was not replaced or substituted as easily as other verses. Even though this daily ritual was optional, we may further surmise that the employment of the GM in it contributed much to the mantra's becoming a frequently recited and well-known mantra, especially since it was used by Ṛgvedic and Yajurvedic traditions alike.

In the **Vaiśvadeva** (#5), the first Tertial Rite as prescribed by several texts of the KYV, the GM forms a pair with a verse in the *jagatī* meter taken from the ṚV (IV 54.3). Here, the meter definitely played a role, as the entire litany is structured both by the order of deities as well as the meter. The creators of

this litany were obviously looking for a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter (and the *jagatī* meter, respectively).

In the **Soma ritual**, a litany called Vaiśvadeva-Śastra is recited (#6–10). The GM appears in various versions of this litany, usually accompanied by ṚV V 50.1 and V 82.7–9, and once by a verse from the MaitrS (I 2: 14.4–7). Together with the former verses, the GM is part of an introductory sequence of verses that in most variations of the litany remains the same, while the verses to the other deities (Savitṛ, Heaven and Earth, the Ṛbhus, and All Gods) vary. Savitṛ is here invoked as the first god both in the relatively stable introduction as well as in the beginnings of the following litanies.

In the litanies given by the VājS for the **Aśvamedha** (#11), we find an extraordinary composition. Here, the GM is the first verse in a new hymn made entirely of *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s, all of which are similar to the GM and the verse following it. While the first two verses of the hymn are taken from the ṚV, the others appear to be original to the VājS and were most likely inspired by the first two. The composition shows that in this case, the GM was not only used because it is a suitable *sāvitrī* verse, but by occupying the first position, it may already by then have acquired a certain status. If that was the case, however, it cannot be observed throughout the entire ŚYV tradition. In the Puruṣamedha (#12) the GM is the very first verse recited on the third day of the ritual, albeit not the first mantra, as it is preceded by a short prose text addressed to Savitṛ.

The GM is also used in the Vājasaneyin **Pravargya** (#13) and cited in the SV (#16). Unfortunately, I could not ascertain how or why it is employed in the Pravargya, where it is conspicuously preceded by the three Vyāhṛtis. Even though the Sāmavedins had a special focus on the *gāyatrī* meter, there is no indication that the GM played a particular role in their litanies. Only in late-Vedic texts is more attention paid to the mantra.

In the **Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi** prescribed by the Kauṣītaki texts (#14), *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s were sought, and the choice fell on the GM and ṚV V 82.9. Here, it is interesting to observe that in the version of the AitB, the place of the GM is taken by another frequent *gāyatrī sāvitrī*, which can also be found in Yajurvedic texts (ṚV 82.7). This could suggest that the relative frequency or prominence of individual verses might already have played a role at the time when this litany was compiled.

The only tradition prescribing the use of the GM in the Śrauta **Agnihotra** is the Kauṣītaki tradition (#15), where it may have been taken over from or inspired by the Upanayana. It is, however, impossible to draw definite conclusions.

4. The early history of the Gāyatrī-Mantra

We can now attempt to give an outline of the development of the various ways the GM was employed in Śrauta ritual, based on the chronology and the localizations of the Vedic texts presented by Witzel.[441] In doing so, it will not be necessary to consider all of the texts that are concerned with the use of the GM in Śrauta ritual; only the earliest sources attesting to a certain way of employment are relevant. Most Śrautasūtras therefore only play a secondary role, as they only give prescriptions for rituals and litanies that already existed before them.

In the early history of the GM, two chronological phases, each lasting several centuries,[442] can be distinguished. To this division corresponds a change of space: the texts of the first phase were produced in different geographical regions than those from the second phase. Specifically, we observe a division into an early western/central phase, and a later eastern phase. To the former belong the texts of the Maitrāyaṇīyas, Taittirīyas, and early Aitareyins, to the latter the Vājasaneyins and Kauṣītakis/Śāṅkhāyanas.

The first phase took place in the region Punjab and in and around the area between Ganges and Yamuna (the Doab; see Figure 2 on page xvii above), around the time of the earliest Saṃhitās of the KYV (c. twelfth century BCE): the Maitrāyaṇīyas can probably be located in the Kuru realm,[443] east to the Doab area, where the Taittirīyas lived.[444] The old MaitrS and the TaittS contain texts for the Vaiśvadeva ritual – the earliest attested adaptive reuse of the GM in Śrauta ritual. This is followed by the first Taittirīya Agnyupasthāna litany, also found in the TaittS, where the GM for the first time appears as an introductory mantra.

The next earliest relevant text is probably the AitB, one of the oldest Brāhmaṇas,[445] on which the later KauṣB depends. The early parts of the AitB, too, were probably composed in the Kuru area, north of the Sarasvatī river, in the same region as that of the Kaṭhas.[446] As we saw above, the (north-)western schools viewed it more or less consistently as a "suitable," but otherwise unremarkable (*gāyatrī*) *sāvitrī*. Nevertheless, the GM often assumes an introductory function within the litanies, such as the several Vaiśvadeva-Śastras.

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441 See Witzel 1987 (cf. also his summary in Witzel 1995a and 1995b: 93–97) and 1997b.
442 The texts and rituals that came into being during the two phases continued to be used and performed throughout the entire Vedic period and beyond, which is why the ends of both phases are even harder to define than the beginnings.
443 Witzel 1987: 178.
444 Witzel 1987: 182.
445 Books I–V were composed at an early date in the Punjab, see Witzel 1987: 185 and 1997b: 322.
446 Witzel 1987: 185.

The second phase took place in a more eastern region. Most important are the texts of the ŚYV: the ŚatB, a text of the late Brāhmaṇa period (c. eighth century BCE) compiled in the eastern area of Videha,[447] and the VājS, a text that was created around the time or even after the ŚatB. In the VājS, the GM is part of the Agnyupasthāna litany, which was probably derived from an earlier (Taittirīya?) source. Further, the GM also appears in a rather late stratum of the text, where it is employed in two rather rarely performed rituals, the Aśvamedha and the Puruṣamedha, as well as in the Pravargya, where its employment is unclear.

Some time after the compilation of the VājS, the GM reappeared in the Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi of the KauṣB, where it replaces the verse ṚV V 82.7 given in the earlier and related AitB; this usage is, however, not innovative. The latest text to prescribe the employment of the GM in another Śrauta ritual, the Agnihotra, is the ŚāṅkhŚS, where it is, perhaps significantly, used in combination with the Vyāhṛtis, similar to the Pravargya. Like the KauṣB, the even later ŚāṅkhŚS can probably be located "somewhere in eastern Uttar Pradesh,"[448] perhaps in Kosala, north of the confluence of Ganges and Yamuna.[449]

The eastern schools of the second phase were thus the first to employ it in a somewhat peculiar, albeit not especially innovative, way. This can be observed in the eastern Vājasaneyin Aśvamedha, Puruṣamedha, and Pravargya, as well as in the Kauṣītaki Agnihotra. It is significant that the GM slowly began to attain some kind of special status only at a comparatively late stage: as we saw above, the Agnyupasthāna litany of the VājS, which belongs to an earlier stratum of the text, is the only one in which the GM is not in an initial position.

As for texts mentioning the GM, chronological development also corresponds to a difference in region, as the relevant central/eastern texts are generally earlier than the western texts of the Vājasaneyins and the even later ŚāṅkhŚS. But could it be that the former influenced the latter? Were the Vājasaneyins, above all, familiar with the ways in which the GM was employed in the western schools? As Witzel has shown, this may indeed have been the case. At the time of the late-Vedic ŚatB,

> Large masses of texts were imported into the east and were made use of in rituals and in public brahmanical discussions. Whatever may have been in use in the east as Vedic ritual (perhaps an early form of the Śukla Yajurveda and the eastern Ṛgveda mentioned in ŚB) was now reshaped according to Kuru-Pañcāla [i.e., "western"] norms.[450]

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447 Witzel 1987: 184, 194.
448 Witzel 1997b: 320.
449 Witzel 1997b: 336.
450 Witzel 1997b: 330.

It is thus very well possible that the creators of the ŚatB and the VājS were also acquainted with the specific Agnyupasthāna litanies and the Vaiśvadeva-Śastras of the Taittirīyas and Aitareyins.

However, it can only be speculated if and to what extent these litanies really influenced, for instance, the creation of the idiosyncratic "Savitṛ hymn" recited in the Aśvamedha. The Aśvamedha litany differs in character both from that of the Agnyupasthāna and the Soma ritual; furthermore, there were other frequently used *sāvitrī*s (such as ṚV I 22.5, the verse following the GM in the "Savitṛ hymn") that could have been chosen. Nevertheless, the employment of the GM in the litanies of the more eastern schools may have done its bit: as we will see in the next chapter, the mere fact that the GM had been reused more than once before might already have been decisive.

As we now know, the GM has not become prominent by its own merit as a text, but because it contains certain words (above all, *savitṛ́*) and is set in the *gāyatrī* meter. The literal meaning of the mantra as a semantically mean-ingful arrangement of words was, as is most often the case in Śrauta litanies, secondary. There are practically no allusions to the main object of the "prayer" (*bhárgas*, "light," or rather: "splendor"), which was apparently only of subor-dinate concern for the makers of the litanies. The same holds true for *dhī́-* ("thought, inspiration"), which only later happened to be etymologically con-nected with *dhīmahi*, the main verb of the mantra (even though it seems that this pun had already inspired the use of *manāmahe* in another *sāvitrī* of the ṚV).[451]

While the evidence does not (yet) warrant setting up a general rule accord-ing to which the GM is the "foremost first verse," it is clear that Savitṛ's being the impeller or initiator is perfectly exemplified in the ritual employment of this verse. The texts themselves assert this (#1, #12) and even project this meaning onto the preverb *prá* "forward," which is also linked with *prathama* "first" (#14, #10).

It becomes apparent, however, that the mantra did not act "as a token of transitions and especially of beginnings" only in the ŚYV, as stated by Brereton. As a matter of fact, it is only the old Taittirīya (KYV) and later Kauṣītaki (ṚV) texts that prescribe the GM as the very first verse in the Agnyupasthāna litany. Even in the Vaiśvadeva-Śastras prescribed by the Ṛgvedic Brāhmaṇas, the GM often assumes a leading or introductory function within its small liturgical con-text. The VājS, on the other hand, was compiled somewhat later, during the late Brāhmaṇa period (around the eighth century BCE), and possibly also under the influence of some of the more western schools.[452]

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451 Cf. Brereton 2022: 76–77.
452 See Witzel 1997b: 326–329.

The newly composed (and, in part, compiled) Savitṛ hymn in the Aśva-medha litany shows that at the time of its creation, the GM may already have acquired a certain renown or was, at least, comparatively well known. Consid-ering the age of the text, however, this status was likely preconditioned by a process which had first taken place in the traditions of the KYV and ṚV. Thus, the use of the GM in the VājS did not *initiate* the rise of the GM, but only be-longs to a later phase of this ascension. The use of the GM in the Aśvamedha (and Puruṣamedha) is perhaps not as significant as it may seem: it must be remembered that the elaborate and expensive Aśvamedha – in comparison to the Agnyupasthāna, Agnihotra, or Vaiśvadeva – was certainly not a frequently performed ritual (the Puruṣamedha, if it ever took place, must have been even rarer).

These observations are also important for the discussion of the role the GM plays in the Upanayana (a Gṛhya ritual) according to the ŚatB, where it was apparently not yet without competitors.[453] While the Yajurvedic tradition certainly "was in the vanguard in shaping late-Vedic piety,"[454] as Timothy Lubin put it, there is no indication that it contributed much to the development of the GM. The use of a *gāyatrī sāvitrī* in the Upanayana in general was also known to the authors of the roughly contemporaneous Kaṭha-Brāhmaṇa, but neither this text nor the ŚatB nor the VājS specify that it is the GM that should be used in this ritual.[455] Even in the other parts of the ŚatB and the VājS, the verse is not (yet) treated as a mantra that is essentially different from others.[456]

It must be stressed that in Śrauta ritual in general, the GM can hardly be said to be special. As we observe in the litanies of other traditions, there were also other frequently cited and used *sāvitrī*s, which sometimes even took the place of the GM. Especially with regard to its embedding in the Upanayana, it would be an exaggeration to assume that the GM was the only possible choice. While it is tempting to project the GM's later fame onto its "adolescence," it must be remembered that in the minds of the ritual experts of the time, it was only one among thousands. As we will see in the next chapter, however, among actually reused *sāvitrī*s, the GM was, in fact, one among few, and while it did have competitors, its employment in Śrauta ritual provided it – as well as several other *sāvitrī*s – with an excellent background to "go places" in Gṛhya ritual, too. The pivotal moment in the history of the GM was, without doubt, its selection as an initiation mantra in the Upanayana.

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453   See Chapter 4.
454   Lubin 2005: 89.
455   Cf. below p. 145.
456   Interestingly, the Gṛhyasūtras of the Taittirīyas and the ŚYV also do not even mention the Sandhyā, the second most important ritual for the development of the GM; see Einoo 1992: 59–60.

∵ **CHAPTER 4** ∵·

Selection as Initiation Mantra

Introduction

The *upanáyana* (the "leading to"), or *upáyana* (the "going to") as it is sometimes also called,[457] takes place when a boy is led to his teacher to be initiated into the study of the Vedic texts. By undergoing this ritual, the boy enters the state called *brahmacárya* and becomes a *brahmacārín*, that is, "someone who is engaged with [learning] the *bráhman*s (potent Vedic formulations)."[458] Probably since the late-Vedic period – that is, sometime between 800 and 500 BCE – the initiation has also included the ritual teaching of a *sāvitrī* verse that authorizes the student to learn the Vedic texts.[459]

In Chapter 2, we encountered what are probably the earliest passages touching upon this practice, the "Upanayana passages" in the ŚatB and the BṛhĀU.[460] These texts address the teaching of a *sāvitrī* only in passing while pointing out the excellence of the *gāyatrī* meter. The first detailed prescriptions for the entire procedure are found in the Gṛhyasūtras. The ritual act that these texts provide for is, in its basic features, always the same. As an example, here is a translation of the relevant passage from the Āpastamba-Gṛhyasūtra (ĀpGS):

> The boy, sitting facing east, seizes with his right hand the [teacher's] right foot, saying: "Teach [me] the *sāvitrī*, sir!" |8|
>
> Then he [i.e., the teacher] recites:
>
> [1] "That [desirable splendor] of the [god] Impeller..." |9| – *pāda* for *pāda*, hemistich for hemistich, and then in its entirety;
>
> [2] the Vyāhṛtis, singly at the beginnings or the ends of the *pāda*s, likewise

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457 The usage of the verbs *úpa+nī* and *úpa+i* is quite complex, see Kajihara 2002: 8–9 and 2016: 272, n. 1.

458 The *brahmacārín* in Vedic literature has been studied in detail by Mieko Kajihara over the last two decades. For an overview, see also Lubin 2018a.

459 For an overview, see also Kajihara 2019: 5–8.

460 See above pp. 67–72.

before/after [the beginnings/ends of] the hemistichs, with the last one [i.e., the last Vyāhṛti] before/after [the beginning/end of] the entire verse. |11|[461]

The Vyāhṛtis (*bhūr buvaḥ svaḥ*) are combined with the verse in the different Gṛhyasūtras in various ways (some omit them altogether).[462] All Sūtras, however, stipulate that the Upanayana involves the teaching of a *sāvitrī* verse, for which reason the procedure later came to be called *sāvitryupadeśa*, the "teaching of the *sāvitrī*." in most cases this *sāvitrī* is the Gāyatrī-Mantra (though not in all, as we shall see).

In the context of Gṛhya ritual, it is usually not too difficult to establish the connection between an act and the mantra(s) accompanying it.[463] In the case of the Upanayana and the GM, however, this connection is by no means obvious. Why is the god Savitṛ invoked in this context, a god who is otherwise not associated with learning or studentship at all? Why would there be a request for *bhárgas* – "splendor" or "effulgence"? Besides the GM, other *sāvitrī*s were occasionally used as initiation mantras as well. How is their use to be explained?

The ritual details as well as other aspects of the Upanayana have already been studied in many (and touched upon in even more) publications.[464] The present chapter focuses on one such aspect: the employment of *sāvitrī*s as initiation mantras. Following on from the preceding analysis of the employment of the GM in Śrauta ritual, it shows what principles guided the creators of the Upanayana in their choice of the GM and the other initiation mantras. To this end, it not only takes into account the Gṛhyasūtras, but also the reuse of the *sāvitrī*s in earlier Vedic texts.[465]

The chapter is divided into four sections:

- **Section 1** (pp. 114–119) sums up the current state of research. Several explanations of why the GM became preeminent are discussed.

- In **Sections 2** and **3** (pp. 119–128), select passages that concern the *sāvitryupadeśa* in the Upanayana are revisited. The GM is compared with

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461 ĀpGS IV 11.8–12: *purastāt pratyaṅṅ āsīnaḥ kumāro dakṣiṇena pāṇinā dakṣiṇaṃ pādam anvārabhyāha sāvitrīṃ bho! anubrūhīti |8| tasmā anvāha tat savitur iti |9| paccho 'rdharcaśas tatas sarvām |10| vyāhṛtīr vihṛtāḥ pādādiṣv anteṣu vā tathārdharcayor uttamāṃ kṛtsnāyām |11|*; also translated by Oldenberg, *SBE* XXX: 273.

462 Cf. BhārGS I 9, VārGS V 24–26, and HirGS I 2.6.10–11. Occasionally, the Vyāhṛtis are also extended by the syllable *om*; see BaudhGS II 5.39–40, MānGS I 22.13–14, GobhGS II 10.38–40, and KhādGS II 4.21–24. About half of the Gṛhyasūtras prescribe only the *sāvitrī*; see KāṭhGS XLI 20, ĀśvGS I 21.4–6, ŚāṅkhGS II 5.9–12, JaimGS I 1: 13.1–2, PārGS II 3.3–10, and KauśS VII 56.8–11.

463 See above pp. 16–17; cf. also Gonda 1977: 567–571.

464 To mention but a few: Kane II(1): 268–312; Olson 1977; Gonda 1979b; Falk 1988: 24–27; Lubin 1994: 170–192 and *passim*; Kajihara 2002, 2004, 2014, 2016, 2019; Michaels 2006: 93–94 and 2018; Lubin 2018a.

465 The relative chronology of the Gṛhyasūtras continues to be a subject of debate. A first

three other verses that are occasionally mentioned as its alternatives or substitutes. A close reading of the texts shows that there was a time when the verse used in the initiation ritual was yet to be determined, and had to be selected according to certain principles. These principles are reconstructed by comparing the known verses. The sources indicate that the key feature of the verses used was that they mentioned the god Savitṛ. The second criterion was meter: while the *gāyatrī* meter was almost always preferred, we also meet with *triṣṭubh*, *jagatī*, and *anuṣṭubh* verses.

- **Section 4** (pp. 128–133) deals with the relationship of Gṛhya and Śrauta ritual. It shows that the *sāvitrī*s used in the Upanayana are among the most frequent in Śrauta ritual. The employment of these verses as initiation mantras is best explained not with reference to their literal meaning, but instead, it was the frequent use of these verses in Śrauta ritual that account for their selection. To explain this, I propose to assume a positive feedback loop (a kind of "snowball effect") in ritual practice: the frequent employment of a verse often lead to its being used in other rituals and litanies.

→ comprehensive chronology was proposed by Gopal (1959: 84): first stratum: ĀśvGS, BaudhGS, MānGS, KauśS, GobhGS; second stratum: ŚāṅkhGS, BhārGS, ĀpGS, PārGS, KāṭhGS; third stratum: KhādGS, JaimGS, HirGS; fourth stratum: VārGS, VaikhGS, ĀgnGS. Another chronology has been proposed by Brucker (1980: 58–59) who, relying entirely on secondary literature, suggests the following sequence: oldest group: BaudhGS, BhārGS, ŚāṅkhGS, ĀśvGS; middle group: ĀpGS, KāṭhGS, HirGS, VādhGS, MānGS, KauśS, JaimGS, GobhGS, KhādGS, PārGS; youngest group: VārGS, VaikhGS, ĀgnGS. This chronology, however, has been severely criticized (see Bodewitz 1984). Lubin (2005: 86–87) has suggested that Sūtras that begin their treatment of the Saṃskāras with the Upanayana (instead of marriage) reflect a historically late development; these include the BhārGS, HirGS, ĀgnGS, and JaimGS. Others, like the MānGS and KāṭhGS, may belong to an intermediate stage. Regarding absolute dates, it is generally assumed that the first Gṛhyasūtras pre-date the Buddha (c. fifth century BCE) by a century or so; according to Bronkhorst (2011: 74), however, they were composed somewhat later, "during the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era." Lubin (2013), too, surmised that, at least in the Ganges valley east of the Doab, the process of systemization of Gṛhya rituals may have taken place around the same time as the erection of Asoka's edicts from the third century BCE. In the present study, I draw conclusions based on the uncertain chronology (relative as well as absolute) of individual Sūtras only with extreme caution. I will, however, assume that they generally postdate the BṛhĀU (which was possibly composed before or around the fifth century BCE [Olivelle 2018b]) and that the VaikhGS and ĀgnGS (which were possibly composed between the third and fourth centuries CE [Gonda 1977: 481]) are among the latest.

1. State of research

In secondary literature, speculations about the possible reasons for the fame of the GM and its use in the Upanayana abound. Different approaches can be distinguished, and I shall confine myself to a representative overview of the most important interpretations by modern scholars.

The first attempt at explanation is based on the assumption that Savitṛ has always had a solar nature. For Edward W. Hopkins,[466] for instance, the "most holy couplet of the Rig Veda" owed its fame to the fact that the "longed-for glory" of Savitṛ (his *bhárgas*) in later times was understood to refer to the sun. According to what he called its "esoteric meaning," the GM was interpreted as an expression of a kind of "primitive pantheism" in which the sun was viewed as a kind of "All-god."[467] Similarly, Leopold von Schroeder, who was convinced that Savitṛ is a sun god,[468] remarked: "Few prayers have been said here on earth as often as this one, and for this reason alone the verse does not seem unworthy of attention. For our purpose, it is a living testimony to the sun worship of the Indian Aryans which has continued over thousands of years."[469]

While von Schroeder's interpretation was already heavily criticized by Oldenberg,[470] who doubted the importance of Savitṛ's solar nature, it continued to find favor among later writers. Pandurang V. Kane, for example, tentatively speculated about the reason the GM was held in such high esteem in his treatment of the Upanayana: "Why the Gāyatrī verse (Ṛg. III. 62. 10) came to be famous it is difficult to say. Its fame was probably due to its grand simplicity and to its adaptability to an idealistic conception of the world as emanating from an all-pervading Intelligence."[471] Therefore, "The sacred Gāyatrī [...] is addressed to Savitṛ (the sun) and may also be interpreted as a prayer to the Source and Inspirer of everything."[472] Similar opinions were also expressed before and after Kane.[473]

However, while some texts indeed assign a more important role to this deity, Savitṛ cannot be said to have been an all-encompassing god in the Vedic or

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466   Hopkins 1895: 46–50.

467   Hopkins 1895: 47.

468   Von Schroeder I: 7–8.

469   Translation of von Schroeder I: 9: "Wenige Gebete sind hier auf Erden wohl so häufig gesprochen worden wie dieses, und schon darum scheint der Vers der Beachtung nicht unwert. Hier ist er uns ein lebendiges Zeugnis der durch Jahrtausende fortgesetzten Sonnenverehrung der indischen Arier."

470   "Daß die Heiligkeit des Sāvitrīverses etwas mit Sonnenverehrung zu tun habe [...], möchte ich, soweit es sich um den Ursprung dieser Heiligkeit handelt, durchaus bestreiten." Oldenberg 1917: 597.

471   Kane II: 303.

472   Kane II: 302.

473   See, for instance, Anand 1988: 5.

(early) Hindu religion in general. As a matter of fact, Savitṛ had already declined in importance in the Brāhmaṇa period, where Prajāpati had a much greater claim to the status of a universal creator god.[474]

Others understood the GM as being above all a prayer for inspiration or "mental power" needed by the student: in its last *pāda*, we read that Savitṛ is expected "to spur on our thoughts" or "to rouse forth our insights." Oldenberg, for instance, took the last line of the GM as one of the most important factors for its use in the Upanayana (together with the fact that it invokes Savitṛ, an important point to which I will return below).[475] Intuitively, of course, this is a very plausible explanation, for in its original context, it is indeed possible to interpret the GM as also being a prayer for inspiration. Yet, the host of other adaptive reuses of the mantra one comes across in the Gṛhya and Śrauta texts makes it questionable whether this could really be the primary reason for the choice of the GM. Furthermore, there were other *sāvitrī*s used in the Upanayana that do not mention inspiration at all.[476]

Somewhat surprisingly, the "inspirational interpretation" also exerted its influence on those who were well-acquainted with the other reuses of the verse. Krishna Lal (1971) traced the start of its career to the ŚatB, where, according to him, it was named *sāvitrī* for the first time, and to the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa (GopB), where it "attained a metaphysical importance."[477] At the beginning of his article, after asking why the GM was chosen and what made it so popular, he conjectured that the common use of the mantra in the Gṛhyasūtras was due to the diversity of its employment in various Śrauta rituals:

> One thing is very clear from the above study that the field of employment of the Sāvitrī was expanding repidly [sic] in the Vedic Sacrifices. It was perhaps the result of this vast field of its employment and its eminence, that all the *Gṛhyasūtras*, irrespective of their schools, have taken this mantra.[478]

As a second reason for its popularity and importance (especially in the Upanayana) he asserted that it was "for the most time [...] related to the rites concerning intellect."[479]As shown above, the use of the GM in the Śrauta ritual can indeed help us understand its use in the Upanayana. It is entirely unclear, however, why the various rituals mentioned by Lal should be regarded as "rites concerning the intellect": among them is not only the Agnihotra (the daily fire ritual), the Soma ritual, and the Aśvamedha (the horse sacrifice), but also the

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474 See above p. 46.
475 Oldenberg 1897: 480 and 1917: 64, n. 1, and p. 466; see also below p. 122. Geldner (I: 410, n. on verse 10) characterized it as "eine Bitte um Erleuchtung, d. h. um Inspiration."
476 See below pp. 123–128.
477 Lal 1971: 227.
478 Lal 1971: 228.
479 Lal 1971: 229.

Puruṣamedha, the human sacrifice. In the latter ritual, the GM is used to worship Savitṛ, the "Impeller," who is obviously expected to impel the human victims to the sacrifice.[480]

Another explanation concerned Savitṛ, the deity of the GM, and his connection with a certain time of the year. According to Harry Falk, it was the time of the Upākaraṇa, the "start of the term" at the beginning of the rainy season, which was decisive for the GM's selection as an initiation mantra.[481] Falk highlighted the fact that the Upanayana and the Upākaraṇa originally did not take place on the same day.[482] Rather, some texts specifically prescribe an initiatory "probation period"[483] of up to one year between the Upanayana, the first "enrolment," and the actual start of study, the Upākaraṇa. (A short probation period, was, in any case, preferred from an early date onwards.) While the latter regularly took place at the beginning of the rainy season[484] on a day Falk calls the "Savitṛ day," the date of the Upanayana varied.

According to Falk, in the early-Vedic period, the god Savitṛ was associated with the summer solstice and the beginning of the rainy season. Not only the beginning, but also the end of one's studies was scheduled for this period. Ideally however the end was soon followed by marriage, which has much clearer links to the role of Savitṛ, who is also, recall, a god of procreation.[485] As Falk pointed out, there are several similarities between the weding ceremony and the initiation to Vedic study;[486] among these, in both rituals the bridegroom/teacher lets the bride/student step on a stone, takes her/his hand, and then utters the very same *sāvitrī* verse.[487]

While this would explain Savitṛ's presence in the wedding ceremony,[488] and while the initiation ritual incorporates some elements of the wedding ritual,

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480   See above p. 99.

481   Falk 1988: 27; cf. Falk 1986a.

482   Falk 1988: 24–25.

483   "[Eine] Art Probezeit," Falk 1988: 25.

484   *śrāvaṇyāṃ paurṇamāsyāṃ kriyetāpi vāṣāḍhyām* BaudhGS III 1.2; *śravaṇāpakṣa oṣadhīṣu jātāsu hastena paurṇamāsyāṃ-* BhārGS III 8; *oṣadhīnāṃ prādurbhāve hastena śravaṇena vā* ŚāṅkhGS IV 5.2; *oṣadhīnāṃ prādurbhāve śravaṇena śrāvaṇasya* ĀśvGS III 5.2; *oṣadhīnāṃ prādurbhāve śravaṇena śrāvaṇyāṃ paurṇamāsyāṃ śrāvaṇasya pañcamīm hastena* PārGS II 10.2; *varṣāsu śravaṇenādhyāyān upākaroti* KāṭhGS IX; *prauṣṭhapadīm hastenādhyāyān upākuryuḥ | śrāvaṇīm ity eke* KhādGS III 2.14–15; *varṣāsu śravaṇenādhyāyān upākaroti | hastena vā | prauṣṭhapadīm ity eke* VārGS VIII 5; see also Falk 1988: 24–25.

485   Cf. above p. 45.

486   See also Lubin 1994: 164–167.

487   "At the impulse of the god Impeller, with the Aśvin's arms, with Pūṣan's hands, I lead you (into marriage/*brahmacarya*), N.N." *devasya tvā savituḥ prasave 'śvinor bāhubhyāṃ pūṣṇo hastābhyāṃ upanayāmy asāv iti*; see ĀśvGS I 24.15, HirGS I 5.8, GobhGS II 10.26, and Gonda 1977: 566.

488   Falk (1988: 5) also referred to the impelling force of Savitṛ, but apparently felt compelled to look for other reasons.

it does not mark the beginning of a procreative life stage, but of studentship – which is concomitant with celibacy. All of this entails a certain inconsistency, a paradox in fact: Why would a fertility god induce a period of chastity? To explain Savitṛ's presence in the Upanayana, Falk resorted to a somewhat more speculative approach:

> As *brahmacārins* the students were not allowed to follow the instigations of Savitṛ to fecundity, marriage, and procreation. The Sāvitrī, given to them each year anew, must be interpreted as a germ ripening to the form of the Veda. Once the respective Veda was completely received the student left his teacher, transformed himself into a "pure" and married householder[489] and, under the auspices of Savitṛ, then led a respected life which included all the possibilities this god had hitherto withheld from him.[490]

Although it has a certain logic, it is by no means obvious why the season in which marriages took place would also determine the choice of the deity addressed in the Upākaraṇa. Savitṛ's connection with the rainy season is not at all sure; as I have shown elsewhere, the evidence in favor of this connection is ambiguous at best.[491]

There is another reason why Falk's explanation that the use of a *sāvitrī* points to Savitṛ's role as god of *marital* procreation is somewhat problematic. While there certainly are parallels to the wedding ritual, this is only one of the "narratives" present in the Upanayana. As a result of his initiation, the student is reborn, and it is said that the teacher becomes the father of the new *brahmacārin*.[492] Thus, it is the student's *birth* (or, more precisely, his ritual and social rebirth as a *dvija*) that is at the center of the occasion.[493] The very fact that in this way the young student is introduced with a *sāvitrī* into a celibate phase of his life – during which he is completely devoted to his teacher – corroborates this.

Lastly, there is little evidence that the Upākaraṇa really influenced the Upanayana.[494] Evidently a Savitṛ verse is used in all versions of the initiation ritual.[495] Falk nevertheless argued that Savitṛ is not particularly important in

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489 For the concept of the "householder" (*gṛhastha*; literally "stay-at-home") in ancient South Asia, see generally Olivelle 2019a.

490 Falk 1988: 33.

491 See Haas 2020: 158–161.

492 See, for instance, Smith 1986b: 73–76 and Kajihara 2016: 277, n. 15.

493 Cf. Kajihara 2002: 13 and Gonda 1980a: 378.

494 Falk seems to suggest that the "probation period" between the arrival of the student sometime during the year and the teaching of the *sāvitrī* (which, he assumes, originally only took place at the start of the term) corresponds to the (possible) interval between the Upanayana and the Upākaraṇa. However, the evidence for such a development is more than scanty.

495 See above pp. 111–112.

the Upanayana,[496] as he does not figure prominently in the procedure called *paridāna* or "transfer." In this ritual procedure, which takes place before the *sāvitrī* is taught, the student is put under the protection of various deities. Several Gṛhyasūtras also mention Savitṛ as one of these deities, but never as the first one.[497] For Falk, the corollary of this is that Savitṛ is not important in the initiation ritual (despite the fact that a *sāvitrī* is taught!), but that his presence can be explained by way of the Upākaraṇa and its connection with a hypothetical "Savitṛ day."[498]

As I have tried to show, Falk's explanation for the use of a *sāvitrī* in the initiation ritual is somewhat problematic. With regard to the aim of the present chapter, it must also be noted that his article does not attempt to provide an answer to the question of why it was the GM that was chosen and not, as in the case of the *sāvitrī* used in the moment of seizing the student's hand, a verse that has a semantically stronger connection to the accompanying action.

The last attempt at an explanation to be mentioned here is pure coincidence. This was put forward by Frits Staal in his article "The Sound of Religion," published in two parts in *Numen*, where, incidentally, he addressed the same question as Lal and Falk some years before and after him. His judgment on the case was devastating:

> Why was this mantra picked to play such an important and auspicious role? There are hundreds of mantras in the Rigveda that say something similar. The answer to such questions is always the same: there is no answer. [...] For some arbitrary reason, supreme significance is attached to it.[499]

Staal's laconic statement is, of course, based on his fundamental assumption that rituals and mantras are meaningless.[500] Even though this theory cannot be upheld as such, the preceding chapter has demonstrated that the meaning of mantras as texts is indeed often secondary to their ritual employment. But is a reference to mere chance really the only way to explain its reuse in other texts? Is it really the case that the GM simply "fell from the heap like the windblown

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496 "Savitṛ selbst spielt beim Upanayana keine prominente Rolle." Falk 1988: 25.

497 Falk 1988: 25, n. 115.

498 It should be noted that the comparatively late Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra (JaimGS I 14; tr. Caland 1991: 25) and GobhGS (III 3.9; tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXX: 78) indeed mention a *sāvitra ahar*, or *sāvitra kāla* (GobhGS III 3.13), during which the study of the Veda is discontinued. The term *sāvitra*, however, refers to the *nakṣatra* Hasta, whose presiding deity is Savitṛ. A Savitṛ day, therefore, recurs every month, and not just once a year at the beginning of the rainy season; cf. Weber 1862: 322.

499 Staal 1986a: 56.

500 See above pp. 12–13.

seed,"[501] a seed "that falls from a blossom and is carried through the wind until it settles down somewhere"[502] – as Staal put it?

Incidentally, Staal expressed an assumption that many of those who have thought about the GM must have had, namely that there is an incalculable amount of other Vedic mantras that could have served in the Upanayana ritual.[503] The ṚV alone contains more than 10,500 verses, and the other Vedic Saṃhitās add even more to this already very large number. For reasons unknown, the very first verses of these collections, such as the famous *agním īḷe puróhitaṃ…* of the ṚV, apparently did not qualify to be the mantra to inaugurate one's study of the Vedic texts.[504] So then, why were the GM and the other *sāvitrī*s chosen?

In the following, I will try to show that the number of eligible verses is sharply reduced by the fact that the initiation mantra was supposed to be a *sāvitrī*, that is, a verse mentioning Savitṛ. Elaborating on a suggestion of Oldenberg, I will argue that it is the function of this god in post-Ṛgvedic rituals that was responsible for the fact that only verses mentioning him could be chosen as initiation mantras.

2. A *sāvitrī*

As has been known for long, the word *sāvitrī* did not always designate the verse ṚV III 62.10, the GM. While in later texts it (almost) always refers to this mantra by default, originally it could be used for *any* verse mentioning Savitṛ (one should for this reason be very careful not to automatically translate *sāvitrī* with "*the sāvitrī*" or even "Sāvitrī").[505] Although the author(s) of the ŚatB already preferred a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter,[506] it is not even entirely certain that at the time when this text was composed this *sāvitrī* was already the GM. The same holds true for the Kaṭha-Brāhmaṇa (KaṭhB), a text of about the same

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501   Staal 1986a: 56.
502   Staal 1986a: 52.
503   Cf., for instance, Apte 1939: 34: "[The ĀśvGS] nowhere specifies which '*Savitrī*,' (literally a verse sacred to the god Savitṛ) is meant although there are so many verses in the RV. sacred to Savitṛ."
504   Note, however, that they did gain some prominence in later times; see, for instance, VaikhGS VI 17 (tr. Caland 1929: 169–170).
505   Cf. Kajihara 2019: 5, n. 14; see also above p. 62.
506   Cf. ŚatB XI 5.4.15, translated and discussed above p. 69; see Kajihara 2019: 5–6.

age,[507] which, while mentioning that the student is born together with (not by) a *sāvitrī*, is not particularly interested in the verse itself.[508]

Moreover, *sāvitrī*s in other meters were evidently used as well.[509] In Chapter 2, we observed that the late-Vedic ŚatB and BṛhĀU allude to people who use a *sāvitrī* in the *anuṣṭubh* meter.[510] In these texts, this "unorthodox" practice is deprecated by the authors: according to them, one should only use a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter. Unfortunately, it is not known who the people who used the *anuṣṭubh* verse were and if they really used it the same way that others used the *gāyatrī sāvitrī*. However, since the Brāhmaṇa mentions the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* in the context of the Upanayana without further specifications, it seems plausible that there actually were some people who regularly used an *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* in their initiation ritual. To use a *gāyatrī sāvitrī* – let alone *the* GM – has apparently not been the universally accepted norm since time immemorial.

As a matter of fact, the use of a *sāvitrī* in other meters than the *gāyatrī* was not at all uncommon. Two other meters were quite regularly used: the *triṣṭubh*, the commonest meter in the ṚV, and the *jagatī*. Already in the (presumably) early Gṛhyasūtras, we observe the practice of correlating the meter of the initiation verse with the social class or Varṇa of the initiates.[511] Two Gṛhyasūtras of the Ṛgvedins, the **ŚāṅkhGS** and the **Kauṣītaki-Gṛhyasūtra (KauṣGS)**, prescribe that the teacher

> teaches the Savitṛ verse within a year, within three nights, or immediately. He should recite a *gāyatrī* to a Brahmin, a *triṣṭubh* to a Kṣatriya, a *jagatī* to a Vaiśya – but only a Savitṛ verse (*sāvitrīṃ tv eva*).[512]

The assignment of certain meters to the social classes follows a well-known pattern that is part of a larger set of cultural, social, ritual, and cosmic correspondences, studied foremost by Brian K. Smith in a series of publications.[513] These correspondences or *bandhu*s, which can be established on several (most often three) levels between various entities, actions, and phenomena, are part of a taxonomical system that serves to organize the universe as a whole. One of the most important goals of this system is to classify society. Thus, each Varṇa (Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya) can be associated with a natural element (fire, wind,

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507 Kajihara 2002: 276.

508 See below p. 146; cf. Kajihara 2019: 4. As I will argue below, there were also other suitable *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s that could have been used.

509 Cf. Kajihara 2019: 8–10 and 2002: 236, n. 24.

510 ŚatB XI 5.4.13 (tr. Kajihara 2019: 8) and BṛhĀU V 15; see above pp. 68–71.

511 See Kajihara 2019: 8–10; cf. Kane II: 303.

512 ŚāṅkhGS II 5.4 = KauṣGS II 3.1–5: *saṃvatsare sāvitrīm anvāha | trirātre | anvakṣaṃ vā | gāyatrīṃ brāhmaṇāyānubrūyāt | triṣṭubhaṃ kṣatriyāya | jagatīṃ vaiśyāya | sāvitrīṃ tv eva*; cf. the translations by Kajihara 2019: 10 and Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 66–67.

513 Smith 1986b, 1992, 1993, 1994. See also Thite 1987; Kajihara 2019: 9, n. 31; and Gonda 1975: 177.

sun), a deity (Agni, Indra/Vāyu, Sūrya/Āditya/ Viśve Devas), a Veda (Ṛg-, Yajur-, Sāma-), etc.[514] These "horizontal" correspondences often also exhibit a "vertical" or hierarchical structure, in which the Brahmins, the formulators of this system, stand at the top.

In the case of the Upanayana, it is the number of syllables of the meter that is correlated to the age at which a member of one of the three classes may be initiated. Thus, Brahmin boys should ideally undergo the Upanayana between the age of eight[515] and sixteen, corresponding to the eight syllables of a *pāda* in the *gāyatrī*. For Kṣatriyas, the age range is eleven to twenty-two (the *triṣṭubh* having *pāda*s of eleven syllables), and for Vaiśyas, twelve to twenty-four (the *jagatī* having *pāda*s of twelve syllables).[516]

Now let us return to the brief Gṛhyasūtra passage found in the ŚāṅkhGS and the KauṣGS. In my view, the supplement to the text in the two Sūtras is telling: *sāvitrīṃ tv eva* – "but only a Savitṛ verse." This indicates that while the meter may vary, the verse has to mention Savitṛ. In this way, the text itself stresses the most important property of the verse. It does not specify that it should be a verse that perfectly fits the context in terms of its literal meaning. It does not even specify the verses themselves (as opposed to other instances, where we find unambiguous references). Although initiation mantras were often kept secret in later times, it is more than improbable that this was the reason why the verses were not named. Rather, the verse had to be selected from the Vedic corpus. This selection was far from free, however, for the verse had to be a *sāvitrī*. Moreover, there can be little doubt that within a short period of time certain verses were established as standard initiation mantras.

The insistence on a *sāvitrī* may be best explained by one of Savitṛ's most prominent ritual functions. The deity Savitṛ has two main functions: First, he is a god of procreation, fertility, and abundance. However, and even though Savitṛ did not lose this function completely, from the Brāhmaṇas onwards this role was slowly taken over by Prajāpati, the "Lord of Progeny."[517] Second – and this is much more significant – he literally is the god "Impeller," who causes all beings to move and to rest, for instance by means of the alteration of day and night.[518] His connection with morning and evening also suggests that he was responsible for bringing about various states of being, such as waking and sleeping. In Śrauta ritual, Savitṛ is often invoked at the beginning of a ritual or liturgy. The use of his mantras in the Śrauta litanies indeed indicates that in the

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514   See, for instance, Smith 1994: 67.
515   That is, eight years after conception. Traditionally it may have been seven from birth for Brahmins, but in order to adapt to the new standard of eight, several Gṛhyasūtras begin counting the years from conception; see Lubin 2018a: 103–104; cf. also Lubin 2005: 85–86.
516   Cf. Kane II(1): 376–380 and Smith 1986b: 69–70 and *passim*.
517   See above p. 46.
518   See, for instance, Oberlies I: 222–223.

course of time his power to impel remained especially important in the ritual domain.[519]

More than a century ago, Oldenberg was to my knowledge the first to suggest that this was one of the two reasons why a *sāvitrī* was chosen for the Upanayana (the other being, as mentioned, that it is a prayer for inspiration):

> It is Savitṛ's nature as impeller which – on a side note – is responsible for the fact that if someone endeavored to learn the Veda, he first directed his prayer to this god, "who shall rouse forth our thoughts." Hence the fame of the much celebrated Sāvitrī, the verse addressed to Savitṛ, which inaugurated the study of the Veda.[520]

As we saw in Chapter 3, however, at least in Śrauta ritual there is no indication that the GM was understood as a verse about inspiration. While one could certainly argue that the authors of Śrauta literature had little reason to allude to this aspect of the GM, it is nevertheless clear that it was most often appreciated merely as a perfect specimen of a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter, and little more. Only its containing the words *prá* "forward" and (*prá+*)*cud* "to move (forward), to set in motion" was worth mentioning, because it could somehow be connected to Savitṛ.

Savitṛ's role in Śrauta ritual also fits the context of the Upanayana, for this ritual indeed signifies a great beginning – a birth even. I would argue that Savitṛ's function as the impeller of rituals is reason enough to invoke him at the beginning of the study of the Veda. In a way, Vedic studentship itself resembles a sacrifice or worship ritual (*yajña*) and was, in fact, even designated as such in various texts.[521] Smith also highlighted this aspect: "[The] *Upanayana* inaugurates not only the study of the Veda but also the daily practice of fire sacrifice, a practice that will continue, ideally, throughout one's life."[522] In spite of the higher status that other gods like Indra or Varuṇa enjoyed, the fact that the study of the Vedas can be regarded as a sacred ritual act fully justified the use of a Savitṛ verse also in the case of the Upanayana. In my view, it is not necessary to forage for any other reason, at least as far as the choice of *a sāvitrī* in general is concerned.

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519   Cf. Oldenberg 1897: 479 and 1905: 256–257.

520   Translation of Oldenberg 1894: 64, n. 2 (≈ Oldenberg 1917: 64, n. 1): "Auf diesem Wesen des Savitar als Antreiber beruht es, beiläufig bemerkt, dass wer an das Erlernen des Veda herantrat, zuerst an diesen Gott, 'der unsere Gedanken vorwärts bringen möge', sein Gebet richtete. Daher die Berühmtheit der vielgefeierten Sāvitrī, des an Savitar gerichteten Verses, welcher das Vedastudium eröffnete (Ṛv. III, 62, 10)."

521   See Smith 1986b: 79–82.

522   Smith 1986b: 79.

3. The *sāvitrī*s

Considering Savitṛ's role and function in the Vedic religion, the use of a *sāvitrī* is perfectly appropriate in the context of the Upanayana. The Vedic Saṃhitās, however, contain numerous verses addressed to Savitṛ and even more merely mentioning his name. How would those who were well-versed in the application of Vedic mantras have selected them? If we compare all of the *sāvitrī*s that were used as initiation mantras, we may be able to infer the general principles which led to their being chosen.

In the regular Upanayana (for an irregular Upanayana, see below), the only *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter that is known to have been used is ṚV III 62.10. As in the ŚāṅkhGS passage translated above,[523] the verses of the other meters often go unmentioned.[524] As of now, the oldest known source specifying these mantras in the context of the Upanayana is the relatively young Vārāha-Gṛhyasūtra (VārGS V 26) of the Maitrāyaṇīya school of the KYV. The comparatively older Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra (MānGS), however, also specifies them, but only in the context of the Sandhyā.[525] All texts give ṚV VII 45.1 as *triṣṭubh* and V 81.1 as *jagatī sāvitrī*. The *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī*, on the other hand, is only specified in the ĀśvGS (I 22.22–29). I will begin with the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī*.

3.1   The *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī*

The ĀśvGS (a Ṛgvedic Gṛhyasūtra and likely one of the oldest) prescribes an *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* for someone who needs to undergo initiation for a second time. According to Kajihara, this kind of initiation was undergone by adults who wished to study additional parts of the Veda as part of an "extracurricular training." As such, it is particularly prominent in the Upaniṣads, which contain numerous stories about adults approaching a teacher in order to learn esoteric teachings unknown to them.[526]

The ĀśvGS only briefly describes the procedure of the additional Upanayana without mentioning its context or purpose. After the prescriptions for the regular Upanayana, the text continues to give the prescriptions for the additional Upanayana:

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523   See above p. 120.
524   ŚāṅkhGS II 5.4; KauṣGS II 3.1–5; MānGS I 22.13; PārGS II 3.3,7–10 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 307); cf. also BaudhDhS II 9.14.
525   MānGS I 2.1–3; see below pp. 189–190. .
526   E.g., KauṣU I 1, IV 19; BṛhĀU II 1.14, VI 2.7; ChāndU IV 4; V 11.7, VIII 7.2; PraśnU I 1; MuṇḍU I 2.12 (see also ŚatB X 6.1.2, XI 4.1.9, 4.2.20, 5.3.13, XIV 1.1.21; GopB I 1.32, 2.13, 3.8, 3.14); see Kajihara 2016: 282–287.

Now for someone who has already previously approached (a teacher to be initiated): [... the teacher recites] "That [sustenance] of the [god] Impeller [is what] we desire..." [ṚV V 82.1; see below] as the Savitṛ verse.[527]

The verse quoted by means of its first *pāda* is another *sāvitrī* from the ṚV (V 82.1).[528] The similarity of this verse with the GM is obvious:

tát savitúr vṛṇīmahe vayáṃ devásya bhójanam /
śrá̤é̤iṣṭhaṃ sarvadhā́tamaṃ túraṃ bhágasya dhīmahi //

That sustenance of the god Impeller is what we desire.
May we obtain the Apportioner's power, the best which best confers wholeness![529]

That the use of this verse is (in accordance with its use in the irregular Upanayana) an exception to the rule is shown by the way the ĀśvGS refers to the verse used in its prescriptions for regular Upanayana. There, the verse is only called *sāvitrī*, which seems to leave open which *sāvitrī* is to be used.[530] The text also mentions, however, that the teacher should recite it *pāda* for *pāda*, hemistich for hemistich, and then finally in its entirety.[531] As Kajihara observed, the mode of recitation in three steps indicates that it is a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter; among the meters of the verses under discussion, only the *gāyatrī* meter has three *pāda*s, and this way of teaching and reciting the verse is typical for the *gāyatrī sāvitrī*.[532] Which *gāyatrī sāvitrī* is to be used, however, is not specified by the text, indicating that it is either taken for granted or irrelevant. The fact that the GM is the only *gāyatrī sāvitrī* that we are certain was used strongly suggests that the former is the case and that the author of the Sūtra already viewed it as the standard *sāvitrī*. The special *sāvitrī* in the *anuṣṭubh* meter, on the other hand, has to be cited by way of its *pratīka* (*tat savitur vṛṇīmaha iti*).

3.2 The *triṣṭubh sāvitrī*

The *triṣṭubh sāvitrī* referred to in the VārGS and the MānGS,[533] ṚV VII 45.1, is the first verse in a simple hymn dedicated to Savitṛ, composed by Vasiṣṭha Maitrāvaruṇi:

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527   *athopetapūrvasya* [...] *tat savitur vṛṇīmaha iti sāvitrīm* ĀśvGS I 22.22,29. For other translations, see Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 193 and Kajihara 2016: 284, n. 27.

528   The ĀśvGS also prescribes that this verse is to be recited when the teacher pours water over the student's hand; cf. Kajihara 2014: 5, n. 11.

529   For another translation, see n. 188 on p. 50 above.

530   Cf. n. 503 on p. 119 above.

531   *sāvitrīm anvāha paccho 'rdharcaśaḥ sarvām* ĀśvGS I 21.5.

532   Kajihara 2019: 6.

533   See above p. 123.

ā́ devó yātu savitā́ surátno, antarikṣaprā́ váhamāno áśvaiḥ /
háste dádhāno nár₍ᵢ₎yā purū́ṇi, niveśáyañ ca prasuváñ ca bhū́ma //

Let god Savitar drive here, possessed of good treasure, filling the midspace,
journeying with his horses,
holding many things meant for men in his hand, bringing the world to rest
and impelling it forth.[534]

It is very difficult to explain the use of this verse in the Upanayana on the basis
of its meaning. The verse is an invitation for the god who is driving his chariot
between heaven and earth and carrying all kinds of good things that he would
bestow if he were to come. There are no specific references whatsoever to learn-
ing, studentship, or celibacy.

3.3 The *jagatī sāvitrī*

The *jagatī sāvitrī*, ṚV V 81.1,[535] on the other hand, begins immediately with
inspiration. It is again the first verse of a hymn to Savitṛ, composed by a poet
named Śyāvāśva Ātreya:

yuñjáte mána utá yuñjate dhíyo, víprā víprasya bṛható vipaścítaḥ /
ví hótrā dadhe vayunāvíd éka ín, mahī́ devásya savitúḥ páriṣṭutiḥ //

They harness the mind and they harness the insights – the inspired poets
attentive to the lofty inspired poet.
He distributes the oblations as the only one who knows the patterns. Great
is the glorification of the god Impeller.

As we can see, this verse is rather about the *vípra,* the "inspired poet," than the
student or *brahmacarya*. The following verses of the hymn make clear that this
vípra is Savitṛ himself.[536] Of course, it cannot be ruled out that mention of the
word *dhī́* ("inspiration") may have been a supporting factor: after all, both this
and the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* (*tát savitúr vṛṇīmahe…*) have some verbal resemblance
with the GM, which may have served as a model. Moreover, based on the asso-
ciative principle, one could also establish a connection between the *vípra* and
the student. But as I argue below, other factors were far more important.

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534 Tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 940.
535 As specified by the VārGS and the MānGS; see above p. 123.
536 ṚV V 81.2: "The sage poet fastens all forms upon himself. He has impelled benefit to the
     two-footed and the four-footed. He has looked out across the firmament – Savitar worthy
     to be chosen. He rules following the lead of Dawn." *víśvā rūpáṇi práti muñcate kavíḥ, prā́-*
     sāvīd bhadrám̐ dvipáde cátuṣpade / ví nā́kam akhyat savitā́ váreṇyo, ánu prayā́ṇam uṣáso
     ví rājati //; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 764.

3.4   The selection of the *sāvitrī*

The *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter is often regarded as the original or "genuine"[537] initiation mantra, leaving the existence of the other *sāvitrī*s in need of explanation. As mentioned, these *sāvitrī*s were introduced in order to mark social classes. While the Brahmins were always initiated with the GM, some of them advocated the use of *sāvitrī*s in other meters for the "inferior" Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas. In doing so, they attempted to clarify their own status. (Regardless of this, the Brahmin version of the ritual continued to be used for Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas as well.)[538] From a Śrauta perspective, these meters were, in a way, inferior or subordinate to the shorter *gāyatrī*. Thus, in these cases the use of *sāvitrī*s set in meters other than the *gāyatrī* meter was the result of a later ritual adaptation.

This observation, however, does not explain *how* the mantras were selected. Even if the *gāyatrī sāvitrī* was the first one to be employed in the initiation ritual – though this is not at all certain when considering that the *gāyatrī sāvitrī* is first mentioned in contrast to the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* – this would only mean that it set the standard for the choice of other mantras. There is little reason to assume that those who modified the ritual did so according to principles that were entirely different from those who created it in the first place. In other words, both the creation and the modification of the ritual were probably based on similar principles, because they were carried out by the same group of highly specialized priests. As we will see below, in the case of the Upanayana, the texts indeed provide some support for this theory.

We will now continue by comparing the GM, the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī* (prescribed in the ĀśvGS), the *triṣṭubh sāvitrī*, and the *jagatī sāvitrī* (both known from the VārGS and the MānGS). What these four verses have in common is the following:

- They are all originally from the ṚV.

- They are the first verses of their hymns in the ṚV. Even the GM was originally the first verse of a brief hymn to Savitṛ that only later came to be part of the composite hymn ṚV III 62.[539]

- Their hymns are exclusively dedicated to Savitṛ. Even though other gods are sometimes mentioned, it is clear that they are Savitṛ hymns, both in view of their content as well as their attribution in Kātyāyana's index of Ṛgvedic hymns, the Sarvānukramaṇī (Sarv.).

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537   Gonda 1980a: 379; cf. also Parpola 1998: 206, n. 126.
538   See Smith 1986b: 67–73 and Lubin 2018a: 104–107.
539   See Jamison & Brereton 2014: 553; cf. above pp. 43–44.

- Savitṛ is the only deity mentioned in the verse. (The word *bhága*, the "Apportioner," which is mentioned in the *anuṣṭubh sāvitrī*, is most probably only an epithet of Savitṛ, and can in any case be understood as such.)[540]

- Excepting the mention of *dhī́* in the *gāyatrī* and *jagatī sāvitrī*, the verses hardly address the elements or topics central to the initiation ritual (studentship, celibacy, learning, birth or rebirth, initiation itself). At any rate, they were not composed for this purpose, nor adapted to it.

We must not assume that the similarities between the four verses directly represent the principles that guided their selection, for they could also be a product of chance (as per Staal). But if we at least accept the criterion that all initiation mantras have to be *sāvitrī*s, the possibility of searching the Vedic corpus for suitable candidates opens up. This was in fact done in preparation for this study. In collecting the possible candidates, however, I restricted myself to those verses that originally stem from the ṚV and directly address Savitṛ or assign a prominent position to him. Of course, a priest could also have selected a *sāvitrī* that only mentions Savitṛ in passing, but I consider that somewhat unlikely. Even in later times, the *sāvitrī* in the Upanayana always was a "pure" or "full-fledged" *sāvitrī*.[541]

Surprisingly, the assumption that the number of candidates must be very large does not prove true. First of all, according to the Sarv.,[542] only eight hymns are entirely dedicated to Savitṛ.[543] Apart from these, there are another seven hymns containing verses explicitly dedicated to Savitṛ.[544] According to my count, there are in sum only ninety-two verses in the ṚV matching the two criteria (*sāvitrī*; Ṛgvedic verse) mentioned above.[545] Forty-five of the ninety-two *sāvitrī*s are in the *triṣṭubh* meter; twenty are *gāyatrī*s; twenty-two *jagatī*s; and four *anuṣṭubh*s.[546]

Furthermore, of these verses, one is a *paṅkti*, a comparatively rare meter which, we may surmise, would never have been used in the Upanayana. The

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540 See n. 158 on p. 44 above.

541 See below p. 132.

542 See Sharma 1977: 105.

543 ṚV II 38: *triṣṭubh*; IV 53: *jagatī*, 54: *jagatī* (except the *triṣṭubh* in verse 6); V 81: *jagatī*, 82: *gāyatrī* (except the *anuṣṭubh* in verse 1); VI 71.1–3: *jagatī*, 71.4–6: *triṣṭubh*; VII 45, X 149: *triṣṭubh*.

544 ṚV I 22.5–8: *gāyatrī*; 24.3–5: *gāyatrī*; 35.1c: *jagatī*, 2–11: *triṣṭubh*; III 62.10–11: *gāyatrī*; VII 38.1–6 *triṣṭubh*; IX 67.25: *dvipadā gāyatrī*; X 139.1–3: *triṣṭubh*. In (at least) two cases, the groups of verses were originally separate hymns in the *gāyatrī* meter (I 22.5–8, cf. Oldenberg I: 17; and III 62.10–11, cf. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 553 and above pp. 43–44).

545 In order to be exhaustive, I have also included several verses not listed in the Sarv.

546 *anuṣṭubh*: V 50.1–3, 82.1; *gāyatrī*: I 22.5–8, 24.3–5; III 62.10–12; V 82.2–9; IX 67.25; X 158.2; *jagatī*: I 35.9; IV 53.1–7, 54.1–5; V 81.1–5; VI 71.1–3; X 100.3; *triṣṭubh*: I 35.2; I 35.3–8, 35.10–11; II 38.1–11; III 54.11, 56.6; IV 14.2, 54.6; VI 50.8, 71.4–6; VII 37.8, 38.1–3, 6–7, 45.1–4; X 34.13 36.14; X 149.1–5.

number can thus be reduced to ninety-one. Taken together, the ninety-one eligible verses do not even comprise 1% of the ṚV. What needs to be explained now is why the four *sāvitrī*s presented above, which we are sure were used as initiation mantras, were chosen from among the ninety-one candidates. In order to reconstruct a possible causal chain, I propose that we consider the reuse of the *sāvitrī*s in Śrauta ritual.

4. The ritual-historical background

It is well known that Śrauta literature largely pre-dates the Gṛhyasūtras, which inform us about domestic ritual.[547] The Gṛhyasūtras often presuppose the existence of the Śrautasūtras and usually cite their verses from the Saṃhitā they belong to. This makes it *a priori* likely that Śrauta ritual influenced domestic ritual, which was sometimes even thought to be "a reduced form of the Śrauta practice."[548]

However, while the codification of domestic ritual in the Gṛhyasūtras is generally posterior to that of Śrauta ritual, it is clear that domestic ritual must have existed since ancient times, even if we do not know exactly in what form.[549] This is perhaps especially true for the Upanayana,[550] which is also mentioned in the AV and the ŚatB.[551] It is, therefore, not to be taken for granted that only Śrauta ritual could have influenced domestic ritual and not the other way round,[552] and it is (at least in theory) possible that the use of the *sāvitrī*s in the Upanayana somehow had an effect on the development of the Śrauta litanies.[553]

This issue cannot be completely resolved here. Nevertheless, there are some reasons that corroborate the idea that in the case of the Upanayana, Śrauta ritual was indeed primary. Even if the origins and precursors of the Gṛhya rituals remain largely in the dark, it is clear that at some point it was revised by Brahmins who were proficient in the Śrauta texts (and, as a conse-

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547 Gonda 1977: 478; cf. Lubin 2005: 82–83.

548 Lubin 2016a: 592; cf. Lubin 1994: 149–151.

549 See Smith 1986a: 79–81.

550 Cf. Lubin 1994: 168.

551 E.g., in AV XI 5 and ŚatB XI 5.4; see also Kajihara 2002, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. Dismissing the evidence from the BṛhĀU as late (p. 151) and ignoring the AV altogether, Bronkhorst (2016: 140–156) argued that the initiation ritual was in fact *invented* at the time of the Gṛhyasūtras towards the final centuries before the beginning of the Common Era. For the present discussion, this theory is only of secondary relevance and will therefore not be discussed further; it should be pointed out, however, that most of the passages he discussed are concerned with irregular forms of the Upanayana; see above p. 123.

552 As was assumed, for instance, by Apte (1939: 15) in his examination of the Ṛgvedic mantras in the ĀśvGS.

553 Cf. my remarks on one form of the Śrauta Agnihotra, see above p. 102.

quence, to a great extent in Śrauta ritual):[554] While some mantras are peculiar to Gṛhya ritual, others, like the *sāvitrī*s used in the Upanayana, were clearly taken from the Vedic Saṃhitās. This, of course, could only be done by specialists who knew the Śrauta texts and Śrauta ritual. Because of their training, these experts would have been likely to also draw upon "Śrauta principles" when incorporating Śrauta material into Gṛhya ritual.[555]

In Śrauta ritual, the *sāvitrī*s are most often combined with other verses than those that follow them in the Ṛksaṃhitā; moreover they are embedded in litanies that are not exclusively dedicated to Savitṛ. Evidently, the *sāvitrī*s here are several among many; furthermore, they are used in various rituals and cannot be associated with a single ritual purpose.[556] In fact, it was very often the meter in which the verses are composed and the deity mentioned in them that were taken to be their most important characteristics.

In some cases, we also observe these principles in other Gṛhya rituals than the Upanayana. A few examples can illustrate this. According to the ŚāṅkhGS, the GM should be recited when a *mantha* or "potion" is mixed, preceded by the verse ṚV V 82.1 (*tát savitúr vṛṇīmahe…*), a very frequently used *sāvitrī* in Śrauta ritual, and then followed by other formulae.[557] According to the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad (ChāndU),[558] only ṚV V 82.1 is to be recited, in between taking sips of the mixture. In an obviously related procedure described in the BṛhĀU, a combination of the *pāda*s of the GM, the ṚV verses I 90.6–8, and the Vyāhṛtis is to be recited, again while drinking the mixture.[559] While the BṛhĀU (which has the GM) is for the most part somewhat earlier than the ChāndU (which has the verse ṚV V 82.1), this can hardly be taken as evidence that the GM was in any way primary in this context (the later ŚāṅkhGS even places ṚV V 82.1 first). Rather, it must have been a rather common practice across Vedic schools to use (frequent) *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s in the context of preparing or consuming a "magically" potent mixture.[560]

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554 Cf. Lubin 2013: 39, who surmised "that the Gṛhyasūtras were priestly efforts to appropriate and 'Vedicize' widespread customary practices"; see also Lubin 1994: 148–149.

555 For the sources of mantras in Gṛhya ritual, see Gonda 1977: 571–581.

556 See Chapter 3.

557 See Oldenberg *SBE* XXIX: 145, n. on ŚāṅkhGS VI 4.1; for ṚV V 82.1, see also below p. 130.

558 ChāndU V 2.7 (tr. Olivelle 1998: 233).

559 BṛhĀU VI 3.6 (tr. Olivelle 1998: 153): ṚV III 62.10a – I 90.6 – *bhūḥ svāhā* – III 62.10b – I 90.7 – *bhuvaḥ svāhā* – III 62.10c – I 90.8 – *svaḥ svāhā*. The text then reads *sarvāṃ ca sāvitrīm anvāha | sarvāś ca madhumatīr aham evedam sarvaṃ bhūyāsaṃ bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ svāheti* "He recites both the Savitṛ verse in its entirety and all those [verses] that contain [the word] "honey" (*madhu*). [He then recites] "May *I* become this whole (world) here – EARTH, INTERSPACE, SKY – SVĀHĀ!""

560 In the much later Kauśika-Sūtra (KauśS I 9.7; tr. Caland 1967: 42), it is recited together with the hymn AV I 6 (*śáṃ no devī́r…*) before and after the *śāntigaṇa* in order to produce *śāntyudaka* or "appeasement water"; cf. Geslani 2018: 37, 100; Gonda 1980a: 131; Bahulkar 2011: 28–29; and Sumant 2013: 140.

The same principle was also applied in another case: According to the Kāṭhaka-Gṛhyasūtra (KāṭhGS XLIX), in the ritual worship of the lunar stations (*nakṣatrayajña*), one verse is to be recited for each station. Neither the stations nor the deities associated with them are mentioned in the text; however, they can easily be inferred from the structure of the list. The lunar station Hasta, with which Savitṛ is associated, is worshipped with the GM.[561] In both cases, it is – just as is often the case in the Śrauta rituals – merely the deity principle that was decisive. No special role is attributed to the GM or to its meaning as a text.

I would argue that the Śrauta principles detectable in these rituals were also applied in the case of the Upanayana. When the *sāvitrī*s were incorporated into this ritual, this was done by experts who were firmly anchored in a Śrauta ritual mindset. But why exactly did those specialists select the attested *sāvitrī*s?

4.1 The frequency of the *sāvitrī*s in Śrauta texts

In order to see what place the eligible *sāvitrī*s of the ṚV have in Śrauta ritual, I counted the mentions of the ninety-one *sāvitrī*s in twelve Śrauta texts.[562] This made it possible to determine the relative frequency of those verses that were cited or reused at least once. As it turns out, about half of these verses can only be found the ṚV; they are listed in footnote 563.[563]

ṚV	meter	mentions
III 62.10 (*tát savitúr...*)	*gāyatrī*	17
V 50.1 (*víśvo devásya...*)	*anuṣṭubh*	17
V 81.1 (*yuñjáte mána utá...*)	*jagatī*	17
I 24.3 (*abhí tvā deva...*)	*gāyatrī*	12
V 82.4 (*adyā́ no deva...*)	*gāyatrī*	10
V 82.1 (*tát savitúr vṛṇīmahe...*)	*anuṣṭubh*	9
V 81.2 (*víśvā rūpā́ṇi práti...*)	*jagatī*	8
V 82.7 (*ā́ viśvádevaṃ...*)	*gāyatrī*	8
I 22.5 (*híraṇyapāṇim ūtáye...*)	*gāyatrī*	7

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561 Cf. Haas 2020: 168, n. 45.

562 ṚV, AitB, AitĀ, KauṣB, AV, SV, VājS, ŚatB, TaittS, TaittB, MaitrS, KaṭhS. The Kāṇva recensions of the VājS and the ŚatB and the Paippalāda recension of the AV have not been considered separately. The complete list of passages is given in Appendix 3 (see pp. 287–288).

563 The following verses occur only in the ṚV: I 24.4–5, 35.3, 6; II 38.2–9; III 54.11, 56.6, 62.11–12; IV 14.2, 53.3–4, 6, 54.5–6; V 50.2–3 (5: *paṅkti*), 81.4–5, 82.2–3, 6, 8; VI 50.8, 71.2, 5; VII 37.8, 38.1–2, 3, 6, 45.2, 4; X 100.3, 149.1–2, 4–5, 158.2, 34.13, 36.14.

ṚV	meter	mentions
VI 71.1 (*úd u ṣyá...*)	*jagatī*	6
VI 71.3 (*ádabdhebhiḥ savitaḥ...*)	*jagatī*	6
VI 71.6 (*vāmám adyá savitar...*)	*triṣṭubh*	6
VII 38.7 (*śáṃ no bhavantu...*)	*triṣṭubh*	6
VII 45.1 (*ā́ devó yātu...*)	*triṣṭubh*	6
IX 67.25 (*ubhā́bhyāṃ deva...*)	*gāyatrī*	6
I 35.2 (*ā́ kṛṣṇéna rájasā...*)	*triṣṭubh*	5
V 81.3 (*yásya prayā́ṇam ánu...*)	*jagatī*	5
V 82.9 (*yá imā́ víśvā...*)	*gāyatrī*	5
IV 53.1 (*tád devásya savitúr...*)	*jagatī*	4
V 82.5 (*víśvāni deva savitar...*)	*gāyatrī*	4
IV 54.1 (*ábhūd deváḥ savitā́...*)	*jagatī*	3
VI 71.4 (*úd u ṣyá...*)	*triṣṭubh*	3
I 22.7 (*vibhaktā́raṃ havāmahe...*)	*gāyatrī*	2
I 22.8 (*sákhāya ā́ ní...*)	*gāyatrī*	2
I 35.4 (*abhī́vṛtaṃ kṛ́śanair...*)	*triṣṭubh*	2
I 35.11 (*yé te pánthāḥ...*)	*triṣṭubh*	2
II 38.1 (*úd u ṣyá...*)	*triṣṭubh*	2
II 38.10 (*bhágaṃ dhíyaṃ...*)	*triṣṭubh*	2
IV 53.7 (*ā́gan devá ṛtúbhir...*)	*jagatī*	2
IV 54.3 (*ácittī yác cakṛmā́...*)	*jagatī*	2
VII 45.3 (*sá ghā no...*)	*triṣṭubh*	2
I 22.6 (*apā́ṃ nápātam ávase...*)	*gāyatrī*	1
I 35.5 (*ví jánāñ chyāvā́ḥ...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1
I 35.7 (*ví suparṇó...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1
I 35.8 (*aṣṭaú ví akhyat...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1
I 35.9 (*híraṇyapāṇiḥ savitā́...*)	*jagatī*	1
I 35.10 (*híraṇyahasto ásuraḥ...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1
II 38.11 (*asmábhyaṃ tád divó...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1
IV 53.2 (*divó dhartā́...*)	*jagatī*	1
IV 53.5 (*trír antárikṣaṃ...*)	*jagatī*	1
IV 54.2 (*devébhyo hí...*)	*jagatī*	1
IV 54.4 (*ná pramíye savitúr...*)	*jagatī*	1
X 149.3 (*paścédám anyád...*)	*triṣṭubh*	1

Table 17: The most frequently cited/reused Ṛgvedic *sāvitrī*s

This table shows that even among this small selection the GM is among the most frequent, together with V 50.1, which is the most frequent *anuṣṭubh* verse, and V 81.1, the most frequent *jagatī* verse. The other three verses discussed above are not far behind: V 82.1 is ranked sixth, and VII 45.1 belongs among the most frequent *triṣṭubh* verses. While the counts will inevitably be different depending on the sources used, the frequent use of these verses clearly shows that they were well known among the *sāvitrī*s. Even if we are concerned with a rather small scale, a count of seventeen or even six is rather much compared to a count of two, one, or zero, considering that in total, twenty-two *sāvitrī*s were reused once or twice, while forty-eight were not reused at all.

With regard to the supremacy of these verses in the Upanayana, some additional observations can be made. The two verses that are third and fourth in rank (ṚV V 50.1, I 24.3) – the "competitors" of the *anuṣṭubh* and the *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s actually used as initiation mantras – both occur in Ṛgvedic hymns that are not exclusively dedicated to Savitṛ. In fact, V 50.1 does not even mention Savitṛ directly, but addresses him as god "Leader" (*netṛ́*). The verse has been traditionally interpreted to be directed at Savitṛ because apparently, he is also referred to in the previous hymn of the ṚV.[564] Thus, we could have already ignored it according to the principles presented above.

A detailed study of these and the other verses could reveal the ways they have taken on their journeys through the variegated Vedic rituals and texts. For the GM, this has been done in the preceding chapter, which illustrated how this *sāvitrī* repeatedly found its way into the Śrauta litanies. As that chapter also showed, achieving such results is very labor-intensive. Here it must suffice to observe that they attracted some attention in a ritual domain largely independent and for the greater part even prior to the domestic rituals to which the Upanayana belongs.

But while we cannot investigate the other verses here, a brief note on some later developments is in order: Some of the other "prominent" *sāvitrī*s came to be used in the Upanayana as well. In his commentary on MānDhŚ II 38, Medhātithi (c. tenth century CE) prescribes ṚV I 35.2 (*ā́ kṛṣṇéna rájasā...*) as *triṣṭubh* and V 81.2 (*víśvā rūpā́ṇi práti...*) as *jagatī sāvitrī*. In Devapāla's commentary (c. eleventh century CE)[565] on KāṭhGS XLI 20, we also find VI 71.3 (*ádabdhebhiḥ savitaḥ...*) as *jagatī sāvitrī*.[566] All of these verses can be found in the table above, and some of them are comparatively frequent. Thus, even more than thousand years after the Gṛhyasūtras we can see that verses were apparently chosen according to Śrauta principles. (Needless to say that none of these verses points in any way to the Upanayana in terms of their literal meaning.)

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564   See above p. 93.
565   See Dreyer 1986: xxx.
566   See Caland 1925: 174–175.

Apart from these verses, however, we also observe other developments: Brāhmaṇabala, an author belonging to the early-medieval period who also commented on the KāṭhGS, prescribes VājS XVII 74 (*tā́ṁ savitúr váreṇyasya...*) to be used as *triṣṭubh sāvitrī* (and ṚV V 81.1 as *jagatī*).[567] This verse, which is clearly playing with the wording of the GM, is original to the VājS and cannot be found in the ṚV. Yet again, it is a *sāvitrī* verse whose text has no obvious reference to the initiation ritual itself.

But let us return to the *sāvitrī*s attested in the Gṛhyasūtras. Although two of them contain a casual reference to a topic relevant to the Upanayana by mentioning *dhī*, their salient frequency in Śrauta ritual indicates that this might only have been a supportive factor. It certainly does not explain their frequency outside the Upanayana, where a reference to inspiration would seldom be expected. But is it really only their frequency in Śrauta ritual that was responsible for their being incorporated into the Upanayana? Why would the textual frequency of a verse influence its use in later rituals? In order to explain the observations made above, I propose to consider the ritual practice.

4.2   The "snowball effect"

How exactly the Vedic branches and schools created their litanies and collections is difficult to reconstruct.[568] It certainly was an extremely complex process in which not only ritual, poetic, and aesthetic principles played a role, but also political and geographical conditions.[569] In any individual case, many criteria determined the choice of a verse: the meter in which it was composed, the mention of a deity or certain words, the poet or Ṛṣi with which it was associated, its previous reuse in other contexts, and so on.[570]

Thus, the distribution of verses in the Vedic corpus results from an extremely large number of individual decisions. These decisions must often have been made unconsciously: after all, it is unlikely that the creators of the litanies in each and every case examined the entire Vedic canon to find the verse that best met their criteria. We have to assume a certain degree of arbitrariness. This arbitrariness, however, did not depend on chance, but was most likely influenced by factors not apparent at first sight. Apart from the manifest properties of a verse itself, there were other factors that influenced the creators of the Śrauta litanies; among them, aesthetics and frequency.

In order to explain the general distribution of verses across the texts codifying the Vedic rituals, I assume a kind of "snowball effect." As is known, in

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567   See Caland 1925: 275.
568   See Witzel 1997b: 285–288.
569   For the "political" aspect in the creation of Śrauta liturgies, see Proferes 2003.
570   See above pp. 13–18.

Śrauta ritual, the priests of the different Vedas work together. During their ritual activities, they often listen to the litanies of the other priests (as well as to their own, of course). In this process, they would hear some mantras more often than others. Even if many priests know their own mantra collections in their entirety, the more or less frequent recitation (or singing) of a specific verse must, presumably, leave a certain impression in their minds. The perceived importance or power of a ritual as well as its frequency possibly play a role as well. When the priests set themselves the task of creating a new litany or when foraging for a verse accompanying a ritual action, they are much more likely to pick a verse that they had already heard or recited many times in the past.

By way of a positive feedback loop, the process of reciting and listening then builds upon itself. Like a rolling snowball that grows larger as it picks up more snow, a single mantra can pick up more of the "matter" it consists of: sound. This increases its sonic (and mental) presence, so to speak, and eventually leads to its being used more often than others. A similar process must, in fact, already have taken place when the Saṃhitās themselves were created.[571]

While the snowball effect does not fully explain the complex processes that may influence the selection of mantras during the creation or modification of a ritual, it nevertheless provides additional help in understanding how Śrauta liturgies were created. As the case of the *sāvitrī*s in the Upanayana shows, there is indeed a correlation between the relative frequency of the *sāvitrī*s used in the Śrauta litanies and their employment in the Upanayana, where preference was given to verses that were comparatively well known from various Śrauta rituals. Nevertheless, one question remains unanswered. Why were these mantras so frequently employed in the first place? When did the snowball start rolling? At least with regard to the GM, there have been attempts to answer this question, which I will briefly address in the following.

4.3 The Gāyatrī-Mantra in the Ṛksaṃhitā

There are some indications that the GM was already a special verse in the ṚV, at least to a certain degree. As Brereton observed, the position of the verse within its hymn (ṚVIII 62) might be significant:[572] first, the general purport of this hymn is to again promote the creation of simple hymns. Second, the GM is roughly at the center of the hymn, a "key position." Third, the books of the ṚV are sometimes concluded by composite hymns "that represent a ritual summing up (in the case of Ṛgveda 2.41) or a reflection on ritual (in Ṛgveda 4.55)."[573] The

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571 Cf. Witzel 1997b: 275: "[S]ome of the Ṛgvedic Mantras apparently were so well known to all of them [i.e., the Vedic priests] that they could be taken over into all of the four Vedic Saṃhitās; the exact process is not known so far."

572 See Brereton 2022: 75–76.

573 See Brereton 2022: 76.

hymn ṚV III 62, too, is at the end of its book and may therefore have functioned as a "climax." Brereton further observed that the GM was probably the source of inspiration for verbally similar, but later verses in the ṚV (V 82.1 and I 159.1,5).

The central or "omphalos" position of ṚV III 6.10–12 was also emphasized by Jurewicz (2021). According to her, the GM, "which begins the second set of three *ṭṛca*s, could have been seen as the climax of the poem and because of that, it could have been chosen as the anchor activating the whole hymn."[574] In her paper, she reconstructed the coherence and meaning of this hymn, which in her interpretation represents the process of cognition: one after the other, the lyrical I of the poet is identified with the various deities mentioned in the verses. According to Jurewicz, the objects of desire mentioned in the text, such as prizes, plenitude, etc., are to be understood metaphorically and refer to cognition and inspiration. In the climactic triplet dedicated to Savitṛ (ṚV III 62.10–12), this quest has come to an end, as the poets are now "driven by insight" (*dhiyéṣitā́ḥ*).

Both Brereton and Jurewicz were cautious in their conclusions and did not claim that the GM became famous only due its position or meaning in the ṚV. Clearly, neither of these factors are sufficient to completely explain its later rise and spread. However, the GM might have been just special enough to be reused in Śrauta ritual, from where it could eventually spread to Gṛhya ritual.[575] It seems impossible to trace the career of the GM further back than this.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the GM's employment as the primary initiation mantra of the Upanayana is not to be explained by reference to semantics. There is no indication that it was chosen because it encapsulates a kind of monotheism, henotheism, or pantheism in which the deity Savitṛ is the principal deity. Not even his identification with the sun seems to have played a role. The interpretation of the GM as a prayer for inspiration is not alluded to in any Śrauta or Gṛhya text. The existence of other initiation mantras that are not concerned with Upanayana-related topics corroborates the view that the meaning of its text was not a decisive factor.

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574 Jurewicz 2021: 163.

575 Whether or not the fact that its author was Viśvāmitra, who since the Sanskrit Epics has been known for having transformed himself from a Kṣatriya into a Brahmin, had any influence on the mantra, is difficult to determine. It might have been just the other way round: Sathaye (2015: 36) remarked that the GM's "popularity has undoubtedly contributed to Viśvāmitra's own continued celebrity while other Vedic figures have faded into obscurity."

To interpret the mantra as a preparation for marriage (following studentship) is a somewhat forced explanation, too. While there are certain similarities in both ceremonies, the teaching of a *sāvitrī* is peculiar to the Upanayana. However, Falk's underlying assumption that the most important thing about the GM was that it mentions the god Savitṛ is evidently correct. As we have seen in **Section 2**, this is not only the common characteristic of all initiation mantras in the Upanayana, but even emphasized in the ĀśvGS.[576]

The existence of various *sāvitrī*s has long been known, but has never been considered in explaining how the GM began to attain prominence. Due to its much more widespread use, the teaching of *sāvitrī*s other than the GM in the *gāyatrī* meter was above all understood as a ritual adaptation: the presence of these *sāvitrī*s can easily be explained by their association with the three Varṇas or social classes. But it has not been recognized that they are part of a more general, implicit scheme that limited the choice of the initiation mantra. As I argued in **Section 3**, the employment of several *sāvitrī*s reflects the fact that there must have been a time before the Gṛhyasūtras when the verse had not yet been determined, but had to be selected according to certain principles: (1) explicit mention of Savitṛ; (2) dedication exclusively to Savitṛ; (3) appropriate meter; and (4) being the first verse in (5) a Ṛgvedic hymn dedicated to Savitṛ.

Even if one only applies the first, most important principle, to the Ṛk-saṃhitā (as was done in **Section 4**), it turns out that not even a hundred verses were eligible. A statistical analysis of the occurrences of these verses in Śrauta ritual provides some help in understanding why a few of them found their way into the Upanayana. In Śrauta ritual, which in this case presumably influenced domestic ritual (and not the other way round), the Upanayana *sāvitrī*s appear to be among the most frequently cited and reused *sāvitrī*s. The correlation of their frequency and their independent employment in the Upanayana can hardly be a coincidence.

I have suggested that this development was due to a kind of snowball effect. Verses that are reused comparatively often are more likely to reappear in other places as well, which is the result of a process in which the repeated recitation of certain verses made an impression on the minds of the reciters. When a new mantra was sought, as in the case of the *sāvitrī*s, the creators or modifiers of the rituals were prone to use a mantra that they had often heard and/or recited in the past.

By studying their frequency in Śrauta ritual, we can now observe that not only the GM, but also other *sāvitrī*s indeed "fell from the heap like the wind-blown seed."[577] We can also see, however, that there was not only one big "heap" of of 19,000 verses, but several; for instance, the heap of *sāvitrī*s. Furthermore,

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576   See above pp. 123–124.
577   Staal 1986a: 56.

the seeds or verses that were "on top" of this heap were more likely than others to be carried away and to settle down in another place.

·: **CHAPTER 5** :·

Status in Early Hinduism

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I argued that a *sāvitrī* was sought to inaugurate Vedic studentship due to the fact that Savitṛ was often invoked at the beginning of rituals and litanies in Śrauta ritual. While occasionally *sāvitrī*s in other meters were prescribed as well, the *gāyatrī* was always considered primary. The Gāyatrī-Mantra was selected from a variety of *sāvitrī*s because it was already frequently reused in Śrauta ritual. It is likely that the GM was the first *gāyatrī sāvitrī* to be chosen in this way, even though the earliest sources are surprisingly unspecific in this regard.

Later developments show that the employment of the GM as an initiation mantra was a pivotal event in its history. As it became the mantra that makes a person a full member of the *ārya* society, it also became important outside the liturgical and ritual domains. The mantra was praised in increasingly higher terms, and was soon understood to be a quasi-divine entity. Several centuries after it had been integrated into the Upanayana, it had become so highly revered that the author of the famous MānDhŚ (*vulgo* Manu) concluded that "nothing is higher than the *sāvitrī*" (*sāvitryās tu paraṃ nāsti*).[578] The eminence ascribed to the mantra not only led to the creation of the so-called modified GMs, but it also rendered it possible to call other texts *sāvitrī*, even though they had no resemblance to the GM whatsoever.[579] The central role the mantra played in the Brahminical cult was also recognized by Buddhist authors.[580]

The aim of this chapter is to explore how and in what sense the GM achieved this status. The period to be investigated ranges from the end of the

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578 See below p. 161.

579 Thus, the four verses in MBh IIXX 5.47–50 are called *bhāratasāvitrī*, that is, "the verse(s) concerned with the Bhāratas (or the Mahābhārata), which verse(s) is especially sacred like the Sāvitrī." Kajihara 2019: 27. The Śiva-Dharmaśāstra (ŚivDhŚ VIII 91–95: 99.22–31) also knows of a *gosāvitrī*, a "*sāvitrī* for cows," but does not explicitly specify a mantra that would be similar to a *sāvitrī*, which might suggest that the mantra given in the preceding text (81–89) is meant as a *sāvitrī*. Interestingly, neither of the two "*sāvitrī*s" shows any resemblance with the GM.

580 See Shults 2014: 114–120 and Kajihara 2019: 27–29; cf. also Bausch 2015: 53–54.

Vedic era, usually (and somewhat arbitrarily) dated to the fifth century BCE, up to approximately the second or third century CE, the time when the MānDhŚ was composed.[581] The main sources examined for this analysis are the religious manuals produced in that period, that is, the (early) Gṛhyasūtras, Dharmasūtras as well as the MānDhŚ.[582] Significantly, the GM does not appear as an independent goddess in these texts (unlike other deities such as Indra, Viṣṇu, or Śiva). While a small number of other texts from the same period already show first traces of a personification and divinization of the GM,[583] in my view, the absence of a mantra goddess in the ritual and Dharma literature reflects the fact that the GM had not yet (and consistently) come to be conceived of as a deity.

While the religious texts of Early Hinduism can be surveyed more or less exhaustively, this is impossible for the much more extensive later literature, where the ritual applications of mantras became more numerous and, to a limited extent, more diversified. Classical Hinduism was (among many other things) characterized by the development of new Gṛhya practices, as the supplements and additions to the existing literature, the so-called "Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts," show.[584] Despite their significance for the further development of Hinduism, these texts are largely understudied. Being beyond the historical horizon of this chapter, they will not be considered here. Select passages concerning the deification of the GM will, however, be dealt with in Chapter 8.

The discussion of the material is arranged into several sections; they follow what I identify as the most important aspects of the GM in this period. Going through the more than one hundred text passages perused for this chapter, I have found that the mantra was rarely used in a "sporadic" fashion. Rather, it had already attained a certain status even before the earliest Gṛhyasūtras were composed. I argue that this status and the use of the GM in ritual practice continuously influenced each other. Thus, the GM functioned as the key mantra both in the initiation into the *ārya* society as well as in the daily morning and evening rituals. This led to it being considered the "first and foremost" or most important Vedic verse. As a consequence, it was recited as the first mantra in other ritual contexts too, which in turn further consolidated its role and status. Eventually, it even came to be regarded as the "epitome of the Vedas."

The present chapter consists of five sections:

- **Section 1** (pp. 142–146) briefly describes the historical background of Brahminism, the ideology that had the greatest influence on the development of the GM. I also dwell on the history of the Upanayana and its connection

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581 For simplicity's sake, I refer to this period as "Early Hinduism"; see above pp. 35–36.
582 For the chronology of the Gṛhyasūtras, see n. 465 on p. 112 above.
583 See Chapter 6.
584 For these texts, see below pp. 232–233.

with the *sāvitrī*, as well as the development of the concept of *dvijāti* or "second birth."

- **Section 2** (pp. 146–153) presents several cases where the GM is the first mantra. Most important is the Sandhyā, a ritual performed daily in the morning and evening. I discuss the possible origins of this ritual, considering also the etiological "Sandhyā myth."

- **Section 3** (pp. 153–159) analyzes the position of the GM in certain Gṛhyasūtra passages that give lists of entities worthy of worship (including not only deities proper, but also more abstract entities such as texts and meters). I demonstrate that the GM, being the only verse present in the lists, was thought to be the "foremost" Vedic verse. As such, it came to stand "on a par" with the entire Vedic corpus.

- **Section 4** (pp. 159–164) explores how the GM became the "epitome" of the Vedas on several levels. I return to the cultural background, suggesting that the compression of the Vedas into a single verse was facilitated by making access to them one of the main characteristics of members of all of the upper classes.

- **Section 5** (pp. 164–166) elaborates on a use of the GM that was presumably the result of the developments presented in the preceding sections: its recitation was often prescribed as a purificatory practice, whose purpose, I argue, was to maintain the ritual and social identity of the reciter, an identity that was first given to him in the Upanayana.

Throughout this chapter, I will switch back and forth between the analysis of textual evidence and the discussion of the context and background necessary to explain my findings. In each section, I follow the principle of chronology (as far as this is possible), usually addressing older texts first. In a way, the order of the five sections also reflects a possible historical, and even causal, development. As will be seen, however, it is often very difficult to establish when exactly a particular practice or notion came into being, or to estimate to what degree it had developed at a certain point in time. My main aim, therefore, has been to follow the path of the GM "from the bird's eye view" (but in doing so I have nevertheless sought to have those eyes be those of an eagle, as it were).

Lastly, a remark on terminology is necessary: The word *sāvitrī* is used frequently in the texts under discussion. Generally there is no reason to assume that in the relevant cases, it refers to any other mantra than the GM. Keeping in line with the usage of the texts under discussion, however, throughout the

chapter I often (but not always) refer to the mantra as "the *sāvitrī*" (as opposed to "a *sāvitrī*").[585]

1. The historical background

Most important for the ascendancy and consolidation of the GM is the history of Brahminism, a specific ideology within the broader category of Vedic religion and Hinduism. Brahminism is characterized by the axiom that Brahmins and everything that is associated with them is, in every respect – be it social, cultural, or religious – superior to others.[586] This attitude had precursors in the Vedic period, when Brahmins and Kṣatriyas joined forces in order to oppress the rest of the population.[587] Over the course of time, it developed into an ideology that spread across the entirety of South Asia, and beyond.

In the first half of the first millennium BCE, the core region of Brahminical culture was located in and around the region Punjab and the Doab between the Ganges and the Yamuna (see Figure 2 on page xvii above), from where it slowly spread to the east and to the south.[588] From around the fifth century BCE onwards, however, other religious currents emerged, most importantly, Buddhism and Jainism. These anti-Brahminical currents possibly originated in a more south-eastern region[589] and quickly began to increase their influence in the political sphere. Brahminism entered into competition with these other currents, and in the process became a much broader movement.

With the burgeoning and unfolding of this movement,[590] an entirely new kind of literature evolved. From around the third century BCE onwards,[591] some Brahmins began to codify their ethical norms as well as personal and criminal law in the Dharmasūtras.[592] In doing so, one of their greatest concerns was to demarcate who belongs to the society to which their rules should apply, and to define the social boundaries within this society.[593]

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585 Cf. Table 2 on p. 2 above.
586 For an overview, see Bronkhorst 2021.
587 See Witzel 1995a: 18–19.
588 Cf. Bronkhorst 2007: 1–2.
589 Bronkhorst (2007) has called this region "Greater Magadha." According to his theory, this region was characterized by a distinct material and, above all, spiritual culture that was not (yet) dominated by Brahminism.
590 For a number of scholars, the changes Brahminism underwent were so profound that it is appropriate to speak of a "new Brahminism" (Bronkhorst 2011: 27) or "Neo-Brahmanism" (McGovern 2019: 21).
591 Cf. Olivelle 2000: 4–10.
592 See generally Olivelle 2018a.
593 Above all by introducing the Varṇa system, which "was from the start an ideologically driven enterprise designed to place the Brāhmaṇa at the top of a pyramidal social hier-

Members of this society called themselves *ārya*s or "noble ones."[594] In Sanskrit, *ārya* is a generic term used to designate "decent" people; exactly who is meant by this word depends on the speaker. In the Brahminical definition, an *ārya* is basically a decent, cultured, Sanskrit-speaking person (and ideally married and male) who accepts Brahmin authority and acts according to Brahminical standards. Being – and, especially, remaining – an *ārya* demanded a certain lifestyle and involved the observance of a great number of (ritual) laws, customs, and behaviors. In order to become an acceptable *ārya* in the first place, however, it became crucial to undergo a certain ritual of initiation: the Upanayana. Over time, this ritual became an essential part in defining who was a "proper" member of the *ārya* society, and who was not.[595]

The Upanayana originally served as an initiation into Vedic studentship.[596] While the evidence suggests that originally only Brahmins underwent it, at some point, it was proclaimed to be obligatory for non-Brahmin *ārya*s as well[597] (while sometimes also being modified in order to uphold and again underscore the Brahmins' superiority).[598] Lubin described this as follows:

> In the *gṛhyasūtra*s, the claim is first made that study of the Veda is not merely available to but incumbent on *kṣatriya*s and *vaiśya*s as well as Brahmins, with the corollary that initiation and the daily use of Vedic *mantra*s become the defining mark of elite, Ārya status in a religiously and ethnically diverse society. [...] The priestly canonization of household (*gṛhya*) ritual, with an accompanying emphasis on trans-regional standardization and the promotion of simplified forms of observance, made the prestige and alleged power of the Vedic cult accessible to a wider range of social and economic statuses. [...] The shift toward universalization is virtually completed with the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, which was no longer understood as specially relevant to the Mānava division of the Black Yajur Vedins but on the contrary lay claim to recording divine knowledge applicable to all Āryas, and essential to the successful governance of a royal state.[599]

→ archy, supporting the claim to power of the Kṣatriya class, and in a special way, reducing the Śūdras and other lower classes to a marginal and oppressed status." Olivelle 2018a: 18.

594 This term must not to be confused with "Aryan" (or "Arier" in German), which was derived from *ārya* but is used in a racial sense, most infamously by the Nazis. See generally Erdosy 1995.

595 The Upanayana was presented as the first Saṃskāra only in the later Gṛhyasūtras; in the earlier Sūtras, the first Saṃskāra is marriage. The new ordering reflects the increasing significance of the Upanayana; see Lubin 2005: 87 and Olivelle 2012a: 126–127.

596 See Kajihara 2002: 372–382; cf. also Lubin 2005: 85 and 2018a: 101–102.

597 Lubin 2018a: 106.

598 Cf. Lubin 2005: 85; cf. also n. 551 on p. 128 above.

599 Lubin 2005: 88–89.

As part of this process of universalization, the Upanayana became an initiation into society, that is, an obligatory rite of passage. This development had a lasting influence on Hindu culture:

> What was originally a consecration rite became a life-cycle rite of passage and a socioritualistic transformation in the system of norms of the specific extended families. Thus, this rite takes priority over all other rites of passage. For the formation of Hindu identity, initiation is perhaps even more significant than the wedding, for no son can be married without being initiated. All male Hindus who employ Brahman priests are initiated, but not all get married. Initiation is also indispensable for the right to perform death and ancestor rites.[600]

From the time of the Dharmasūtras onwards, all those who underwent it came to be called *dvija*s, or "twice-born," a term that was rarely used previously and more often than not only to denote Brahmins.[601] Undergoing the Upanayana thus not only became the necessary prerequisite for one's active participation in Vedic and Brahminical rituals, but also made a person a full-fledged member of the *ārya* society. Birth alone was not (or no longer) sufficient.[602]

The corollary of the extension of the Upanayana was that every *dvija* learned a *sāvitrī*, in most cases, the GM. Though many non-Brahmin *dvija*s would certainly never learn any great amount of Vedic texts (an important fact to which I will return in Section 5), the position of the GM in the initiation ritual ensured that every *dvija* knew and associated it with the Vedas, the Brahmins and everything connected to them. In fact, even if they never formally learned it, we may safely assume that many non-initiates shared this association. As the Upanayana has continued to be performed in many Hindu traditions up to the present day, this specific verse could reappear again and again as one of the hallmarks of "orthodox" Hinduism.

This status was soon recognized and emphasized within the tradition, and a special connection was established between the Upanayana and the GM. While the position of the GM was not necessarily emphasized in the descriptions of the Sūtras or in the ceremony itself – indeed, the Upanayana includes several other ritual procedures – the teaching of a *sāvitrī* was an essential and crucial component.[603] This can be observed (1) in the historical development of the ritual, (2) in the way it was connected with the social domain, as well as (3) on the "theological" level.

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600 Michaels 2018.

601 See Lubin 2005: 87 and Olivelle 2012a: 123–128.

602 Cf. also Lubin 2005: 81.

603 Great importance was also attached to the tying of the Muñja girdle, and later to the investment with the sacrificial cord; see Scharfe 2002: 105–111.

First, from the ŚatB onwards, a *sāvitrī* was taught in all versions of the Upanayana,[604] and was explicitly prescribed for all three Vedas (excluding, as so often, the AV).[605] Considering that the early "Brahmanical institutions were diffuse and intensely localized"[606] and that the authors of the Gṛhyasūtras themselves were very aware of the multitude of Gṛhya practices,[607] the existence of a specific ritual practice compulsory for *brahmacārin*s of all Vedic schools is striking. Teaching a *sāvitrī* must have been an integral component of the (revised) initiation ritual from an early point onwards. The practice was probably introduced after the AV and during or possibly even before the time of the late-Vedic ŚatB and KaṭhB.[608] It seems likely that it was devised towards the end of the Vedic period, as part of what could be called the "Śrauta revision" of Gṛhya rituals.[609]

Second, it seems that the practice of teaching a *sāvitrī* became especially important when the Upanayana was turned into a rite of passage obligatory for all three *ārya* classes. This is shown in the way that those who do not undergo it are referred to. In the Brahminical system, initiation could only be postponed and made up, never passed over. In theory, one even had to learn one's *sāvitrī* before a certain age:[610] if one failed to do so, one became a *patitasāvitrīka*, "someone who has forfeited the *sāvitrī*."[611] Such a person would be excluded from the society of twice-born *ārya*s, as one could not marry them or even speak with them.[612] The existence of this technical term points to what was perceived as the essential act of the Upanayana.

Lastly, the role of the *sāvitrī* in the Upanayana was also reflected on a theological level. This role is often emphasized in those texts that conceptualize the ritual as a "second birth" (*dvijāti*).[613] The association of the ritual with birth is already found in the AV, where it is said that during the initiation, the teacher carries the student in his belly for three nights.[614] The teaching of a *sāvitrī*, however, is not mentioned in this text, but only in the comparatively later KaṭhB and ŚatB. Both texts explicitly connect this very likely innovative practice with birth

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604 See above pp. 111–112.

605 See, for instance, ĀpDhS I 1.10 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 25; cf. also his n. on p. 472).

606 Lubin 2005: 81.

607 Lubin 2005: 83.

608 As shown in Chapter 4; see especially above p. 120.

609 Cf. above pp. 128–129.

610 See above p. 121.

611 See, for instance, BaudhGS III 13.5, ŚāṅkhGS II 1.9; PārGS II 5.39,42; GobhGS II 10.5; VārGS V 3; GautDhS I 12; VasDhS XI 74; and MānDhŚ II 38. Cf. Kane II(1): 376–380.

612 See Lubin 1994: 176–177.

613 Most Gṛyhasūtras do not show any trace of the existence of this conception (cf. Olivelle 2012a: 124–125). However, this does not necessarily show that it did not exist in any form, but can be explained by the fact that these texts generally do not show much concern for theology or interpretation.

614 AV XII 5.3 and AVP XVI 153.2; see Kajihara 2019: 3, n. 8.

symbolism. In the KaṭhB, for instance, it is said that "this *brahmacārin* is born together with (*sahá*) the *sāvitrī*."[615] The focus here is on the temporal sequences in the initiation process, on the teacher's being pregnant with the student, and that pregnancy's duration lasting three days or a year. The word *sahá*, "with," indicates simultaneity: the *brahmacārin* is (re-)born just at the same time that he is taught the *sāvitrī*, which marks the beginning of his new life.

The rebirth of the student and the teaching of a *sāvitrī* continued to be strongly associated together throughout the next two millennia. Around the beginning of the Common Era, the mantra even came to be called the "mother" of the initiate.[616] While it formerly only accompanied the rebirth of the student (the teacher being the one who became pregnant and gave birth), it now at least metaphorically became a ritual agent. This personification of the *sāvitrī* – in practice, most often the GM – illustrates how its significance increased in the course of time. (I will return to the subject of personification in Part II of this study.)

The following section turns to the role of the GM in the Sandhyā, one of the most important Hindu rituals. As we will see, the presence of the GM in this ritual was very likely a consequence of its use in the Upanayana. The GM is repeated several times in the Sandhyā, which, as a ritual that is performed daily, became a powerful "amplifier" of the mantra.

2. The first Vedic verse

2.1 The Sandhyā and its origins

The *sandhyopāsana*, the "worship at/of[617] the juncture(s)" of day and night (i.e., the two twilights, dawn and dusk), or abbreviated simply *sandhyā* is a ritual that is generally performed twice daily, before sunrise and after sunset (and sometimes also at noon, another "juncture").[618] As observed by Einoo, in the earliest texts dealing with the ritual, the Sandhyā was still a rather simple ritual. According to the ĀśvGS, for instance, it basically consisted in the recitation of the GM; the KāṭhGS additionally mentions that it was to be preceded by *om* and the Vyāhṛtis.[619] But even as other ritual actions and mantras were added (their

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615 *sá vá eṣá brahmacārī́ sāvitryá̄ sahá prájāyate* KaṭhB L 10 (also translated by Kajihara 2002: 270); see also ŚatB XI 5.4.12.

616 See below pp. 179–182.

617 See n. 635 on p. 150 below.

618 See Kane II(1): 312–321, Srinivasan 1973, Einoo 1992, 1993, 2005a: 7–8.

619 ĀśvGS III 7.4 and KāṭhGS I 28. The other potentially early Gṛhyasūtra passages mentioned by Einoo (1992: 59) are ŚāṅkhGS II 9.1–3, KauṣGS II 6.3–4, MānGS I 2.1–5, VārGS V 30, and JaimGS I 13. The ŚāṅkhGS and the closely related KauṣGS additionally in-

number has grown considerably over the course of time),[620] later texts, too, time and again emphasize the recitation of the GM. To give but one example from the MānDhŚ:

> At the morning twilight, he should stand reciting softly the Sāvitrī verse until the sun comes into view; at the evening twilight, however, he should remain properly seated until the Big Dipper becomes clearly visible. When he stands reciting softly at the morning twilight, he banishes any sin committed during the night; and when he sits at the evening twilight, he removes any taint contracted during the day. A man who neither stands at the morning twilight nor sits at the evening twilight should be excluded like a Śūdra from all rites of the twice-born.[621]

Recitation of the GM has always been considered the most important component of the ritual.[622] Looking at the earliest prescriptions, it even stands to reason that originally it was the only component of the ritual, around which other elements were gradually added.[623] Most of these are clearly "day-to-day rituals" whose purpose is often (but not always) to uphold or renew the ritual purity of the performer. Among them are, for instance, *ācamana*, the "sipping" of water for purification; *aghamarṣaṇa*, "making the sins forgiven"; *mārjana*, "purifying" oneself; and *arghya*, making an "honorary offering" of water to the sun. These components continued to vary considerably in different traditions,[624] which certainly did not make it easy to attribute a unified meaning or purpose to the ritual.

→   clude the Svastyayanas (according to Oldenberg [*SBE* XXIX: 74, n. ad ŚāṅkhGS II 9.2], "[t]he Svastyayanas are texts such as Rig-veda I, 89; IV, 31"). Whether the Sandhyā of the MānGS, which is discussed in detail below pp. 189–192, belongs in its entirety to the same stage as, for instance, the KāṭhGS, remains open. The VārGS and the JaimGS are both probably comparatively late; see n. 465 on p. 112 above; for the latter, see also below pp. 247–248. ĀpDhS I 30.8, GautDhS II 10–11, and VasDhS VII 16 only allude to the ritual, but do not mention any mantras; cf. Einoo 1992: 62.

620   For an overview, see Srinivasan 1973: 162; see also Einoo 1993: 226–233.

621   MānDhŚ II 101–103: *pūrvāṃ saṃdhyāṃ japyṃs tiṣṭhet sāvitrīm ārkadarśanāt / paścimāṃ tu samāsīta samyag ṛkṣavibhāvanāt /*101*/ pūrvāṃ saṃdhyāṃ japaṃs tiṣṭhan naiśam eno vyapohati / paścimāṃ tu samāsīno malaṃ hanti divākṛtam /*102*/ na tiṣṭhati tu yaḥ pūrvāṃ nopāste yaś ca paścimām / sa śūdravad bahiṣkāryaḥ sarvasmād dvijakarmaṇaḥ /*103*/; tr. Olivelle 2005: 100.

622   Cf. Kane II(1): 314 and Rastelli 2014: 271: "In the Vedic orthodox form of the *sandhyā* ritual, the most important mantra is the *gāyatrī*." In many forms of ritual, the mantra is recited not just once, but up to one hundred times. The recitation of the GM therefore takes up a lot of time in the ritual, in many cases probably the most. This circumstance certainly had a great influence on how the role of the mantra was perceived in the Sandhyā.

623   A more detailed examination of the history of the Sandhyā, especially with regard to its relationship to daily personal recitation and individual Veda practice (*svādhyāya*), would be worth a study of its own.

624   See Rastelli 2014: 256–257 and Einoo 1993.

It appears that, at some point, this situation preoccupied some of those who performed the ritual, as they supplied the composite ritual with a myth explaining how it works. According to this etiological myth, which has been called the "Sandhyā myth," the purpose of the ritual performed in the morning is to help the sun rise. The first one to draw attention to the myth was Doris Srinivasan (1973), who studied its various manifestations in several texts. As I could not put it any better, I will quote her summary:

> As soon as the sun sets, demons are there to attack it. They try to devour the sun to keep it from rising. In order for sunlight to reappear, the struggle must be resolved. Alone the sun is not strong enough to defeat its enemies. A spell is divinely revealed to effectuate the desired outcome. The spell, when uttered in a ritual context taps the power of *bráhman.* The worshipper must perform certain ritual actions precisely during the transition from night to day and from day to night. He must stand, facing East during the former time span; during the latter he must sit facing West. Doing so, and throwing up water consecrated by the spell conquers the enemies of the sun. The drops of water become thunderbolts (*vajra*) and these strike down the demons. To assist the sun, the twice-born throw up abundant water in the Saṃdhyā. Thereby, they stave off, for that day, the sun's foes and foster sunrise. A curse placed on these demons prevents them from ever dying. Thus the same battle is waged each night (from the setting until the dawning of light). This necessitates that Saṃdhyā must never be neglected. He who fails to do this duty is a killer of the sun; he who observes this duty promotes the uninterrupted succession of days and nights. In this manner, the sun maintains its course.[625]

Does this myth reflect the original purpose of the ritual – if there ever was only one? The presumably oldest text passages containing the Sandhyā myth are the Ṣaḍviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (ṢaḍvB) and the TaittĀ, both translated in Srinivasan's article.[626] Portions of these texts were certainly composed after the Vedic period.[627] While a closer examination of their dates lies outside the scope of this study, it is possible to make a few basic observations.

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625 Srinivasan 1973: 168–169. The summary is based on more than eleven Vedic and post-Vedic texts, see Srinivasan 1973: 168.

626 ṢaḍvB IV 5.2–4, see pp. 169–170; TaittĀ II 2, see p. 170. A similar ritual act is also mentioned in KauṣU II 7, where Sarvajit Kauṣītaki is said to have venerated the sun three times a day by pouring water three times into a pot.

627 For the TaittĀ, see above pp. 79–80. The date of the composite ṢaḍvB (Caland 1931: ii–iii), an appendix of the Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (PañcB), is unclear. Judging from the language, the Sandhyā myth contained in this text is clearly post-Vedic; indeed, it even seems to contain intertextual references to texts such as the BaudhDhS and the GautDhS; see Srinivasan 1973: 170, nn. 43 and 45.

An important detail is that the "demons" (Asuras) are struck down by the water thrown up by the performer, "water which is consecrated with the Gāyatrī" (*gayatriyābhimantritenāmbhasā*), as the TaittĀ elucidates. First, the act of throwing up water is not mentioned in the earliest Gṛhyasūtras.[628] Second, the fact that the texts designate the performer of the Sandhyā simply as "Brahmin" (*brāhmaṇa* in the ṢaḍvB) or even "learned Brahmin" (*brāhmaṇo vidvān* in the TaittĀ), suggests to me that they conceive of him as an adult (rather than as a young *brahmacārin*), another factor that, as I discuss below,[629] points to a rather late date. A comparatively late date would also support the theory put forward in Chapter 1 that the word *gāyatrī* was probably introduced as a second name of the mantra only after the second century CE.[630]

We can also observe that the GM itself does not feature very prominently in the myth: in the ṢaḍvB, it is simply viewed as just one part of the Sandhyā, and in the TaittĀ, it serves to consecrate the water that then strikes down the Asuras. While the recitation of the GM is certainly essential in the Sandhyā ritual, it is not essential in the Sandhyā myth itself: the drops of water could be consecrated with any other mantra, and indeed, the ṢaḍvB mentions the recitation of other verses, ṚV X 190.1–3,[631] even before the GM. The Sandhyā myth, therefore, is most likely secondary: it was only attached to the composite ritual after it had already been in existence for some time. It cannot be applied to the simplest (and presumably earliest) form of the ritual, which only consists in the recitation of the GM, and hence does not really help to explain how this mantra found its way into the Sandhyā.

But could it be that there was another connection between the mantra and other elements of the ritual – such as the time stipulated for its performance – a connection that was never explicitly stated, possibly because it was too obvious? As mentioned, the deity Savitṛ has always been associated with the times of morning and evening or, more specifically, with the times before sunrise and after sunset.[632] This association continued even when the sun came to be seen as his primary manifestation. Especially in the Vedic period, he was conceived of as an impeller and initiator, a function that was closely connected with his association with the beginning and the end of the day. Considering this prehistory – and the fact that after the Vedic period, the word *savitṛ* itself began to be used synonymously with other words designating the sun – it would be natu-

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628 Cf. Srinivasan 1973: 166.
629 See below pp. 150–151.
630 That the mantra, and not the meter is meant, is indicated by the word *abhimantrita* "addressed" or "consecrated with a mantra."
631 See Srinivasan 1973: 172. The verses belong to the so-called Aghamarṣaṇa-Sūkta; see Kane II(1): 317.
632 See above pp. 44–46.

ral to assume that Savitṛ's nature and the daily recitation of the *sāvitrī* before sunrise and after sunset are in some way connected.[633]

Surprisingly, however, this connection is never mentioned or alluded to in any of the earliest sources. I have not found explicit evidence for it in any of the texts pre-dating the Common Era. The same holds true for a possible connection of the *sāvitrī* and the goddess Sūryā Sāvitrī, who was likewise associated with the time of morning.[634] It would have been no big step to identify the *sandhyā*, that is, the "twilight" that is supposedly being worshipped (*upa+ās*), with or as Sūryā Sāvitrī – but this was apparently never done, at least not explicitly.

In fact, it is not even entirely clear whether *sandhyopāsana* or the various expressions used in this context refer to an adoration *of* the twilight.[635] It is certainly possible that the earliest practitioners already interpreted it as such, but it remains difficult to show that this was the motivation behind the creation of the entire ritual. Savitṛ's being the sun might not have been the primary reason for the recitation of a *sāvitrī* in the Sandhyā, nor was it the identification of the time with the goddess Sūryā Sāvitrī, or identification with the goddess and the celestial light visible at that time – all of which are lacking in evidence. In the following, I will propose another explanation that is based on the putative historical development of the ritual.

According to Shingo Einoo,[636] the Sandhyā was originally performed only by Vedic students. Apparently it "is in the Yājñavalkyasmṛti that it is for the first

633   As argued, for instance, by Anand (1988: 4–7).

634   See Chapter 7.

635   I have not found any early sources that explicitly state that the twilight is the object of worship (one of the earliest is the late VaikhGS [VI 8], which uses the expression *sandhyām ādityaṃ copasthāya* "having worshipped the Twilight/Juncture and the sun"). The most frequently used expression is *saṃdhyām upa+ās* (e.g., *saṃdhyām upāsīta* ĀśvGS III 7–3 and KāṭhGS I 25; *saṃdhyām upāste* MānGS I 2.1 and KauṣGS II 6.3). However, the verb *upa+ās*, literally "to sit down next to," not only means "to perform worship," but also simply "to perform" (cf. *ye ... agnihotram upāsate* "those who perform the Agnihotra" MānDhŚ XI 42). If *saṃdhyā* is understood to be the designation of the ritual (the "Juncture/Twilight"), the expression *saṃdhyām upa+ās* can be translated as "to perform the Juncture/Twilight (worship/ritual)." But yet another interpretation is possible. We occasionally also encounter the expression *saṃdhyām ās* (e.g., *saṃdhyām āset* VārGS V 30, *saṃdhyām āste* ŚāṅkhGS II 9). The simplex *ās* cannot take a direct object, but may, for instance, be used with an internal accusative (e.g., *sattram ās*, "to sit a session") or, more frequently, with an adverbial, temporal accusative ("during, through, for the time of"). An adverbial use of *saṃdhyām* is clearly given in cases where the verb *sthā* "to stand" is used, as for instance in MānDhŚ II 101a = 102a = IV 93c: *pūrvāṃ saṃdhyāṃ japaṃs tiṣṭhet* "during the morning juncture, he shall stand, softly reciting." While *upa+ās* is most often used with direct accusative objects, it is not impossible to understand *saṃdhyām* in *saṃdhyām upa+ās* as an adverbial accusative, i.e., "worship (during) the juncture." To account for all these possible interpretations, I generally translate *saṃdhyām upa+ās* with "to perform the Juncture (worship)," which leaves open whether the ritual itself is called "Juncture/Twilight," is a worship of the Juncture/Twilight, or is simply performed at/during the two junctures/ twilight times.

636   See Einoo 1992: 61–62 and 1993: 227–228, 231.

time explicitly taught that the householder too should perform this daily cere-mony,"[637] that is, in a text as late as the fourth or fifth century CE.[638] Originally, therefore, the Sandhyā was restricted to the time of studentship. As a matter of fact, the Sandhyā was one of the first simple rituals one had to learn after initiation, possibly even the very first. This is clearly expressed, for instance, in the MānDhŚ, which states that "after initiating a student, the teacher should at the outset train him in purification, proper conduct, (the ritual of) taking care of the fire (*agnikārya*),[639] and performing the Juncture (worship)."[640] It is well known that there are ritual regulations for many, if not most, of the daily activ-ities of a religious practitioner, be it a student or a householder.[641] Along with the similarly simple *agnikārya*, the Sandhyā was one of the first proper rituals to be learned by the young student.

I hypothesize that the daily recitation of a *sāvitrī* might have begun as a simple exercise for young *brahmacārin*s. In preparation for the study of longer Vedic texts, they were given the task of reciting one verse correctly at a specific time each day. Since the *sāvitrī* is the first Vedic verse that the student learns, it is even impossible for him to recite another text (not having yet learned any), at least for a certain – if very short – time.[642] After and alongside memoriza-tion, as well as accustoming the student to regular and disciplined individual recitation,[643] reciting the *sāvitrī* may also have fulfilled another – most likely even more important – function: as the *sāvitrī*s played an important role in the definition of the students' new social identity, their recitation may have served a similar purpose as most of the other elements of the Sandhyā, that is, the renewal of their purity. The recitation of the *sāvitrī* may have had a simi-lar momentum as the initiation ritual: learning a *sāvitrī* made the young boy a *brahmacārin*, and by repeating the same mantra, this status was restored with each new day. As such, it could also be interpreted as a purificatory practice, a principle that I will discuss in more detail below.[644]

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637 Einoo 1992: 66; see also generally Lubin 2018b.

638 For the Yājñavalkya-Smṛti (YājñSm), see Olivelle 2018a: 26.

639 Olivelle translates *agnikāryam* with "fire rituals." Literally it refers to the daily mainte-nance and handling of the ritual fire, and as such, it is also said to be an important duty of a housewife (MBh XIII 134.45). For the *agnikārya* in the Gṛhyasūtras, see, for instance, ŚāṅkhGS II 10 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 75–76) and MānGS I 16–17 (tr. Dresden 1941: 3–5).

640 MānDhŚ II 69: *upanīya guruḥ śiṣyaṃ śikṣayec chaucam āditaḥ / ācāram agnikāryaṃ ca saṃdhyopāsanam eva ca //*; cf. the translation by Olivelle 2005: 98.

641 Cf. Lubin 2018b.

642 Cf. Kane II(1): 312: "On the day of Upanayana there is no morning *saṃdhyā*. Jaimini says 'as long as there is no imparting of the Gāyatrī there is no saṃdhyā.' So the student be-gins his saṃdhyā in the noon of the day of Upanayana. As however on that day he knows no Vedic text except the Gāyatrī, his whole saṃdhyā worship consists of the Gāyatrī."

643 Cf. Lubin 1994: 139: "In the first place, ritualized recitation serves to help the student memorize the texts, and later to consolidate that memory."

644 See below pp. 164–166.

Whatever its origins, the Sandhyā became one of the most regularly performed Hindu rituals, and with it the regular repetition of the *sāvitrī*. Even though for a long time the Sandhyā was primarily part of the students' daily routine, it is conceivable that it was already being performed by some adults before the YājñSm was composed.[645] As *brahmacārin*s, in any case, they used to repeat the *sāvitrī*, up to one hundred times (or even more often), at the beginning and end of each day, and even ideally, throughout their studies (or, in the case of life-long *brahmacārin*s and later also householders, throughout their entire lives).

Even without conducting a psychological study, it is easily understood that this daily and repeated recitation must have made a great impact on the minds of the reciters. There can be little doubt that it contributed much to the "snowball effect" proposed above, and it made it more likely that the *sāvitrī* would reappear in other ritual contexts. As explained above, the *triṣṭubh* and *jagatī sāvitrī*s were substitutes of the GM.[646] While they were probably also used in the Sandhyā, at least by some,[647] the GM was certainly used more frequently. Those who were responsible for creating new rituals (or modifying existing ones), in any case, were the Brahmins, who would always recite the GM. Accordingly, the Sandhyā above all affected the development of this *sāvitrī*.

2.2 The Gāyatrī-Mantra as the first mantra in other contexts

In a number of cases we observe that, when the GM is combined with other mantras, it is assigned a special, initial position. The following provides several examples to illustrate this.

In at least two codified rituals, the GM serves as a kind of prelude to other Vedic verses: one passage of the ŚāṅkhGS prescribes its recitation in the *pratyavarohaṇa* or "redescending," a ritual that is performed after the time of the year when one does not sleep on the ground (in order not to be bitten by a snake).[648] Here, the GM (preceded by the Vyāhṛtis) is in an initial position, heralding ṚV I 97, an entire hymn in the *gāyatrī* meter.[649] In the context of a

645 Einoo (1992: 66–67) noted that the earlier MānDhŚ does not (yet) mention it as one of the daily duties of a householder. However, it seems plausible to me that in practice some householders performed the ritual (or rather, continued to perform it after they were no longer *brahmacārin*s) even before the YājñSm was composed, and that the author of this text did not introduce the practice, but only wanted to provide it with legitimacy.

646 See above p. 126.

647 Cf. the Sandhyā passage of the MānGS below pp. 189–192.

648 ŚāṅkhGS IV 17 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 130–131).

649 ŚāṅkhGS IV 17.5. As the purpose of the ritual is to drive away the "evil" (*pāpman*), among the texts that are to be recited, only ṚV I 97 can be said to fit the occasion. The first verse of this hymn shows why it was chosen: "Blazing away the bad for us, blaze wealth here, o Agni, – blazing away the bad for us." *ápa naḥ śóśucad aghám, ágne śúśugdhịy á̄ rayím / ápa naḥ śóśucad aghám //*; tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 235.

Śrāddha (a ritual performed for the benefit of dead relatives), while the invited Brahmins are eating, the Gṛhastha recites the so-called Madhuvātīya verses, verses dedicated to the Pitṛs and verses to Soma Pavamāna – again, preceded by the three Vyāhṛtis and the GM.[650] Some texts also generally prescribe its recitation before *svādhyāya*, the private or individual recitation of the Veda,[651] or before the Veda is taught.[652] While both the *pratyavarohaṇa* and the Śrāddha are comparatively rarely performed, the individual recitation (and for some, teaching) of the Veda was a daily business (and was even done in multiple sessions throughout the day). In ritual practice, the GM was thus quite often recited as the first verse or the first mantra (often preceded, of course, by *om* and the Vyāhṛtis, a combination that could in fact be categorized as a mantra itself).

While it is difficult to establish direct causal developments between the various rituals, it seems plausible that they were often influenced by the GM's prominent position in the Upanayana and the daily Sandhyā: in the former, it features as the first mantra to be learned in one's lifetime; in the latter, as the most important (and often first) mantra to be recited at the beginning and end of each day. It is clear that every time the GM was used as the first mantra in a sequence, its role as an initiatory mantra was further consolidated. As we will see in the following section, this frequent and typical use of the GM as the first mantra also gave a further impetus to its becoming the *foremost* verse of the Vedas. s

3. The foremost Vedic verse

In Chapter 2, we observed that *a gāyatrī sāvitrī* was used as an initiation mantra already before the first Gṛhyasūtras came into being.[653] There seems to be little reason to assume that this was any mantra other than the GM.[654] While the Gṛhyasūtras formally treat it as one mantra among others (notwithstanding the fact that it is one of the few mantras with a proper name), they also reflect the status it had already attained before they were composed. In several Gṛhya rituals, oblations are offered to a multitude of entities, including not only deities in the usual sense, but also Ṛṣis and other semi-divine beings along with texts, meters, the ritual itself, heaven and earth, plants, and so forth. These divinities

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650   ŚāṅkhGS IV 1.5; cf. Gonda 1980a: 446.

651   See, e.g., ĀśvGS III 2.3–4 and TaittĀ II 11.8; see also Malamoud 1977: 86–89 and Kane II(1): 703.

652   ŚāṅkhGS II 7.8–11 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 70; see also below p. 160); GautDhS I 55 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 123).

653   See above p. 69.

654   See above p. 70.

are given in lists which, in a way, represent the totality of the religious cosmos of their authors. The GM features in these lists as the only verse present.

What follows is a presentation of seven of these lists containing the GM, alongside brief introductions to the ritual and textual context, translations of relevant portions, comments on special characteristics, and discussions of their meaning and purport. Particularly instructive is the position of the mantra relative to the other entities in the lists. In several cases, however, I will also clarify whether or not the GM was thought to be more than a divine text, possibly even a deity.

Most prominent among the rituals containing such lists is the Upākaraṇa, the annual ritual which inaugurates the period of study around the beginning of the rainy season.[655] In the lists used for this ritual, the *sāvitrī* is often placed in a position *before* the Vedas.

The first example is found in one of the least studied Gṛhyasūtras, the **Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (BaudhGS)**.[656] In this text, a particular ritual sequence is prescribed in various contexts, occasionally with modifications.[657] This sequence includes the "carving" (*ud+likh*) of a *devayajana*, a "place of ritual worship for the gods," on the ground. In this demarcated area, libations to various deities are offered. In the case of the Upākaraṇa, it is generally the teacher who offers libations, not only to divine beings such as Sadasaspati, but also

> ... to the ***sāvitrī***, to this one: "That desirable [splendor] of the Impeller...". |7|

> Next, he offers oblations to the Vedas: "to the Ṛgveda, SVĀHĀ; to the Yajurveda, SVĀHĀ; to the Sāmaveda, SVĀHĀ; to the Atharvaveda, SVĀHĀ; to the Atharvans and the Aṅgirases, SVĀHĀ; to the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, SVĀHĀ; to the serpent gods, SVĀHĀ; to all beings, SVĀHĀ!" |8|[658]

A very similar (and long) list is found in the Dharmasūtra of the same school, the **BaudhDhS**, where even more entities are to be "quenched" or "satiated" (*tṛp*) during the daily morning bath.[659] The passage is probably a later addition, but shall nevertheless be briefly dealt with here. The performer is the householder:

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655 See Kane II(2): 811–815.

656 For this text, see especially Lubin 2016b.

657 See also BaudhGS III 1.4–8; 2.5–11, 17–24, 30–36, 42–49; 3.6–13.

658 *... sāvitrīṃ juhoti tat-savitur-vareṇyam ity etām |7| atha vedāhutīr juhoti ṛgvedāya svāhā | yajurvedāya svāhā | sāmavedāya svāhā | atharvavedāya svāhā | atharvāṅgirobhyas svāhā | itihāsapurāṇebhyas svāhā | sarpadevajanebhyas svāhā | sarvabhūtebhyas svāhā iti |8|* BaudhGS III 1.4–8

659 This bath does not belong to the Sandhyā in the strict sense; cf. Rastelli 2014: 246: "BaudhDhS's prescriptions for the Twilight worship and the bath overlap in some aspects. They give the impression of describing two independent procedures that partly consist of the same elements rather than two consecutive sequences."

"*om*, I satiate … the Humming [i.e., the syllable *om*] … the Vyāhṛtis … the *sāvitrī* … the *gāyatrī* … the meters … the Ṛgveda … the Yajurveda … the Sāmaveda … the Atharvaveda … the Atharvans and Aṅgirases … the Itihāsas and Purāṇas … all the Vedas … all the gods and people … all beings."[660]

In this list, the *sāvitrī* is preceded by *om* and the Vyāhṛtis. Considering that this list is much more extensive that of the BaudhGS, it is easily understood that these two elements (which are regularly present in the Upanayana) are added. Interestingly, the *sāvitrī* is here also followed by the *gāyatrī* and the meters.

Similar practices are also known in other Vedic schools. The **ŚāṅkhGS**, for instance, prescribes a ritual that is most likely performed after the Samāvartana, the conclusion of studentship.[661] While bathing, the ex-student offers libations to a great many entities,[662] among them "Brahmā, the Vedas, the gods, the Ṛṣis and all meters, the sound *om*, the sound sequence *vaṣaṭ*, the Great Vyāhṛtis, the *sāvitrī*, the sacrifices…" Why the ritual utterance *vaṣaṭ*, well known from Śrauta ritual, is inserted between *om* and the Vyāhṛtis is unclear.[663] Perhaps the combination of *om*, the Vyāhṛtis, and the *sāvitrī* was not as fixed in this school as in others: the ŚāṅkhGS, for example, does not combine *om* or the Vyāhṛtis with the verse in the prescriptions for the initiation ritual.[664]

The fourth list shows that the *sāvitrī* was not restricted to being a formulaic prelude to the Vedas. In the prescription for the Upākaraṇa as well as the Utsarga given in the **ĀśvGS**, it is found among yet other abstract concepts and entities. Here, it is the first one, followed by the *brahman* (or, possibly, the god Brahmā):

660   *oṃ praṇavaṃ tarpayāmi | oṃ vyāhṛtīs tarpayāmi | oṃ sāvitrīṃ tarpayāmi | oṃ gāyatrīṃ tarpayāmi | oṃ chandāṃsi tarpayāmi | om ṛgvedaṃ tarpayāmi | oṃ yajurvedaṃ tarpayāmi | oṃ sāmavedaṃ tarpayāmi | om atharvavedaṃ tarpayāmi | om atharvāṅgirasas tarpayāmi | om itihāsapurāṇāni tarpayāmi | oṃ sarvavedāṃs tarpayāmi | oṃ sarvadevajanāṃs tarpayāmi | oṃ sarvabhūtāni tarpayāmīti* BaudhDhS II 9.14. For a full translation, see Olivelle 2000: 275.

661   Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 120, n. on *sūtra* "9, 1."

662   ŚāṅkhGS IV 9.3: *agnis tṛpyatu | vāyus tṛpyatu | sūryas tṛpyatu | viṣṇus tṛpyatu | prajāpatis tṛpyatu | virūpākṣas tṛpyatu | sahasrākṣas tṛpyatu | somaḥ | brahmā | vedāḥ | devāḥ | ṛṣayaḥ | sarvāṇi ca chandāṃsi | oṃkāraḥ | vaṣaṭkāraḥ | mahāvyāhṛtayaḥ | sāvitrī | yajñāḥ | dyāvāpṛthivī | nakṣatrāṇi | antarikṣam | ahorātrāṇi | saṃkhyāḥ | saṃdhyāḥ | samudrāḥ | nadyaḥ | girayaḥ | kṣetrauṣadhivanaspatigandharvāpsarasaḥ | nāgāḥ | vayāṃsi | siddhāḥ | sādhyāḥ | viprāḥ | yakṣāḥ | rakṣāṃsi | bhūtāny evamantāni tṛpyantu | śrutim tarpayāmi | smṛtim tarpayāmi | dhṛtim tarpayāmi | ratim tarpayāmi | gatim tarpayāmi | matim tarpayāmi | śraddhāmedhe dhāraṇām ca gobrāhmaṇam | sthāvarajaṅgamāni | sarvabhūtāni tarpyantv iti yajñopavītī.*

663   Cf. Rām. VII 99.8: "The Vedas in the form of a Brahmin, the *sāvitrī*, savior of all, the sound *om* as well as the sound sequence *vaṣaṭ* are all devoted to Rāma." *vedā brāhmaṇarūpeṇa sāvitrī sarvarakṣiṇī / oṃkāro 'tha vaṣaṭkaraḥ sarve rāmam anuvratāḥ //.*

664   See ŚāṅkhGS II 5 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 66–67); cf. also above p. 120.

Having offered two *ājya* portions, he [i.e., the teacher] is to offer *ājya* libations to the **sāvitrī**, the *brahman*/Brahmā, to faith,[665] to intelligence, to insight, to concentration, to the Lord of the Seat (Sadasaspati), to assent, to the meters, and to the Ṛṣis.[666]

In the examples given so far, the *sāvitrī* is often found near (though not necessarily next to) the Vedas. Some lists, however, also exhibit another peculiarity: in addition to mentioning the *sāvitrī* in combination with the Vedas, they conspicuously associate the *sāvitrī* with Savitṛ. Three of these passages follow.

According to the rules laid down in the Upākaraṇa section of the **Hiraṇya-keśi-Gṛhyasūtra (HirGS)**, the teacher is to offer oblations to the deities associated with the five *kāṇḍa*s of the TaittS or,[667] alternatively, to the names of the *kāṇḍa*s themselves (which also contain the names of the deities). Next, he makes offerings to the *sāvitrī* and to the four Vedas, and, lastly, to the deity Sadasaspati.[668] In the same ritual, the teacher and his students also ritually prepare seats of Dharba grass for a great number of divinities. In a long list of Ṛṣis, deities, and divinities, the four Vedas are also mentioned, preceded by Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* and followed by the Itihāsas and Purāṇas:

> ... to Indra, to Tvaṣṭṛ (the Carpenter), to the Maker, to the Upholder, to the Placer, to Death, to **Savitṛ**, to the **sāvitrī** and to the Vedas: one by one to the Ṛgveda, to the Yajurveda, to the Sāmaveda, to the Atharvaveda, to the Itihāsas and Purāṇas taken together.[669]

Another, similar list is found in the **Bhāradvāja-Gṛhyasūtra (BhārGS)**, recited in both the Upākaraṇa and Utsarjana. The greatest similarity occurs after Indra is mentioned. Here again, several names and epithets of several obviously very powerful male deities (or one deity?) are given, followed by the *sāvitrī*:

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665 Cf. n. 908 on p. 209 below.

666 *ājyabhāgau hutvājyāhutīr juhuyāt sāvitryai brahmaṇe śraddhāyai medhāyai prajñāyai dhāraṇāyai sadasaspataye 'numataye chandobhya ṛṣibhyaś ceti* ĀśvGS III 5.4. Cf. the translations by Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 221 and Stenzler 1865: 94–95

667 The TaittS as we know it has seven *kāṇḍa*s, not five. On this point, see Keith 1914: xliii–xliv.

668 Not much is known about this deity, whose name literally means "Lord of the Seat." *sadasaspati* is used as an epithet of Bṛhaspati, Agni as well as Indra; cf. Macdonell 2002 [¹1916]: 102.

669 HirGS II 8.19.6: *tata ekavedyāntebhyaḥ kṛṣṇadvaipāyanāya jātūkarṇyāya tarukṣāya tṛṇabindave varmiṇe varūthine vājine vājaśravase satyaśravase suśravase sutaśravasesomaśuṣmāyaṇāya satvavate* [or *sattvavate/satyavate?*] *bṛhadukthāya vāmadevāya vājiratnāya haryajvāyanāyodamayāya gautamāya ṛṇaṃjayāya ṛtaṃjayāya kṛtaṃjayāya dhanaṃjayāya babhrave tryaruṇāya trivarṣāya tridhātave śibintāya parāśarāya viṣṇave rudrāya skandāya kāśīśvarāya śvarāya dharmāyārthāya kāmāya krodhāya vasiṣṭhāyendrāya tvaṣṭre kartre dhartre dhātre mṛtyave savitre sāvitryai vedebhyaś ca pṛthakpṛthag ṛgvedāya yajurvedāya sāmavedāyātharvavedāyetihāsapurāṇāyeti*; cf. the complete translation by Oldenberg, *SBE* XXX: 244. Cf. also HirGS II 20.9.

... to Indra, to Death, to the Maker, to Tvaṣṭṛ (the Carpenter), to the Placer, to the Ordainer, to **Savitṛ**, to the one abundant in fame, to the one having true fame, to the *sāvitrī*, to the meters, to the Ṛgveda, to the Yajurveda, to the Sāmaveda, to the Atharvans and Aṅgirases, to the Itihāsas and Purāṇas.[670]

While Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* are not directly adjacent, it is conspicuous that they are only separated by two compounds that could easily be understood as epithets of Savitṛ (*suśravase satyaśravase*; note also the alliteration).

In the seventh and last passage to be considered here, the association between Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* appears to be even stronger. According to the **BaudhDhS**, oblations are to be offered to a number of divinities before the complete individual recitation of the Veda (performed while fasting). In the list, which has some similarity with that of the ĀśvGS (III 5.4) given above, several male gods and different types of Vedic texts (masculine) are followed by several abstract entities (feminine), followed in turn by Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* as well as the Lord of the Seat and *anumati*, "assent" (masculine/feminine in both cases). This reinforces the impression that they in some way form a couple:

To Fire, svāhā; to the Lord of Progeny (Prajāpati), svāhā; to Soma, svāhā; to All Gods, to the Self-Existent One, to the verses of praise (*ṛc*), to the ritual formulae (*yajus*), to the melodies (*sāman*), to the *atharvan*s (the Atharvavedic formulae), to faith,[671] to insight, to intelligence, to splendor, to modesty, to **Savitṛ**, to the *sāvitrī*, to the Lord of the Seat (Sadasaspati), and to assent.[672]

In these last three passages, the *sāvitrī* is mentioned right after or very near Savitṛ, its eponym. In the first two it is located between the deities and the texts; in the last one, it is located between two deities. It is certainly no coincidence that the *sāvitrī* is always found very close to Savitṛ in these lists.

As we approach the turn of the millennium (in fact, the passage from the BaudhDhS translated above most likely dates to the first millennium CE), we

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670 BhārGS III 10: *viśvāmitrāya jamadagnaye bharadvājāya gautamāyātraye vasiṣṭhāya kaśyapāyārundhatyai kalpayāmīti dakṣiṇato 'gastyāya kalpayanty uttarataḥ kṛṣṇadvaipāyanāya jātūkarṇāya tarukṣāya bṛhadukthāya tṛṇabindave somaśravase somaśuṣmiṇe vājaśravase vājaratnāya varmiṇe varūthine satvavate haryajvane vāmadevāyodamayāyarṇaṃjayāyartaṃjayāya kṛtaṃjayāya dhanaṃjayāya babhrave tryaruṇāya trivarṣāya tridhātave 'śvayajñāya parāśarāya vasiṣṭhāyendrāya mṛtyave kartre tvaṣṭre dhātre vidhātre savitre suśravase satyaśravase sāvitryai chandobhya ṛgvedāya yajurvedāya sāmavedāyātharvāṅgirobhya itihāsapurāṇebhyaḥ sarpadevajanebhyaḥ sarvabhūtebhyaś ca kalpayāmīti.*

671 Cf. n. 908 on p. 209 below.

672 *agnaye svāhā | prajāpataye svāhā | somāya svāhā | viśvebhyo devebhyaḥ svayaṃbhuva ṛgbhyo yajurbhyaḥ sāmabhyo 'tharvabhyaḥ śraddhāyai prajñāyai medhāyai śriyai hriyai savitre sāvitryai sadasaspataye 'numataye ca* BaudhDhS III 9.4; also translated by Olivelle 2000: 323.

have to be more aware regarding the possibility that the *sāvitrī* appears as a deity (even while we are still in the first of part of this study). Even if there are no explicit indications, we must carefully examine each case whether the *sāvitrī* could have been thought of as a goddess. As we saw in the preceding chapter,[673] the authors of the Gṛhyasūtras were certainly very aware of the etymological and ritual connection between Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī*. The question is whether this connection was the only reason for their being grouped together in the lists.

Just as the *sāvitrī* is often grouped together with the Vedas, it is very likely that the various male names and epithets preceding the texts are somehow associated with each other. While designations such as "maker" or "ordainer" are used as names of specific deities, they are also applicable to any "henotheistic" or "monotheistic," supreme creator god.[674] At the time of the early Gṛhyasūtras, the best candidate for this role would still have been the famous Prajāpati, who could certainly be thought of as a great maker, giver, and ordainer.[675] Prajāpati was also identified with Savitṛ, who was one of his most important predecessors.[676] In Part II, I will show that a number of Vedic texts know of a goddess called Sūryā Sāvitrī. This Sāvitrī was not only said to be Savitṛ's daughter, but also Prajāpati's.[677] Yet another text, the JaimUB, one of the earliest Upaniṣads, explicitly calls Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* a couple.[678] Could it be that, after all, the *sāvitrī* in the Gṛhyasūtra list is not only a mantra, but also a goddess, who is in some way related to the previously mentioned male deities?

While this interpretation is tempting, there are several reasons for not accepting it. The word *ca* "and" in the HirGS passage – the only *ca* in a very long list – connects the *sāvitrī* with the Vedas,[679] thus suggesting that, as is usual in texts from this period, the *sāvitrī mantra* is meant. This does not rule out that someone could have understood the term as *also* referring to a deity. However, the early Gṛhyasūtras *nowhere* state or imply that the GM was personified or even deified, nor do they ever explicitly identify it with Sūryā Sāvitrī, the Vedic goddess bearing (almost) the same name.[680] There is no indication that the authors of the early Gṛhyasūtras and the Dharmasūtras already conceived of the *sāvitrī* as a goddess.

Similar uncertainties surround Sāvitrī's potential father or partner. The various designations in the lists certainly could be interpreted as manifestations

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673   See, in particular, above p. 121.
674   Cf. Andrijanić 2018.
675   For this deity, see especially Gonda 1982 and 1986.
676   See Falk 1988: 22–23; cf. also above p. 46.
677   For Sūryā/Sāvitrī as the daughter of Savitṛ/Prajāpati, see below pp. 204–212.
678   JaimUB IV 27–28; see below pp. 175–178.
679   For the function of *ca*, see Gonda 1957 and 1954.
680   This happened only in the first centuries of the Common Era; see Chapter 7.

or aspects of a universal creator god, a conception that had already emerged in the Vedic period. But this deity is not explicitly called Prajāpati in the lists. If he really was thought to be Sāvitrī's father (or more precisely, the father of the goddess Sāvitrī identified with the *sāvitrī* mantra), there would have been no reason to conceal his name. The most plausible explanation is that Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* were simply associated with each other because of their etymological relationship and phonetic similarity. This is corroborated by the observation that there are even more alliterations in the lists of the BhārGS (*savitre suśravase satyaśravase sāvitryai*) and the BaudhDhS (*savitre sāvitryai sadasaspataye*).

What the lists discussed above have illustrated, however, is that elaborate personification is not necessary in order to become a divinity, or at least an object of religious worship. As we saw last, the *sāvitrī* – or, returning to the standard usage in this study, the GM – was neither personified nor deified. Nevertheless, the passages reveal much about the status the GM had in Early Hinduism. We observe that it usually precedes the Vedas. Given that it is the first Vedic mantra to be learned, this is only natural. What is significant, however, is that this position also places it "on a par" with the entire Vedic corpus. While other frequently heard sonic entities, such as *om*, the Vyāhṛtis, *vaṣaṭ*, and the meters, are also occasionally present, the GM is the only verse to be found in the lists. This shows that it enjoyed a special status among Vedic verses in general: the status of being the Vedic verse *par excellence*, one might say. As we will see in the following, calling it such is by no means an exaggeration. The GM could, in some cases, even stand in for the entire Veda, in theory as well as in practice.

4. The epitome of the Vedas

4.1 The proxy of an entire corpus

The Gṛhya- and Dharmasūtra passages discussed above are the earliest sources informing us about the high status of the GM in the religious cosmos. But the GM was not only raised to be on a par with the other Vedas, it even became their "epitome" – a word which has no direct equivalent in the Sanskrit sources, but whose usage, as we shall see, is fully justified. This can be observed on the practical as well as on the ideological or "theological" level.

On the practical level, it was in some cases possible to substitute the recitation of (parts of) the Vedas with the recitation of the GM. Probably the earliest evidence for this practice is found in the **TaittĀ**, where individual recitation of the Veda is prescribed as a kind of remedy against the exhaustion resulting

from acting as a priest (and receiving payment for it).[681] The text of the passage is corrupt and difficult to understand, and I will only try to give an approximate translation:

> Verily, he who officiates at a sacrifice or receives payment becomes, as it were, empty, almost over-empty. Having officiated at a sacrifice or having received payment, he should thrice – privately and while fasting – recite the Veda. Alternatively, for three days [literally "nights"] he should pro-long[682] [the recitation of] the *sāvitrī gāyatrī*.[683]

In this case, the repetition of the GM is a ritual equivalent for the recitation of Vedic texts. What "reciting the Veda thrice" encompasses is not specified, but at any rate, three days of reciting the same mantra probably was not meant to save time. What we can conclude from this passage is that the GM was not recited because of any of its own properties as a text, but because of its special relationship to the Veda as a whole.

Another early example shows that the GM could also be used to make up for a lack of knowledge. The example is found in the **ŚāṅkhGS**. The text prescribes that, before the teaching of the Veda, the teacher should be asked to recite the GM as well as the names of its Ṛṣi (Viśvāmitra), its deity (Savitṛ), and its meter (*gāyatrī*). In this way, he should teach the Ṛṣi, deity, and meter of every mantra. In the unfortunate case that he does not recall this paratextual (or "para-mantric") data, there is a stopgap:

> Or, when not recalling the Ṛṣi, the dedication to the deity, and the meter, the teacher recites this: "That desirable [splendor] of the Impeller...," *pāda* by *pāda*, hemistich by hemistich, [and then finally] without pausing; having finished, [he recites or explains] "this... [verse belongs to Savitṛ etc.]."[684]

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681 For this passage, see also Lubin 2005: 89–90. The idea here appears to be that acting as a priest and receiving payment for it causes impurity; individual recitation is, therefore, a means of expiation and purification.

682 Malamoud 1977: 197: "Littéralement: on fait en sort que la gāyatrī dépasse à la suite (d'elle-même), d'est-à-dire qu'elle se prolonge." This might mean that the recitation of the GM at the beginning of a *svādhyāya* session should be prolonged.

683 *rícyata iva vá eṣá prévá* (*préva/práivá?*) *ricyate yó ⁺yājáyati práti vá gṛhṇáti ⁺yājayitvá ⁺pratigṛ́hya vánaśnan tríḥ svādhyāyáṃ vedám ádhīyīta | trirātrám ⁺vá sāvitrī́ṃ gāyatrī́m anvátirecayati* TaittĀ II 16. For the text and emendations, see Malamoud 1977: 111 and 196–197; for his translation, see p. 129.

684 *api vāvindindann ṛṣidaivatachandāṃsi tat savitur vareṇyam ity etāṃ paccho 'rdharcaśo 'navānam ity eṣeti samāpta ⁺āhācāryaḥ* ŚāṅkhGS II 7.19. Cf. the translation by Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 71 and especially his note on Sūtra 19.

In general, however, the *complete* substitution of Vedic recitation with the GM in ritual practice was restricted to more or less isolated instances, or even "makeshift solutions," such as those shown here.[685]

More significantly, the GM was also made the representative of the Vedas on a "theological" level. Several texts explain that the GM was, in one way or another, "extracted" from all the Vedas. The earliest among them is probably the **MānDhŚ**, where many of the aspects of the GM discussed in this chapter reappear:[686]

> The sound "*a*," the sound "*u*," and the sound "*m*" – Prajāpati milked them out of the three Vedas, as also "EARTH, INTERSPACE, SKY." /76/
> From the three Vedas, Prajāpati, the Supreme Being, milked out foot after foot of this *sāvitrī* verse: "That..." /77/
> Softly reciting this syllable and this (verse), preceded by the Vyāhṛtis, at the junctures, a Brahmin who knows the Veda wins the merit of the Veda [i.e., of reciting the Veda itself]. /78/
> By exercising these three one thousand times outside [the village], a twice-born is freed from even a grievous sin within a month, like a snake from its slough. /79/
> Someone who is a Brahmin, a Kṣatriya, or a Vaiśya by birth invites the censure of good people by disconnecting himself from this verse and from [the performance of] his ritual at the right time. /80/
> The imperishable three Great Vyāhṛtis, preceded by the sound *om*, and the three-footed *sāvitrī* should be recognized as the mouth [i.e., the principal part] of the *brahman*. /81/
> When someone recites this [*sāvitrī*] tirelessly everyday for three years, having become wind and having the form of the air,[687] he reaches the highest *brahman*. /82/
> The highest *brahman* is the single syllable [i.e., *om*], the highest ascetic toil

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685 For an example in a much later text, the Garuḍa-Purāṇa (GarP), see Hikita 2005: 162. Cf. also KūrmP II 14.50: "The Lord weighed the weight of the Gāyatrī(-Mantra) and the Vedas: on one side, the four Vedas, on the other, the Gāyatrī(-Mantra)." *gāyatrīṃ caiva vedāṃś ca tulayātolayat prabhuḥ / ekataś caturo vedān gāyatrīṃ ca tathaikataḥ //*; or AVPar XLI 4.5: "One should softly recite a hundred Gāyatrīs on a rosary in the evening and morning; one certainly obtains the full result of the four Vedas." *gāyatryā akṣamālāyāṃ sāyaṃ prātaḥ śataṃ japet / caturṇāṃ khalu vedānāṃ samagraṃ labhate phalam //.*

686 A peculiarity of this passage, which has not been made the subject of discussion so far, is the praise of the syllable *om*, a syllable whose significance in South Asian religions has long been known, but which only recently has begun to receive the scholarly attention it deserves; see Gerety 2015 and 2016.

687 This probably refers to the disembodiment of the soul or self after death.

is the control of breath, nothing is higher than the *sāvitrī*; truth is better than silence. /83/[688]

For the greater part, I believe, this passage speaks for itself. Prajāpati, the "Lord of Progeny," extracted the three *pāda*s of the GM from the three traditional Vedas (Ṛg-, Yajur-, Sāma-). The GM can, therefore, be understood to be their essence. Together with its frequent introductory formula, the syllable *om* and the Vyāhṛtis, the GM is the *mukha* of the Vedas, that is, its "mouth, entrance, face" or, less literally, its "main" or "principal part." Every *dvija* has to recite it, and reciting it at the Sandhyā amounts to reciting the entire Veda. Thus, in this short passage many important aspects of the GM above are present: its social importance as the defining characteristic of *dvija*s is alluded to; its recitation in the Sandhyā is mentioned; and lastly, it is characterized as the essence or main part of the Veda, that is, its epitome.

4.2 Compressing the Vedas

As we can see, between the earliest Gṛhyasūtras and the MānDhŚ, which was composed several centuries later,[689] the GM in many ways became the first and foremost formula of the Vedas, and even its epitome. While we can retrace this development on various levels, why it continued in this way over the course of several centuries is not self-explanatory. What drove this development for so long? What caused it to assume this role? To answer these questions, it is necessary to return to the question of how Brahminism emerged and by which authority it legitimized itself.

The Vedas were (and are) the ideological hallmark of Brahminical authority. In formulating the Dharmasūtras, the Brahmin authors invoked the Vedas as their ultimate authority and legitimization. In fact, of course, "the Vedas" (that is, in the strictest sense, the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas)[690] have little to say about Dharma as such. The source of the Brahminical Dharma was only ostensibly the Vedic texts, but in fact the true source was the customs and traditions of

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688 MānDhŚ II 76–83: *akāraṃ cāpy ukāraṃ ca makāraṃ ca prajāpatiḥ vedatrayān niraduhad bhūr bhuvaḥ svar itīti ca /76/ tribhya eva tu vedebhyaḥ pādaṃ pādam adūduhat / tad ity ṛco 'syāḥ sāvitryāḥ parameṣṭhī prajāpatiḥ /77/ etad akṣaram etāṃ ca japan vyāhṛtipūrvikām / saṃdhyayor vedavid vipro vedapuṇyena yujyate /78/ sahasrakṛtvas tv abhyasya bahir etat trikaṃ dvijaḥ / mahato 'py enaso māsāt tvacevāhir vimucyate /79/ etayā ṛcā visaṃyuktaḥ kāle ca kriyayā svayā brahmakṣatriyaviśyonir garhaṇāṃ yāti sādhuṣu /80/ oṃkārapūrvikās tisro mahāvyāhṛtayo 'vyayāḥ / tripadā caiva sāvitrī vijñeyaṃ brahmaṇo mukham /81/ yo 'dhīte 'hany ahany etāṃ trīṇi varṣāṇy atandritaḥ / sa brahma param abhyeti vāyubhūtaḥ khamūrtimān /82/ ekākṣaraṃ paraṃ brahma prāṇāyāmaḥ paraṃ tapaḥ / sāvitryās tu paraṃ nāsti maunāt satyaṃ viśiṣyate /83/.* Cf. the translation by Olivelle 2005: 98–100.
689 See n. 465 on p. 112 and n. 342 on p. 81 above.
690 Cf. ĀpŚS XXIV 1.31: "Mantra and Brāhmaṇa are designated as Veda" *mantrabrāhmaṇayor vedanāmadheyam.*

those Brahmins who codified the Dharma.[691] Nevertheless, the Vedas became the most important cultural symbol of Brahminism, and access to them was only granted to those who had been duly initiated.

However, as the knowledge of and permission to recite Vedic texts formally were made the hallmark of the entire upper stratum of society,[692] a solution had to be found for all those who would never engage in the arduous study of Vedic texts. Obviously, inaugurating the memorization of thousands of mantras could no longer remain the general objective of the ritual. While many of the new initiates probably learned more than just one Vedic verse, only few would continue to dedicate themselves entirely to the preservation of the Vedic heritage: the Brahmins in the original sense of the word.[693]

It is difficult to reconstruct how many Vedic mantras Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas really learned throughout the centuries. Considering that they were primarily to acquire skills and competencies of a completely different nature, it is very likely that the study of Vedic texts was in many cases only a minor part of their education.[694] In modern times, the period of studentship is sometimes even compressed to a few hours.[695] It is yet unknown when exactly this process of compression started and how it developed. What we can infer, however, is that it must have been very conducive to the GM's becoming the epitome of the Vedas.

For a great number of non-Brahmin *dvija*s – who were *allowed* to recite, but not *obliged* to learn as many Vedic mantras as possible – the GM in practice was probably of the one of the few, perhaps even the only Vedic mantra they ever learned.[696] The idea that this mantra must, therefore, be the most important and most representative of all Vedic mantras, is then only natural. The nexus between the GM and the Vedas, already established by way of the Upanayana, could thus become even stronger. In a way, the GM even became more than just the essence of the Veda. As Malamoud put it:

> The *sāvitrī* is indeed an actual stanza of the Ṛksaṃhitā, a piece, therefore, taken from the body of the Veda, not the reduced image of the Veda or the quintessence of the Veda. The *sāvitrī* is rather the minimal Veda, and like an emblem of Vedism.[697]

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691   Cf. Olivelle 2000: 15 and 2012a: 120–121.

692   Cf. Lubin 2005: 84.

693   Cf. Lubin 2005: 86 and 96–97. Note that it was not the case that all Brahmins devoted their time to Vedic study; cf. Scharfe 2002: 102.

694   For the education of Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras, see Kane II(1): 363–365; cf. Scharfe 2002: 89.

695   See Zotter 2018: 235–237.

696   The late VaikhGS VIII 3 (tr. Caland 1929: 185), for instance, mentions a so-called *gāyatra brahmacārin*, who only remains a *brahmacārin* for three days after his initiation.

697   Translation of Malamoud 1977: 89: "[L]a *sāvitrī* est en effet une stance réelle de la Ṛk-Saṃhitā, un morceau, donc, prélevé sur le corps du Veda, non l'image réduite du Veda

As we saw above, the rise of the GM certainly started in the Brahminical milieu itself: it could even substitute the recitation of the Veda in two rituals performed by the most exemplary of Brahmins, a priest and a teacher. Once established, however, the extension of the Upanayana and the concomitant extension of the teaching of the GM must have fed back to the system that had brought it about. Put simply: when non-specialists began to view the GM as the epitome of the Vedas, Brahmins trained in the Vedas, too, became more inclined to think of it as such.

5. Purification and social identity

In the preceding sections, we observed how the GM became the foremost verse of the Vedas. In this section, we will turn to the emergence of a practice that, I would argue, is a consequence of the developments discussed above. This practice is the recitation of the GM for the purpose of ritual purification.

In many cases, ritual purification involved repeated recitation, a practice that later came to be known as *japa*. While this kind of *japa* is nowadays well known, in the earliest stages of Hinduism, it had not yet become a common practice. As far as I can tell, it first emerged during the time of the Dharmasūtras.[698] In the prescriptions of these texts, if a mantra is to be recited repetitively (i.e., one hundred times or more), it is in the vast majority of cases the GM – and no other mantra.[699] The purpose of this practice is almost always to maintain or restore the ritual purity of the reciter.

In Hinduism, the axis of purity and impurity – not only in a physical, but also in a ritual and social sense – plays a major role.[700] Impurity is not only caused by external pollution, but also by committing "sinful" acts. A "sin" (*pāpa*) is something that has negative soterial, social, and/or ritual effects.[701] States of sinfulness, too, are conceptualized along the axis of purity and impurity: the graver the sin, the graver the impurity. Since purity is demanded in most ritual contexts, impure substances and persons are not allowed to be part of any kind of ritual. Impurity also has social consequences: someone who has become im-

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→   ou la quintessence du Veda. La *sāvitrī* est plutôt le Veda minimal, et comme l'emblème du védisme."

698   For examples, see Gonda 1980a: 228–229. The practice is rarely mentioned in the Gṛhyasūtras; see, for instance, BaudhGS II 9.4 and JaimGS II 6. Later, the practice is also combined with fire-offerings; cf. Einoo 2005a: 47–48.

699   This assessment is based on my (certainly not exhaustive) reading of the extant Dharma-sūtras; more research on the emergence of repetitive mantra recitation is needed.

700   See generally Malinar 2009 and 2018.

701   See Brick 2018: 314. As Kellner (2020: 39, n. 2) pointed out, the term "soterial" is preferable to the term "soteriological" in contexts such as the present one.

pure can even be prohibited entirely from engaging with other, comparatively purer, persons.[702]

There are, however, several means to re-establish ritual purity.[703] The Dharmasūtras describe many kinds of *prāyaścitta*s ("penances") as well as *pavitra*s ("means of purification"), whose purpose is to remove sin and to restore purity. The recitation of the GM features prominently among them. Thus, the GM is listed, alongside others, as one of the so-called *pāvana*s or "purificatory" texts.[704] The Sūtras prescribe its recitation in a number of cases: it is recited if someone has spoken with an outcaste,[705] if one was asleep at sunrise,[706] or if one has survived an attempt at suicide.[707] If a broken pot is replaced by a new one, one should recite the GM several times, obviously to purify it (and oneself).[708] The GM should be repeated as often as possible if a mistake is committed during the teaching or recitation of the Veda.[709] Bathing and reciting it 1,000 times, with or without breath control, is given as one of several *prāyaścitta*s for "studying in the wrong way" (*mithyādhīta*).[710] It should also be recited 1,000 times as an (obviously easier) alternative for penances for severe sins unknown to the public.[711] If a wife commits adultery in her mind, in words, or in deed, she has to undergo various penances, and the husband has to offer ghee into the fire 800, 3,200, or 8,000 times, reciting the GM together with the so-called Śiras formula.[712] Elsewhere, it is also said that by reciting it 8,000 times (or just three times)[713] at sunrise, a man is freed from all sins.[714]

But why the GM? As a young student, an *ārya* learns how to keep himself pure, both in the physical as well as in a ritual sense. The concept of purity even becomes ingrained in his personal and social identity. In the Brahminical system, the (male) *dvija*s of the three classes are considered purer than all

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702   See Malinar 2009: 36–38.
703   Cf. Malinar 2009: 23–25, 35.
704   GautDhS IXX 12, BaudhDhS III 10.4, VasDhS XXII 9 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 160, 325, and 443). Interestingly, the GM is always the last among them.
705   GautDhS XX 8 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 171).
706   GautDhS XXIII 21 and VasDhS XX 4–5 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 177 and 431).
707   VasDhS XXIII 19–20 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 445).
708   If it is from a Brahmin, ten times; if it is from a Śūdra, one hundred times; if from a Vaiśya, fifty times; if from a Kṣatriya, twenty-five times; see BaudhDhS I 6.7 and 9 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 209).
709   ŚāṅkhGS IV 8.20; cf. Gonda 1980a: 292.
710   ĀpDhS I 26.14 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 65).
711   GautDhS XXIV 11 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 179).
712   VasDhS XXI 6 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 437). The Śiras formula, also called "Gāyatrī-Śiras," is *āpo jyotī raso 'mṛtaṃ brahma bhūr bhuvaḥ suvar om* MNārU X 27.
713   BaudhDhS IV 4.6 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 335).
714   BaudhDhS IV 5.31 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 341); see also VasDhS XXV 12 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 451).

others,[715] the Brahmins being the purest.[716] Non-*dvija*s, on the other hand, are characterized by impurity: they are either Śūdras, untouchables, or foreigners. For a *dvija*, becoming polluted therefore also means moving towards the other end of the purity–impurity axis, that is, becoming more like someone who in the social hierarchy is below him.[717] Even if the status of being a *dvija* itself is ultimately not lost that easily, pollution constantly threatens to diminish it.

Above we saw that a person becomes a *dvija* through his second birth in the Upanayana. One of the most important components of this ritual is the teaching of a *sāvitrī*, in most cases, the GM.[718] As the mantra that makes a person a *dvija* in the first place, the GM is also well suited to restore this status whenever it is diminished. Obviously, it is not used in *prāyaścitta*s because its meaning as a text or its other ritual applications are connected with purification. Rather, it was felt to have the power to renew the socio-ritual identity of its reciter. By way of extension, this logic was also applied in the case of objects: as mentioned above, a pot can be purified by reciting the GM, the number of repetitions depending on the status of its donor. The fact that the GM is, in practice, among the foremost purificatory texts is thus easily explained.

As I alluded to above, it is likely that the practice of reciting the GM as a *prāyaścitta* and its repetition in the Sandhyā (which originally only consisted in the recitation of a *sāvitrī*) are related. Considering that the early Gṛhyasūtras – the texts containing the instructions for the Sandhyā – are probably somewhat older than the Dharmasūtras,[719] this ritual may have been the source of inspiration for the specific practice of repeating the GM as a *prāyaścitta*. This does not preclude, however, that this repetition could not function *as a prāyaścitta*. On the contrary, the entire Sandhyā is probably better understood as an obligatory *prāyaścitta* rather than as an actual worship of the junctures, or twilights.[720]

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715   See Malinar 2009: 36–38.

716   This is not so much because they *are* always pure, but because they have the power and means to purify themselves; see Malinar 2009: 23–27.

717   According to Olivelle (2012b: 240), in Dharma literature, "we see no instance when a term for pure/impure is used with reference to a group of individuals or to a Varṇa or caste, the only exception being people who have fallen from their caste due to grievous sins; these are often called *aśuci*." Belonging to a particular social group or class is no guarantee of purity; rather, purity must be maintained in order not to be excluded from the system in the first place.

718   See above pp. 144–146.

719   The earliest Dharmasūtra, the ĀpDhS, probably dates to the third century BCE (Olivelle 2018a: 21); the start of the production of Gṛhyasūtras is generally (though not by all scholars) placed somewhat earlier; see n. 465 on p. 112 above.

720   Cf. BaudhDhS II 7.20 (tr. Olivelle 2000: 269).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the status of the GM was significantly upgraded during the early phase of Hinduism. Apart from the obvious significance of an initiation mantra and its role as the first mantra among thousands to follow (the "ABC" of an endless "alphabet" of mantras), cultural and social developments, too, contributed to its rise (see **Section 1**). When the Upanayana was extended and was made a rite of passage for all *ārya*s, it became compulsory to be initiated with a *sāvitrī*. While other *sāvitrī*s were sometimes used, the GM remained the most important among them, especially because it was used by the Brahmins, who were the certainly the most active ritual performers. Its position in the Upanayana ensured that it could reappear again and again as one of the symbols of the Vedas and, therefore, of "orthodox" Hinduism (see Figure 5).

adaptive reuse in Śrauta ritual
(Chapter 3)

↓

selection as initiation mantra
(Chapter 4)

↓

| primary initiation mantra and first Vedic text in the Upanayana | the Vedic verse *par excellence*, on a par with the entire corpus |

| primary mantra in the first ritual of the day (Sandhyā), first mantra in other contexts | epitome of the Vedas: substitute for other mantras, essence of the Vedas |

Figure 5: The development of the status of the GM in Early Hinduism

However, as we saw in **Section 2**, it did not simply remain the first Vedic verse to be learned, but also became the first mantra to be recited in the daily life of *brahmacārin*s and, in the course of time, of householders as well. Reciting the GM was an essential (and the only original) component of the Sandhyā. I have proposed that at the very beginning, the recitation of the GM in this this ritual might have been a simple exercise for young students, who at the commencement of their studentship could not even recite any other mantra.

Additionally – and this was probably much more significant – it could also function as a daily "reminder" of one's new social status and as a means to preserving that status. As such, its purpose was essentially purificatory, which also explains why it was later combined with a number of other (mostly) purificatory rituals acts. In this function, it also became popular outside the Sandhyā, namely as a *prāyaścitta*, a private religious practice whose purpose is to purify the reciter from sins.[721] This use is first mentioned in the Dharmasūtras, which are presumably somewhat younger than the earliest Gṛhyasūtras. It is possible that the (repetitive) recitation of the GM as a *prāyaścitta* historically goes back to the Sandhyā; however, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions.

The term *sandhyopāsana* was probably not understood as "worship of the Sandhyā." The idea that the juncture or twilight itself is the object of worship is, to my knowledge, never explicitly stated in the early sources. A mythical or etiological background for the ritual was, in any case, only provided after it had already existed for some time. The "Sandhyā myth," found in two late-Vedic (or rather, post-Vedic) texts, the ṢaḍvB and the TaittĀ, explains that its ultimate purpose is to help the sun rise. Significantly, however, neither of the two texts place any emphasis on the GM. A connection to the time of the early morning by way of Savitṛ and/or his manifestation as the sun is possible, but cannot be backed up with evidence. As I have suggested, however, this connection might have simply been too obvious, and there might have been little need to elaborate on what is more or less self-explanatory.

However it originated, the Sandhyā became one of the most regularly performed rituals. It is easily understood that the daily recitation of the GM during this ritual (be it once, thrice, or more often) must have made a great impact on the minds of the reciters. As a matter of fact, it was also used as the first mantra in a sequence in several other Gṛhya rituals.[722] Every time the GM was used in this way, its role as an initiatory mantra was further consolidated. Above all others, however, it must have been the daily Sandhyā that functioned as an excellent "amplifier" of the GM, especially when we take into account that it eventually became part of a householder's daily ritual routine as well.

In **Section 3**, we saw that several Gṛhya rituals reflect the status the GM had already attained before these rituals were codified. In the lists of entities worthy of worship,[723] the GM is the only verse. It appears both in the company of the three Vedas and without them. Despite its occasional association with Savitṛ, it does not appear as a deity itself. Nevertheless, it was evidently thought to be in some way divine, otherwise it would not have made much sense to

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721 See pp. 164–166.
722 See above pp. 152–153.
723 See pp. 153–159.

worship it. Its high status in the religious universe is also indicated by the fact that it is mentioned alongside the Vedas, thus being placed on a par with them.[724]

In ritual practice, in some cases it became possible to substitute the GM for the recitation of Vedic texts. Most importantly, however, this aspect of the GM was also reflected on the theological level: since around the beginning of the Common Era, the GM has been thought to be the essence of the Vedas (see **Section 4**).[725] While this idea clearly became a common part of Brahminism, I have suggested that here again, the extension of the Upanayana to non-Brahmins might have played a role: with this extension, the permission to recite Vedic texts formally was made the hallmark of the entire upper stratum of society. The new initiates, however, often did not learn a great number of texts. On the contrary: many probably did not learn more than the very first mantra. While the "condensation" of the Vedas in the GM may have started independently in the Brahminical milieu itself, the role it came to play for those who would never engage in extensive Vedic study probably gave further impetus to this development.[726]

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724 See pp. 159–164.

725 The GM's status has continued to manifest itself in numerous ways up to the present day. For example, several sixteenth-century commentators of the Rām. considered the Epic "both physically and spiritually a grand expansion and exposition of the famous and widely revered and recited ṛc, Ṛgveda 3.62.10" Goldman & Sutherland Goldman 2016: 187. The mantra was mapped onto the text by locating each of its twenty-four syllables in the various parts of the text. The purpose of this strategy was to invest the Epic with Vedic authority – authority that was condensed in the essence of the Vedas, the GM.

726 This, in turn, might have been one of the reasons why medieval commentators such as Sāyaṇa insisted on "interpreting the traditional injunction to study the Veda as pertaining to the *complete* textual body of one's family Veda" Galewicz 2009: 256; emphasis mine.

∴ **PART II** ∴

THE MOTHER
OF THE VEDAS

·:   **CHAPTER 6**   :·

Personification, Divinization, Deification

Introduction

Part I has shown that the status of the Gāyatrī-Mantra in Early Hinduism continued to increase after it had been made the primary initiation mantra. But while the religious manuals produced in that period reflect this increase in status in a number of ritual developments, they nowhere personify the mantra, even when attributing divinity to it. The most straightforward explanation for this is that the GM was not (yet) consistently considered a full-fledged deity, at least not by the practitioners and codifiers of the "orthoprax" ritualistic religion. In this chapter, however, we will see that the idea of a mantra goddess had already had precursors in this period.

Evidence for the earliest traces of the personification and divinization of the mantra is found in a small number of passages in several "Vedic" texts: the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa (JaimUB), the GopB, the MNārU (also transmitted as part of the TaittĀ), and the AV. I have put the adjective "Vedic" in quotation marks for a reason: the text passages to be discussed are, in fact, all from the post-Vedic period (with perhaps the exception of the JaimUB) as defined by linguistic criteria.[727] At least in two cases, the MNārU and the AV, the text remained subject to changes even well beyond this period.[728] The attribute "Vedic" is, therefore, far from unambiguous. The order in which the texts are listed is deliberately chosen as well. Traditionally, Vedic texts are classified according to a quasi-chronological scheme comprising Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads. It has long been known, however, that this scheme is somewhat too simple.[729] In the case of the text passage we will deal with in this chapter, it will indeed be of no help at all.

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727   For a summary of the special features of Vedic as compared to Classical Sanskrit, see *VGS*: 236–243.

728   Cf. also n. 333 on p. 80 above.

729   Cf., for instance, Gonda 1975: 22: "The ideas of chronological succession of 'literary genres' and of corresponding forms of religious interest can no longer be maintained."

While focusing on late-Vedic and Early Hindu texts, I will inevitably antic-
ipate some of the later developments of the GM and its/her worship, in one case
even touching upon Tantric elements[730] (especially when discussing the addi-
tions and modifications in the MNārU). In several cases I will also use passages
from later texts in order to clarify the purport of earlier ones. By considering
all these texts, I will thus span a quite wide historical arc. In general, however, I
will again concentrate on the early period and on the processes contributing to
the mantra's deification rather than on its results. It is also for this reason that
the concept of the "Mother of the Vedas," which we will encounter for the first
time in this chapter, will only be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.[731]

The present chapter consists of two major sections (**Section 1**: "Personifi-
cation and divinization"; **Section 2**: "Deification"), each containing two subsec-
tions.

- **Section 1.1** (pp. 175–178) deals with the JaimUB, in which first traces of
  a personification as well as divinization of the GM can be detected: the
  mantra here appears as the partner or spouse of the Vedic god Savitṛ.

- **Section 1.2** (pp. 178–183) briefly discusses a passage from the GopB. This
  very late Brāhmaṇa not only reuses the textual material of the JaimUB, but
  also adds several new passages that further elaborate upon the personifica-
  tion of the mantra, which/who is now also given the name "Mother of the
  Vedas." Moreover, I also consider a number of passages from the Dharma
  literature.

- **Section 2.1** (pp. 184–193) introduces the MNārU, a text that continued to
  grow and diversify throughout centuries. This highly complex text touches
  virtually on every single aspect of the deification of the GM relevant to
  this study. In particular, its several recensions very well reflect the various
  stages in the long-term development of the deification of the GM.

- **Section 2.2** (pp. 193–197) deals with the so-called *vedamātṛ* verse, a piece of
  religious poetry that has been reused in several texts and is also included in
  one version of the MNārU. A dedicated treatment of this verse is above all
  justified by the fact that it was also included in the AV, generally deemed to
  be one of the most ancient Vedic texts.[732] Moreover, the *vedamātṛ* verse is
  (in all of its versions) so corrupt that its restoration requires more detailed
  argumentation.

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730   These elements are found in the latest recension of the Upaniṣad, the Āndhra recension,
     and are most likely later than the fifth century CE.

731   See below pp. 234–240.

732   Its significance has so far been unclear; cf. Brereton 2022: 78: "[I]t is difficult to connect
     this highly uncertain evidence with the status or role of the Gāyatrī in other Vedas."

1. Personification and divinization

The last two sections of the Sāmavedic JaimUB,[733] IV 27–28,[734] consist of a brief text entirely dedicated to Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī*. The position of this text at the very end of the JaimUB suggests that it belongs to the "later appendices."[735] It was also reused in an Atharvavedic text, the GopB. (Moreover, in combination with a short appendix, it also came to be known as the Sāvitrī-Upaniṣad [SāvU], a possibly medieval text that due to its very late age will only be treated in passing here.) The *khaṇḍa*s 31–38 in GopB I 1[736] reuse and modify much of the JaimUB text and provide it with a frame story. *khaṇḍa* 33 in particular is verbally similar to JaimUB IV 27; *khaṇḍa*s 34–36, in turn, are concerned with the interpretation of the GM, just like JaimUB IV 28. GopB I 1.31–38 has also been called "Gāyatrī Upaniṣad (see also Gāyatra-Upaniṣad)"[737] or "Sāvitrī-Upaniṣad."[738]

Among the two texts, the JaimUB is clearly the earlier one, as it is largely coeval with the BṛhĀU and the ChāndU, probably composed between 800 and 500 BCE.[739] The date of the various parts of the GopB, which is generally considered a very "late" Vedic text, has been the subject of debate.[740] Its first part, however, is probably even younger than the Aṣṭādhyāyī, composed in or around the fourth century BCE.[741] It is thus certainly posterior to JaimUB IV 27–28.

1.1 Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa

For the purpose of this chapter, the content of JaimUB IV 27–28 is perhaps better summarized than translated in full.[742] In section 27, the same question is re-

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733   The text is also known as Śāṭyāyanī-Gāyatrasya-Upaniṣad. Bodewitz (2019 ['1986]): 86–87 argues that it is rather an Āraṇyaka than an Upaniṣad or a Brāhmaṇa; Fujii (2011: 106), on the other hand, considers it the "earliest Upaniṣad"; see Fujii 1997: 89–90 and 2010: 31, n. 100. Its last two sections, however, are later, see Fujii 1997: 94.

734   Tr. (& ed.) Oertel 1896: 223–225.

735   Fujii 1997: 94.

736   Translated by Mitra & Vidyábhushaṇa 1872: 19–24 and Patyal 1969: 32–41. Note that Patyal variously translated the word *sāvitrī* with "Gāyatrī" or "Sāvitrī."

737   Gaastra 1919: 29.

738   Gonda 1975: 355.

739   For the date of the JaimUB, see the references to Fujii's works given in n. 733.

740   For an introduction, see Gonda 1975: 355. Interestingly, the significance of this source for the history of the GM was recognized quite early. At a time when all works called "Brāhmaṇa" were still thought to be ancient, one of the first editors of the GopB remarked that "[t]he account given of the Gáyatrí is the fullest I have met with in the Vedas, and will perhaps be interesting to many as containing the oldest ideas of the Bráhmaṇas on the subject." Mitra & Vidyábhushaṇa 1872: 19. Cf. also Lal 1971: 227: "In brief, the mantra had here attained a metaphysical importance."

741   Jamison & Witzel 1992: 11. The GopB certainly existed in the ninth century CE; see Kataoka 2007; cf. Griffiths 2007: 180.

742   For a complete translation, see Oertel 1896: 223–225.

peated nine times: *kaḥ savitā kā sāvitrī*, literally: "What[743] is Savitr̥, what is the *sāvitrī*?" or "What is the Impeller (m.)? what is the one (f.) belonging/related to the Impeller?" After each question, the text answers by identifying the two with other entities that are in some way linked to each other, for example: "Savitr̥ is the wind, the *sāvitrī* is space. Where there is wind, there is space, and where there is space, respectively, there is wind" (*vāyur eva savitā ākāśas sāvitrī | sa yatra vāyus tad ākāśo yatra vākāśas tad vāyuḥ*).

Nine such male/female pairs are given: (1) fire/earth; (2) Varuṇa/waters; (3) wind/space; (4) sacrifice/meters; (5) thunder/lightning; (6) sun/sky; (7) moon/ lunar stations; (8) mind/speech; (9) man/woman.[744] After each pair, the text states that Savitr̥ and the *sāvitrī* "are the two wombs/origins/sources" and that "they are one coupling" (*te dve yonī tad ekaṃ mithunam*). The main message is clear: Savitr̥ and the *sāvitrī* complement each other, they represent an ideal couple. They are the primordial sources – of the entire universe, one might infer.

The imagery employed by the text is not really innovative. Already in the earlier Vedic literature, couples are compared to both natural and ritual pairs. In the AV, for instance, after a newly wedded couple has first united, the husband has to address his wife reciting the text "A 'he' am I, a 'she' are you; the melody am I, you are the verse; the sky am I, you are the earth."[745] Here, too, we find both ritual and natural pairs side-by-side. What is new in the JaimUB is that it is Savitr̥ and the *sāvitrī* who are connected in this way.

In my view, the idea of making them a couple is based on the mythical and ritual functions typically associated with Savitr̥. As the impeller and initiator of everything, this god was also strongly connected with procreation.[746] As I show in Chapters 4 and 5, his functions were very significant for the employment of the *sāvitrī*s, especially the GM, which soon became the "prototypical first verse." This might be the reason why Savitr̥ and the *sāvitrī* are said to be "the two wombs" (*yonī*) in the first section: as "wombs" or "sources," they stand at the very beginning of things. The theme of procreation is also found in the link between the sections 27 and 28, which is established through similar words: two times, the text states that "the sacrifice impels (*pra+cud*); woman and man

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743 *ka* can mean either "who?" or "what?," depending on the context. The answers to questions given in the JaimUB suggests that here it means "what?." For the "inverse" agreement of pronouns with their reference words within the same sentence, see Brereton 1986: 99–102; cf. also *AS*: 565, *SS*: 18.

744 (1) *agni/pr̥thivī*; (2) *varuṇa/ ap* (plural); (3) *vāyu/ākāśa*; (4) *yajña/ chandas* (plural); (5) *stanayitnu/vidyut*; (6) *āditya/dyu*; (7) *candra/ nakṣatra* (plural); (8) *manas/vāc*; (9) *puruṣa/strī*.

745 AV XIV 2.71ab: *ámo 'hám asmi sā́ tváṃ sā́māhám asmy ŕ̥k tvám dyáur ahám pr̥thivī́ tvám*; cf. the translation by Whitney 1905: 766; cf. Shende 1949: 245; cf. also JaimUB I 53–54 (tr. Oertel 1896: 130–133).

746 Cf. above p. 45.

propagate (*pra+jan*)."[747] The idea is that both the god and his most important mantra have the same "impelling or propagating power."

Another aspect opens up if we consider the general symbolism behind the relationship between husband and wife, or male and female in general, in (late-)Vedic times.[748] The JaimUB passage itself provides some clues. In several identifications of the JaimUB, the male part "moves through" or "governs" the female part: wind moves through space, the sun through the sky; fire "moves" above the earth. Varuṇa, on the other hand, is the god who presides over water in general; the structure of the ritual determines which meters are to be used;[749] the mind controls speech.

While the passage certainly implies the interdependence and unity of the couple – several pairs merely indicate complementarity or co-occurrence[750] – the imagery employed also reveals that the male part was thought to be more mobile or to move within or through the female part. Although one could well imagine it the other way around, in ancient South Asia, this mobility also indicated a kind of primacy or sovereignty.[751] In a culture where the ideal role of a woman is that of a stationary housewife, this may come as little surprise.

The relationship between Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* can be construed along these lines: Savitṛ "permeates" the *sāvitrī*, whose name is derived from his.[752] The *sāvitrī* is entirely dedicated to him, as it were. His power is "channelled" through the *sāvitrī*, he impels by means of it; where a *sāvitrī* is recited, Savitṛ is present. The power of the mantra is derived from – and the same as – the power of the god.

But while they may be presented as a couple, this does not mean that their relationship is symmetrical: the *sāvitrī* in the JaimUB can hardly be understood as an independent goddess on the same ontological level as Savitṛ, even though she is his partner. On the contrary, the passage still makes sense if the *sāvitrī* is simply understood to be a potent formula, even if a divine one. In section 28, the text focuses completely on the interpretation of the three *pāda*s of the GM. Knowledge of the supposedly hidden or esoteric meaning of the text is stressed; the idea of personifying the mantra, on the other hand, is not taken up again.

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747 JaimUB IV 28.3,5: *yajño (vai) pracodayati; strī ca vai puruṣaś ca prajanayataḥ*.

748 See generally Dange 1979.

749 For the relationship between the sacrifice the meters, see Thite 1987: 435–438.

750 E.g., thunder/lightning or perhaps also sacrifice/meters. In the GopB, day/night and heat/cold are complementary; cf. n. 762 on p. 179 below.

751 Sovereignty was often conceived of as the freedom of movement, especially in the case of the sun; see Proferes 2007: 49–51. The "universal ruler," too, was often called *cakravartin*: literally a *cakravartin* is someone "who makes the wheels [of his chariot] roll [without being obstructed]," which means that he can go wherever he wants; cf. Bronkhorst 2011: 103, n. 11.

752 Interestingly, the wives of Agni, Indra and Varuṇa are also named after their husbands: Agnāyī, Indrāṇī, and Varuṇānī. None of them have ever developed a distinctive profile; see Macdonell 2002 [¹1916]: 125.

References to other mythical or ritual concepts that may indicate deification or at least personification, such as the myth of (Sūryā) Sāvitrī,[753] the idea that initiation is a rebirth by means of the *sāvitrī*,[754] or the metaphor of the Mother of the Vedas,[755] are missing entirely. The passage concludes that "[h]e who knows this *sāvitrī* thus overcomes second death, he wins the same world with the *sāvitrī* itself; he wins the same world with the *sāvitrī* itself."[756] The expression "to win the same world with the *sāvitrī*" might at first give the impression that the *sāvitrī* must be a goddess. However, in Vedic literature the expression is used in combination with all kinds of entities, including days, the year, meters, or the cardinal directions.[757]

1.2 Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa and Dharma literature

In the GopB, the passage JaimUB IV 27–28 has been reworked and expanded. Significantly, the frame story of this text introduces the themes of studentship and initiation. In this story, a certain Vedic expert, Glāva Maitreya, is speaking (soliloquizing, as it seems) ill of one of his colleagues, Maudgalya Ekādaśākṣa. A student of Maudgalya's overhears this and reports it to his teacher, who then orders him to test the insulter's knowledge by asking him a question about the GM:

> Teach [me], sir, the *sāvitrī gāyatrī*, which has twenty-four wombs, twelve couplings, whose eyes are the Bhṛgus and Aṅgirases,[758] (tell [me] about the *sāvitrī*) on which all this here rests – explain this (*sāvitrī*), sir![759]

Glāva is unable to talk about the subject and, defeated, approaches Maudgalya in order to become his student and to learn about the *sāvitrī*:

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753   See below pp. 204–212.

754   See above p. 145.

755   See below pp. 234–240.

756   JaimUB IV 28.6: *yo vā etāṃ sāvitrīm evaṃ vedāpa punarmṛtyuṃ tarati sāvitryā eva salokatāṃ jayati sāvitryā eva salokatāṃ jayati*; tr. Oertel 1896: 225 (I have replaced "Sāvitrī" with "*sāvitrī*").

757   Cf., for instance, the following statement: "For the quarters [or "cardinal directions"] joined in the song. He thus wins the same world with the quarters." *diśo hy upāgāyan diśām evaṃ salokatāṃ jayatīti* JaimUB I 22.4; tr. Oertel 1896: 100. For more on these and similar expressions, see Gonda 1966: 113–115; cf. also Shults 2013: 112–119.

758   The Bhṛgus and Aṅgirases are sages strongly associated with the AV (as well as with the MBh; see Bronkhorst 2016: 236–240). The exact meaning of the expression "eyes of the Bhṛgus and Aṅgirases," however, is unclear to me; possibly, the idea is to emphasize that the GM is also important for the Atharvavedic tradition. (Note that the mantra nowhere appears in the AV itself; see above pp. 63–67.)

759   GopB I 1.31: 23.12–14: *adhīhi bhoḥ sāvitrīṃ gāyatrīṃ caturviṃśatiyoniṃ dvādaśamithunāṃ yasyā bhṛgvaṅgirasaś cakṣur yasyāṃ sarvam idaṃ śritaṃ tāṃ bhavān prabravītv iti*; also translated by Patyal 1969: 33.

Having approached him, he [i.e., Glāva] asked [Maudgalya]: "Pray, sir, what do the poets call Savitṛ's excellent effulgence, what do they call thoughts? Tell if you know those through which the propelling (*pra+cud*, "setting in motion, spurring on") Savitṛ moves!"

Thereupon he told him: "The Vedas, the meters(/ metrical Vedic texts), that excellent effulgence of the god Savitṛ – the poets call that food; thoughts are rituals – that I teach you – through which the propelling (*pra+cud*) Savitṛ moves." Embracing him [by the feet], he asked: "Recite, sir: What is Savitṛ, what is the *sāvitrī*?"[760]

The following text basically follows the structure of JaimUB IV 27, using its formulations almost verbatim.[761] The number of male/female pairs, however, is expanded from nine to twelve: (1) mind/speech; (2) fire/earth; (3) wind/ interspace; (4) sun/sky; (5) moon/ lunar stations; (6) day/night; (7) heat/cold; (8) rain cloud /rain; (9) lightning/thunder; (10) breath (vital force) /food; (11) Vedas/meters; (12) sacrifice/fees.[762] After these pairs, the text speculates extensively about the three *pāda*s of the GM. The interpretation has little to do with the actual text of the mantra, but simply connects elements typically given in threes (e.g., *ṛc, yajus, sāman*) with its *pāda*s. For this and for reasons of space, I will not give a full translation of it here.

There is, however, an interesting aspect I would like to highlight: the mention of the *brahmacārin*. As we saw above, in the frame story of the text, Glāva becomes the student of Maudgalya. The theme is taken up again in the transi-

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760 GopB I 1.32: 25.5–11: *taṃ hopetya papraccha kiṃ svid āhur bhoḥ savitur vareṇyaṃ bhargo devasya kavayaḥ kim āhur dhiyo vicakṣva yadi tāḥ pravettha pracodayānt savitā yābhir etīti tasmā etat provāca vedāṃś chandāṃsi savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya kavayo 'nnam āhuḥ karmāṇi dhiyas tad u te prabravīmi pracodayānt savitā yābhir etīti tam upasaṃgṛhya papracchādhīhi bhoḥ kaḥ savitā kā sāvitrī.* Half of the manuscripts used for the critical edition read *pracodayant* (see Gaastra 1919: 25, n. 8), which is grammatically correct. However, I consider it very likely that even the author did not dare to shorten the long *ā* in order to preserve the most salient feature of *pracodáyāt*, a Vedic form that was no longer in use at his time. *pracodayān* would then be the *lectio difficilior*. Patyal's (1969: 35, n. 2) emendation to *pracodayāt* and his translation has to be rejected.

761 There are only minor differences: the phrase *te dve yonī tad ekam mithunam* in the JaimUB is changed to *ete dve yonī ekaṃ mithunam*; *sa yatra ... yatra vā ...* is changed to *yatra hy eva ... yatra vai ... iti.*

762 (1) *manas/vāc*; (2) *agni/pṛthivī* (3) *vāyu/antarikṣa* (4) *āditya/dyu*; (5) *candramas/ nakṣatra* (plural); (6) *ahar/rātri*; (7) *uṣṇa/śīta* (8) *abhra/varṣa* (9) *vidyut/stanayitnu*; (10) *prāṇa/anna* (11) *veda* (plural) / *chandas* (plural); (12) *yajña/ dakṣiṇā* (plural). In comparing this list with that of the JaimUB, we observe that the order is slightly different. Moreover, the pairs Varuṇa/waters and man/woman are dropped; wind/space is changed to wind/interspace, sacrifice/meters is changed to sacrifice/fees, thunder/lightning is reversed and becomes lightning/thunder. Four pairs are entirely new: day/night; heat/cold; rain cloud/rain; breath (vital force)/food. Interestingly, the pairs day/night as well as heat/cold are opposites; however, they can still be said to be complementary.

tional text between the passage dealing with the pairs and the speculation about the mantra, spoken by the instructor, Maudgalya:

> "Then, having stood up, he went forth"[763] – [and about him] this indeed I know: Gone into these wombs, coming into being from these couplings, my *brahmacārin* will not die before [the end of] his full lifespan. |33| For *brahman* regarded this abode[764] as a radiation foundation. Practice that austerity! If that [abode] is maintained in the observance (*vrata* [i.e., in *brahmacarya*]), it has established [the student] in truth. Having created[765] a [twice-born] Brahmin with/ by means of /from the *sāvitrī*, that Savitṛ enveloped/entrusted [him with (?)] the *sāvitrī*.[766]

What can be gleaned from this (somewhat corrupt) passage is that Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* are not only a perfect couple, but are, in a sense, also the *parents* of the *brahmacārin*, who is also figuratively said to be "born from these couplings" (*mithunebhyaḥ saṃbhūtaḥ*). Moreover, Savitṛ might also be the creator of Brahmins in general: depending on how one reads the sentence, he either created them "by means of the *sāvitrī*" or, possibly, "*together with* the *sāvitrī*" (or "Sāvitrī"), his partner.

A number of similar metaphors in several (younger) Dharma texts may be fruitfully compared. One, the earliest[767] among them, is perhaps a passage from

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763   In the ChāndU (VIII 9.2, 10.3, 11.2), the verb *pra+vraj* is used to describe a student (in this case, Indra) departing from the teacher after being instructed. In the GopB passage the verb seems to be used in the same meaning.

764   Lubin suggested that "*āyatana* likely refers to the *agnyāyatana*, the fire enclosure, which is where the *brahmacārin* is supposed to toil, tending the fire. This is another symbol of the womb" (personal communication, September 19, 2022).

765   Interestingly, in MBh V 106.10, Savitṛ is once said to be the "primeval enunciator" of the *sāvitrī*.

766   GopB I 1.33–34: 27.5–10: *athotthāya prāvrājīd ity etad vā ahaṃ veda naitāsu yoniṣv ita etebhyo vā mithunebhyaḥ saṃbhūto brahmacārī mama purāyuṣaḥ preyād iti* |33| *brahma hedaṃ śriyaṃ pratiṣṭhām āyatanam aikṣata tat tapasva yadi tad vrate dhriyeta tat satye pratyatiṣṭhat sa savitā sāvitryā brāhmaṇaṃ sṛṣṭvā tat sāvitrīṃ paryadadhāt*; also translated by Patyal 1969: 37–38. *paryadadhāt* literally means "enveloped"; possibly it is confused with *paryadadāt* it "entrusted." Lubin suggested that it refers to the *pāda*-by-*pāda* recitation that is part of the *sāvitryupadeśa* (see above pp. 111–112), with the image being that the *brahmacārin* is "wrapped" in the mantra (personal communication, September 19, 2022).

767   An older, somewhat obscure and isolated passage is also found in the Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra (BaudhŚS XII 18; also translated by Kashikar 2003: 783). In the middle of the Rājasūya, two pairs of people enter the sacrificial enclosure. Those already present allow entry only to those who can trace their female ancestors back up to the tenth generation. If, however, "one says: 'My mother is a Commoner (*vaiśyā*)' or '(the) *sāvitrī*,' they let him pass, saying: 'Commoners (*viś*) are the protectors of marriages [sic]'" (*sa ya āha vaiśyā me mātā sāvitrīti vāti taṃ sṛjanti viśo vivāhān goptāra iti vadantaḥ*). The possible meaning of this is that someone who cannot claim Brahmin or Kṣatriya ancestry, but has nevertheless been duly initiated is admitted as well. The crucial point is that initiation is indispensable for marriage; see above p. 145. In contrast to Brahmins and Kṣatriyas,

the youngest Dharmasūtra, the **VasDhS** (with a parallel in the MBh), a text that can roughly be dated to the first centuries CE (and is, therefore, probably not too far removed in time from the GopB). Here, however, the father is not Savitṛ, but the teacher. According to the text, "at first, birth is from the mother, the second is at the tying of the Muñja-grass girdle. In the latter, the *sāvitrī* is his mother, while the teacher is said to be the father."[768]

The **MānDhŚ**, in turn, mentions both the natural mother and father, but does not reproduce the analogy with the same explicitness in the case of the *sāvitrī* and the teacher:

> That mother and father produce him jointly out of desire, that he is born in a womb – that he should know as his coming into existence.
> But the birth which the teacher who has mastered the Veda produces according to the rules through the *sāvitrī* – that one is real, free from aging and free from death.[769]

In the second verse, the instrumental *sāvitryā might* be read in a way as to imply that the *sāvitrī* is the mother. However, it is equally possible that it only plays the role of an instrument, especially when considering that it is the teacher who is said to "bring about the birth" (*jātiṃ- … utpādayati*). Read in this way,

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Vaiśyas were perhaps less often able to present as impressive a pedigree but are here given the benefit of the doubt. If, on the other hand, someone says that his mother is the *sāvitrī*, this implies that only he himself had been initiated – possibly because his birth mother was not even a proper Vaiśyā. Admitting such people was perhaps a concession to the fact that in reality, many *dvija*s were not able to show that their ancestors had been *dvija*s as well – a thought that is so not far-fetched considering that originally only Brahmins were initiated; see above p. 143. If this interpretation is correct, the BaudhŚS would be the earliest text to give evidence for the mother metaphor. For the importance of the maternal lineage for the legitimacy and status in the case of Hindu rulers, see Falk 2006: 148–153.

768 VasDhS II 3: *mātur agre vijananaṃ dvitīyaṃ mauñjibandhane / atrāsya mātā sāvitrī pitā tv ācārya ucyate //*; cf. the translations by Olivelle 2000: 355 and Kajihara 2019: 4, n. 12. The second half of the verse has a parallel in the MBh: VasDhS II 3cd ≈ MBh III 177.29cd: *tatrāsya mātā sāvitrī pitā tv ācārya ucyate /* (tr. van Buitenen II: 565). The context in the Epic, however, is the ritual to be performed after the (natural) birth (*jātakarman*), and not the Upanayana. Van Buitenen (II: 830; cf. *MCI* I: 219) explains that "*sāvitrī*" therefore does not refer to the GM, but to another Savitṛ verse; see, for instance, ŚāṅkhGS I 24.4 and ĀśvGS I 15.1 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 50 and 182). In the star passage MBh III 177.29*88 an attempt is made to rectify this unusual reference by supplying a mention of the Upanayana ("after that, the naming ritual; after that, the tonsure is prescribed; after that, the Upanayana of those who have a second birth is explained according to the rules." *tatas tu nāmakaraṇaṃ tataś caulaṃ vidhīyate / tatopanayanaṃ proktaṃ dvijātīnāṃ yathāvidhi //*).

769 MānDhŚ II 147–148: *kāmān mātā pitā cainaṃ yad utpādayato mithaḥ / saṃbhūtiṃ tasya tāṃ vidyād yad yonāv abhijāyate /147/ ācāryas tv asya yāṃ jātiṃ vidhivad vedapāragaḥ utpādayati sāvitryā sā satyā sājarāmarā /148/.* Cf. the translation by Olivelle 2005: 102.

the MānDhŚ is similar to the KaṭhB, where the *sāvitrī* is not personified, but nevertheless connected to the second birth of the student.[770]

Notwithstanding minor uncertainties, taken together these parallel passages indicate that the idea that the GM plays the role of a mother of the initiate must have been quite common around the time when the Dharmasūtras were being composed. None of the Dharmasūtra passages, however, show any trace of a divinity or deity. The personification of the mantra seems to be nothing more than a trope.[771]

In the GopB and in the JaimUB, in contrast, the GM forms a couple with Savitṛ, a full-fledged Vedic god. Depending on how "seriously" one takes this text, this makes it difficult not to consider it a divinity of some kind.[772] But does that mean that its recipients consequently conceived of it as a real deity, perhaps even as an anthropomorphic deity like Savitṛ? As we saw in Chapter 5, personification is not a prerequisite for becoming an object of worship: in several Gṛhya rituals, the *sāvitrī* is worshipped (alongside the Vedas, the meters, etc.) in the same way as other, "proper" gods like Indra or Prajāpati.[773] But we also saw that the *sāvitrī* was considered a divine mantra rather than an independent deity, let alone an anthropomorphic goddess.[774]

To a large extent, the same seems to apply to the GopB. The focus of the GopB text, too, lies on the mantra and its powerful secrets, and promises much for those who know it.[775] Only towards the end of the text is the personification further elaborated, as the text concludes: "He who knows thus and who, knowing thus, thus worships this Mother of the Vedas, the *sāvitrī*, as success, as a secret (*upaniṣad*) – he attains infinite splendor/prosperity (*śrī*) – thus (ends) the Brāhmaṇa."[776] This colophon – which could very well be a later addition – clearly personifies the mantra. While it/she is still primarily an object of knowledge, it/she is also called the "Mother of the Vedas."

This personification of a divine mantra might be a considered a small step taken towards the concept of a "mantra goddess": as still later texts show, at

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770   See above p. 145.

771   It is worth noting that entering *brahmacarya* involved the boy's separation from his mother. It is doubtful whether any young *brahmacārin* would have accepted a mantra as an appropriate substitute. However, we may assume that the attribution of the role of mother had a reinforcing effect on the personification of the mantra during this sensitive transitional phase and created a memory that remained for the rest of the *dvija*'s life.

772   Cf. Varenne, *EU*: "Ainsi la Sāvitrī est, en premier lieu, la prière adressée au dieu incitateur (*Savitṛ*), mais elle est en même temps la puissance créatrice (*śakti*) de ce dieu; et il est, en ce sens, légitime de la tenir pour une déesse. "

773   See above pp. 153–159.

774   See above pp. 156–159.

775   Cf. the translation of this passage by Falk 1986b: 85–86.

776   GopB I 38: 30.3–5: *anantāṃ śriyam aśnute ya evaṃ veda yaś caivaṃvidvān evam etāṃ vedānāṃ mātaraṃ sāvitrīṃ saṃpadam upaniṣadam upāsta iti brāhmaṇam.*

least some recipients of the text did take it quite literally.[777] The much later SāvU, which adaptively reuses the text from the JaimUB, for instance, bluntly calls her *mahādevī*, "great goddess." Towards the end of this text, we read the following:

> oṃ hrīṃ – O powerful, great goddess – hrīṃ – O you of great power – klīṃ – O you who give accomplishment of the fourfold goal of man, O you whose nature is to grant the boon of "that [excellent effulgence] of the Sun[-god]"[778] – hrīṃ – O you whose nature is to grant the boon of "[that] excellent effulgence of the [Sun-]god," O exceedingly powerful one, embodiment of compassion for all, powerful one, destroyer of all hunger and fatigue, born from "who may [inspire] our thoughts," O bountiful one whose nature is to inspire,[779] who by nature has the Humming [i.e., the syllable *om*] at/as her head – huṃ phaṭ svāhā![780]

It seems plausible (to myself, at least) that the authors of reworkings such as this one did not perceive their additions as alterations of the "original" meaning of the text. Rather, they well may have felt that texts such as the JaimUB actually are concerned with a goddess, and only adapted them somewhat in order to make this clearer.

2. Deification

While in the JaimUB and GopB, the GM is only divinized to the extent to which – and no further – it is the "mantric partner" of Savitṛ, another "Vedic" text invokes it as a goddess in her own right. This is the MNārU,[781] which at least in

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777   It must be noted, however, that it is still unknown when the GopB was composed. It cannot be ruled out that at the time of its composition, the deification of the GM was already far more elaborate, but was deliberately ignored by the author, who here is only concerned with the mantra.

778   As in the ŚvetU passage translated in Chapter 1 (see above pp. 52–53), I understand the *pāda*s cited here to be components of the new sentence that incorporate the rest of the mantra into the intended meaning, but have not been syntactically adapted.

779   The compound *pracodayātmika* cannot be analyzed as consisting of *pracodaya+ātmika*; the word *pracodaya* does not exist. We may speculate that the author's original idea was to formulate *dhīmahi-dhiyo-yo-naḥ-pracodayād-ātmike* (analogously to the previous two *pāda*s) – *non liquet*.

780   SāvU 14: *oṃ hrīṃ bale mahādevi hrīṃ mahābale klīṃ caturvidhapuruṣārthasiddhiprade tat-savitur-varadātmike hrīṃ vareṇyaṃ-bhargo-devasya-varadātmike atibale sarvadayāmūrta-ye bale ⁺sarvakṣucchramopanāśini dhīmahi-dhiyo-yo-nar-jāte ˣpracure* [ed. *pracuryā*] *yā pracodayātmike praṇavaśiraskātmike huṃ phaṭ svāhā*.

781   Also called Yājñikī-Upaniṣad, Bṛhan-Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad, Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad (Varenne 1960/II: 5), and Nārāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad (Sāyaṇa; see Varenne 1960/II: 9).

part may have been composed around the beginning of the Common Era. In this Upaniṣad, we not only find the modified GMs, but also a passage dedicated to a goddess worshipped in the Sandhyā. While in the earliest version of the text this goddess is possibly only a deified form of the *gāyatrī* meter, she soon was also identified with the GM. Moreover, some versions of this passage (henceforth I will simply call it "the Gāyatrī passage") also contain a verse calling the GM the *vedamātṛ* – "the Mother of the Vedas." This verse (henceforth, to be called "the *vedamātṛ* verse") was also included in the AV.

In the following, I will first discuss the Gāyatrī passage in the MNārU before turning to the *vedamātṛ* verse and its AV pendant. This passage is not free of corruptions, but especially in its prose parts its text is more intact than that of the *vedamātṛ* verse, which is much more in need of textual restoration.

2.1 The Gāyatrī passage in the MNārU

The MNārU has been transmitted in at least[782] three recensions, both as an independent text and as an appendix added to the TaittĀ:[783]

	recension		editions
(1)	Drāviḍa (also TaittĀDr X)	**Dr**	**C** = Mitra 1872: 752–909
			P = Phaḍke & Āpṭe 1898: 689–782
(2)	Ātharvaṇa	**Āth**	Jacob 1888
(3)	Āndhra (also TaittĀĀn X)	**Ān**	**P** = Phaḍke & Āpṭe 1898: 783–909[784]
			Pa = Varenne 1960/I[785]

Table 18: The recensions and editions of the MNārU

According to Robert Zimmermann, both the Āth and the even younger Ān recension, which is the version with the most insertions and additions, are based on the Dr recension.[786] My goal in discussing the Gāyatrī passage is to trace the process of the GM's deification from the earliest to the latest recension. To this

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782 According to Sāyaṇa, there also exist Karṇātaka recensions (cf. Zimmermann 1913: 7: "Keine derselben hat sich trotz nachdrücklichen Suchens in Europa und Indien auffinden lassen"); see also Sarma 1939: 69–70.

783 *prapāṭhaka* X, following the TaittU (= *prapāṭhaka*s VII–IX). Sarma (1939: 68) aptly remarked that "[t]he arrangement of the text of no other Vedic work is, perhaps, so uncertain as that of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka."

784 In addition, there is an appendix to TaittĀ X in Mitra 1872 containing text also found in the Ān.

785 Note that this edition, notwithstanding its title, is not critical; see Gonda 1963b: 299.

786 Zimmermann 1913: 62–74. For the date of "the MNārU," see Srinivasan 1997: 120–121. She tentatively suggests that it may have been composed some time in the first century CE. However, Srinivasan (1997: 112) explicitly proposes this date for the Ān recension, which

end, I will begin with the Dr (C), while including the few variants of the very similar Āth in the footnotes. After that, I will present the text as given in Ān (the youngest recension). These two end points will provide the basis for my analysis of the development of the text, which will also open up the possibility of retracing the various stages of the deification of the GM.

In the following, I present and translate the passage from the **Dr** recension.[787] The two indented sections 28 and 29 are only found in the Dr and in the Āth, but not in the Ān.

> *āyā́tu varádā devī́ akṣaráṃ brahmasaṃmitam*[788] /
> *gāyatrī́ chandásāṃ mā́tā idaṃ bráhma juṣasvá naḥ*[789] //
>
> *ojó 'si sahó 'si balám asi bhrājó 'si devā́nāṃ dhā́ma nā́māsi viśvám asi vi-śvā́yuḥ sarvám asi sarvā́yur abhibhū́r*[790] *oṃ*[791] *gāyatrīm āvā́hayāmi*[792] |26|
>
> *oṃ bhūḥ | oṃ bhuvaḥ | oṁ suvaḥ*[793] *| oṃ mahaḥ | oṃ janaḥ | oṃ tapaḥ | oṁ satyaṃ |*
> *oṃ tat sávitur varéṇyaṃ bhargó devasyá dhīmahi | dhiyo yo náḥ pracodayā́t |*
> *om āpo jyotī́ raso 'mṛtaṃ brahma bhūr bhuvaḥ suvar om* |27|
>
>> *oṃ bhūr bhuvaḥ suvar mahar janas tapaḥ satyaṃ*[794] *tad brahma tád āpa āpo jyotī́ raso 'mṛtaṃ brahma bhūr bhuvaḥ suvar om* |28|
>>
>> *óṃ tad brahma óṃ tad vāyuḥ | óṃ tad ātmā | óṃ tat satyam*[795] *| óṃ tat sarvám | óṃ tat puror*[796] *namaḥ* |29|

→ is the latest of all recensions. The fact that this recension already uses the designation "Gāyatrī" for the mantra suggests that the MNārUĀn may have been composed after the third century CE. However, insofar as Tantricization was a reaction to the *strong* presence of Tantric traditions, the text more likely came into being even later, namely after (or in) the fifth century CE, and would hence belong to the "Tantric Age" (the only *terminus ante quem* I know of is given by Sāyaṇa, who lived in the fourteenth century CE and knew the text). This oversight notwithstanding, the date proposed by Srinivasan may very well be correct – but for the *earlier* recensions of the Upaniṣad, the Dr and Āth, or at least for earlier versions or precursors of these texts.

787 For the Dr, see C: 847–851 and P: 743–74. Most of the text is identical with the (unaccented) passage Āth XV 1–5, for which see Jacob 1888: 14.19–15.12.

788 The reading *akṣare brahmasaṃmite* "O imperishable one, equal to the *brahman*/Brahmā" as given in the MānGS (see below pp. 189–190) would make much more sense, but is not attested in the MNārU recensions.

789 *me v.l.* in DrC.

790 TaittS II 4.3.1–2: *ójo 'si sáho 'si bálam asi* |1| *bhrā́jo 'si devā́nāṃ dhā́manā́māsi víśvam asi viśvā́yuḥ sárvam asi sarvā́yur abhibhū́r-.*

791 *oṃ-* is omitted in Āth.

792 Āth adds *sāvitrīm āvāhahayāmi sarasvatīm āvāhayāmi.*

793 *svaḥ* Āth.

794 Āth here adds *madhu kṣaranti*; cf. Zimmermann 1913: 70.

795 DrP gives *óṃ tat satyam* only as a *v.l.*

796 *pur oṃ* Āth; *puro namaḥ v.l.* in DrP.

uttamé[797] *śikháre devī́*[798] *bhū̱myā̍ṃ párvata̱mūrdháni* /
brā̱hmaṇébhyo 'bhyánujñā̱tā̱[799] *gáccha dévi ya̱thāsúkham* /30/

The wish-fulfilling goddess shall come, the imperishable one equal to the
brahman/Brahmā![800]
Gāyatrī[801] is the mother of the meters(/ metrical Vedic texts). Find pleasure
in this formulation (*brahman*) of ours! |26|

You are vigor, you are power, you are strength, you are brilliance, you are
the glory and fame of the gods, you are the entirety, an entire lifespan, you
are the whole, a whole lifespan, surpassing! OM – I invoke Gāyatrī!

OM EARTH – OM INTERSPACE – OM SKY – OM GREATNESS – OM PEOPLE –
OM HEAT – OM TRUTH –
OM – We visualize that excellent effulgence of the Sun god, who may in-
spire our thoughts! –
OM, WATERS, LIGHT, ESSENCE, IMMORTALITY, BRAHMAN – EARTH, INTER-
SPACE, SKY, OM.[802] |27|

> OM EARTH, INTERSPACE, SKY, GREATNESS, PEOPLE, HEAT, TRUTH – that
> is the *brahman*, that is the waters – WATERS, LIGHT, ESSENCE, IMMOR-
> TALITY, BRAHMAN – EARTH, INTERSPACE, SKY, OM. |28|

> OM, that is the *brahman*, OM, that is the wind, OM, that is the self, OM,
> that is the truth, OM, that is the whole, OM, that is the name of the two
> fortresses/cities. |29|

O you who are born on the highest peak on earth, on the summit of the
mountain –
having taken leave from the Brahmins, go, goddess, as you please! /30/

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797   *uttare v.l.* in Āth.
798   *jāte v.l.* in DrC.
799   *hy anujñātā* Āth.
800   Cf. n. 788.
801   It is very well possible that the meter alone is meant; see the discussion below.
802   This paragraph consists of (1) the seven Vyāhṛtis (each preceded by *om*); (2) the GM
        (preceded by *om*); (3) the so-called "Śiras formula" (*om āpo jyotī raso 'mṛtaṃ brahma*);
        and (4) the three Vyāhṛtis (followed by *om*).

In the later **Ān** recension,[803] the text of the Dr has been adapted. Here, I have indented the passages not found in the Dr:

āyā́tu varádā devī́ akṣaraṃ brahmasammitam
gāyatrī́ chandásāṃ mātā̍e̤idaṃ bráhma juṣasvá me /

> yad ahnā́t kurúte pā́paṃ tad ahnā́t pratimucyáte /
> yad rātriyā́t kurúte pā́paṃ tad rātriyā́t pratimucyáte /[804]
> sarvávarṇe máhādevi sandhyāvidye sarasváti /34/

ojó 'si, sahó 'si, balám asi, bhrājó 'si, devā́nāṃ dhā́ma nāmā́si, viśvám asi, viśvā́yuḥ, sarvám asi, sarvā́yur, abhibhū́r![805] oṃ – gāyatrīm āvā́hayā́mi,

> sāvitrīm āvā́hayā́mi, sarasvatīm āvā́hayā́mi, ⁺chandarṣīn[806] āvā́hayā́mi, śriyam āvā́hayā́mi.

> gāyatriyā gāyatrī chando, viśvāmitra ṛṣiḥ, savitā devatāgnir mukhaṃ, brahmā śiro, viṣṇur hṛdayaṃ, rudraḥ śikhā, pṛthivī yoniḥ. prāṇāpāna-vyānodānasamānā[807] saprāṇā śvetavarṇā sāṅkhyāyanasagotrā gāyatrī caturviṃśatyakṣarā tripadā̍ ṣaṭkukṣiḥ pañcaśīrṣā̍o̤upanayane viniyogaḥ

oṃ bhūḥ – oṃ bhuvaḥ – oṃ suvaḥ – oṃ mahaḥ – oṃ janaḥ – oṃ tapaḥ – oṃ satyaṃ –
oṃ tat sávitur varéṇyaṃ bhargó devasyá dhīmahi | dhiyo yo náḥ pracodayā́t |
om āpo jyotī raso 'mṛtaṃ brahma – bhūr bhuvaḥ suvar om |35|

> uttamé śikháre jā́te bhū́myāṃ párvatamūrdháni /
> brā́hmaṇébhyo 'bhyánujñā́tā gaccha dévi yathāsúkham //

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803 MNārUĀn 34–36. For the Ān, see P: 852–855 and Pa: 80–84 (ed. & tr.; verses 329–346); cf. also C: 914.11–915. I have chosen to present the Ān text as given in P rather than the text edited by Varenne (Pa) because the Ān gives accents. Since they are used very inconsistently, I have decided to transliterate them as they are instead of transcribing them. The linguistic value of these accent marks may be minimal; however, they illustrate very well the idiosyncratic treatment of Vedic accents by later scribes (for the written transmission of Vedic texts in general, see Galewicz 2011). Indeed, they most likely even point to the fact that the authors of these post-Vedic Vedic (in the actual linguistic sense) texts did not use correct forms in the first place, an observation that is of no little consequence when making – or more often, dispensing with – emendations and corrections; on this point see also n. 331 on p. 80 and n. 760 on p. 179 above.

804 The edition has *ahnā́t* and *rātriyā́t*; both forms are grammatically incorrect (*rātriyā́t* is also hypermetric). I presume that originally it might have been *ahnā* and *rātryā*; cf. MatsyP 127.20ab: *yad ahnā kurute pāpaṃ taṃ dṛṣṭvā niśi muñcati /*.

805 See n. 790 on p. 185 above.

806 Ed.: *chandarṣīn*.

807 °*āḥ* ĀnC.

stuto[808] *maya varadā vĕdamāṭā, pracodayantī pavanĕ dvijāṭā /*
āyuḥ pṛthivyāṃ draviṇaṃ bráhmavarcasaṃ, mahyaṃ dattvā prajā-
tuṃ bráhmalŏkam[809] /36/

The wish-fulfilling goddess shall come, the imperishable one equal to the
brahman/Brahmā![810]
Gāyatrī is the mother of the meters(/ metrical Vedic texts). Find pleasure
in this formulation (*brahman*) of mine!

> The bad one does by day, is let go by day [i.e., on the same day],
> the bad one does at night, is let go at [that same] night,
> O great goddess having all letters/colors who is the knowledge/mantra
> (*vidyā*) of the Juncture (worship), O Sarasvatī! |34|

You are vigor, you are power, you are strength, you are brilliance, you are
namely the abode of the gods, you are the entirety, an entire lifespan, you
are the whole, a whole lifespan, surpassing! ОМ – I invoke Gāyatrī,

> I invoke Sāvitrī, I invoke Sarasvatī, I invoke the Ṛṣis of the Vedic texts,
> I invoke radiance.

> The meter of the Gāyatrī is the *gāyatrī*, the Ṛṣi is Viśvāmitra, the deity
> is Savitṛ, the mouth is Agni, the head is Brahmā, the heart is Viṣṇu,
> the tuft is Rudra, the womb is the Earth. The Gāyatrī who, possessing
> *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, and *samāna*, has *prāṇa*s (vital forces),
> is white-colored, belongs to Sāṅkhyāyana's *gotra*, has twenty-four
> syllables, three feet, six abdominal sections,[811] and five heads. The
> application is in the Upanayana.

OM EARTH – OM INTERSPACE – OM SKY – OM GREATNESS – OM PEOPLE –
OM HEAT – OM TRUTH –
OM – We visualize that excellent effulgence of the Sun god, who may
inspire our thoughts! –
OM WATERS, LIGHT, ESSENCE, IMMORTALITY, BRAHMAN – EARTH, INTER-
SPACE, SKY, OM. |35|

O you who are born on the highest peak on earth, on the summit of the
mountain –
having taken leave from the Brahmins, go, goddess, as you please!

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808   *stutā u* ĀnPa; see below p. 194.
809   See n. 812 on p. 189 below.
810   Cf. n. 788 on p. 185 above.
811   See below pp. 251–252.

[The *vedamātṛ* verse:][812]
Praised by me is the wish-granting Mother of the Vedas, the pro-
pelling one, twice-born in the purifier [i.e., "in the wind" or "in a
strainer"?]!
Having given me on earth long life, wealth, *brahmavarcasa*,[813] (she
shall?) go forth to the world of *brahman*/Brahmā. |36|[814]

Let us now analyze the development of ideas around the (deified) GM in
light of the most significant changes between the passage in the Dr presented
above and the latest recension, the Ān. First all, we observe that in the earliest
version, the Dr, a deity called Gāyatrī is invoked, followed by a full quotation of
the "augmented" *sāvitrī* mantra. Only Gāyatrī, however, is explicitly called *devī*.
In the Āth and Ān, on the other hand, it is difficult to differentiate between the
various goddesses (called not only "Gāyatrī" and "Sāvitrī," but also "Sarasvatī");
in fact, all of them appear to be manifestations of a single goddess. But was
that already the case in the earliest version? The word *chandas* can mean both
"meter" and "metrical Vedic text."[815] Is the Gāyatrī the mother of the meters, of
the metrical Vedic texts, or of both? Is only the meter deified, or are both the
meter and the mantra supposed to be goddesses, or *a* goddess? To answer these
questions, let us have a look at a very similar passage from an entirely different
text: the **MānGS**.

Even at a superficial glance, it is easily assumed that the Gāyatrī passage
found in the various recensions of the MNārU was not only intended to convey
information about the meter or the mantra, but was used in ritual practice. At
least in the Ān, we are explicitly told that *upanayane viniyogaḥ*, "the application
is in the Upanayana." While this is of course true for the GM, there are several
indications that the entire text was, in fact, intended for the Sandhyā.[816] This is
indicated by an instructive parallel in the MānGS:

Then he performs the Juncture (worship). |1| He goes out before sunset,
sits down on a clean spot north of the village or east of it, washes himself,
fills his cupped hands with water, turns right and invokes [the goddess,[817]

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812   For the text and translation of this verse (which is barely intelligible without reconstruc-
       tion), see the discussion below pp. 193–197.
813   See n. 1045 on p. 249 below.
814   Cf. the translation by Varenne 1960/I: 80–84 and the translations of individual verses in
       Gonda 1976: 74, n. 163 (see pp. 183–184).
815   Pāṇini's usage of the term was even broader; cf. Bronkhorst 2007: 188: "Pāṇini's term
       chandas covered more than just 'Sacred Literature'. We may have to assume that certain
       works, primarily the ritual Sūtras, and among those first of all the Śrauta Sūtras, belonged
       to a fringe area wherein Vedic usage was sometimes considered appropriate."
816   Cf. also Mitra 1872: 70–72 and Varenne 1960/I: 79.
817   The text does not specify who is to be invoked. Following the commentary, Dresden
       (1941: 5) here supplements "Savitṛ" instead of "the goddess."

reciting:]

"Come, pure goddess, imperishable one, equal to the *brahman*/Brahmā! Gāyatrī, mother of the meters(/ metrical texts), find pleasure in this formulation (*brahman*) of mine!" |2|

Having softly recited "You are vigor…"[818] and having combined[819] it with "Who yokes for you…,"[820] he employs eight times [the formula] "OM – EARTH – INTERSPACE – SKY – That [excellent effulgence] of the Sun[-god]…" Thus, the objects of desire are transmitted [by tradition].[821] He utters "Let the god [Savitṛ] drive here…" [= ṚV VII 45.1] as a *triṣṭubh* for a Kṣatriya; "They harness…" [= ṚV V 81.1] as a *jagatī* for a Vaiśya. |3|[822]

In this Gṛhyasūtra passage, three elements from the MNārU can be recognized: the verse addressing the goddess – in this case, in flawless (reconstructed) Sanskrit – the adaptive reuse of the TaittS passage, and, lastly, the GM itself (in addition, the text also cites an unknown verse beginning with *kas te yunakti*). This similar structure leaves no doubt that the MNārU's Gāyatrī passage, too, was supposed to be recited in the Sandhyā. But is the Gāyatrī in this passage the mantra or the meter? At the very end of the quoted MānGS passage, the *sāvitrī*s in the two other meters are cited as well, which at first might suggest that the mantra is meant. The other *sāvitrī*s would then be Gāyatrīs in other meters (a "*triṣṭubh* Gāyatrī," etc.), as it were – an odd, but not entirely impossible idea.[823] Later reciters might indeed have understood the text in this way. Most likely, however, the *sāvitrī*s for the other Varṇas were only added to fulfil the scheme

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818 See n. 790 on p. 185 above.

819 Dresden (1941: 5) tentatively translated *yojayitvā* as "folded (his hands)?."

820 An unknown verse (cf. MānGS I 45). Verses with similar *pratīka*s exist; see the *UVC s.vv.* "kas tvā yunakti sa tvā yunaktu," "kas tvā yunakti sa tvā vi muñcatu," "ko vo yunakti sa vo yunaktu," and "ko vo yunakti." However, it is difficult to establish a connection with the present verse.

821 How the "objects of desire" have to be understood is unclear (cf. Dresden 1941: 6); possibly the objects of desire mentioned in the mantras, that is, *ojas*, *bhargas*, etc., are meant.

822 MānGS I 2.1–3: *atha saṃdhyām upāste* |1| *prāg astamayān niṣkramyottarato grāmasya purastād vā śucau deśe niṣadyopaspṛśyāpām añjaliṃ pūrayitvā pradakṣiṇam āvṛtya | āyāhi viraje devy akṣare brahmasaṃmite / gāyatri chandasāṃ mātar idaṃ brahma juṣasva me //* ity *āvāhayati* |2| *ojo 'sīti japitvā kas te yunaktīti yojayitvā | oṃ bhūr bhuvaḥ svas tat savitur ity aṣṭau kṛtvaḥ prayuṅkta ity āmnātāḥ kāmāḥ | ā devo yātīti triṣṭubhaṃ rājanyasya | yuñjata iti jagatīṃ vaiśasya* |3|; also translated by Dresden 1941: 5–6; for a German translation and a translation of Aṣṭāvakra's commentary on this passage, see Strunz 2016: 62. For a discussion of the Sandhyā as it is prescribed by the KāṭhGS, MānGS, VārGS, and their commentaries, see Strunz 2016: 54–82. A very similar, but probably somewhat later passage is also found in the ĀgnGS II 6. For the three *sāvitrī* mentioned, see also above p. 123.

823 Cf. the designation *kṣatriyagāyatrī* in one manuscript of the AVP for the *triṣṭubh*/*jagatī* verse AVP X 4.3; see Kubisch 2012: 37.

known from the Upanayana,[824] without too much concern for the consequences. Their presence, therefore, does not really help to explain whether the mantra or the meter is meant.

Given the ambiguity of the word *chandas*, the question is not easily answered. The MānGS itself evidently uses the word *chandas* in the meanings "meter" as well as "metrical/Vedic text" or even "Vedic literature."[825] There are, thus, at least two ways to understand the invocation: (a) the *gāyatrī* meter is the mother of the meters, or (b), the GM is the mother of the metrical Vedic texts. Both options can be justified: the *gāyatrī* meter was considered the "principal" meter, from which the other, longer meters were derived, as it were.[826] As such, it could be easily called their mother. The GM, in turn, could just as easily be called the mother of the metrical Vedic texts. (Pointing out the blatant similarity with the *vedamātṛ* [or *vedānāṃ mātṛ*] is probably not necessary.)

While we cannot rule out that both readings were valid, there are some indications that originally the meter was primary. The Gṛhyasūtras in general, including the MānGS, use *sāvitrī* for the mantra and *gāyatrī* for the meter.[827] Indeed, the same holds true for most of the MBh.[828] Though the date of the MānGS is uncertain, it certainly belongs to the "older half" of the extant Gṛhyasūtras.[829] *If* the Sandhyā prescription is not an addition from a later time, or a different ritual milieu or context – a possibility that I would not rule out completely – *gāyatrī* in the Sūtra probably refers to the meter, and we may infer that this is also the case for the MNārU.

If this is correct, it means that the meter in these passages appears as a goddess. While reification and personification of meters is very common in Vedic literature,[830] in the context of the Sandhyā, this is somewhat unexpected. To my knowledge, the *gāyatrī* meter was never deified and worshipped in this way before. Like other meters, it was occasionally identified with Vāc, "Speech," who was among the most prominent female deities in the Vedic religion.[831] In several Vedic texts, the meter assumes the form of an eagle or falcon who flies to heaven in order to fetch Soma;[832] the same story, however, is also told of other meters. I am not aware that the idea of an avian Gāyatrī was continued in post-Vedic

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824 See above pp. 120–121.

825 MānGS I 4.8: *chandasy arthān buddhvā* "having understood the meanings in the Vedic literature" (cf. the translation and n. in Dresden 1941: 7); MānGS I 6.2: *saptacchandāṃsi*, the "seven meters" must be meant (cf. the translation and n. Dresden 1941: 21–22).

826 See above p. 65, Smith 1992: 116, and Thite 1987: 452–453.

827 See, above all, MānGS I 22.13.

828 See above pp. 72–78.

829 See n. 465 on p. 112 above.

830 Numerous examples are given in Thite 1987, see especially pp. 441–443.

831 See Thite 1987: 450–451.

832 See Gonda 1975: 398, Thite 1987: 442, Rosenfield 2004: 188, Mehendale 1971, and Dange 1963: 261.

texts; in the context of the deification of the GM, in any case, it did not play any role at all.[833] It therefore remains unclear how exactly we should envision the goddess Gāyatrī in the first recension of the MNārU and in the MānGS.

In any case, neither of the two passages indicates that the GM played a particular role as a goddess – as opposed to several versions of the Sandhyā ritual in later times, where the GM itself (or, rather, herself) is even visualized. If it was intended at all, the "production of the divinity"[834] of the GM itself may have been merely a by-product: the mantra could be thought of as a goddess inasmuch as it is a manifestation of the deified *gāyatrī* meter. The deification of the GM, therefore, was perhaps on its way, but nevertheless not yet fully developed when the MNārU and the MānGS were composed (i.e., in the centuries around the turn of the millennium; a more precise dating will not be attempted here).

With the later additions to the Gāyatrī passage, on the other hand, there remains little doubt that the mantra itself became a goddess in the proper sense of the word. The originally ambiguous formulation here provided the basis for unequivocal deification. Already in the Āth, the invocation of the Gāyatrī is complemented by that of Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī, which resulted in the triad Gāyatrī–Sāvitrī–Sarasvatī known from medieval texts.[835]

In a line inserted only in the later Ān recension, she is called Sarasvatī as well. In the same line, she is also called *sandhyāvidyā*. The meaning of this term hinges on the meaning of the word *vidyā*. Either it simply means "knowledge," in which cases the goddess would be the "one who possesses the knowledge of the Sandhyā," that is, she knows how the ritual is done, etc.[836] (which might very well be said of Sarasvatī); or, alternatively, and perhaps more likely, the goddess

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833 Mention may, however, be made of a particular passage in the MBh, where the *gāyatrī* meter appears as a girl in heaven. In MBh XIII 137.18, Bhīṣma tells a story about a Kṣatriya called Arjuna Kārtavīrya, who, due to three boons obtained from a Ṛṣi, has become very powerful. Blinded by his prowess, he flew to heaven with his chariot, where he boasted that he was the most powerful being. Suddenly, he heard a bodiless voice: "You fool, do you not recognize that a Brahmin is better than a Kṣatriya? It is together with the Brahmin that a Kṣatriya protects the creatures!" (MBh XIII 137.12: *na tvaṃ mūḍha vijānīṣe brāhmaṇaṃ kṣatriyād varam / sahito brāhmaṇeneha kṣatriyo rakṣati prajāḥ //*). At first, it is not clear to whom this voice belongs. But when Arjuna argues that the Kṣatriyas are superior to the Brahmins, he in passing also reveals the identity of the speaker by saying: "What this girl, *gāyatrī*, said in heaven is untrue!" (MBh XIII 137.18ab: *kathitaṃ hy anayāsatyaṃ gāyatryā kanyayā divi*). Continuing his speech, he eventually drives the "night-walking" (? *niśācarī* [XIII 137.21]) being away. In the following, the god Vāyu (Wind) appears and tells Arjuna many stories, ultimately convincing him that Brahmins are superior. The passage must be understood against the background that the Brahmins and the *gāyatrī* meter are strongly associated with each other; the meter personifies the voice of the Brahmins, as it were. Significantly, however, she is not described as a bird.

834 See above pp. 22–23.

835 See below pp. 256–258.

836 Varenne 1960/I: 83: "qui possèdes la science des *saṃdhyā*."

is the *vidyā* herself: at some point, *vidyā* acquired the additional meaning of "mantra" or "spell."[837] In this case, the text would state that the goddess actually *is* the mantra of the Sandhyā, and while several mantras are used in this ritual, the GM no doubt qualifies best as *the* Sandhyā mantra. In this case, the mantra would be a "manifestation" of Sarasvatī.

The Ān, however, not only portrays the mantra as a goddess, it also makes the mantra absorb the meter by using the word *gāyatrī* for both. A self-contained paragraph (*gāyatriyā gāyatrī chando-...* "the meter of the Gāyatrī is the *gāyatrī*..."), which is characterized by an almost complete lack of accentuation, interrupts the invocation by describing the properties of the GM (which it also calls by that name), adding further that its meter is the *gāyatrī*. The mantra here appears as an anthropomorphic (or rather, "super-anthropomorphic") goddess, belonging to the *gotra* of Sāṅkhyāyana, having breaths and five heads. The *aṅga*s of the mantra deity are mentioned as well, which gives the insertion a Tantric tinge. The paragraph concludes by stating that the application of the mantra is in the Upanayana, and by doing so it completely intertwines the text with its deification, making no distinction whatsoever between them. While the mantra is thus clearly deified, the meter no longer plays any significant role.

A general assessment of the development of the Gāyatrī passage will be undertaken in the conclusion, and we will also return to the paragraph just discussed in Chapter 8.[838] Before that, we have to deal with the last and most likely youngest addition to the text, the *vedamātṛ* verse also found in the AV. As we will see in the following section, this verse continues to deify the mantra rather than the meter.

2.2 The *vedamātṛ* verse

The *vedamātṛ* verse is not only given in full at the end of one version of the MNārU, but also in the Śaunaka recension of the AV. The verse has several variant readings and appears to be a later addition to both texts. In the AV, it is the second-last piece of *kāṇḍa* XIX, a relatively late collection of hymns of varying length. It is preceded and followed by other short hymns, mostly prayers for long life. While the verse also asks for *āyus*, a "long lifespan" – among several other things – it clearly does not form a textually coherent whole with the surrounding hymns; in the Paippalāda recension (AVP), it is missing altogether. In the case of the MNārU, too, it is only given in the Ān recension.

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837 Cf. MBh XIV 44.5, see above p. 73. In Tantric contexts, *vidyā*s are female mantra deities, whereas *mantra*s are male deities (Padoux 2011: 2, n. 4 [see p. 123] and 13, n. 3 [see p. 126]).

838 See below pp. 249–252.

The verse is special insofar as it is barely intelligible as it is, neither in the available editions of the MNārU, nor in the AV, where several manuscript variants are recorded in the editions. For this reason I will first give a comparison of the two versions, including the variants found in the editions of the AV available to me:

AV XIX 71[839]	MNārUĀn 36: 855.9–10[840]
a *stutā́ máyā varadā́ vedamātā́*[841]	*stuto mayā varadā védamā̄tā,*
b *pracodáyantām pāvamānī́(ṃ) dvijā́nām /*	*pracodayantī pavané dvijā̄tā /*
c *ā́yuḥ prāṇám prajā́m paśū́n*[842] *kīrtíṃ* *dráviṇaṃ brahmavarcasám |*	*āyuḥ pṛthivyām* *draviṇaṃ bráhmavarcasaṃ,*
d *máhyaṃ dattvā́ vrajata brahmalokám //*	*mahyaṃ dattvā prajātuṃ bráhmalokam //*

Table 19: The *vedamātṛ* verse in the AV/MNārUĀn

With regard to form, we observe that the first and last *pāda* are more or less *triṣṭubh* lines; in the MNārUĀn, the same is true of *pāda* b. *pāda* c, on the other hand, is hypermetric and barely conforms to the rules of a *triṣṭubh* (with the MNārUĀn version being a bit less excessive). It is likely that the original verse was already unmetrical;[843] at least the metrical structure here is only of limited help in reconstructing the potential original wording.

What we also gather from this overview is that many of its variant readings are probably the result of scribal misreadings and re-readings as well as typographical errors (in the later, printed editions): *ā* and *o* are very similar in Devanāgarī, as are *ā(ṃ)* and *ī(ṃ)* as well as °*ānām* and °*ātā*. **stuto** in the MNārU, for instance, is probably simply a scribal error for **stutā**. Assuming that ***vedamātā́*** is original, the variant *vándamānā* in the old edition of the AV is probably

839 Tr. Whitney 1905: 1008: "Praised by me [is] the boon-giving Veda-mother. Let them urge on the soma-hymn of the twice-born. Having given to me life-time, breath, progeny, cattle, fame, property, Vedic splendor, go ye to the *brahma*-world." Square brackets by the translator.

840 Cf. also C: 915.16–17 (no real variants are given). Tr. Varenne 1960/I: 85: "Je l'ai louée, (le déesse) qui exauce les désirs, la mère du Veda, la deux-fois née qui stimule (nos énergies) dans (le feu) purificateur! Après m'avoir donné longue durée de vie sur la terre, richesses, gloire brâhmaṇique, qu'elle s'en retourne, (la déesse) au monde du *bráhman*."

841 The manuscripts "accent *vedamātā* in several different ways" Whitney 1905: 1008; see Pânḍurang 1898/IV: 549. Roth & Whitney 1856: 390 *vándamānā*.

842 Other AV manuscripts also read *paśúṃ*-; see Pânḍurang 1898/IV: 549 and Whitney 1905: 1008.

843 To quote Bloomfield 1899: 42: "Atharvan metres are so generally capable of improvement that we are in danger of singing our own rather than Atharvan hymns, when we apply ourselves to the task of improving them."

the product of a copyist as well. The same is probably true of *paśūn*/*paśúṃ-* and *pāvamānī(ṃ)*/*pavane*.

The form **pracodáyantām** (AV; alternating with **pracodayantī** in the MNārUĀn) poses a more serious problem. The reading *pracodáyaṃtām* is supported by almost all manuscripts as given in Pâṇḍurang's edition.[844] Commenting on the AV, Sāyaṇa, too, (apparently) gives *pracodáyantām* and glosses it with *prerayatu* "she shall set in motion" and *+prayacchatu* "she shall give," stating "a full lifespan" etc. to be the object.[845] In contrast, Whitney took *pāvamānī́m* to be the object. However, considering that the verb *prá+cud* in the causative is generally not used in the Ātmanepada, it is unlikely that the original verse had *pracodáyantām*, a finite verb in the *pluralis majestaticus* with the *vedamātā* as the subject. The combination of these two irregular features is highly improbable. As I (unlike Sāyaṇa or Whitney) cannot see how the text should be understood with the form *pracodáyantām*, for the time being I will assume the form *pracodayantī*, which is found in the MNārUĀn, is appropriate.

pavane (MNārUĀn; alternating with **pāvamānī́** in the AV) means either "in a purifying instrument," like a "sieve" or a "strainer," or "two purifying instruments." Again, it is unclear how either of these forms should be connected to the rest of the sentence. *pāvamānī́* "purifying" (AV) does not fit into the metrical structure, but would have to be understood as a participle qualifying the *vedamātṛ* (similar to the assumed *pracodáyantī*). The accusative *pāvamānī́m*, on the other hand, could refer to one of the so-called *pāvamānī*s, Soma hymns especially from book IX of the ṚV. Considering that the GM is often recited as a means of purification,[846] however, I believe it is more likely that the Mother of the Vedas is the "purifier of the twice-born" – for two reasons. First, I would suggest that it was the adjective *pā́vanī* from which both *pāvamānī́* and *pavane* were derived, as it would be metrically and also semantically appropriate.[847] Second, in contrast to *dvija* and *dvijāti*, the word **dvijāta** (MNārUĀn) is rare, and it is difficult to see why the GM should be called a twice-born herself. The form **dvijānām** is, therefore, more plausible.

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844 Pâṇḍurang 1898/IV: 549; only one reads *pracodáyatām*. Possibly following Pâṇḍurang, Whitney (1905: 1008) preferred *prá codayantām*, even though "the manuscripts accent *pracodáyantām*." If it were the verb of a main clause in a sentence strictly following the rules of Vedic grammar, only *prácodayantāṃ* would be correct. However, it is more likely that the original text was, in fact, incorrect: as the modified Gāyatrīs in the MaitrS show, the accent of *pracodáyāt* was "frozen," and the same was probably true of its derivatives. Cf. also n. 331 on p. 80 above and n. 760 on p. 179 above.

845 See Pâṇḍurang 1898/IV: 550.

846 See above pp. 164–166.

847 Cf. MBh XIV 96.15 App. 4.494: *yo japet pāvanīṃ devīṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamātaram*; ViṣṇDh 51.1cd: *japan hi pāvanīṃ devīṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamātaram*; LiṅgP I 79.334cd: *sāvitrī varadā puṇyā pāvanī lokaviśrutā*; KūrmP II 14.56b: *gāyatrī lokapāvanī*; BrahmP 64.17: *gāyatrīṃ pāvanīṃ devīṃ manasā vedamātaram / sarvapāpaharāṃ puṇyāṃ japed aṣṭottaraṃ śatam //*.

The number of objects of desire in *pāda* c (*āyuḥ*...) is uncertain: is the shorter list of the MNārUĀn a corruption of the AV list, or is the AV list a modification and extension of the MNārUĀn list? This is difficult to decide; however, if we assume that growth is more probable than reduction and consider that *pṛthivyām* is the *lectio difficilior*, the latter may be more likely.

On the passage containing the opaque form ***prajātum*** (MNārU; alternating with ***vrajata*** in the AV) in *pāda* d, Varenne remarks:

> It has only one obscurity: the barbarism *prajātum*, which we have corrected not with the imperative 2nd plural *vrajata*, but with the 3rd singular *vrajatu*. Indeed, if the form *vrajata*, which is so limpid, had been used by the authors of the Upaniṣad, it is hard to see how it could have been corrupted in this way, whereas *vrajata*/*prajātum* are, phonetically and graphically, very close.[848]

Another possibility would be the form *avrajata*, "she went," which would fit into the context of the MNārUĀn. Considering the beginning of the MNārUĀn passage (*āyātu varadā*...), however, an imperative *vrajatu* may be more likely.

On the basis of these considerations, I propose the following restoration which, as must be emphasized again, is only tentative (I have used here the correct Vedic accents):

The restored *vedamātṛ* verse

*stutá́ máyā varadá́ vedamātá́
pracodáyantī pá́vanī(/pāvamānī́) dvijá́nām /
á́yuḥ pṛthivyà̀ṃ(/ prāṇá̀ṃ prajá́ṃ paśúṃ kīrtíṃ)
dráviṇaṃ brahmavarcasám |
máhyaṃ dattvá́ vrajatu brahmalokám //

> Praised by me is the wish-granting Mother of the Vedas,
> propelling [and] purifying the twice-born!
> Having given me long life on earth (/ vital force, progeny, cattle, fame), wealth, [and] *brahmavarcasa*,[849]
> she shall go to the world of *brahman*/Brahmā.

As already mentioned, in terms of language this verse is clearly not Vedic, even though its inclusion in the AV (with its more or less correct accentuation found in the manuscripts of this text) could easily suggest that. Probably the most

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848 Translation of Varenne 1960/II: 23: "Il ne présente qu'une seule obscurité: la barbarisme *prajatum* [sic] que nous avons corrigé non par l'imperatif 2ᵉ pluriel *vrajata* mais par la 3ᵉ singulier *vrajatu*. En effet, si la forme *vrajata*, si limpide, avait été utilisée par les auteurs de l'Up., on voit mal comment elle aurait pu se corrompre de cette façon, alors que *vrajata/prajatum* sont, phonétiquement et graphiquement, très proches."

849 The brilliance or luster resulting from knowledge of the *brahman*, i.e., the Vedas.

conspicuous indicator of its age is the mention of the word *dvija*, a term which, according to Olivelle, is "absent in the entire Vedic corpus, including the Upaniṣads."[850] Lubin pointed out that this term only became established in its classical meaning when the so-called "Āśrama System"[851] was devised.[852] The first text to use the word *dvijāti* for an initiated person is the Gautama-Dharmasūtra (GautDhS), probably composed in the late second to early first century BCE; the first one to use *dvija* is the BaudhDhS, composed around the beginning of the Common Era.[853] There is no indication that the *vedamātṛ* verse is earlier than the BaudhDhS; indeed it could be much younger.

In fact, it is only found in the latest (as of now, undated) recension of the MNārU, where it blends in well with the Gāyatrī passage discussed above: The passage, recited in the Sandhyā, begins by invoking Gāyatrī (by which, probably, only the deified meter was originally meant): *āyātu varadā ... chandasāṃ mātā*. The *vedamātṛ* verse, in turn, sends her back again: *vedamātā ... vrajatu brahmalokam*. In this way, the text comes full circle. Considering that both versions are ultimately equally corrupt, I hypothesize that the MNārU was the source of the AV – or rather, that the Sandhyā ritual performed by the transmitters of the former influenced the Sandhyā of the transmitters of the latter.[854]

As I will discuss again below, not only the *vedamātṛ* verse, but also the verses beginning with *āyātu varadā* and, respectively, with *uttame śikhare*, were used in other (likely somewhat later) versions of the Sandhyā ritual.[855] How exactly the *vedamātṛ* verse may have become part of the AV will need to be examined more closely elsewhere. What is most important for the present discussion is that it is by no means ancient, but rather belongs to the first millennium CE – and therefore does not provide evidence for an *early* deification of the mantra.

Conclusion

The sources analyzed in this chapter demonstrate how, parallel to its rise as a mantra, the GM was also personified, and, following a certain delay, even deified (see Figure 6 below). The earliest evidence for the beginning of this development is to be found in the JaimUB, which, by and large, was composed before 400 BCE. In a late portion of this text, the *sāvitrī* is portrayed as the partner of Savitṛ. The

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850 Olivelle 2012a: 124, see especially n. 17.
851 See Olivelle 1993 and 2019b.
852 Lubin 2005: 87–88; cf. Lubin 2020: 42–43.
853 Cf. also above pp. 142–146.
854 The verse is found in the Sandhyā prescription of the AVPar (XLI 3.2), which also includes the recitation of the GM – unlike the AV itself.
855 See below pp. 248–249.

apparent equivalence of the two spouses might easily suggest that while besides being a mantra, the *sāvitrī* is also a goddess in the same sense as Savitṛ is a god. As we have seen, however, there are many indications that the extent of the deification of the *sāvitrī* was still very limited at this stage. In fact, the JaimUB and the GopB, which in this case is based on the JaimUB, only seem to play with the fact that the name of this verse, *sāvitrī*, is of the feminine grammatical gender.

While the technique of partnering a mantra with the deity it addresses is certainly creative, the JaimUB basically exemplifies a well-known aspect of the Vedic religion: everything that has a name can be personified, at least ad-hoc and temporarily.[856] As with many other abstract beings, this also happened – in this case, for the very first time – with one of the few mantras that received a proper name. It is thus more appropriate to speak of a personified mantra rather than a proper deification or a "mantra goddess," even though the mantra is, by virtue of being connected with Savitṛ, a divinity of sorts. The motive behind the creation of the passage was, in my view, to create a mythic or etiological explanation for the efficacy of the GM. With this agenda, the JaimUB is completely in line with other Brāhmaṇas, whose purpose is to explain why and how the Vedic rituals and the mantras used in them work.[857]

Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the JaimUB provided the perfect basis for further speculation concerning the divine nature of the GM. In the Atharvavedic GopB, which is certainly several centuries younger than the JaimUB (although as of yet, there have been no attempts to date it) almost the entire text of the JaimUB has been reused. Not only do Savitṛ and the *sāvitrī* again appear as a couple, but they are even the "two wombs" (*dve yonī*) of the *brahmacārin* too – his parents, as it were. As several parallel passages from the Dharmasūtras and the MBh show, conceiving of the GM as the mother of the initiate – but not necessarily as a goddess – must have been quite common in the centuries around the turn of the millennium.[858] Thus, the personification was further developed, and, we may speculate, was also felt to be more vivid, and perhaps even more "real" than a fictional personification.[859] The SāvU, a much more recent text that we have only discussed in passing, illustrates that later redactors easily understood texts like the JaimUB as referring to a goddess.

In a passage from the MNārU that contains the text to be used in the Sandhyā, we can observe how the mantra goddess emerged in yet another way. In

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856 Cf. Elizarenkova 1995: 103. Cf. also Gonda 1963a: 286: "It is small wonder that the Sāvitrī like many other important concepts in Indian thought could be represented as a person."
857 See generally Lubin 2019.
858 Savitṛ, in contrast, no longer played any role at all. This development was not only a consequence of the fact that the teacher is the more obvious choice for the initiate's father, but probably also reflects Savitṛ's diminished role in Hinduism; see above p. 46.
859 For the distinction between "fictional" and "real" personification, see above pp. 27–28.

the earliest recension of this text, the Dr, a goddess called Gāyatrī is invoked as the "mother of the meters." The text of the GM has also to be recited but is not patently identified with the goddess called upon at the text's beginning. A parallel passage from the MānGS buttresses the interpretation that at first only the meter was deified. Already in the Āth, however, this situation changes: not only is the goddess Gāyatrī invoked, but also Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī. Lastly, the late Ān even calls the mantra itself "Gāyatrī," blurring every distinction between the meter and the mantra.

It is also in this youngest recension of the MNārU that the term *vedamātṛ* is introduced into the text. As I show in Chapter 8, in non-Vedic literature this term is first found in the MBh.[860] Its comparatively young age as an addition at the end of a passage in a text (the MNārU) that is itself a later addition to a late[861] Vedic text (the TaittĀ) might not be surprising – if it were not also found in the AV. As I have argued, it is very well possible that this by and large ancient text was only the second home of the *vedamātṛ* verse. In the AV, the verse is not connected to its surrounding text. In the MNārU, in contrast, it fits in very well: with the *vedamātṛ* verse, the mother of the meters (the Gāyatrī) invited at the beginning is dismissed at the conclusion of the ritual sequence. That she is called the Mother of the Vedas indicates that the *gāyatrī* meter and the GM were both understood as aspects of a single goddess.

On the basis of these observations, it is possible to draw some initial, general conclusions about the deification of the GM: First, the texts show that the GM was not "appointed" goddess from one day to the next, but that its deification came about gradually. Second, this process was not unidirectional, nor did it happen in all traditions at the same time: while one may detect some sort of development between the Sāmavedic JaimUB, the Atharvavedic GopB, and roughly contemporaneous texts (especially with regard to personification), the MānGS and, at first, the MNārU too only deified the meter. Third, the precursors were of various kinds: As the partner of Savitṛ, the GM was personified and divinized to some extent, but not (yet) established as a full-fledged deification. As the "mother of the initiate," it was not actually deified either; its quality as a personal being, however, was possibly felt to be more vivid and real than in the JaimUB.

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860   See below pp. 234–240.
861   Cf. Witzel 1997b: 319, n. 315.

JaimUB
Savitṛ's partner:
divinization,
(metaphorical) personification

Dharmasūtras, MBh
mother of the initiate:
metaphorical
personification

MNārUDr, MānGS
Gāyatrī,
mother of the meters:
deification of the meter

GopB
Savitṛ's partner,
mother of the initiate:
divinization,
metaphorical (?)
personification

MNārUĀth/Ān
invocation of
other divinities

MNārUĀn, AV
vedamātṛ verse:
deification of the mantra

SāvU
deification of the mantra

Figure 6: The deification of the GM as reflected in textual developments

The early texts thus show that divinization could be restricted to specific contexts and that personification was not necessarily more than a metaphor, or a case of "personification characterization."[862] In some cases, however, such a literary device was evidently also understood literally at some point. This is reflected by the adaptations of texts such as the JaimUB and the MNārU: both of them were augmented with passages that clearly depict the mantra as an anthropomorphic goddess (in the case of the JaimUB, this resulted in the SāvU); the *vedamātṛ* verse was even included in the AV. Later recipients of the texts, therefore, seem to have had little difficulty in interpreting them as texts concerned with a deified mantra. As we will see in the next chapter, the emergence of this understanding was facilitated by another, more or less simultaneous process.

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862   See above p. 27.

∵ **CHAPTER 7** ∴

Identification with Sāvitrī

Introduction

Chapter 6 focused on the deification of the Gāyatrī-Mantra itself, considering its association or even identification with other deities (the deified *gāyatrī* meter; Sarasvatī) only insofar as they were relevant to this process. In this chapter, the approach differs in that it hones in on one specific deity that, I argue, had a vital impact on the deification of the GM. The origins of this deity extend far back to a time long before the Indo-Aryans immigrated to South Asia in the second millennium BCE. In various forms and under various names, it had already existed for thousands of years prior to the GM's elevation to divine status. By the time it first came into contact with the GM, it was called Sāvitrī, just like the mantra itself. This chapter is devoted to retracing the history and prehistory of this goddess, and to showing how she became entangled with the foremost *sāvitrī*.

In addition to this new approach and perspective, the nature of the source texts also changes in this chapter. Thus far, we have primarily dealt with the literature of ritual: virtually all of the texts examined either give instructions for the implementation of rituals or contain the texts or mantras to be recited in them. It is, however, in various kinds of narratives that the goddess Sāvitrī most often appears.

While ritual manuals are generally meant to be taken literally – or at least, seriously, if only for the sake of the ritual's success – the same is not necessarily true for narratives. If we encounter a certain deity in an episode of the MBh, for instance, we cannot directly jump to the conclusion that this deity was actually worshipped, or even believed to be real, by either the author(s), the redactor(s), or their congenial audience. On the other hand, texts that are generally categorized as fiction may not only reflect, but even contribute to and create, religious realities in a number of ways. This, for instance, applies to much of the material incorporated into the MBh: many of the epic tales were meant to entertain and, at the same time, to inform and instruct. What people really believed – or believed for some time, believed in certain contexts, believed as long as they were

not asked, or pretended to believe – is a very complex issue. It is not always possible to know whether and to what extent a particular deity or practice was or became part of the lived religion.

As mentioned in the Introduction,[863] in the case of the Sanskrit Epics, the religious authority ascribed to them increased over the course of time. This is evidenced above all by their medieval categorization as Smṛti, a term that was first used in the meaning of "tradition," then to specifically denote authoritative Dharma literature, and finally came to be applied to many kinds of authoritative, non-Vedic literature.[864] As Smṛti, the Epics were less authoritative than Śruti, the "aural transmission" of Vedic knowledge – yet authoritative nonetheless.[865] It can be assumed that this also affected the status of certain divinities mentioned in them, which were perhaps more readily accepted as real beings by recipients of a later period than by their creators.

The present chapter primarily collects the information that can be gleaned from the literature and presents it in as much detail as possible. The scope of the chapter ranges from the first centuries CE back to the early-Vedic period (and in considering the PIE prehistory of the goddess, even beyond that). The few relevant text passages stretch across this rather vast period of time, which makes it impossible to reconstruct any sort of coherent history. As Sāvitrī appears to have led her divine life mostly outside the textual domain, this often requires an imagination that goes beyond the texts, sometimes even quite far. Several gaps remain, including even such salient events as the change of name from Sūryā to Sāvitrī. However, I will not refrain from at least attempting to draw lines between the dots.

The four main sections of this chapter strictly follow an order that reflects the chronology of the texts studied:

- **Section 1** (pp. 204–208) discusses what I believe is the earliest form or precursor of the goddess Sāvitrī: the Vedic goddess Sūryā, who in turn likely had a PIE precursor. Sūryā, generally considered Savitṛ's daughter,

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863   See above p. 33.
864   See Brick 2006.
865   Klaus (2011) defines Śruti and Smṛti and summarizes the relationship between them thus: "The term *śruti* usually denotes the Veda or, more precisely, the Vedic Saṃhitās and Brāhmanas together with the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, whereas *smṛti* primarily denotes the Dharmaśāstras and Vedic Sūtras, as well as the epics (Mahābhārata) and Purānas [sic] along with various fundamental philosophical and scientific texts. [...] The *smṛti* texts that stand alongside them [i.e., the Śruti texts] had human authors and therefore are not authoritative *per se*, but they are 'rooted in the Veda,' i.e. they are based on *śruti* texts, so that *dharma* can nevertheless be deduced from them. Since it is possible that some *śruti* texts have been lost, a *smṛti* passage does not lose its authority if it cannot be associated with the extant *śruti* texts. A *smṛti* passage can be ignored only if it directly contradicts a surviving *śruti* passage or contains clear evidence that it reflects only particular secular interests."

was connected with a certain "mytheme":[866] like other "solar maidens," she played the role of the ideal bride. As such, she was not only very beautiful, but she was also known for choosing her bridegroom herself.

- **Section 2** (pp. 208–212) turns to the later fate of Sūryā, who, after the composition of the Ṛgvedic hymns, also came to be called Sūryā Sāvitrī. A number of relevant passages from the Brāhmaṇas are discussed here, including one where a possible variant of Sūryā Sāvitrī, called Sītā Sāvitrī, plays the role of the self-determined bride.

- **Section 3** (pp. 212–222) deals with the epic Sāvitrī story, arguably the earliest explicit evidence for an anthropomorphic goddess called Sāvitrī who is associated with the *sāvitrī* mantra. In **3.1**, the identity of this goddess is examined in detail; there I argue that her nexus with the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī is stronger than her association with the *sāvitrī* mantra. This is not only suggested by her characterization as Savitṛ's daughter, but also by the presence of the marriage theme in the Sāvitrī story: like her divine "patron," the princess Sāvitrī, too, is a beautiful bride who chooses her husband herself. **3.2** also deals with the various male characters the goddess and princess were associated with, which makes it possible to outline a chronological development of the divine figure(s).

- **Section 4** (pp. 223–226) essentially proposes that the association of the goddess Sāvitrī with the *sāvitrī* formula in the epic story may have been meant as a joke. While not claiming that this is the only valid interpretation, I believe that the connection of the goddess and the mantra, when it was first made, may have been so unexpected – at least for some recipients – that it had a comical aspect to it. At the same time, I do not deny that the story also reflects the beginning of a new phase in the deification of the GM.

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866   The word "mytheme" (or "mythème") was coined by structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958: 233) to denote the "gross constituent units" of a myth (1955: 431). Lévi-Strauss saw mythemes as analogues to phonemes in language; myths consist of a variety of mythemes. I here use it to denote typical and recurring combinations of mythical characters, the relationships between them, and actions and events associated with them.

1. Sūryā

In the ṚV,[867] we encounter Sūryā (*sūryá*), a morning goddess who is (depending on the source) the daughter of Savitṛ or of the sun god Sūrya.[868] Being the daughter of Savitṛ, she later also came to be called Sūryā Sāvitrī (*sāvitrī* meaning "Savitṛ's daughter" or "descendant"). Sūryā, or Sūryā Sāvitrī, should however be strictly distinguished from the *sāvitrī* mantras or the epic character Sāvitrī: there is no indication that she was, in the ṚV or other early-Vedic texts, associated with any single mantra at all (let alone the GM), nor that was she a princess like Aśvapati's daughter in the MBhār.

While in later times it was generally Savitṛ who came to be acknowledged as Sūryā's father, the name Sūryā Sāvitrī can be found nowhere in the ṚV itself, but was only later attached to one of its hymns, because in this hymn, it is Savitṛ who is presumably Sūryā's father.[869] It appears, however, that the question of Sūryā's father was not yet clearly settled in the early-Vedic religion – most likely, because it was only of secondary importance. She was clearly not always considered the daughter of the sun: Savitṛ was only later (and, as a god, never completely) conflated with Sūrya, the deification of the sun.[870]

In fact, Sūryā was less defined by her parentage – Prajāpati, too, was later said to be her father[871] – than by her own characteristics and a particular "mytheme." In the Vedic religion, Sūryā represented the archetypical bride. In the ṚV, a variety of husbands are named, among them Soma, Pūṣan, and the two Aśvins, who in other cases are also her "wooers" (*varás*) and arrange her marriage.[872] At the center of Sūryā's mytheme is the famous "Wedding Hymn," ṚV X 85, a rather long and intricate hymn that, so as not to exceed the scope of this chapter, will not be translated here.[873] As Sūryā is the bride *par excellence*, her wedding could be expected to be exemplary, too. In the Wedding Hymn, however, there is not only one bridegroom, but three: one after the other, Soma, Gandharva, and Agni are said to be Sūryā's bridegrooms. How is this to be understood?

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867 ṚV I 167, 184 (see also 119, where *ūrjā́nī* probably designates Sūryā); IV 43–45; V 73; VI 58, 63; VII 68; VIII 8, 22, 29; X 26, 85.

868 The goddess Night is once said in the AV to be Savitṛ's "lively woman" and "young woman belonging to the house" (AV XIX 49.1a: *iṣirā́ yóṣā yuvatír dámūnā* [tr. Whitney 1905: 979]); cf. Falk 1988: 13. Perhaps she could be envisaged as Sūryā's mother? It should also be noted that in MBh I 60.34 (tr. van Buitenen I: 149), Savitṛ's wife is once said to be Tvāṣṭrī; their sons in this case are the Aśvins.

869 On account of the fact that Savitṛ is said to give her to her husband, a role normally assumed by the father; see ṚV X 85.9 (cf. also 13).

870 See above pp. 45–46.

871 See below pp. 208–212.

872 See Jamison & Brereton 2014: 48.

873 See the translation by Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1519–1525.

According to Oberlies, the three husbands correspond to the three phases of an (early) Vedic wedding: during the "wooing" or engagement, her husband is Soma; when she is brought to her new home, she is in the hands of the Gandharva; and at the wedding proper, she is associated with Agni.[874] The appearance of several spouses in Sūryā's wedding is probably part of a stylistic strategy that serves to "aggrandize" Sūryā's wedding by elaborating on its various stages and by illuminating it from a divine point of view. No real polyandry must be assumed in this case.[875]

Besides that alleged polyandry, however, there is another aspect that makes Sūryā and her wedding special. Jamison has argued that Sūryā's famous marriage is probably a kind of mythical "prototype" of the so-called *svayáṃvara* marriage, in which the bride herself chooses her bridegroom.[876] As shown by formulaic expressions in other hymns of the ṚV, Sūryā's self-choice is very significant to her characterization. This may perhaps be unexpected: this epitome of the ideal bride – known for choosing her husband herself – stands quite in contrast to the traditional Indian way of letting one's parents and relatives arrange one's marriage.[877]

We will see below that this motif also reappeared in the epic Sāvitrī story.[878] Before turning to her later development, however, I will briefly discuss two other aspects that are important for understanding the Vedic Sūryā: her parallels in other IE cultures as well as her potential manifestation in nature (which, incidentally, again throws up the question of who she is being married to).

Sūryā's role as the ideal bride, her self-choice, and especially her association with the two Aśvins are often mentioned or alluded to in the Ṛgvedic hymns.[879] This mytheme most likely had a PIE precursor (see Figure 7): the "daughter of the sun" or "sun maiden" as a very sought-after bride can also be found in the mythologies of other IE peoples.[880] She is generally characterized by great beauty, which often leads to rivalry for her hand, and is associated with twins. In Baltic mythology, for instance, the two sons of God (as well as other deities) – the *dieva dēli* or *dievo sunēliai* (Latvian/Lithuanian) – are the suitors of *saules meita* or *saulēs dukterys*, the "sun's daughter" (note that in this case the sun itself is female as well). As in Sūryā's case, songs about her were sung at weddings.

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874 Oberlies 2012: 289–290.
875 For more on the "polyandry" of the IE solar maidens, see Steets 1993: 154–156.
876 Jamison 2001.
877 Arranged marriages have been the norm since the early-Vedic period (see Oberlies 2012: 290–292), but certainly go back much further.
878 See below pp. 212–222.
879 See, e.g., ṚV I 116.17, 119.5; IV 43.2, 6; VII 69.3–4; VIII 8.10.
880 See Steets 1993 and West 2007: 227–237; cf. also Edmunds 2015: 69.

Probably the clearest parallel, however, is to be found in Greek mythology, where we find the goddess[881] and epic character Helen, the sister of the two Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux (the counterparts of the Aśvins). In the Iliad, she is married to Menelaus and abducted by Paris, but both Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon set out to retrieve her. While in Greek mythology, Helen is almost never said to be the daughter of the sun, but of Zeus, her name has often been connected with Helios, the Greek sun god, and with the word ἐλάνη *helánē* (or ἐλένη *helénē*), "torch," and she has been associated with "shining beauty" or interpreted to be a "Mistress of Sunlight."[882] Jamison also suggested a derivation from *$\underset{.}{u}elh_1$,[883] the PIE predecessor of the root *vr̥/vr̥̄* "to choose," and emphasized that when she was to be wed, Helen could choose her husband, too.[884] Ultimately, however, there is no consensus on the etymology and meaning of Helen's name.[885]

PIE solar maiden

Helen, the Baltic daughter of the sun, etc.
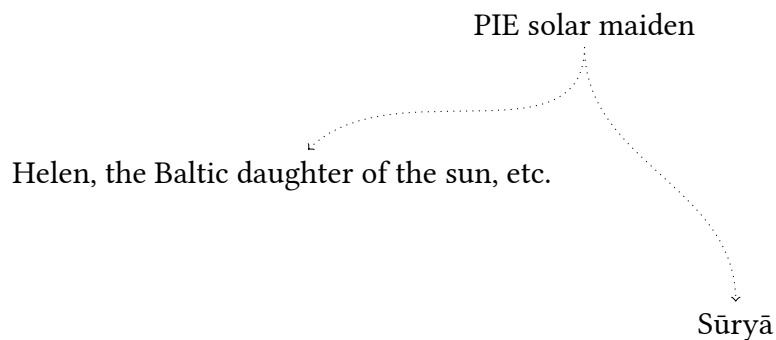
Sūryā

Figure 7: From the PIE solar maiden to Sūryā

The same is also true for Sūryā, whose name is obviously in some way related to that of Sūrya, the "sun." As in the case of her father, Savitr̥,[886] scholars have made several attempts to establish a connection between her and a celestial body or phenomenon. This has not always been the sun itself. In fact, she has often been identified with Uṣas, the goddess (of) Dawn.[887] This identification was already doubted by Oldenberg, above all because unlike Sūryā, Uṣas is always said to be the daughter of Heaven (*divó duhitā́*) – and not of Savitr̥

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881 For Helen's divinity, see Jaszczyński 2018: 11.
882 Edmunds 2015: 69.
883 Or *$(\underset{.}{u})elh_x$; according to *VIA* I: 379.
884 Jamison 2001: 313–314; cf. Edmunds 2015: 89.
885 See Edmunds 2015: 87–91.
886 See Haas 2020.
887 For instance, in Ehni 1879: 169, de Gubernatis 1897: 39–40, and Macdonell 2002 [¹1916]: 125. Lommel (1956: 98) stated that Sūryā's manifestation in nature is unknown.

or the sun.[888] According to Oberlies, "Sūryā, as the daughter of the (old) sun, seems to be a personification of the sun at the intersection of day and night in the morning."[889] In a later publication, Oberlies asserted that Sūryā is the goddess of the gray heaven or twilight *before* dawn proper (and not the deification of the morning sun).[890] He based this identification on the observation that the Aśvins, Sūryā's wooers, are associated with the time between night and day.

Recently, further arguments have been put forward for an explicit identification of Sūryā and the sun.[891] In the Wedding Hymn, Sūryā's (principal) husband is Soma, who is here for the first time given lunar attributes. Assuming that Soma is to be identified with the moon, the thought suggested itself to some scholars that his partner Sūryā might be a kind of sun goddess. On the basis of these identifications, it has been argued that Sūryā's wedding might have been represented by the *amāvāsyà*, the night (and the following day) of the new moon, which occurs when the moon and the sun roughly have the same ecliptic longitude, and set and rise at about the same time.[892] This conjunction of celestial bodies might have been interpreted as a marriage (a "conjugal event"). According to Junko Sakamoto-Gotō,

> The marriage of the moon (king Soma) and the Sun goddess Sūryā (daughter of Savitr̥) symbolizes the conjunction of the moon and the sun; their wedding implies the New Moon Sacrifice (str.3-5 [i.e., R̥V X 85.3–5]), which is further combined with the rituals such as the Animal Sacrifice at the summer or winter solstice (str.13 [...]).[893]

However, while words in *ā* typically designate the feminine form and female version of those ending in *a*, there is little evidence that *sūryā́*[894] was really understood as a "female sun" or "sun goddess." To my knowledge, there are no unambiguous Vedic references supporting Sūryā's identification with the (morning) sun itself. The texts themselves never explicitly mention or suggest any such identification – the only thing they *sometimes* do mention is that she is the sun's *daughter*,[895] but not the sun itself.

We may of course suspect that Sūryā might have been seen in several celestial objects or phenomena, depending on the poet and the context – but *if*

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888   See Oldenberg II: 53 ad R̥V VII 69.1; cf. also Zeller 1990: 101, n. 605.

889   Translation of Oberlies 1993: 175: "*Sūryā* scheint als ‚Tocher der [alten] Sonne' eine Personifikation der Sonne am morgendlichen Schnittpunkt von Tag und Nacht zu sein" (square brackets in the original).

890   Oberlies I: 240 and 2012: 173.

891   This has also been argued, for instance, by Ehni (1879: 170) and Falk (1988: 31–32).

892   At the actual time of this conjunction, the moon is of course invisible, as the sun outshines it; the new moon is the first visible crescent of the moon *after* the conjunction.

893   Sakamoto-Gotō 2010: 1122.

894   Untypically derived with a shift of accent; cf. *AG* II,1: 240–241 (§140d).

895   See, e.g., R̥V III 35.15, IV 43.1, IX 1.6, and IX 113.3.

this was the case, we cannot determine which one.[896] In the Vedic period, only her association with the morning is beyond doubt, an association which is also backed up by IE mythology.[897] Even if one insists on interpreting her marriage with Soma as an astronomical event, her association with the early morning would, in my view, be sufficient: the last time the (waning) moon can be seen is in the early morning.

2. Sūryā Sāvitrī

Let us now turn to Sūryā's development in later Vedic and Sanskrit texts. Evidently, she remained prominent as the archetypical bride also after the ṚV. For instance, various places in the AV briefly allude to the marriage of Sūryā.[898] In book XIV, we find an even longer wedding hymn in which many verses of the Ṛgvedic Wedding Hymn are reused.[899]

The myth is taken up again in the Brāhmaṇas too. Here, it is either Savitṛ or Prajāpati who hands Sūryā Sāvitrī over to Soma, and gives the thousand verses of the so-called Āśvina-Śastra, a certain litany that is recited by the Hotṛ,[900] as a kind of dowry. The **AitB**, for instance, recounts: "Verily, Prajāpati gave a daughter to king Soma: Sūryā Sāvitrī. All of the gods came to her as wooers.[901] He gave her these one thousand [verses] as dowry, which they call the 'Āśvina[-Śastra]' here."[902] The passage contains a contradiction: while Prajāpati is obviously the father of Sūryā, she is nevertheless called Sūryā Sāvitrī. While in the course of time Prajāpati took over many functions of Savitṛ (and, indeed, of many gods),[903] it would be hasty to conclude that the two gods are tacitly

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896 Cf. Lommel (1956Lommel 1956: 98. Ultimately, neither the PIE daughter of the sun nor Helen can be clearly identified with a single celestial phenomenon or celestial body; see West 2007: 233–234.

897 Steets 1993: 174–177 and *passim*.

898 AV VI 82.2 (where Sūryā is also called Sāvitrī), XII 1.24, XX 143.1, and XIV 2.1.

899 AV XIV 1–2 (tr. Whitney 1905: 740–768) ≈ AVP XVIII. For a description of the wedding depicted in this hymn, see Shende 1949: 248–237.

900 For another narrative concerning this Śastra that does not include Sūryā, see PañcB IX 1.34–38 (tr. Caland 1931: 199).

901 The wooers are sent by the groom's family to that of the bride in order to arrange the marriage (negotiate the bride-price, etc.). It here appears that the gods are indeed Soma's assistants; however, it might also be the case that the gods actually want her for themselves, but only Soma was successful in obtaining her as his bride.

902 AitB IV 7: *prajāpatir vai somāya rājñe duhitaram prāyacchat sūryāṃ sāvitrīm | tasyai sarve devā varā agacchaṃs tasyā etat sahasraṃ vahatum anvākarod yad etad āśvinam ity ācakṣate*; also translated by Keith 1920: 444.

903 See above p. 46.

identified in this passage.[904] Rather, it is more likely that "Sāvitrī" had become a common epithet of Sūryā, which was kept when the author of the passage decided to make Prajāpati her father.

The contradiction was recognized by one of the authors of the **KauṣB**, who most likely knew the older passage in the AitB.[905] He replaced Prajāpati with Savitṛ and omitted the designation "Sāvitrī," while hinting at the possibility that (according to another account) Prajāpati might have been her father: "Now when Savitṛ gave Sūryā to king Soma – or, alternatively, it was Prajāpati – he gave the daughter these thousand [verses] when she was being married."[906]

In both passages, the Āśvina-Śastra is said to be the dowry of Sūryā. What is significant is that this particular Śastra is regularly recited at dawn, before sunrise, at the end of an *atirātra* or "overnight" ritual. This shows that not only the Aśvins, but also Sūryā and her wedding continued to be associated with the early morning.

In a passage from the **TaittB**, one of the earliest Brāhmaṇas,[907] we encounter another Sāvitrī, a girl called Sītā Sāvitrī. The relationship between Sītā Sāvitrī and Sūryā Sāvitrī is not clear; however, there can be little doubt that they (or at least their stories) are connected in some way. I translate the passage here in full:

> Prajāpati emitted king Soma. After him the three Vedas were emitted. He [i.e., Soma] took them in his hand.
>
> Now, Sītā Sāvitrī desired king Soma, but he desired Śraddhā.[908] She approached father Prajāpati and said to him: "Obeisance to you, sir! I shall approach you, |1| I resort to you: verily, I desire king Soma, but he desires Śraddhā."
>
> After providing her with an ornament made of fragrant powder, explaining the Ten-Hotṛ [i.e., the Ten-Hotṛ Litany] from the east, the Four-Hotṛ

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904 Ehni (1879: 170) thought that *sāvitrī* here invokes Savitṛ's typical function as initiator and impeller (cf. also Varenne's translation "l''incitatrice'"). This argument is made implausible by the fact that the sense of "female descendant of Savitṛ" was well established for the word *sāvitrī*. For the possibility of linguistic anomalies in the names of deities, however, see West 2007: 134–135.

905 The later KauṣB in many ways depends on, or is derived from, the AitB; see Keith 1920: 22–28.

906 KauṣB XVIII 1: *atha yatra ha tat savitā sūryāṃ prāyacchat somāya rājñe | yadi vā ×prajāpatiḥ | tat sahasram anvākarod duhitra ūhyamānāyai*; the conjecture *prajāpatiḥ* was suggested by Weber (1862: 364–365, n. 3) and Caland (1931: 199); the edition has *yadi vā prajāpateḥ* ("or, alternatively, [she may have been the daughter] of Prajāpati's"). Also translated by Keith 1920: 202.

907 Witzel 1995a: 5, n. 20.

908 Literally, *śraddhá* is "trust" or "belief" in the efficacy of the ritual; this abstract concept is personified in the story. According to the commentary, Śraddhā is another daughter of Prajāpati's. For the personified *śraddhá* in Vedic literature, see also Joshi 1973: 51–53.

from the south, the Five-Hotṛ from the west, the Six-Hotṛ from the north, the Seven-Hotṛ from above,[909] and adorning her face with the Requisites and the Spouses,[910] |2| she[911] went to his [i.e., Soma's] side.

Having beheld her, he said: "Turn to me!" She said to him: "Pray, reveal to me [your object of] enjoyment! Reveal to me that which is in your hand!" So he gave her the three Vedas. Therefore/ ever since, women procure enjoyment for themselves.

Whoever desires someone, says: "May I be a darling [i.e., the darling of the desired person]!" |3| and, respectively, about whom one desires, one says: "May he be a darling [i.e., my darling]!" Therefore, after providing this ornament made of fragrant powder, explaining the Ten-Hotṛ [Litany, etc., as above] …, she should go to his side [i.e., the bride should go to the groom's side]. A darling will he become. |4|[912]

This passage, which to my knowledge does not have any parallels in Vedic literature, requires some further explanation. In order to achieve even a preliminary understanding of the narrative, it is necessary to identify the ritual elements and references contained in it.

A much later text, the Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra (ĀgnGS), shows that the various "Hotṛ Litanies" as well as the "ornament made of fragrant powder" are part of the extended wedding ceremony.[913] In this Sūtra, the ritual involves both the bride and the husband. In the Brāhmaṇa, on the other hand, it is not entirely clear whether it is already part of the actual wedding of Sītā and Soma or whether it is even meant to attract him. Its purpose, in any case, is to make the

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909   For the various texts containing these litanies, see *WaR*: 77, 67, 86, 126, and 120.

910   These are the names of two texts; they are found in TaittĀ III 8.1 and 9.1.

911   The syntactical construction seems to be somewhat loose (while the subject of the gerunds is Prajāpati, the subject of the main verb is apparently Sītā Sāvitrī); cf. *VGS*: 332 (§210a).

912   TaittB II 3.10.1–4: *prajā́patiḥ sómaṁ rā́jānam asṛjata | tā́ṁ tráyo védā ánvasṛjyanta | tā́n háste 'kuruta | átha há sī́tā sāvitrī́ | sómaṁ rā́jānaṁ cakame | śraddhā́m u sá cakame | sā́ ha pitáraṁ prajā́patim úpasasāra | tā́ṁ hovāca | námas te astu bhagavaḥ | úpa tvāyāni |1| prá tvā padye | sómaṁ vái rā́jānaṁ kāmaye | śraddhā́m u sá kāmayata íti | tásyā u há sthāgarám alaṅkārám kalpayitvā́ | dáśahotāraṃ purástād vyākhyáya | cáturhotāraṃ dakṣiṇatáḥ | páñcahotāraṃ paścā́t | ṣáḍḍhotāram uttaratáḥ | saptáhotāram upáriṣṭāt | sambhā́raíś ca pátnibhiś ca múkhe 'laṅkṛ́tya |2| ásyárdhám vavrāja | tā́ṁ hodī́kṣyovāca | úpa mā́ vartasvéti | tā́ṁ hovāca | bhógaṁ tú ma ácakṣva | etā́n ma ácakṣva | yát te pāṇā́v íti | tásyā u há trī́n védān prádadau | tásmād u ha stríyo bhógam áivá hārayante || sá yáḥ kāmáyeta priyáḥ syām íti |3| yám vā kāmáyeta priyáḥ syád íti | tásmā etáṁ sthāgarám alaṅkārám kalpayitvā́ | dáśahotāraṃ purástād vyākhyáya | cáturhotāraṃ dakṣiṇatáḥ | pañcáhotāraṃ paścā́t | ṣáḍḍhotāram uttaratáḥ | saptáhotāram upáriṣṭāt | sambhā́raíś ca pátnibhiś ca múkhe 'laṅkṛ́tya | ásyárdhám vrajet | priyó haivá bhavati |4|.

913   ĀgnGS I 7.1; see Gonda 1977: 594.

girl attractive to her husband.[914] The logic is that if someone wishes to become another person's *priyá* – their "darling" – one has to be sufficiently attractive for that person. Conversely, this will also make them one's own "darling."

In the story, this procedure is successful: as I imagine it, Sītā sits or stands by Soma's side, only half visible (perhaps because both are looking forward). When asked to face him and thus show herself in all her beauty, she asks him to show her what is in his hand – a demand he obviously fulfils. Sītā thus even manages to make Soma give her his prized possession, the three Vedas.[915] This not only shows the great value of the Vedas, but also of the various texts "adorning" the bride. Moreover, it gives rise to the observation that women in general are intent on procuring enjoyments for themselves.

Turning to the main protagonists of the story, we again observe that Sītā is called Sāvitrī even though she is obviously Prajāpati's daughter. While the fact that she becomes the wife of king Soma naturally suggests an affinity to Sūryā Sāvitrī, it is entirely unclear what their relationship would be and why Sītā is called Sāvitrī. In fact, it is not even clear who Sītā is: well known from the Sanskrit Epics as Rāma's virtuous wife, she is barely mentioned in Vedic literature.[916] Whatever the case might be, however, for the time being it remains unknown as to whether there is any reason for Sūryā's replacement by Sītā other than a misspelling or a change made by a later redactor.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this story are very limited. It is conspicuous, however, that Sītā Sāvitrī, too, chooses her husband herself. The typical terminology associated with a "self-choice" may be missing: the passage neither contains the verb *vṛ* nor the noun *svayáṃvara*. But the initiative clearly comes from Sītā Sāvitrī, who eventually attracts Soma through her beauty. It therefore appears that this passage is in some way related to the Sūryā myth-complex, even though Sūryā herself is *de facto* not mentioned (see Figure 8).

After this somewhat long digression, let us return to Sūryā and her fate in later periods. Unfortunately, we come to a relatively abrupt abyss here. In contrast to the Vedic literature, the name Sūryā does not appear very often in later Sanskrit texts: In the Gṛhyasūtras, she is only mentioned in the context of weddings. Some Sūtras mention a verse that should be recited while the cou-

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914   Note also that, since the bride is essentially *purchased* by the husband (at least in the so-called *śaulka* or "price-"types of marriage), her adornment can be seen as part of the arrangement; cf. Jamison 1996: 213–215.

915   According to Pradhan (1988: 31), this may be a "relic of the practice of *kanyā-śulka*," that is, the "bride price."

916   See Macdonell 2002 [¹1916]: 138 and Joshi 1973: 48. It should perhaps be noted that, at least in Vālmīki's Rām., the epic Sītā becomes Rāma's wife as the result of a *svayaṃvara*. This *svayaṃvara*, however, does not involve any choosing on her part (cf. n. 957 on p. 221 below). Moreover, it appears to have been a "an interrupted, disappointing, and even failed one between the suitors' departure and Rāma's arrival long after, with no rivals remaining" Hiltebeitel 2018.
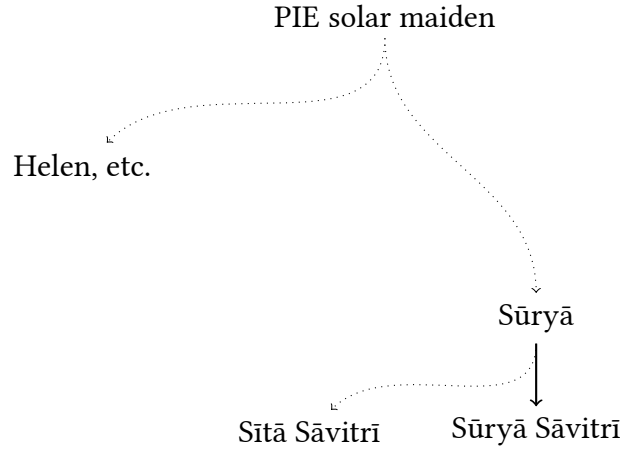
Figure 8: From the PIE solar maiden to Sūryā and Sītā Sāvitrī

ple circumambulate the fire.[917] The Wedding Hymn itself is mentioned in the
ŚānkhGS, where it is prescribed that the bride's wedding dress should be given
as a gift to the Brahmin who knows the hymn.[918] On the other hand (and to the
best of my knowledge), the Dharmasūtras and the Sanskrit Epics do not even
mention her name. As we shall see, however, her myth was continued in various
ways. In a text as late as the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa (BhāgP; c. tenth century CE),[919]
a newly wedded bride, Śatadruti, is designated as Sūryā;[920] in two other places,
her chariot ride is alluded to.[921] But even in the much earlier epic literature there
seem to be some traces of a "nuptial goddess" Sāvitrī.

3. Sāvitrī

The most prominent successor of the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī is the literary character
Sāvitrī known from the MBh story about her and her husband Satyavat. The
"Sāvitrī story," or "the story of Satyavat and Sāvitrī" (or a variation thereof)[922]

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917 ṚV X 85.38 (*túbhyam ágre páry...*); see BaudhGS I 4.27; PārGS I 7.3 (trs. Oldenberg, *SBE*
     XXIX: 283 and Stenzler 1878: 18); and VārGS XIV 20.
918 ŚānkhGS I 14.12 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 38).
919 For the problematic date of the BhāgP, see Edelmann 2018.
920 BhāgP IV 24.12.
921 BhāgP X 1.29 and 61.40.
922 Anand 1988: 1 ("story of Sāvitrī and Satyavat"); Brockington 1998: 142 ("the story of
     Satyavat and Sāvitrī"). The MBh itself does not mention Satyavat (let alone place him
     first), who in fact is more of a support actor: I 2.126ab: *sāvitryauddālakīyaṃ ca vainy-
     opākhyānam eva ca,* *12.872: *sāvitryāś cāpy upākhyānam atraiva parikīrtyate*; 46*82.1:
     rāmākhyānaṃ tataḥ parva sāvitryākhyānam eva ca; 51*85.2: *sāvitraṃ vāmadevyaṃ ca
     vainyopākhyānam eva ca*; III 283.16*1333.1: *yaś cedaṃ śṛṇuyād bhaktyā sāvitryākhyānam
     uttamam.*

has achieved widespread recognition as a showcase for the ideal of a *pativratā*, a wife devoted to her husband. It has even been said that is "perhaps the most celebrated of all the episodes of the Great Epic."[923] It has inspired numerous retellings (but few adaptations)[924] and has been translated and interpreted so often that any attempt to briefly summarize its reception history is bound to fail.[925] While it has been categorized as "relatively late,"[926] it is in fact unknown when the story came into being; similarities in wording with the MānDhŚ,[927] composed around the second century CE, possibly indicates that it is not far distant in time.[928]

I will briefly retell the story here, including a translation of one select passage. In the analysis I will focus on the possible continuities between the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī and the epic Sāvitrī, as well as on the role of the *sāvitrī* mantra and its deification.

The story, as narrated by the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, begins with the great king of Madra, Aśvapati, who remained childless for a long time. To remedy his fate, the king began to follow a religious lifestyle, which, among other practices also included the repeated recitation of the *sāvitrī* formula. After a long time, this approach began to bear fruit, and the goddess Sāvitrī herself appeared before him. I quote here van Buitenen's translation of the relevant passage in full:[929]

> [H]e offered oblations a hundred thousand times with the *sāvitrī* formula, O best of kings, and forewent his meal every sixth time. /9/

> For eighteen years he lived with this life rule, and when the eighteenth year was full, Sāvitrī became contented. /10/ She showed herself [literally "in her own form," *svarūpiṇī*] to the king, O prince, arising from the *agnihotra* with much joy. And the boon-granting Goddess said to the king, /11/ "I am pleased with your continence, purity, restraint, and self-control, and with your wholehearted devotion to me, O king. /12/ Aśvapati, king of the Madras, choose whatever boon you desire, but pay heed at all times to the Law [i.e., Dharma]." /13/

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923 Sukthankar et al. IV: 960 (note at the beginning of *adhyāya* 277).

924 See Aklujkar 2007: 327–328.

925 For an overview and references, see Anita Ray's dissertation *An analysis of the Sāvitrī Legend in ancient Indian literature and culture* (1998) and Brodbeck 2013: 528–529. For an accurate translation, see van Buitenen II: 761–778; for other summaries of the story, see, for instance, Gombach 2000: 138–140, Weiss 1985: 259–260, and Lommel (1956Lommel 1956: 95–97.

926 Brockington 2006: 39.

927 Brockington 2006: 38.

928 Whether these similarities provide clues to the chronological relationship between the two texts will have to be clarified elsewhere.

929 Tr. van Buitenen II: 762. The verse numbers have been inserted by me without any additional marking; all other additions are, as usual, indicated by square brackets.

Aśvapati said:

I undertook this effort to obtain a child, out of desire for the Law. May I have many sons, goddess, to prosper my lineage. /14/ If you are pleased with me, goddess, this I choose as my boon. For offspring, as the twice-born [i.e., Brahmins] have told me, is the highest Law. /15/

Sāvitrī said:

I knew before this of this intention of yours, O king, and I have spoken to Grandfather [i.e., Brahmā] in your cause for sons. /16/ By the favor decreed to you on earth by the Self-existent, good man, a splendid girl shall soon be born to you. /17/ And you should make no reply at all to this, for I am pleased and say this to you on behalf of Grandfather. /18/

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

The king acknowledged Sāvitrī's word: "So be it!" And once more he besought her: "May it happen soon." /19/ Sāvitrī disappeared, and the king went home. And he happily lived in his kingdom, ruling his subjects by the Law. /20/

Some time went by, then the king, who was strict in his vows, planted a seed in his eldest queen who abode by the Law. /21/ The fruit waxed in the Mālava woman, who was the daughter of a king, bull of the Bharatas, as in the bright fortnight the moon waxes in the sky. /22/ When her time came, she gave birth to a lotus-eyed daughter, and happily the king performed the rituals for her. /23/ The Brahmins and her father gave her the name of Sāvitrī, for she had been given by Sāvitrī when she was pleased with the oblations he had offered with the *sāvitrī*. /24/[930]

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930 MBh III 277.9–24: *hutvā śatasahasraṃ sa sāvitryā rājasattama / ṣaṣṭhe ṣaṣṭhe tadā kāle babhūva mitabhojanaḥ /9/ etena niyamenāsīd varṣāṇy aṣṭādaśaiva tu / pūrṇe tv aṣṭādaśe varṣe sāvitrī tuṣṭim abhyagāt / svarūpiṇī tadā rājan darśayām āsa taṃ nṛpam /10/ agnihotrāt samutthāya harṣeṇa mahatānvitā / uvāca cainaṃ varadā vacanaṃ pārthivaṃ tadā /11/ brahmacaryeṇa śuddhena damena niyamena ca / sarvātmanā ca madbhaktyā tuṣṭāsmi tava pārthiva /12/ varaṃ vṛṇīṣvāśvapate madrarāja yathepsitam / na pramādaś ca dharmeṣu kartavyas te kathaṃ cana /13/ aśvapatir uvāca / apatyārthaḥ samārambhaḥ kṛto dharmepsayā mayā / putrā me bahavo devi bhaveyuḥ kulabhāvanāḥ /14/ tuṣṭāsi yadi me devi kāmam etaṃ vṛṇomy aham / saṃtānaṃ hi paro dharma ity āhur māṃ dvijātayaḥ /15/ sāvitry uvāca / pūrvam eva mayā rājann abhiprāyam imaṃ tava / jñātvā putrārtham ukto vai tava hetoḥ pitāmahaḥ /16/ prasādāc caiva tasmāt te svayaṃbhuvihitād bhuvi / kanyā tejasvinī saumya kṣipram eva bhaviṣyati /17/ uttaraṃ ca na te kiṃ cid vyāhartavyaṃ kathaṃ cana / pitāmahanisargeṇa tuṣṭā hy etad bravīmi te /18/ mārkaṇḍeya uvāca / sa tatheti pratijñāya sāvitryā vacanaṃ nṛpaḥ / prasādayām āsa punaḥ kṣipram evaṃ bhaved iti /19/ antarhitāyāṃ sāvitryāṃ jagāma svagṛhaṃ nṛpaḥ / svarājye cāvasat prītaḥ prajā dharmeṇa pālayan /20/ kasmiṃś cit tu gate kāle sa rājā niyatavrataḥ / jyeṣṭhāyāṃ dharmacāriṇyāṃ mahiṣyāṃ garbham ādadhe /21/ rājaputryāṃ tu garbhaḥ sa mālavyāṃ bharatarṣabha / vyavardhata yathā śukle tārāpatir ivāmbare /22/ prāpte kāle tu suṣuve kanyāṃ rājīvalocanām / kriyāś ca tasyā muditaś cakre sa nṛpatis tadā /23/ sāvitryā prītayā dattā sāvitryā hutayā hy api / sāvitrīty eva nāmāsyāś cakrur viprās tathā pitā /24/*.

Sāvitrī grew up and became a woman of unfathomable pulchritude, so beautiful that no suitor dared to ask for her hand.[931] Because he could not fulfil his duty to marry his daughter off in time, Aśvapati became worried and decided to send her off to find a husband on her own. This she did; her choice, however, fell on a man with a serious shortcoming: prince Satyavat was a good match in every respect, but as the divine messenger Nārada revealed, his fate was to die within a year. Moreover, he was a son of the blind and involuntarily retired king Dyumatsena, who lived with his family in a hermitage. Understandably, Aśvapati initially resisted the choice made by his daughter. Eventually, however, he gave his consent, and Sāvitrī married Satyavat.

As predicted, Yama, the god of death, came after a year to take Satyavat's soul. Sāvitrī, however, having performed *tapas* for three days, insisted on following her husband, and began to argue with Yama. By impressing him with her knowledge of Dharma, she made the god grant her five wishes. She used the first and second wishes for the restoration of her father-in-law's eyesight and kingdom. Her third wish was for her own father to have a hundred sons, and as her fourth wish, she asked for a hundred sons for herself. With her fifth wish, she made Yama realize that to this end, Satyavat would have to live, and in this way forced him to revive her husband. The couple returned to the hermitage, and in the course of time, all of Sāvitrī's wishes were fulfilled.

This, in short, is the story of Sāvitrī. As we can see, in the story the princess is portrayed as the ideal wife rather than as the ideal bride. But this is at most a change in emphasis: what Sūryā Sāvitrī and the princess Sāvitrī both have in common is not only their name and their great beauty, but also the remarkable fact that they choose their husbands themselves. These similarities leave little doubt that the epic story is in some way connected to the Vedic myth. The question is: How exactly? Should we assume literal or "literary" identity between the two Sāvitrīs, or did the story-maker only play with some elements he knew from Vedic lore? And how does the *sāvitrī* mantra fit into the story?

The most recent studies dealing with the Sāvitrī complex (in greater detail than offered here) are by Asko Parpola.[932] In the fourteenth chapter of his book *Deciphering the Indus Script* (1994) and in a lengthy paper published four years later in *Studia Orientalia*,[933] Parpola developed a great number of hypotheses about the Sāvitrī legend and the so-called *sāvitrīvrata*,[934] its predecessors in the

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931   According to Brodbeck (2013: 531–532), this was likely intended as some sort of joke. The real reason why no suitors approached Sāvitrī was that she was an only daughter; as such, any sons born to her would count as the sons of her father rather than of her husband.

932   Some of his ideas were also anticipated by Hermann Lommel (1956) and further developed by Anita C. Ray (1998).

933   Parpola 1998, summarized in a follow-up article in 2000; cf. also Parpola 2002: 366–367.

934   The so-called *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* or *sāvitrī-vrata* is an annual observance performed by married women to various ends, above all to keep their husbands alive and well and to obtain

(according to him, Dravidian-speaking) Indus Valley Civilization as well as various other subjects. His aim was to construct a coherent history of the goddess and/or literary character Sāvitrī – who for him seemed to be a somewhat monolithic being – beginning in Harappan times up to medieval South Asia.

Parpola tried to show that Sāvitrī's relationship with various male characters is often problematic; her father (Savitṛ, Prajāpati, Brahmā, Aśvapati) is often suspected of committing incest and both he and/or her husband (the sun, Soma the moon, Brahmā, Satyavat) are regularly doomed to die (again and again), allegedly in many cases by decapitation.[935] Sāvitrī, however, has the power to revive or save them. This motif is reflected in various Vedic and Purāṇic legends, in the Hindu wedding ritual[936] as well as in the *sāvitrīvrata*.[937] For Parpola, the resemblances found in the narratives and rituals point to the existence of a single underlying structure or theme; the human couple of Sāvitrī and Satyavat are the analogues to the divine couple Sāvitrī and Brahmā,[938] they even "symbolize one and the same thing."[939]

Many of Parpola's theories are highly speculative.[940] Most problematic are his poorly qualified equations or identifications: even if the various entities called Sāvitrī are connected with each other, expressing these connections in terms of identities can easily suggest relations and developments – mythical as well as historical – that do not actually exist or, respectively, have never taken place.[941] His presentation of the Sāvitrī complex therefore needs to be somewhat revised and refined. In the following, I will only revisit the various Sāvitrīs in the MBh and, in particular, in the Sāvitrī story. In doing so, I will make a sharp distinction between the goddess Sāvitrī, the *sāvitrī* mantra, and the princess Sāvitrī. Naturally, my focus will lie on the mantra, the goddess, and their inter-

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→　children. In texts to be recited in this ritual, Sāvitrī above all appears as a divine version of the princess, the ideal, devout wife (Satyavat, too, is worshipped). This role is also projected onto the "original" Sāvitrī, Brahmā's wife, who as such is occasionally also called Gāyatrī and Mother of the Vedas. However, her worship apparently does not include the recitation of the GM by the female worshipper herself, and her nature as the deification of the mantra is clearly only secondary. For references and a discussion, see Parpola 1998: 184–199.

935　Parpola 2000: 199–201.
936　Parpola 2000: 206.
937　Parpola 1998: 186, n. 59.
938　Parpola 1998: 303.
939　Parpola 1998: 186, n. 59.
940　See also the reviews of other works of his by Doniger 2017 and Jamison 2020.
941　To give but one of the most striking equations/identifications: "The dying husband is the 'old sun', the 'old year' (Prince Satyavat dies after one year has passed since his the [sic] wedding). In the daily cycle, this 'old sun' is the 'night sun', Sāvitrī's father and husband through incest, Savitṛ = Varuṇa = Yama = Puruṣa = Prajāpati = Brahmā, the 'first man' who created all beings by uniting with his own daughter, and who was punished with death for his sin. Thus he was also the first man to die." Parpola 2000: 206.

relationship. As will be seen, the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī probably plays a role here too.

3.1 The goddess

The story does not provide too many details about the goddess Sāvitrī. After her brief appearance in the narration of Sāvitrī's birth, she is mentioned only once again. When princess Sāvitrī returns with Satyavat to their hermitage, Gautama, one of the ascetics living there, says to her: "I want to hear it, Sāvitrī, because you know the whole extent of it: I know that you, Sāvitrī, are like Sāvitrī in splendor (*tejas*)."[942] This statement indicates that the princess Sāvitrī shares an important quality with her eponym: splendor. Apart from that, it does not really add to our knowledge about the goddess herself.

The goddess indeed seems to play only a supporting role. In fact, one might even think that the author invented her ad-hoc:[943] the practice of repetitively reciting the *sāvitrī* mantra was widespread at the time, as was the notion that the mantra is, in many ways, special, or to some degree even divine. Personifying the mantra as the "mother of the initiate," for instance, was not uncommon,[944] and texts like the JaimUB exalted and perhaps even deified it to some extent. As I will discuss in some more detail below, the author certainly found no trouble in making up religious practices. Why not let a mantra appear in front of a devout reciter in the form of a beautiful, benevolent goddess?

Some of these factors might indeed have influenced the author. There are, however, many indications that the goddess Sāvitrī was, in fact, the successor of the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī, and not only the product of "religious fiction." This is first of all suggested by her association with Brahmā, who, as could be shown, is the Hindu "successor" of Prajāpati, the great Vedic creator god.[945] While it is not entirely clear how this deity emerged, it is evident that over the course of time, many of Prajāpati's characteristics were transferred to Brahmā. Against the background of this development, I believe it is possible to make an argument based on analogy.

As we saw above, Sūryā Sāvitrī was also suspected to be Prajāpati's daughter. If Brahmā is the successor of Prajāpati – or rather, his epic manifestation – it would make sense that Sāvitrī continues Sūryā Sāvitrī, from whom she even

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942 MBh III 282.34: *śrotum icchāmi sāvitri tvaṃ hi vettha parāvaram / tvāṃ hi jānāmi sāvitri sāvitrīm iva tejasā //.*

943 As I myself assumed earlier: "Since Sāvitrī only briefly appears after the repetition of her mantra by king Aśvapati, it cannot be ruled out that at that time she was a literary character created 'ad-hoc' rather than a goddess who was actually worshipped and had her own cult." Haas 2019a: 14.

944 See above pp. 181–182.

945 In the MBh, "Brahmā and Prajāpati are simply two names for one and the same deity" Sullivan 1994: 379. For more details, see Bailey 1983: 63–76.

may have derived her name. Sāvitrī would, therefore, be Brahmā's daughter. The relationship between the various male and female deities, however, is not necessarily that straightforward: Is Sāvitrī Brahmā's daughter, or is she his wife? As a matter of fact, a goddess called Sāvitrī was at some point identified with Sarasvatī – Brahmā's most famous consort[946] – and is even explicitly called Brahmā's wife in at least one other passage of the MBh.[947]

The Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī, on the other hand, was never the wife of Prajāpati, Brahmā's precursor. In contrast to many other myths, where Prajāpati himself makes an attempt to unite with one of his daughters,[948] the Vedic Sūryā Sāvitrī always becomes the wife of Soma. In the Sāvitrī story itself, virtually nothing is said about Sāvitrī's relationship with Brahmā. While she does call him "Grandfather" (*pitāmaha*), this does not necessarily imply that he is her grandfather in actuality; indeed, like Prajāpati, Brahmā is the progenitor of all beings.[949] It is, therefore, certainly possible to interpret Sāvitrī as the wife of Brahmā, and perhaps as Savitṛ's daughter. But was that a general belief?

In order to answer this question, we have to take a closer look at how Sāvitrī is characterized in the Great Epic. In my view, the MBh also shows traces of the ancient Sāvitrī, who does not necessarily play the role of Brahmā's wife and who is also not first and foremost a deified form of the mantra. There are strong reasons to believe that this Sāvitrī was also involved in the Sāvitrī story.

First of all, two passages in the Epic imply that Sāvitrī is Savitṛ's daughter, as is the case in the KauṣB and probably also in the ṚV. When Lomapāda marries his daughter Śāntā to the ascetic Ṛśyaśṛṅga, for instance, this act is likened to Savitṛ's giving Sāvitrī away, leaving little doubt that the author thought Sāvitrī to be Savitṛ's daughter.[950] In the Ādiparvan, there is a story about Sāvitrī's younger sister, who is called Tapatī, literally the "warming" or "torching one."[951] Like her, she is a beautiful daughter of Savitṛ's, who here is not differentiated at all from Sūrya, the sun.[952] No mention is made of Brahmā or the *sāvitrī* mantra. What

946   In the MBh, however, Sarasvatī is his daughter; see Ludvik 2007: 116.

947   MBh XIII 134.3a: *sāvitrī brahmaṇaḥ sādhvī*.

948   For summaries and further references, see Ludvik 2007: 63–72. For incest myths involving Brahmā, see Bailey 1983: 118–121.

949   Bailey 1983: 121–23. Cf. also Bailey 1983: 120: "Despite Brahma's strongly paternalistic character and his paternal roles, there are very few passages in the epics where he is accompanied by his wife."

950   MBh III 110.5: *nivartiteṣu sasyeṣu yasmai śāntāṃ dadau nṛpaḥ / lomapādo duhitaraṃ sāvitrīṃ savitā yathā //*. Brodbeck (2009: 83) points out that this marriage, too, might involve a *putrikā* aspect (on which see below p. 221).

951   Her story is told in MBh I 160–163 (tr. van Buitenen I: 324–329); cf. Gombach 2000: 47.

952   Savitṛ/Sūrya decides to marry her to king Saṃvaraṇa, who is his devotee; together they have a son, Kuru, an ancestor of Arjuna (who is therefore also called Tāpatya). Interestingly, this story mentions that, like Aśvapati, Savitṛ is worried when thinking about marrying Tapatī off (I 160.11). A star passage (*1722.1) adds that she is sixteen years old: by Dharmaśāstric standards, her father should probably already have taken care of her

stands out is the beauty of the radiant, "solar" bride (a quality obviously shared by Tapatī and Sāvitrī) and the theme of marriage.

The most obvious evidence for the continuation of the Sūryā Sāvitrī mytheme, however, is that of the Sāvitrī story itself. That the epic princess has to find a husband for herself also means that she has to choose him herself. In my view, this points to a nexus with the Ṛgvedic and Atharvedic Sūryā/ Sūryā Sāvitrī, who likely was known to have chosen her husband herself, too (possibly in contrast to some of her later versions).[953] That her mytheme was probably not forgotten after the Vedic period may also be inferred from the fact that her hymns continued to be recited at weddings.[954] While the wedding hymns may not have been understood by all in the same way – both because of their language and their partly enigmatic content – the idea of a bride who is so beautiful that she has the freedom to choose her husband herself, may have easily persisted. As in other IE cultures, this may have also included the idea that this radiant bride is somehow related to the sun.
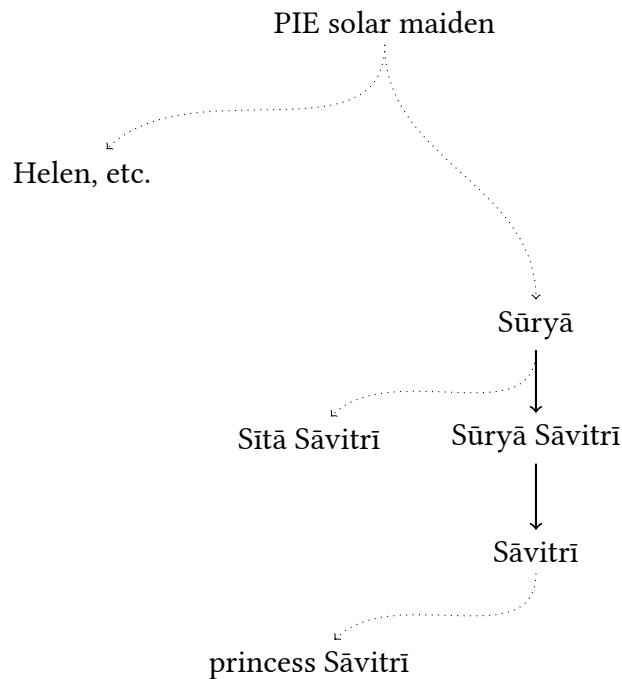
Figure 9: From the PIE solar maiden to Sāvitrī

→   marriage before that age; see n. 957 on p. 221 below. Possibly, she is a *putrikā* as well, see Brodbeck 2009: 144.

953   Note that in the AitB and KauṣB, self-choice is not mentioned, which however does not necessarily mean that for the authors/recipients it was not in the background. Sītā Sāvitrī evidently chose her husband herself and managed to attract him by means of her beauty.

954   See above p. 211.

It is thus possible to draw a line from the Ṛgvedic goddess Sūryā to the epic goddess Sāvitrī via Sūryā Sāvitrī (see Figure 9). All texts either emphasize her beauty and radiance or associate her with marriage, and a good number of them do both. (Interestingly, the texts never mention any children born by the goddess; the reason for this might be the focus on her role as a bride.) In doing so, I believe they continue and actualize a mytheme already existent in PIE culture. It should be emphasized, however, that there are also discontinuities, especially with regard to Sāvitrī's varying fathers and husbands. These will be discussed next.

3.2   Husbands, fathers, and the infamous incest

In the ṚV, the identity of Sūryā's father (Savitṛ/Sūrya) does not appear to be fixed, a circumstance that suggests that he was not (yet) very important. It is only in the AV that she is called Sāvitrī, indicating that Savitṛ is her father. At this point (I shall call it **stage 1**; see Table 20 below), Sūryā herself and her wedding are clearly in the foreground. Her association with twins is still intact. While her husband, Soma, does appear and is associated or even identified with the moon, it is difficult to reconstruct an elaborate marriage between the sun and the moon on the basis of the available evidence. Drawing any conclusions about the nature of their union is little more than speculation. A problematic relationship between Sūryā, her father or her husband is, in any case, not discernible at all.

Minor problems begin to arise in what can be called **stage 2**: In the Brāhmaṇas, Sūryā continues to be called Sāvitrī. At the same time, it appears there have been rumors about Prajāpati being her father. One explanation for this is that Prajāpati tended to absorb other deities; Savitṛ in particular was at times simply identified with him. I would like to emphasize, however, that the relationship between Savitṛ/Prajāpati and Sūryā Sāvitrī remained perfectly normal. The incest myths connected with Prajāpati did not at all affect Sūryā Sāvitrī's marriage with Soma.

In the next period, **stage 3**, Sūryā Sāvitrī abandons her first name; the reasons for this are unknown. Her biggest appearance is in the Sāvitrī story. To my knowledge, in the non-epic literature of that time she is never mentioned at all (the word *sāvitrī* is generally used for the GM). But even the Sanskrit Epics only give sparse information, at least with regard to her "non-mantric" manifestation: in the constituted text of the MBh, she is mentioned only briefly in a few generally late passages (other than those discussed above), none of which provide any more clues about her.[955] Soma, Sūryā's husband, is never

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955   In XII 264.10–12, she very briefly appears in order to request an ascetic named Satya to perform an animal sacrifice (for this story, see Gombach 2000: 273–274 and

mentioned. When her father is mentioned, it is Savitṛ, who in these texts is generally equated with Sūrya, the sun god. A problematic father-daughter relationship might be present, but is never mentioned explicitly.[956]

stage	texts	father	daughter	husband
1	ṚV	(Savitṛ/Sūrya)	Sūryā	Soma
	AV	Savitṛ	Sūryā Sāvitrī	Soma
2	AitB, KauṣB	Savitṛ/Prajāpati	Sūryā Sāvitrī	Soma
	(TaittB	Prajāpati	Sītā Sāvitrī	Soma)
3	MBh	Savitṛ (= Sūrya)	Sāvitrī	(Brahmā)
	MBh	Aśvapati	Sāvitrī (princess)	Satyavat

Table 20: Sūryā/Sāvitrī's fathers and partners

This, of course, cannot be said of the princess Sāvitrī, who causes her father a lot of trouble. This trouble is directly related to the triangular relationship between her, her father, and her husband, and therefore deserves a more detailed discussion. As we will see below, understanding this problem may also have implications for how the presence of the mantra is understood in the story.

The root of the problem lies in Sāvitrī's self-choice. There can be little doubt that in the eyes of the author, a *svayaṃvara* was not how things should ideally work. Even if the story has a happy end, Sāvitrī's choosing a man who is destined to die within a year must have been an alarming example of what could happen if you let girls decide for themselves. In fact, the Dharmaśāstras generally do not permit *svayaṃvara*s, at best allowing a girl to choose a husband herself if her father fails to marry her within three years after she has reached puberty.[957] One moral of the story, therefore, is not to let the situation come to this in the first place.

Assuming a certain Dharmaśāstric momentum in the background of the story is not as unlikely as it may seem at first. Simon Brodbeck has argued that one of the central themes of the story is the "promotion" of the ideal of a

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→   Brodbeck 2009: 75–76). In XIII 66.7, she is reported to have praised food gifts in the context of a *devasattra* (for *sattra*s in the MBh, see Brodbeck 2009: 125–128). In III 221.20, she is mentioned in a list when Śiva and Pārvatī leave Mount Śveta, their entourage comprises a host of gods and goddesses. Pārvatī in particular is followed by Gaurī, Vidyā, Gāndhārī, Keśinī, Mitrasāhvayā, and Sāvitrī. For XIII 134.3, see above p. 218. Interestingly, in XII 256.21, *sāvitrī* is an epithet of Śraddhā, who in this verse is called a daughter of the sun: *śraddhā vai sāttvikī devī sūryasya duhitā / sāvitrī prasavitrī ca jīvaviśvāsinī tathā //*; for another translation of this passage, see Deussen & Strauss 1906: 434.

956   Cf. n. 952 on p. 218 above.

957   See, for instance, Brockington 2006: 36 and Kane II(1): 523. One may distinguish two types of *svayaṃvara*s: (1) the rather rare "ceremonial" one, which is associated above

pativratā, a wife devoted to her husband (and his family) as opposed to a *putrikā*, a "female son," whose own son would continue the lineage of her father (and not of her father-in-law). If his interpretation is correct, the intention to deploy Sāvitrī as a *putrikā* would be yet another reproachable – or at least problematic – act besides the *svayaṃvara*, for which ultimately Aśvapati is accountable too.[958]

Both misdeeds might indeed be connected. Drawing a parallel with the story of another famous epic heroine, Draupadī, Brodbeck observed that

> Sāvitrī and Draupadī both have *svayaṃvara*s, but in each case the choice of husband is later overlaid and overshadowed by the choice of which line will survive, the line of the husband or the line of the father. In Sāvitrī's case both choices are her own; in Draupadī's case both choices are made for her. This pattern throws up the possibility of a link between the *svayaṃvara* and the *putrikā* option, particularly as the *putrikā* is in many ways the incestuous wife of her own father.[959]

As we saw, the association of the princess Sāvitrī with a somewhat problematic father is not directly inherited from her divine eponym. Neither Savitṛ nor Prajāpati have an incestuous relationship with Sāvitrī. The fact that she chooses her husband herself, however, was – if my interpretation is correct – well established. The Sāvitrī story may also be understood against this historical background. Instead of glorifying self-choice, the story implies that it was a consequence of Sāvitrī's being a potential *putrikā* – a girl who was difficult to "market," because she would not produce sons for the husband's own patriline.

Leaving aside further genealogical contemplations, we shall now return to the aspect that is most significant for this study. Clearly, Aśvapati's plan only became necessary because he was the father of an only daughter. This circumstance, in turn, was the result of his religious practice, which above all included the recitation of the *sāvitrī* formula. How could this seemingly innocuous practice cause him so much trouble?

→   all with princesses and generally takes the form of a contest between multiple suitors (the winner gets the bride); and (2) the "emergency" *svayaṃvara* permitted only if the father fails to find a husband for his daughter. A real choice is only given in the second type; cf. Brockington 2006: 40: "Basically, the earlier epic *svayaṃvara* is a celebration of *kṣatriya* valour, whereas the later *svayaṃvara,* present also in the *dharmaśāstras,* is a means devised to ensure that no woman fails to comply with the brāhmanical ordinance to marry and bear children. The main, perhaps the only point that they have in common is that the woman has reached puberty before her *svayaṃvara* but this is probably true of marriage in general in the epics." Making a too strong distinction between the two types may, however, be problematic; see Brodbeck 2013: 533, n. 11.

958   Whether those who opposed the *putrikā* possibility would have preferred Aśvapati to simply dispense with his "*putrikā* trick" (Brodbeck 2013: 537), for whose execution it may have been necessary to conceal that Sāvitrī was an only daughter, remains open.

959   Brodbeck 2013: 541, n. 23.

4. Sāvitrī and the *sāvitrī*

At the time when the Sāvitrī story was composed the author certainly thought of no other *sāvitrī* than the GM when using the word *sāvitrī*. (One could argue that as a Kṣatriya, Aśvapati recited another *sāvitrī*, but I think that rather unlikely.)[960] The GM had already achieved a certain status by then. Its role in the story, however, is not a major one. In the manuscripts used for the critical edition of the Sāvitrī story in the MBh, it is mentioned only twice,[961] and only at the beginning of the story (277.9 and 24).[962] In contrast, so to say, to this double (or single)[963] mention of the mantra stands the fact that king Aśvapati repeats the mantra a great, great number of times: one hundred thousand times in the course of eighteen years.[964]

Similar practices are first known from the Dharmasūtras, where the number of repetitions of the GM is most often a multiple of ten (i.e., 100, 1,000, etc.).[965] Originally this recitation was regarded as a practice in itself, for example, as a purificatory practice or *prāyaścitta*. Only rarely did it accompany libations into the fire, as in the story.[966] The author, in any case, was evidently not an expert in Vedic ritual: the fact that he lets the goddess Sāvitrī emerge "from the Agnihotra" (*agnihotrāt*: most likely this means that she emerged from the fire) suggests that the GM was recited during this ritual. To my knowledge, however, the repetition of this mantra has never been part of the Agnihotra (which consequently was also never intended as worship of the goddess Sāvitrī).[967] Although it is made up of real components (and seems much more realistic than many other rituals described in the MBh), Aśvapati's practice appears to be made up in the

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960 See above pp. 120–121.

961 With one insignificant exception: the scribe of G₄ replaced *sāvitrī* in MBh III 280.8 with *gāyatrī*. Considering that this verse is obviously about the princess Sāvitrī, this replacement can only be a mistake.

962 One could even argue that *sāvitryā hutayā* in 24b does not mean "by the one to whom (oblations) had been offered with the *sāvitrī* [mantra]," but "by [the goddess] Sāvitrī, to whom (oblations) had been offered" (as in *PW* VII: 1634), which would reduce the number of the mentions of the mantra to just one. However, the wording is clearly reminiscent of MBh III 277.9ab (*hutvā śatasahasraṃ sa sāvitryā rājasattama*), where the mantra is meant; similar expressions (*sāvitryā* + a form of *hu* "to offer") are frequently used in the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts, but generally not in the context of worshipping the goddess Sāvitrī. Below I will argue in more detail that the recitation of the *sāvitrī* does not have to be understood as an intentional worship of the goddess Sāvitrī at all.

963 See n. 962.

964 If taken literally, he only recited the mantra 15.22 times a day.

965 See above pp. 164–165. The number 108 is mentioned, for instance, in VaikhGS VI 10 (tr. Caland 1929: 161–162).

966 One may note a ritual prescribed in the JaimGS (II 6; tr. Caland 1991: 55–56), the *gṛhakarman*, in which the GM is recited 1,000 times, accompanying as many offerings of ghee.

967 The GM is recited in the Kauṣītaki Agnihotra, but this does not involve repetition; see above p. 102 (#15).

literal sense, that is, it is fictitious. But even if the author was well acquainted with Vedic matters, his lack of seriousness may have been intentional.

As I imagine it, bringing the well-known *sāvitrī* mantra and the goddess of the same name together could, at least in part, be meant as a joke – or, at least, as a surprise. On the one hand, we have the embodiment of piety, king Aśvapati, who devotes his time to reciting the most Vedic of mantras, the "emblem of Vedic piety,"[968] for the most Vedic of life goals: male offspring. On the other, there is Sāvitrī, the role model of the perfect bride, whose self-choice however must have posed a certain problem. These two Sāvitrīs had never been connected before (see Figure 10 below).[969]

While the mantra was already on the way to becoming a deity, it evidently lacked real personhood, and especially a visible, anthropomorphic form. As I have argued, its portrayal as Savitṛ's partner in the JaimUB was a strategy employed to elucidate the efficacy of the GM.[970] It would of course be tempting to draw a direct line from this partnership to Sāvitrī's later partnership with Brahmā, equating Savitṛ and Brahmā on the way. This merger of powerful male deities could then be explained by some sort of contagion with the Prajāpati incest-myths. We cannot rule out that the texts were never interpreted in this way. From the historical perspective, however, I strongly believe that, originally, there were two entities: first, the divinized and personified mantra, and second, the epic, "popular" manifestation of the goddess Sāvitrī.

One reason for assuming this is that there are no traces of Savitṛ's being the husband of Sāvitrī outside the few strongly interrelated, rather arcane texts discussed above. The more scattered evidence of the other Vedic texts and the MBh, on the other hand, suggests that Savitṛ was simply understood to be Sāvitrī's father, and nothing more (that is, especially not her lover). The idea of a very attractive bride choosing among a number of suitors may have easily persisted even without textual support (at least this seems to have been possible for hundreds, if not thousands, of years in PIE culture). The idea of a partnership between a mantra and the deity it addresses, on the other hand, was evidently restricted to a certain textual tradition.

But even if the association of the mantra and the goddess had a comical aspect, we still have to answer the question of their exact relationship. *A priori* one would expect that if a text addressing a certain deity is recited, this will

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968   Lubin 2020: 38.

969   Similar observations were made by Sharma (2011: 22), who, however, apparently took the goddess Sāvitrī only to be a manifestation of the GM: "It is true that women in India are given names such as Śruti or Sāvitrī, notwithstanding the irony that they don't have access to what their names denote. I would like to highlight the possibility here that in the case of Sāvitrī, it may be a *deliberate* irony, given the antecedent and subsequent facts about her personal life." In the following, Sharma argued that Sāvitrī did not at all conform to Vedic or Brahminical ideals.

970   See above pp. 175–178.

PIE solar maiden

Helen, etc.

stage 1   Sūryā

                                                    the *sāvitrī* (GM)

stage 2   Sītā Sāvitrī   Sūryā Sāvitrī

stage 3   Sāvitrī

        princess Sāvitrī   association

                                        manifests in

stage 4   (mantra) goddess   (deified) mantra

                                        evokes

                                identification
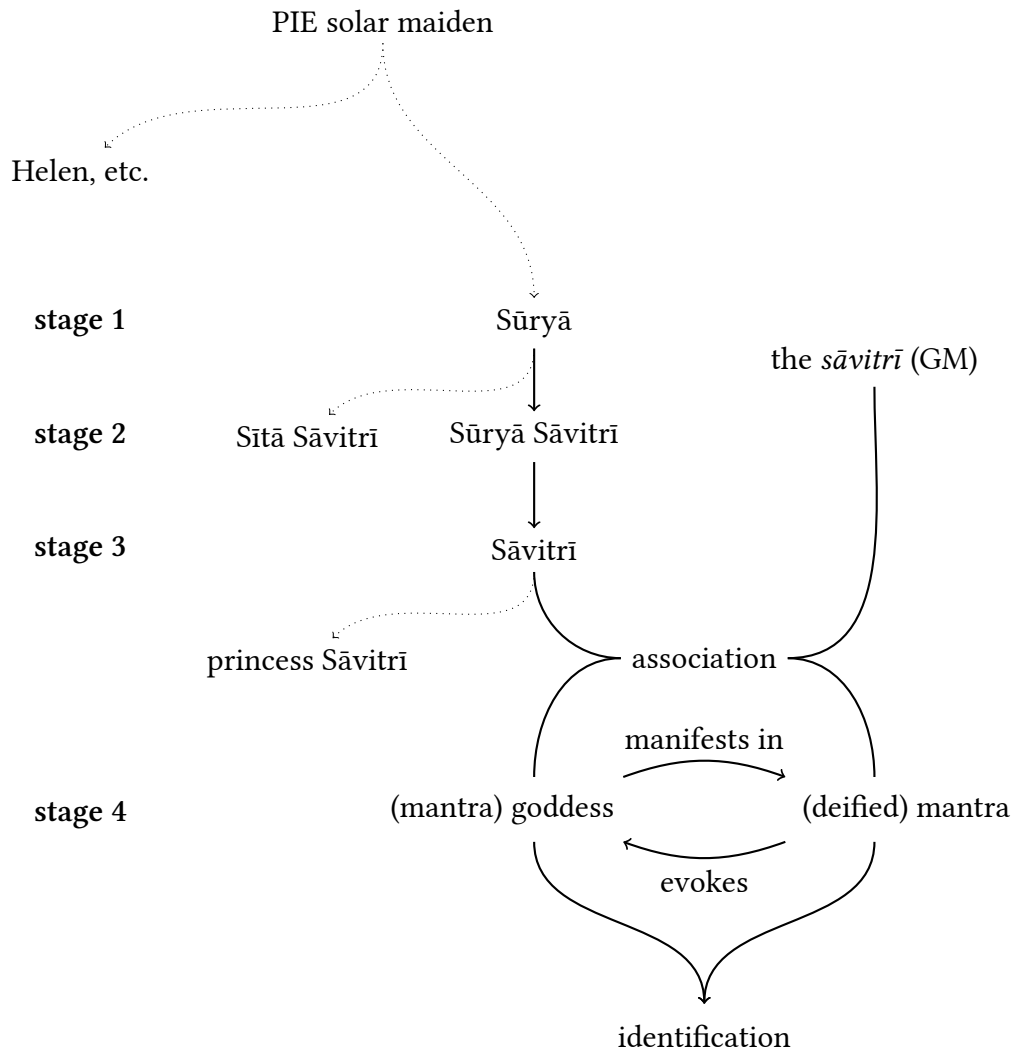
Figure 10: From the PIE solar maiden to the mantra goddess Sāvitrī

invoke that deity. However, this is certainly not so in the case of the repetition of the GM, where the invoked deity would be Savitṛ (notwithstanding the fact that the GM actually does not directly address this god by calling upon him with a vocative or the like). It is not even possible to interpret the deity that appears as a consequence of the recitation as an alternative manifestation of Savitṛ: Sāvitrī is decidedly a female deity. Obviously, it was the name of the mantra – which does not even appear in the text of the mantra itself – that was decisive.

Considering that the mantra and the goddess are not at all differentiated, it really seems that they are the same, at least superficially: Aśvapati "offered a hundred thousand times with the *sāvitrī*" (*hutvā śatasahasraṃ sa*) and "when the eighteenth year was full, Sāvitrī showed herself in her own form to the king" (*pūrṇe tv aṣṭādaśe varṣe sāvitrī tuṣṭim abhyagāt / svarūpiṇī tadā rājan darśayām*

āsa taṃ nṛpam //).[971] Depending on the perspective, one could think of the goddess either as a deity that *manifests in*, but is essentially *independent of*, the mantra – a "mantra goddess" – or as the deified form of the mantra itself, now having a visually perceptible, or imagined, form.

However, in contrast to the earlier texts preceding the Sāvitrī story, later texts are much more explicit when depicting the mantra itself as a goddess.[972] There is much to suggest that the Sāvitrī story can be placed somewhere in the middle between these two phases. When the text was composed, the mantra and the goddess were most likely still in the process of being associated with each other. How far this association had already progressed into an outright identification remains open – and may not have been the same for all recipients – but probably they were still felt to be in many ways distinct and independent of each other. This intermediary phase can be called **stage 4** in the development of the goddess Sāvitrī.

Conclusion

This chapter has devoted much space to a goddess who, for most of her early life, had almost nothing to do with the GM. As we saw, despite her great beauty, this goddess was not fond of being in the spotlight. If one judges her development only on the basis of textual appearances, one can hardly help thinking that she led an existence on the brink of oblivion. She even kept such a low profile that she could silently change her name. Nevertheless, she came to play a vital role in the deification of the GM.

The goddess was introduced in **Section 1** as Sūryā, a solar divinity that came to be recognized as Savitṛ's daughter. Despite her apparently descriptive name, she was not identified with the sun; rather, her solar quality above all consisted in radiant beauty. Her mytheme was characterized by three different elements: her role as the archetypical bride; the self-choice of her spouse; and her association with twins, in the Vedic case, the Aśvins. To various degrees, these three elements are even detectable in other IE mythical characters, which makes it likely that they go back to a PIE precursor.

The idea that Sūryā is a *sāvitrī*, a "daughter of Savitṛ," is first made explicit in the AV. As we saw in **Section 2**, this idea must have been generally accepted: only in the AitB, Prajāpati is said to be her father, but even in this text, she is called Sāvitrī. The fact that the author of the later KauṣB chose to replace Prajāpati again with Savitṛ shows that this was indeed thought to be the norm.

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971   MBh III 277.9a, 10b–e.
972   See Chapter 8.

In the TaittB, the word *sāvitrī* was also attached to another character, Sītā, who actually appears to be Prajāpati's daughter. I have argued that Sītā is a variant of Sūryā: she, too, essentially chooses her husband herself (as with Sūryā Sāvitrī, this is Soma). Why she is called Sāvitrī is not clear. It is conceivable that Sāvitrī could be used as some kind of epithet for brides in general;[973] however, this has not yet been demonstrated.

In **Section 3**, I argued that Sūryā's mytheme persisted: in the MBh there are two mentions of Savitṛ's daughter, in both places this is in the context of marriage. For reasons unknown, this daughter is here only called Sāvitrī, never Sūryā. The most important appearance of this goddess is clearly the Sāvitrī story: while she herself only appears briefly, at least two of her characteristics are present in the princess who is named after her: Sāvitrī, Aśvapati's daughter, is said to be very beautiful, and like her eponym, she chooses her husband herself. These resemblances suggest that the goddess Sāvitrī was indeed Sūryā Sāvitrī's successor, or her manifestation in epic literature.

Continuing from observations made by Brodbeck, I suggested a new perspective on the Sāvitrī story, which also affects its role in the deification of the GM. Brodbeck argued that the princess Sāvitrī's father, Aśvapati, wants (or has) to deploy her as a *putrikā*, a daughter whose sons would continue his rather than her husband's lineage. Such a girl, however, is hard to sell on the marriage market. (Brodbeck also suggested that this, and not her beauty, is the real reason why no suitor dared to approach her.) Eventually she is forced to find – which also means to choose – a husband herself, thus continuing one of the goddess's salient features. On the human level, however, self-choice was evidently deemed problematic by some. Real self-choice was at best considered an emergency solution. In the Sāvitrī story, it may even be an undesired consequence of the fact that she is a potential *putrikā*, an option that is discouraged by the text.

What does all of this have to do with the GM? The extensive study of Sāvitrī's prehistory allows us to draw a negative but highly significant conclusion: originally, the goddess Sāvitrī did not have anything to do with the *sāvitrī* mantra or its deified form. As mentioned in **Section 4**, there is no evidence that the *sāvitrī* mantra was ever used to worship the/a goddess called Sāvitrī, Savitṛ's daughter. In fact, her association with the mantra in the story might have been so unexpected that it could be understood as a joke: For eighteen years, the king worships the most beautiful goddess, the archetypical bride, who, however, is also known to be rather self-determined in the choice of her husband. When she finally appears, he asks for many sons – but instead is promised a single daughter and is immediately told to accept his fate, without even being given the chance to make an appeal.

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973   As was possibly the case with Sūryā; see above p. 212.

The fact that this daughter turns out to be a "second Sāvitrī" appears to be no coincidence: Aśvapati simply got what he asked for. Despite the fact that this unwanted boon is ascribed to Brahmā, it rather seems to be of Sāvitrī's design (who perhaps even granted it with a certain degree of complacency). The way Aśvapati's practice is described suggests that the author was not interested in ritual accuracy, denoting a lack of seriousness that may have been intentional and part of his humor.

This interpretation may or may not be correct. There is at least one reason against it: the fact that in other, presumably somewhat later, texts, Sāvitrī and the deification of the mantra are plainly identified, without any trace of humor or lack of seriousness. Whether or not the audience, or perhaps only part of the audience, of the Sāvitrī story were giggling when they heard about the mantra appearing as a beautiful goddess remains open.

But irrespective of its interpretation, the Sāvitrī story is the earliest evidence for the deification of the GM (thus testifying to what we may call **stage 4** in the development of the goddess Sāvitrī). While the exact date of the composition of the tale remains unknown, a goddess called Sāvitrī only appears in a few other passages of the Great Epic, most of them in the late books XII and XIII, or in the appendices.[974] Most of the text passages discussed in the previous chapter were composed around or after the beginning of the Common Era. As we saw, these texts both divinize and personify the mantra, at least in terms of a fictional personification. But even if for some recipients this may have evoked the image of an anthropomorphic goddess, the mantra itself remained in the foreground.

In the Sāvitrī story, on the other hand, Sāvitrī is above all a goddess: she has a visible form – an anthropomorphic one, which we may infer from the fact that the princess is said to be like her in splendor or radiance – she has emotions (in the story, joy), she converses with mortals and immortals, and so on. These characteristics, as unspecific as they may be, were all taken over from the nuptial goddess Sāvitrī, Savitṛ's radiant daughter. While the *sāvitrī* mantra does mention *bhárgas*, "splendor," there is no indication that the text of the mantra played any role at all.

But could this single story, which is mainly concerned with telling the story of the princess Sāvitrī, initialize a totally new way of thinking about the GM? Was the Sāvitrī story the source of the mantric goddess, or does it reflect a then emerging or current, real religious imagination or practice? Was the author a bigger joker than his audience, or was he pretty unimaginative? The answers to these questions will probably remain in the dark. But regardless of the author's humor or piety – or his lack of these qualities – the crucial observation, in the context of the present study, is that the GM is not actually deified itself

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974 See n. 955 on p. 220 above.

here, but is identified with an existing, in a way even ancient, goddess. This goddess added what the deification of the mantra had been missing thus far: an appealing anthropomorphic form and, perhaps even more importantly, agency.

·: **CHAPTER 8** :·

The Mantra Goddess

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have attempted to show how the Gāyatrī-Mantra became a goddess. In doing so, I adopted a diachronic perspective, focusing on the developments that took place between one stage and the next. This approach shed light on the processes involved in the mantra's deification. The result of these processes, however – the deity itself – has so far been largely left aside. This lacuna will be partially closed in the present chapter, whose primary aim is to outline a portrait of the mantra goddess as she appears in the Sanskrit literature that was composed in the period of Classical Hinduism (c. 350–550 CE) and in the first centuries of the "Tantric Age" (sixth century CE+).[975] To round off the portrait, I will also address conceptions of the goddess that likely originated in the final third of the first millennium CE (and continued to be elaborated throughout the second).

As Hinduism evolved, the GM largely retained its status as well as the qualities, functions, and powers it became associated with in the centuries around the turn of the millennium. It continued to be seen as the first and foremost Vedic verse, as the epitome of the Vedas, and as a hallmark of Brahminical, Veda-centered, culture and orthopraxy.[976] The only major innovation was the establishment of the designation "Gāyatrī" as another name, or cognomen, of the mantra.[977]

The preceding chapters have shown that the deification of the mantra was not yet fully established when it acquired these qualities, a process that had reached a plateau by the end of the third century CE. However, this chapter will demonstrate that, during the course of the first millennium CE, the qualities of the mantra "rubbed off" more and more on to the goddess, and were gradually integrated into her personality. Thus, the goddess was above all worshipped

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975   The Tantric Age was marked by the rise and spread of new initiatory traditions and the concomitant production of novel religious texts (often, but by no means always called Tantras). Due to the predominance of Śaivism, Sanderson (2009) calls it the "Śaiva Age."

976   See Chapter 5.

977   See Chapter 2.

in the Sandhyā, the first ritual of the day, which from the fourth century CE at the latest was also performed by adult twice-born.[978] The mantra's status as the epitome of the Vedas is reflected in the concept of the "Mother of the Vedas," which, as we shall see, is anchored in the mantra. Apart from these developments, the mantra goddess also became associated, and even identified, with Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge and learning. Contrary to what one might assume, this famous goddess did not eclipse the deification of the mantra. In fact, Sarasvatī was at times even considered a manifestation of the mantra goddess, and not the other way round.

The relevant primary sources from the time-range defined above are numerous, and are not easily accessed. In many cases, only one or two editions are available; few of them are critical editions (the lack of digitized texts, too, hampers extensive research). For these reasons, I have opted to make a selection of sources. In doing so, I have not only paid attention to ritual manuals and religious works (in the strict sense), but also to narrative literature.

First, I have focused on the late portions (fourth century CE+) of the MBh,[979] including the Harivaṃśa (Har.). The VaiṣṇDhŚ (which is appended to the MBh), the Viṣṇudharmāḥ (ViṣṇDh),[980] and the Śiva-Dharmaśāstra (ŚivDhŚ; sixth–seventh century CE)[981] have been taken into account as well.[982] I have also utilized one work of fiction, bhaṭṭa's Harṣacarita (Harṣ.; seventh century CE), where Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī act as two exiled hermit girls. Moreover, I have also considered one comparatively older medical work, the Caraka-Saṃhitā (CarS; c. 150–150 BCE/CE),[983] where the *sāvitrī* is mentioned.

The most detailed information regarding the worship of the goddess is found in the so-called "Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts," a classification introduced by Shingo Einoo for a group of texts whose titles often (though not always) end

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978   See above p. 150. Interestingly, the goddess does not seem to have gained much significance in the Upanayana; see, however, n. 985 on p. 233 below.

979   The historical development of the MBh continues to be the subject of debate. For Fitzgerald (2018), "the inventive energy of the Itihāsapurāṇa genre seems to have moved beyond the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* tradition into that of the *Harivaṃśa* and early Purāṇas" between the mid-second to mid-fourth centuries CE.

980   The upper limit of this text, which can only be estimated on the basis of dated Nepalese manuscripts, is the eleventh century CE (Grünendahl 1984: 72–73). There can be little doubt that it is several centuries older.

981   Mirnig 2019: 471–472, n. 4.

982   Interestingly, as far as I can see, the other, "orthodox" early Dharmaśāstras (YājñSm, NārSm, ViṣṇSm, and ParSm; fourth–eighth centuries CE [Olivelle 2018a: 26–28]) do not show any trace of the deification of the GM.

983   The last major redaction of the CarS took place in the fifth century CE; for references, see Angermeier 2020: 5–7.

with "-gṛhyapariśiṣṭa" or "-gṛhyaśeṣasūtra."[984] As supplements or addenda (*pariśiṣṭa*, *śeṣa*) to the Vedic corpus, these texts are generally affiliated with one of the Vedic schools. However, their purpose is most often to codify new, originally non-Vedic, ritual practices, which may also include Tantric elements. The Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts treated in this chapter are the late Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra (JaimGS), AVPar XLI, the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra (BaudhGŚS), and the Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra-Pariśiṣṭabhāga (ĀśvGSPar).[985] The late recensions of the MNārU, too, belong to the same (or a later) period.

Among the Purāṇas (which often also contain material that originated after the tenth century CE), I have considered passages from the Skanda-Purāṇa (SkandP),[986] the Matsya-Purāṇa (MatsyP), the Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa (MārkP), the Garuḍa-Purāṇa (GarP), and the Kūrma-Purāṇa (KūrmP). I have also paid peripheral attention to various early Tantric texts; however, for understandable reasons, these rarely deal with the normal, Vedic GM, let alone with its deification.

The general idea in this chapter is to present comprehensive profiles of what I have identified as the three primary conceptions of the goddess. Each of these is treated in a separate section:

- **Section 1** (pp. 234–240) is dedicated to the concept of the Mother of the Vedas. Here, I will focus above all on epic literature, where the *vedamātṛ* makes her first appearances.

- In **Section 2** (pp. 241–246), I will discuss how the mantra goddess came into the vicinity of Sarasvatī, and explore the various ways in which the two deities became entangled with one another. These range from deep friendship to outright mutual identification.

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984 It is generally assumed that these texts were produced after the latest Gṛhyasūtras (c. 400 CE). Einoo (2005a: 13) hypothesized that "the texts belonging to the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa level, with the exception of the *Āśvalāyanīya Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa*, were composed at latest before the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* namely, the end of the fifth century AD." However, there are certainly exceptions to this rule. AVPar XLI, for instance, has been placed in the second half of the first millennium CE (Bisschop & Griffiths 2003: 324).

985 A number of other Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts do seem to recognize her as a goddess, but do not spend many words over her. The VaikhGS contains a list of numerous entities receiving oblations; Sāvitrī here follows directly after Brahmā (VaikhGS II 12: *brahmaṇe sāvitryai* [tr. Caland 1929: 56]). The same Sūtra also mentions an "ocean-like Sāvitrī" (VaikhGS III 16: *samudravatī sāvitrī* [tr. Caland 1929: 56]), whose identity is unclear. Lastly, it also (once) prescribes honoring Sāvitrī with the recitation of TaittS II 4.3.1–2 (*ójo 'si...*; see n. 790 on p. 185 above) before the *sāvitrī* is taught to the student in the context of initiation (VaikhGS II 6 [Caland 1929: 48–49]). In the Karmapradīpa (Karm. I 1.11), Sāvitrī is counted among the ten so-called "world-mothers" (*lokamātaraḥ*). I have not found material relevant for the goddess in the ṚVidh, SāmB, GPar, or PārGSPar.

986 Sixth century CE+; see, e.g., Adriaensen, Bakker & Isaacson 1998: 5.

- **Section 3** (pp. 246–259) turns finally to the various goddess conceptions that developed in the context of the Sandhyā. As it turned out, this ritual (and not the Upanayana) became the most important "home" of the goddess.

1. The Mother of the Vedas

1.1 A mother goddess?

The "Mother of the Vedas"[987] is an epithet and alternative name that is used quite frequently for the GM as well as for its deification. Among the earliest texts to use the expression is the **MBh**,[988] where it occurs (at least) five times, mostly in the later books as well as in the appendices.[989] The Śāntiparvan in particular contains a number of passages where the Mother of the Vedas comes to the fore. In two of them, she appears to humans in a visible form. The two passages are translated below and will serve as a starting point for further exploration.

In the first passage, Bhīṣma tells a story that leads to a debate between king Ikṣvāku, a Brahmin named Kauśika, Time, Death, and Yama.[990] In the story, the pious Brahmin practises austerities at the foot of the Himālaya, continuously reciting a certain text. Then, after a thousand years,

> the goddess appeared before his eyes and said: "I am pleased." Silently repeating the soft recitation (*japya*),[991] he said nothing to her. /7/ Then, out of compassion for him, the goddess was pleased. The **Mother of the Vedas** then lauded that soft recitation of his. /8/

> Having completed the soft recitation, he whose very being is Dharma stood up, fell with his head to the feet of the goddess, and said this: /9/

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987   *vedamātṛ* or occasionally *vedānāṃ mātṛ*; SkandP 8.16–17 has *vedabhāvinī*; KūrmP II 14.56 has *vedajananī*. The expression is only rarely used alone; e.g., in ParSm II 5.1cd: *ātmakṛcchraṃ tataḥ kṛtvā japed vai vedamātaram.*

988   The expression occurs already once in the TaittB (II 8.8.m), where it characterizes Vāc: "The Speech is the imperishable one, the first offspring of the Sacred Order, the Mother of the Vedas, the navel (i.e., the origin) of immortality. Being pleased let her come to our sacrifice. Let the helping goddess be easily invoked by me." *vā́g akṣaram prathamajā́ ṛtasya, védānāṃ mātā́ 'mṛtasya nā́bhiḥ, sā́ no juṣāṇó 'pa ⁺yajñám ā́gat, ávantī devī́ suhávā me astu.*; tr. Dumont 1969: 62.

989   As far as I can see, the *vedamātṛ* occurs nowhere in the Rām.

990   MBh XII 192–193. For this story and its context, see Brockington 2012 (the story is addressed on pp. 82–83).

991   Literally, *japya* is "that which should be" or "can be recited softly."

"Fortunately, O goddess, you are kind and have shown yourself to me. If you are gracious, my mind shall enjoy the soft recitation!" /10/

Sāvitrī said: "What do you desire, best of the Ṛṣis, and what wish shall I fulfill for you? Speak, best of those who recite softly – all of it will become yours!" /11/

Bhīṣma said: Thus spoken to by the goddess, the Brahmin, a knower of Dharma, said:

"This desire of mine for the soft recitation shall increase again and again, /12/ and the concentration of my mind may increase day by day, O beautiful one."

"So be it," the goddess then sweetly replied. /13/ And the goddess also said this, desiring to show him kindness: "Not to hell, but where the greatest among the twice-born have gone will you go: /14/ you will go the cause-less, irreproachable place of *brahman*. I will bring it about and it shall be, that which you have requested here from me. /15/ Being restrained and focused, recite! Dharma will approach you, and Time, Death, and Yama will also come to you, and there will be a debate here between you and them based on Dharma." /16/

Having spoken thus, the Lady went to her own abode, and then the Brahmin sat reciting softly for a celestial century. /17/[992]

As in the Sāvitrī story, Sāvitrī is here invoked by means of (soft) mantra recitation. Interestingly, the author of this text for some reason refrained from specifying that which is being softly recited by Kauśika (his *japya*),[993] only des-ignating it as *saṃhitā* (in verses 6, 78, and 112). The fact that he causes Sāvitrī to appear by repeating (*ā+vṛt*) his *japya* would actually lead one to expect that it is the GM. But considering that this *japya* is also called a *saṃhitā* – a term

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992 MBh XII 192.7–17: *sa devyā darśitaḥ sākṣāt prītāsmīti tadā kila / japyam āvartayaṃs tūṣṇīṃ na ca tāṃ kiṃ cid abravīt /7/ tasyānukampayā devī prītā samabhavat tadā / vedamātā tatas tasya taj japyaṃ samapūjayat /8/ samāptajapyas tūtthāya śirasā pādayos tathā / papāta devyā dharmātmā vacanaṃ cedam abravīt /9/ diṣṭyā devi prasannā tvaṃ darśanaṃ cāgatā mama / yadi vāpi prasannāsi japye me ramatāṃ manaḥ /10/ sāvitry uvāca / kiṃ prārthayasi viprarṣe kiṃ ceṣṭaṃ karavāṇi te / prabrūhi japatāṃ śreṣṭha sarvaṃ tat te bhav-iṣyati /11/ bhīṣma uvāca / ity uktaḥ sa tadā devyā vipraḥ provāca dharmavit / japyaṃ prati mameccheyaṃ vardhatv iti punaḥ punaḥ /12/ manasaś ca samādhir me vardhetāhar ahaḥ śubhe / tat tatheti tato devī madhuraṃ pratyabhāṣata /13/ idaṃ caivāparaṃ prāha devī tatpriyakāmyayā / nirayaṃ naiva yātāsi yatra yātā dvijarṣabhāḥ /14/ yāsyasi brah-maṇaḥ sthānam animittam aninditam / sādhaye bhavitā caitad yat tvayāham ihārthitā /15/ niyato japa caikāgro dharmas tvāṃ samupaiṣyati / kālo mṛtyur yamaś caiva samāyāsyanti te 'ntikam / bhavitā ca vivādo 'tra tava teṣāṃ ca dharmataḥ /16/ evam uktvā bhagavatī jagāma bhavanaṃ svakam / brāhmaṇo 'pi japann āste divyaṃ varṣaśataṃ tadā /17/.* Cf. the translation by Deussen & Strauss 1906: 195–197.

993 Cf. n. 991 on p. 234 above.

that usually refers to much longer texts – this is not necessarily the case. (It also again remains open whether the goddess is understood as the deification of the mantra). The goddess herself, in any case, is not described in any detail; we only learn that she is called Sāvitrī and Mother of the Vedas, and that she is beautiful and gracious.[994] As in the Sāvitrī story (and, one might add, as is quite common in Hindu tales in general), she immediately disappears after her brief appearance, and does not play any further role in the remainder of the story.

The second MBh story does not explicitly call the goddess "Mother of the Vedas," but nevertheless deserves to be translated here. As will soon become apparent, the mother motif is indeed present, albeit perhaps in a somewhat unexpected form. The story is found in the appendix to the Śāntiparvan.

Once, the sage Nārada roamed the earth, visiting sacred and numinous sites (*tīrtha*s). At the foot of the Himālaya, he saw a beautiful girl playing at the bank of a pond. The girl recognized him and sat down near him, smiling and laughing again and again. When she opened her mouth, out came three beings in the shape of men, wearing jewels and ornaments. They circumambulated the girl, making various sounds. Perplexed, Nārada asked the girl who she was.

> The girl said:
> "I'm called Sāvitrī, O Brahmin Ṛṣi, listen, happiness to you! What shall I do? Tell me what is on your mind." /93/

> Nārada said:
> "I greet you, Sāvitrī, I'm one who has accomplished his goals, O irreproachable one. Deign to clear this doubt I have, O beautiful goddess: Who is the man-shaped one who came into being first? There are dots on his head, O great goddess, he has a form made of light." /97/

> The girl said:
> "The first-born one came into being first, next was the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda was the third. Your doubt shall be dispelled, O sage! The Vedas are furnished with dots, they are endowed with the fruit of the sacrifice. That big light that you have seen – the wise call it 'the light.' O Ṛṣi, it can be recognized by(/through) me too!" Having said this, she disappeared. /102/[995]

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994 *śubhe* (13) and *tatpriyakāmyayā* "with the desire to show him kindness" (14).

995 MBh XII 199.32 App. 15.92–104: *kanyovāca* /91/ *sāvitrī nāma viprarṣe śṛṇu bhadraṃ tavāstu vai* /92/ *kiṃ kariṣyāmi tad brūhi tava yac cetasi sthitam* /93/ *nārada uvāca* /93/ *abhivādaye tvāṃ sāvitri kṛtārtho 'ham anindite* /94/ *etaṃ me saṃśayaṃ devi vaktum arhasi śobhane* /95/ *yas tu vai prathamotpannaḥ ko 'sau sa puruṣākṛtiḥ* /96/ *bindavas tu mahādevi mūrdhni jyotirmayākṛtiḥ* /97/ *kanyovāca* /97/ *agrajaḥ prathamotpanno yajurvedas tathāparaḥ* /98/ *tṛtīyaḥ sāmavedas tu saṃśayo vyetu te mune* /99/ *vedāś ca bindusaṃyuktā yajñasya phalasaṃśritāḥ* /100/ *yat tad dṛṣṭaṃ mahaj jyotir jyotir ity ucyate budhaiḥ* /101/ *ṛṣe jñeyaṃ mayā cāpīty uktvā cāntaradhīyata* /102/.

In the story, Sāvitrī is envisioned as a beautiful, divine maiden.[996] While she is clearly the source of the Vedas, she is not called their mother. In fact, even in the first story, where the goddess is actually called the Mother of the Vedas, one does not necessarily get the impression of a mother of three (or four). A father, too, is missing in both cases (and, as we will see, in all others too). Could it be that the expression "Mother of the Vedas" was not understood literally? To answer this question, let us have a look at the other epic passages mentioning her.

In the Udyogaparvan, we find mention of even more than one Mother of the Vedas. At the beginning of a duel between Bhīṣma and Rāma, the former prompts the latter to mount a chariot to fight. Rāma, however, prefers to remain on the ground, replying

> my chariot is the earth, O Bhīṣma, the draught-animals are the Vedas, like fine horses; my charioteer is the wind (*mātariśvan*); the armor is the **mothers of the Vedas**, well-covered by them in combat I will fight, scion of Kuru![997]

Rāma thus basically proclaims that he will fight without the usual material equipment. But who are the mothers of the Vedas – in the plural?

Nīlakaṇṭha commented that the mothers are Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī, and Sarasvatī (*vedamātaro gāyatrī-sāvitrī-sarasvatyaḥ*). This triad, however, only really formed several centuries later.[998] To my knowledge, it occurs nowhere in the constituted texts of the MBh or the Rām. In a note to his translation, van Buitenen asserts that the mothers are the meters, but does not explain why this should be so.[999] It is clear that, since they are not in the singular or dual, the mothers are at least three. A triad of meters was indeed sometimes associated with the three Vedas in Vedic literature.[1000] Interestingly, all manuscripts of the Southern recension except one (G₅) read *devamātaraḥ*, "mothers of the gods," instead of *vedamātaraḥ* (which is why a wavy line is drawn under the word).[1001] It thus remains open which interpretation or reading is correct.

In addition to the texts translated thus far, a (single) Mother of the Vedas briefly appears in two other MBh passages. The first one is a *durgāstotra* put into

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996 *kanyā* "girl" (91 etc.), *anindite* "irreproachable one" (94), *devi* "goddess," *śobhane* "beautiful one" (95), *mahādevi* "great goddess" (97).

997 MBh V 180.3cd–4: *ratho me medinī bhīṣma vāhā vedāḥ sadaśvavat /3/ sūto me mātariśvā vai kavacaṃ vedamātaraḥ / susaṃvīto raṇe tābhir yotsye 'haṃ kurunandana /4/*; also translated by van Buitenen III: 509. For the description of a divine chariot in which the *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* are part of the equipment, see above p. 74.

998 See below pp. 256–258.

999 van Buitenen III: 555.

1000 *gāyatrī*/ṚV, *triṣṭubh*/YV, *jagatī*/SV; see Smith 1994: 60–67.

1001 In a passage in the appendix of the Har. (App. I 8.21: *sāvitrī cāpi devānāṃ mātā bhūtagaṇasya ca*), we find a similar alternation between *devānāṃ mātā* and *vedānāṃ mātā*.

the mouth of Arjuna. In the *stotra* the goddess is called upon by many names; in one verse she is also called *sāvitrī vedamātā*.[1002] In the second passage, which is from the Nārāyaṇīya, the Lord reveals himself to Nārada in his divine form. Among other things that are inside his body, he also mentions a number of female deities: "Śrī, Lakṣmī, Kīrti, and the humped Earth; see the Mother of the Vedas inside me, the goddess Sarasvatī."[1003] Neither passage gives any more hints with regard to the mother's motherhood.

In the **Har.**, the expression is used to qualify the GM, here already called Gāyatrī. The passage narrates how Brahmā created the universe. After the oceans and rivers, we are told that "he then emitted the three-footed Gāyatrī, the Mother of the Vedas, and made the four Vedas originating from the Gāyatrī."[1004] Whether "Gāyatrī" here primarily or even exclusively denotes the GM or also the meter is not entirely clear. What is clear is that, at least in this verse, the "Mother of the Vedas" really is only a metaphor: the creator of the Vedas is Brahmā, who, we may surmise, somehow used the Gāyatrī to create them.

The passages dealt with so far reinforce the impression that the Mother of the Vedas never played the role of an actual (birth-giving, child-rearing) mother. The most straightforward explanation for this is that the expression was, at least in epic literature, only used metaphorically. The basis of this metaphor was the mantra, even when it appeared in its deified form. To understand it, we have to recall the status it had already achieved by about the third century CE. In the MānDhŚ, the GM is portrayed as the essence or epitome of the Vedas, and in ritual practice it frequently functioned as their substitute.[1005] In a number of Dharma texts, it was also personified as the mother of the initiate, for whom it was the first Vedic mantra he learned, regardless of which Veda he began to study.[1006] Against this background, it is perfectly understandable that the GM was not only envisioned as having been extracted from the Vedas, but that the Vedas were also thought to have been extracted from the mantra – as, in fact, the Har. passage seems to suggest.

1002 MBh VI 22.16 App. 1.24: *sāvitri vedamātā ca tathā vedānta ucyate //*.

1003 MBh XII 326.52: *śriyaṃ lakṣmīṃ ca kīrtiṃ ca pṛthivīṃ ca kakudminīm / vedānāṃ mātaraṃ paśya matsthāṃ devīṃ sarasvatīm //*.

1004 Har. App. 41.487–488: *tato 'sṛjad vai tripadāṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamātaram / akaroc caiva caturo vedān gāyatrisaṃbhavān //*. For the form *gāyatri-*, see n. 338 on p. 81 above. In another passage, we learn that during the creation, "the best among the meters, the goddess with the twenty-four syllables came into being. Recollecting her together with her feet, the Lord made the divine *sāvitrī*." Har. App. I 42.317–318: *chandasāṃ pravarā devī caturviṃśākṣarābhavat / tatpadaṃ saṃsmaran divyāṃ sāvitrīm akarot prabhuḥ //*. In the ŚivDhŚ (III 18: 6.3–4), Gāyatrī is one of the elements that enter the *liṅga* at the end of the aeon and emanate from it again when the world is created anew. Interestingly, it/she is said to enter the very heart of the *liṅga* (*hṛdaye*), and is characterized as the "most supreme among all gods" (*gāyatrī sarvadevottamottamā*).

1005 See above p. 159.

1006 See above pp. 179–182.

The term "mother," therefore, is used in the sense of "original source" or "container." This notion is even reflected in the story about Nārada translated above, where Sāvitrī appears as a girl. Not being a mother, she nevertheless carries the Vedas in herself, and emits them through her mouth. (Note that this image is in fact quite striking: women were not actually allowed to learn the Vedas, so they would rarely, if ever, have come out of the mouths of women, i.e., be recited by women.)

At the same time, the mother metaphor blended in well with the increasingly more frequent personification, and indeed deification, of the mantra. In another text appended to the MBh, the **VaiṣṇDhŚ**,[1007] for instance, we find the following passage concerning the Sandhyā:

> Those who in the morning and in the evening correctly and regularly perform the Juncture (worship), pass and lead across [that is, they attain and bring salvation] by making a boat consisting of the Veda. If someone **softly recites** the purifying **goddess** Gāyatrī, the Mother of the Vedas, he does not sink down while taking possession of the earth and the sea.[1008]

This passage shows that, at some point, the GM could be *simultaneously* conceived of as a mantra and an anthropomorphic goddess. No need was felt to keep these two aspects apart. As we saw in the previous two chapters, this had probably not always been the case: Aśvapati's recitation of the *sāvitrī* in the Sāvitrī story does not necessarily have to be interpreted as an intended worship of the goddess Sāvitrī. Similarly, in the earliest Sandhyā texts that include the invocation of a goddess, the mantra was probably not yet fully identified with its (deified) meter.

1.2   The Mother of the Vedas and the mother of the meters

The latter texts, in fact, raise another question. What was the relationship between the Mother of the Vedas and the mother of the meters (or metrical Vedic texts, *chandasāṃ mātṛ*) known from various Sandhyā liturgies? As the passages above illustrate, the expression "Mother of the Vedas" was applied both to Gāyatrī and Sāvitrī. To my knowledge, the expression "mother of the meters" first occurs in one of those verses that introduced goddess worship into the Sandhyā, and is only used to characterize a goddess called Gāyatrī.[1009] Even though in the

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1007 See above p. 76.

1008 MBh XIV 96.15 App. 4.492–495; see above p. 77. Similar formulations can be found in the Purāṇas: GarP I 36.14ab: *saṃdhyākāle tu vinyasya japed vai vedamātaram*; KūrmP I 19.56ab: *japeyaṃ devadeveśa gāyatrīṃ vedamātaram*, II 14.55ab: *yo 'dhīte 'hany ahany etāṃ gāyatrīṃ vedamātaram*, 56: *gāyatrī vedajananī gāyatrī lokapāvanī / na gāyatryāḥ paraṃ japyam etad vijñāya mucyate //*.

1009 See above pp. 190–192 and below pp. 246–259.

Sandhyā the GM is to be recited soon after her invocation, it is not entirely clear whether the Gāyatrī is here the deification of the meter, the mantra, or of both. Could they be understood to be identical?

In Chapter 2, I argued that "Gāyatrī" came to be used as a name of the GM probably around the third century CE. While the distinction between the mantra and its meter was often blurred and occasionally even ignored or forgotten,[1010] the basic meanings of the words *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* were never lost completely. *gāyatrī* did not become a perfect synonym for *sāvitrī*. Nevertheless, in the following centuries, it became increasingly more popular to use the name "Gāyatrī" for the mantra.

While the situation may not have been clear-cut at the very beginning, there seems to be little reason to assume that the use of either Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī reflects the emergence of two discrete goddesses.[1011] That the mantra could possess divine personhood was well established and constantly reaffirmed, for instance, by her invocation in the daily Sandhyā ritual (or at least certain versions of it). On the other hand, nothing suggests that in texts such as the MBh, the Har., the VaiṣṇDhŚ, or the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas that will be discussed below, the goddess going by the name Gāyatrī was understood as independent or distinct from the mantra goddess (or deified mantra), let alone as the deification of the *gāyatrī* meter.[1012] If the two mother metaphors were ever perceived as semantically distinct at all, then at most this was as different *aspects* of one and the same goddess.

The fact that the *gāyatrī* meter was considered the prototypical first meter, however, certainly contributed to the emerging conception of the "mother" goddess, just as it had also transferred its qualities to the mantra. As I emphasized in Chapter 2,[1013] verses and their meters – or meters and their verses – are, in practice, not easily separated. Moreover, as parts of the Veda, both meters and mantras were believed to have always existed. The meter thus does not have any "priority" (in the literal, temporal sense) over the mantra. Against this background, it is only a matter of perspective whether one says that the primordial source of the Vedas is the *gāyatrī* meter, or the most well-known verse set in this meter. The same applies to the goddess, who only rarely shows traces of a dual nature.

1010 See n. 961 on p. 223 and n. 823 on p. 190 above.

1011 In MatsyP IV 9–10, for instance, "Sāvitrī" is obviously used as an alternative name of the goddess Gāyatrī.

1012 In the story of Brahmā's two wives, connected with his worship at Pushkar (see above p. 5), there are no two goddesses – Gāyatrī here is not the meter, but a shepherd girl. Only few Tantric texts seem to treat Gāyatrī and Sāvitrī as discrete deities; see Acharya 2015: xxxiii–xxxiv.

1013 See above pp. 71–72.

2. Sarasvatī

As the previous chapter showed, the deification of the *sāvitrī* was aided by its identification with an already existing goddess, the homonymous Sāvitrī, the epic successor of the Vedic Sūryā. Alongside Sāvitrī, there was also another goddess with whom the deified mantra became identified: the famous Sarasvatī. Being the consort (or daughter!of Brahmā) of Brahmā, the creator of the universe – as well as, in particular, of the Vedas – Sarasvatī is well known as the Hindu goddess of knowledge, learning, music, and the arts.[1014] The identification with Sarasvatī constitutes what we may call **stage 5** in the development of the goddess Sāvitrī.[1015]

Like Sūryā Sāvitrī, Sarasvatī has an ancient prehistory – a prehistory, however, that is much easier to trace back. In Ṛgvedic times, *sárasvatī*, "the one being rich in ponds," or perhaps more likely, "rich in floods" and "currents," was the name of a mighty river flowing through the Northwest of South Asia, now known as Ghaggar or Hakra.[1016] This river was deified and worshipped as a goddess, and was already strongly associated with "inspiration" (*dhī́*) and "speech" (*vā́c*).[1017] In the course of time, Sarasvatī's riverine qualities slowly faded into the background, and she became more independent from her "substrate," the river, which at some point dried up and disappeared. While she continued to be associated with various rivers, she gradually transformed into a goddess of knowledge. In the Brāhmaṇas, she was identified with Vāc, the deification of speech. Vāc, in turn, was also considered a daughter of the creator deity Prajāpati. As discussed above,[1018] this god was known to have an incestuous relationship with his daughter,[1019] who is variously identified as Speech (*vā́c*), Dawn (*úṣas*), or Sky (*dív*). With a time lag, this relationship also affected Sarasvatī[1020] – as well as Sāvitrī (see Figure 11 below).

1014 For an overview, see Söhnen-Thieme 2018; for a more extensive study, see Ludvik 2007.

1015 For the first four stages, see above pp. 220–226.

1016 The Ghaggar/Hakra River is an intermittent river whose course runs south of the Sutlej and flows into the Thar Desert (as it flows only in the monsoon season, it is not shown on the map on p. xvii above). A summary of the state of research on the Ṛgvedic Sarasvatī can be found in Ludvik 2007: 11–37. According to Witzel (1984, following an idea of Hillebrandt), the heavenly pendant of Sarasvatī is the Milky Way. This view, however, is problematic; see Köfner 2008: 6.

1017 See Ludvik 2007: 32–37, 42, 52–53, and 57–60. Interestingly, this occasionally connects her with Savitr̥. In KhādGS II 4.8 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 308), Savitr̥ and Sarasvatī are expected to provide insight. Savitr̥, Sarasvatī, and Anumati are mentioned together in AVP XX 7.1 (tr. Kubisch 2012: 50) ≈ AV VII 24.1. In AVP XX 26.5 (tr. Kubisch 2012: 152), Savitr̥ and a mysterious *jagadrātrī* (or ˟*jagaddhātrī*) are mentioned; according to Kubisch, this *might* be Sarasvatī.

1018 See n. 948 on p. 218 above.

1019 Ludvik 2007: 60–72.

1020 As already observed by Söhnen-Thieme 2018.

Prajāpati's successor in the role of the "Allfather" was Brahmā. While in the MBh, the relationship between him and Sarasvatī was that of father and daughter (her husband is said to be Manu or the sage Matināra),[1021] in the Purāṇas, they also became consorts. However, Sāvitrī, too, was said to be Brahmā's wife, possibly even before Sarasvatī.[1022] The idea that Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī could be one and the same goddess simply and apparently suggested itself, and they were indeed identified with each other. One consequence of this merger was that Brahmā once and for all replaced Savitṛ as Sāvitrī's father.[1023]
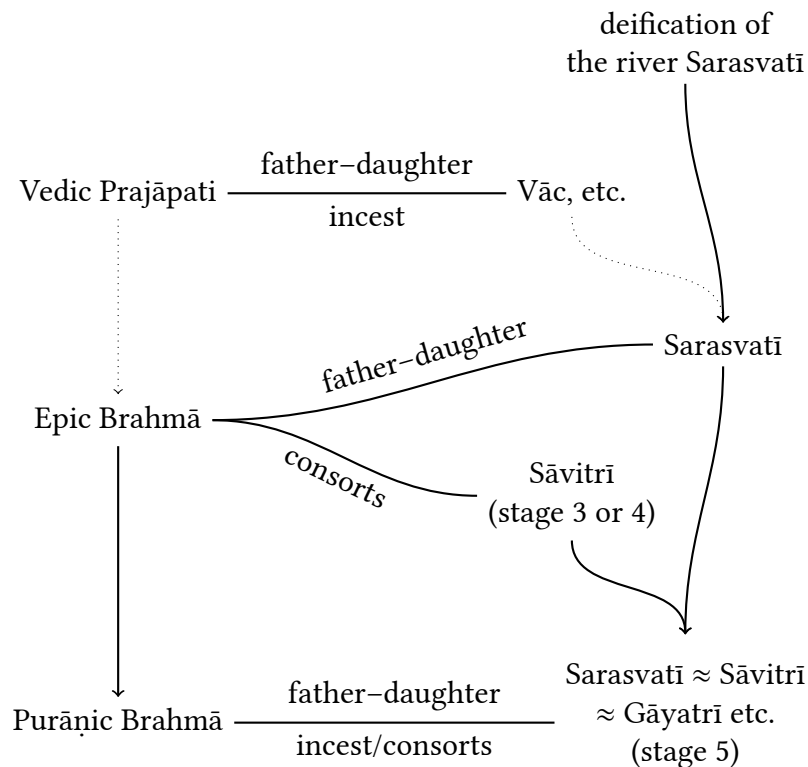
Figure 11: The identification of Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī

In the transition of the goddess from stage 3 to 5, it is not clear what happened when. In particular, it is unknown how exactly the goddess became Brahmā's wife. Their union may have been a result of the combination of the various notions and mythemes presented in the previous chapters of this study:

1021 Ludvik 2007: 116.

1022 Sāvitrī is repeatedly called his wife already in the late strata of the MBh: XIII 151.4b: *sāvitrī brahmaṇaḥ satī*; 134.57, App. 15.4408a: *sāvitrī brahmaṇaḥ patnī*; IV 14.19*297.4: *sāvitrīsahitaṃ caiva brahmāṇam paryakīrtayat*; 16.7*347.5: *brahmāṇam iva sāvitrī yathā ṣaṣṭhī guhaṃ yathā*.

1023 Note how this mirrors Prajāpati's earlier substitution of Savitṛ, whose significance as an individual god had declined even further by the time of the Purāṇas; cf. above p. 208.

the idea of a primordial couple Savitṛ/*sāvitrī*; the association of the *sāvitrī* with Brahmins, *brahmacarya*, and the learning of the Vedic texts ("*brahmans*"); or the evolving idea of a "mother" of the Vedas. The idea that Brahmā could or should have a consort (even if this inevitably meant incest) was certainly inspired by the various Prajāpati myths, and it could be that Sāvitrī was simply the first goddess so chosen.

Sāvitrī's identification with Sarasvatī, in any case, seems to have taken place after the bulk of the MBh had already been composed, that is, within the middle third of the first millennium CE. The following passage from the MatsyP, which possibly belongs to the earliest extant strata of Purāṇic literature (parts of it were perhaps composed in the sixth and the following centuries CE),[1024] illustrates the result of this process. The passage is concerned with the creation of the world, a process that also involves the *sāvitrī* and its deification:

> For the purpose of creating the world, having recalled the *sāvitrī*, he [i.e., Brahmā], then after he had recited it softly, having split his spotless body, made half the form of a woman, half having the form of a man.[1025] She is named Śatarūpā ("having a hundred forms") as well as called Sāvitrī, Sarasvatī, further Gāyatrī and Brahmāṇī, O foe-torcher. Therefore he fashioned a daughter who had come out of his own body.[1026]

The following verses describe how Brahmā falls in love with his daughter and, against the protest of his sons, marries her. Their incest produces Manu, the first of all men.

Among other things, the passage shows that the incest mytheme associated with Prajāpati had also become part of Sāvitrī's "biography." Sāvitrī no longer simply remained Savitṛ's daughter and the deification of the *sāvitrī* mantra.[1027] Rather, she could become part of a larger, amalgamated divine personage. Due to Sarasvatī's high profile and her connection to knowledge and learning (which, at least in the case of the study of the Vedas, is inaugurated by a *sāvitrī*), this identification proved to be lasting.

The effects of this identification even proved to be mutual to both. The BaudhGŚS,[1028] for instance, contains a prescription for a so-called *sarasvatīkalpa*.

1024 For a brief overview and references, see Ludvik 2007: 117–118.

1025 The translation emulates the somewhat inelegant style of the original.

1026 MatsyP III 30–32: *sāvitrīṃ lokasṛṣṭyarthe hṛdi kṛtvā samāsthitaḥ / tataḥ saṃjapatas tasya bhitvā deham akalmaṣam /*30*/ strīrūpam ardham akarod ardhaṃ puruṣarūpavat / śatarūpā ca sā khyātā sāvitrī ca nigadyate /*31*/ sarasvaty atha gāyatrī brahmāṇī ca parantapa / tataḥ svadehasaṃbhūtām ātmajām ity akalpayat /*32*/. For another translation and a more detailed discussion, see Ludvik 2007: 119.

1027 Interestingly, in the MatsyP, the mantra already exists before the creation of the goddess and, indeed, the entire world – most likely because she is the epitome of the Vedas, which are, of course, eternal..

1028 BaudhGŚS III 6; tr. Harting 1922: 46–47.

In this ritual, Sarasvatī is invoked by means of the *āyātu* mantra known from the Gāyatrī passage in the MNārU.[1029] After several other mantras and oblations, the goddess is dismissed with a verse beginning with *uttame śikhare*, which, again, is almost the same as that known from the MNārU.[1030] Sarasvatī is thus invited and dismissed by mantras dedicated to the Gāyatrī in its deified form. This shows just how far the identification of the mantra goddess and the (former) river goddess must have gone, at least in some contexts.

But the two goddesses were not always conflated. The first chapter of Bāṇabhaṭṭa's Harṣ. (seventh century CE), which is concerned with the divine origins of his own (the Vātsyāyana) line,[1031] contains an interesting story about Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī. The story recounts how Sarasvatī was once cursed by the choleric sage Durvāsas Ātreya because she was smiling when he made a mistake in singing a *sāman*. The goddess Sāvitrī, who was nearby, became very angry about this, and reprehended the sage. The vivid passage describing this scene deserves to be given here in full, especially because it contains one of the most verbose (if quite stereotypical) descriptions of the goddess, and the four personified Vedas accompanying her:

> the goddess was sitting close to the Self-Existent One [i.e., Brahmā] in a corporeal form; she wore a bast(-garment made) from the Wishing Tree and the Dukūla plant that was yellowish like the foam film of beestings, and had a knot in the girdle [?][1032] bound between her raised breasts into [?] the garment made from the fibers of a (lotus) rhizome; the courtyard of her forehead was brightened by the three rows of the ash-mark, banners of triumph, as it were, over the three worlds vanquished by ascetic force; a scarf made from a yoga strap was hanging from her shoulder, white like milk foam, similar to the Ganges stream bent to a circle by ascetic power; in her left hand she held a crystal jar, which resembled the lotus bud from which Brahmā emerged – she threw up the right hand, which was entwined with a rosary and studded with rings made from shells, reprimanding with the waving index finger:

> "Wretch! Prey to anger, malicious, ignorant, ignorant of the self, pseudo-Brahmin, miserable sage, outcast, outlaw – how can you, ashamed by stumbling over yourself, wish to curse Lady Sarasvatī, the mother of the three worlds, worthy to be worshipped by the multitudes of gods, demons (Asuras ["anti-gods"]), sages, and humans?"

1029 See above pp. 184–193.
1030 These verses, which are used in various versions of the Sandhyā, will be discussed below; see below pp. 248–249.
1031 For Bāṇa's ancestry, see generally Bakker 2021: 107–112.
1032 Or shawl? The meaning of *gātrikā* is unclear.

Thus she spoke, and the four embodied Vedas, outraged, left their rattan seats: with their mouths, they made the sound "*om*" resound; they filled the cardinal directions with the mass of their dreadlocks, which were swaying from being tossed up; they darkened the daylight with the shadows of their bulging black antelope skins, which were whirling around as they tied their belts; they made the world of Brahmā swing with the swaying of their indignant panting; from their foreheads, which gleamed with the pure ashes from the Agnihotra, they exuded the sap of Soma, as it were, under the guise of profuse sweat; wearing lovely chowries of Kuśa fibers, bark garments and canes, they used their round jars as if they were weapons – together with them, Sāvitrī left her grass cushion and stood up.[1033]

However, a curse cannot be undone, and accompanied by her friend Sāvitrī, Sarasvatī was forced go to the forest to live in exile. Soon the two divine maidens met a young man named Dadhīca, with whom Sarasvatī fell in love. Sarasvatī soon gave birth to a son, Sārasvata, and subsequently returned to Brahmā's world. For this reason, Sārasvata was raised by a hermit's daughter who had given birth to a son just at the same time as Sarasvatī. This son, who grew up together with the divine Sārasvata, was called Vatsa, and became the ancestor of the Vātsyāyana line.

I shall not attempt to explore how exactly one should relate Bāṇa's depiction of the deities to their actual worship at the time. Nevertheless, a few observations are in order. First, most of the imagery Bāṇa employs in this story is not specific to either Sāvitrī, Sarasvatī, or the personified Vedas. Rather, it is consistent with how forest hermits in general were imagined, with all of their clothing being made from natural substances, Sāvitrī wearing rings made from

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1033 Harṣ. I 3: 26 – 4: 10: (*atrāntare*) *svayambhuvo 'bhyāśe samupaviṣṭā devī mūrtimatī pīyūṣaphenapaṭalapāṇḍaraṃ kalpadrumadukūlavalkalaṃ vasānā bisatantumayenāṃśuke- nonnatastanamadhyabaddhagātrikāgranthiḥ,   tapobalanirjitatribhuvanajayapatākābhir iva tisṛbhir bhasmapuṇḍrakarājibhir virājitalalāṭājirā skandhāvalambinā sudhā- phenadhavalena tapaḥprabhāvakuṇḍalīkṛtena gaṅgāsroteseva yogapaṭṭakena viracita- vaikakṣyakā, savyena brahmotpattipuṇḍarīkamukulam iva sphaṭikakamaṇḍaluṃ kareṇa kalayantī, dakṣiṇam akṣamālākṛtaparikṣepaṃ kambunirmitormikādanturitaṃ tarjana- taraṅgitatarjanīkam utkṣipantī karam, 'āḥ pāpa, krodhopahata, durātman, ajña, anātmajña, brahmabandho, munikheṭa, apasada, nirākṛta, katham ātmaskhalitavilakṣaḥ surāsuramuni- manujavṛndavandanīyāṃ tribhuvanamātaraṃ bhagavatīṃ sarasvatīṃ śaptum abhilaṣasi' ity abhidadhānā, roṣāvimuktavetrāsanair oṅkāramukharitamukhair utkṣepadolāyamāna- jaṭābhārabharitadigbhiḥ   parikarabandhabhramitakṛṣṇājināṭopacchāyāśyāmāyamāna- divasair amarṣaniḥśvāsadolāpreṅkholitabrahmalokaiḥ somarasam iva svedavisaravyājena sravadbhir   agnihotrapavitrabhasmasmeralalāṭaiḥ   kuśatantucārucāmaracīracīvaribhir āṣāḍhibhiḥ praharaṇīkṛtakamaṇḍalumaṇḍalair mūrtaiś caturbhir vedaiḥ saha vṛṣīm apahāya sāvitrī samuttasthau |. In the original, this entire passage is a single sentence; to make the translation easier to read, I have divided it into several sentences. For another, in part similar, translation, see Cowell & Thomas 1897: 6–7.

shells, and so on. The antelope skins worn by the Vedas are an archaic Brahminical item. Their depiction could just as well have been applied to human characters. (Significantly, the two goddesses are also characterized as worshippers of Śiva.) The goddesses are thus fully anthropomorphic. In fact, neither of them are connected with their prehistory as personification deities. This is especially striking in the case of Sāvitrī, whose origin as a mantra goddess is only briefly alluded to by the word *mūrtimatī*, "having a corporeal form" or "being embodied," which possibly suggests that this is not her natural state.

3. The Sandhyā goddess

As said earlier, there are only a few temples these days that are dedicated to the mantra goddess.[1034] This has probably always been the situation. Unlike Sarasvatī, Gāyatrī/Sāvitrī never became a fully independent goddess. Her identification with Savitṛ's daughter did not change that. Rather, she remained, above all, a deified mantra – a mantra which, it must not be forgotten, was not meant to be recited by everyone. Like its recitation, its worship as a deity was subject to certain restrictions, both in terms of the contexts in which that worship was appropriate and in terms of who was allowed or obliged to perform it.

In Chapter 5, I argued that one of the most important rituals in which the GM was recited, was the Sandhyā.[1035] At first, the ritual was to be performed daily by the Vedic students. In the first centuries of the Common Era, it also became a part of the routine of initiated householders.[1036] At the same time, the number of repetitions tended to increase in various contexts, including the Sandhyā. The connection between the mantra and this ritual was thus further strengthened.[1037] It is therefore probably no surprise that the Sandhyā also came to play an important role for the deified form of the GM. As a matter of fact, the ritual not only became the first, but also the most regularly performed ritual in which the mantra was worshipped as a goddess.

In the following pages, I will outline how and into what the goddess and her worship in the Sandhyā developed over the course of the first millennium CE. In doing so, I will also discuss passages that (strictly speaking) are only

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1034 See above p. 5.

1035 See especially pp. 146–152.

1036 See above p. 150.

1037 AVPar XLI explicitly says that "when the sun has half sunk, when the sun has half risen – there the Gāyatrī is present, that is called the time of the juncture(/twilight)." AVPar XLI 4.1: *ardhāstamita āditye ardhodite divākare / gāyatryās tatra sāṃnidhyaṃ saṃdhyākālaḥ sa ucyate //*.

concerned with the mantra; as will be seen, keeping the GM and its deification apart becomes almost impossible at some point.

3.1 The early phase

As Chapter 6 revealed, the earliest evidence of goddess worship in the Sandhyā is found in the MNārU and the MānGS.[1038] The goddess these texts invoke goes by the name of Gāyatrī, and is clearly a deification, either of the mantra, the meter, or of both. It seems that this deification process started independently of the goddess Sāvitrī, Savitṛ's daughter. There are, however, at least two passages that also allow for a reading in which this goddess, too, might play a role that is relevant for her development in the Sandhyā. The texts containing these passages are the **CarS** and the **JaimGS**, both of which are probably not too far removed in time from the MNārU and the MānGS.[1039]

In the context of a prescription for a *payovṛtti* or "milk-diet," the CarS once mentions that one should "mentally contemplate/visualize the *sāvitrī*" (*sāvitrīm + manasā + dhyā*).[1040] Similarly, a passage in the JaimGS prescribes that one should "mentally contemplate/visualize the *sāvitrī*" for the rest of the day if one was asleep when the sun rose or when it set. According to the same passage, during the evening Sandhyā one should contemplate/visualize it mentally until the stars rise, and then recite the *sāvitrī*.[1041]

These formulations raise questions. Do they entail that one should simply "think about" the Sandhyā (i.e., the twilight time or the Juncture ritual) and the *sāvitrī*,[1042] or do they also include "imagining" them (or at least the *sāvitrī*)? Could it be that these passages refer to a practice involving the goddess Sāvitrī as we know her from the Sāvitrī story? Conspicuously, both texts are roughly

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1038 See above pp. 184–193.

1039 For the date of the JaimGS and the MānGS, see n. 465 on p. 112 above. For the date of the MNārU, see above p. 184.

1040 CarS VI (Cikitsāsthāna) 1.3.9: *saṃvatsaraṃ payovṛttir gavāṃ madhye vaset sadā / sāvitrīṃ manasā dhyāyan brahmacārī yatendriyaḥ //*.

1041 JaimGS I 13: *sāyaṃprātar udakānte pūto bhūtvā sapavitro 'jadbhir mārjayet āpohiṣṭhīyāb-his tisṛbhis tarat sa mandī dhāvatīti catasṛbhir vāmadevyam ante śucau deśe darbheṣv āsīno darbhān dhārayamāṇaḥ pratyaṅmukho vāgyataḥ sandhyāṃ manasā dhyāyed ā nakṣa-trāṇām udayād uditeṣu nakṣatreṣu trīn prāṇāyāmān dhārayitvā sāvitrīṃ sahasrakṛtva āvar-tayec chatakṛtvo vā daśāvaram athāgnim upatiṣṭhate 'gne tvaṃ no antama ity atha varuṇam upatiṣṭhate tvaṃ varuṇa uta mitra ity etayaivāvṛtā prātaḥ prāṅmukhas tiṣṭhann athādityam upatiṣṭhata udvayaṃ tamasaspartīty atha mitram upatiṣṭhate pra mitrāya prāryamṇa iti sa yadi sūryābhyuditaḥ sūryābhinimukto vā taccheṣaṃ sāvitrīṃ manasā dhyāyet saiva tatra prāyaścittiḥ |* (tr. Caland 1991: 22–23, where *sāvitrīṃ manasā dhyāyet* is misleadingly translated with "he should repeat mentally").

1042 As, for instance, in MBh XIII 107.62*491.3; see above p. 75. Cf. also GobhGS II 9.10–11 (tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 61), where the performer is expected to think of /imagine the deities Savitṛ and Vāyu while softly reciting formulae dedicated to them (*japati ... manasā dhyāyan*).

coeval (speaking in centuries). Moreover, at least the JaimGS passage is explicitly concerned with the Sandhyā.

As the CarS and the JaimGS otherwise take no notice of the goddess, no definite conclusion can be drawn. Nevertheless, I would argue that however they were intended, they could easily be understood as such, and in this way at least they might have inspired the imaginations of their recipients. The occurrence of the combination of the expression *manasā* + *dhyā* with *sāvitrī* in the two texts suggests that it was not restricted to "discipline-specific" discourses. It may even have been part of the everyday religious vocabulary. The author of the Sāvitrī story, for instance, might very well have been familiar with it, even though he presumably never studied either of the two texts.

In any case, the Sandhyā ritual that took shape around the same time and was reflected in texts such as the MNārU and the MānGS, had a much greater and far more lasting impact. This Sandhyā is characterized by special verses that invite and dismiss the goddess. The Gāyatrī passage in the latest recension of the MNārU, translated in full above, contains a total of three such verses, each of which is also found (with variants) in other texts:

First, there is a verse inviting the goddess, beginning with *āyātu varadā*, *āyāhi viraje*, or *āgaccha varade*, e.g.:

> The wish-fulfilling goddess shall come, the imperishable one equal to the *brahman*/Brahmā!
> Gāyatrī is the mother of the meters(/ metrical Vedic texts). Find pleasure in this formulation (*brahman*) of ours![1043]

A complementary verse, beginning with *uttame* (or *uttare*) *śikhare*, dismisses her again, e.g.:

> O you who are born on the highest peak on earth, on the summit of the mountain –
> having taken leave from the Brahmins, go, goddess, as you please![1044]

1043 MNārU, all recensions (with variants): *āyātu varadā devī, akṣaraṃ brahmasaṃmitam / gāyatrī chandasāṃ mātā, idaṃ brahma juṣasva naḥ //*; cf. MānGS (see also above pp. 189–190): *āyāhi viraje devy akṣare brahmasaṃmite / gāyatri chandasāṃ mātar idaṃ brahma juṣasva me //*; BaudhGŚS III 6.1 (see also above p. 243): *āyātu varadā devy akṣaraṃ brahmasammitam / gāyatrīṃ chandasāṃ mātedaṃ brahma juṣasva naḥ //*; ĀgnGS II 6: *āyātu varadā devyakṣaraṃ brahmasammitam / gāyatrī chandasāṃ mātedaṃ brahma juṣasva naḥ //*; ĀśvGSPar I 5 contains only a *pratīka* (*āgaccha varade devī*), as does AVPar XLI 2.4 (*āyātu varadₐetᵢy*).

1044 MNārU, all recensions (with variants) *uttame śikhare jāte, bhūmyāṃ parvatamūrdhani / brāhmaṇebhyo 'bhyanujñāntā, gaccha devi yathāsukham //*; cf. BaudhGŚS III 6.7 (see also above p. 243): *uttame śikhare devi bhūmyāṃ parvatamūrdhani / brāhmaṇebhyo hy anujñā-naṃ gaccha devi yathāsukham //*; ĀgnGS II 6 contains only the *pratīka*: "*uttame śikhare*"; ĀśvGSPar I 6: *uttame śikhare devi bhūmyāṃ parvatamūrdhani / brāhmaṇair abhyanujñātā gaccha devi yathāsukham //*.

Third, there is the *vedamātṛ* verse (*stutā mayā…*), which has been reconstructed in Chapter 6 on the basis of the two available attestations in the AV and the MNārU:

> Praised by me is the wish-granting Mother of the Vedas, propelling [and] purifying the twice-born!
> Having given me long life on earth (/ vital force, progeny, cattle, fame), wealth, [and] *brahmavarcasa*,[1045] she shall go to the world of *brahman*/Brahmā.[1046]

The *vedamātṛ* verse, too, dismisses the goddess.

Considering their wide distribution, the verses dedicated to the "Sandhyā goddess" represent one of the most distinctive features of her worship. The information they provide about her as a goddess, however, is limited: First, she is characterized as the mother of the meters or the Vedas. As we saw in Section 1, this characterization is well understood against the background of the development of the mantra.[1047] Second, the verses reveal that the goddess was thought to dwell on the "highest peak on earth." This place may perhaps best be identified as the peak of Mount Meru, the well-known cosmic mountain at the center of the cosmos – a location frequently identified as the abode of the gods.[1048] We do not learn what the goddess looks like, who she is related to, etc. With the rise of new ritual techniques and modes of worship in the middle third of the first millennium CE, however, more details and aspects were added to her and her worship. As we will see in the following, the mantra goddess became considerably more visual.

3.2 A glimpse into the Tantric Age

In dealing with the Gāyatrī passage, we have already come across one innovation in the worship of the goddess: the embedding of Tantric elements. Here, I will briefly return to the relevant paragraph in the Gāyatrī passage, before I present passages from two other texts that deal with Tantricized versions of the Sandhyā (AVPar XLI and ĀśvGSPar I 6). Some parts of these texts or of their contents could turn out to be younger than the tenth century CE in their present form (and would thus be outside the scope of this work). Nevertheless, taken together they illustrate very well what kinds of Tantric elements were being in-

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1045 The brilliance or luster resulting from knowledge of the *brahman*, i.e., the Vedas.

1046 For the text of this verse, reconstructed on the basis of the MNārUĀn and the AV; see above pp. 193–197. AVPar XLI 3.2 also mentions it, but only by means of its *pratīka*.

1047 See above pp. 238–239.

1048 For references, see Satinsky 2015; see also generally Mabbett 1983. The *vedamātṛ* verse sends her off to the world of Brahmā, which may easily be located atop Mount Meru.

troduced into the worship of the deified GM during the second half of the first millennium CE.

In the **MNārUĀn**, we encountered the following description, which can be analyzed as consisting of three components:

> [1a] The meter of the Gāyatrī is the *gāyatrī*, the Ṛṣi is Viśvāmitra, the deity is Savitṛ, [2] the mouth is Agni, the head is Brahmā, the heart is Viṣṇu, the tuft is Rudra, the womb is the Earth. [3] The Gāyatrī who, possessing *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, and *samāna*, has *prāṇa*s (vital forces), is white-colored, belongs to Sāṅkhyāyana's *gotra*, has twenty-four syllables, three feet, six abdominal sections(/ abdominal sides /bellies), and five heads. [1b] The application is in the Upanayana.[1049]

Stating the meter, the Ṛṣi, and deity of a mantra as well as its ritual application [1ab] is common practice in the Vedic domain, and was of course also done with the GM.[1050] In Tantric contexts, these specifications are even used to "Vedicize" non-Vedic mantras.[1051] Here, however, their presence is only natural.

Inserted between the mention of the deity and the application, we find information that is primarily concerned with the mantra's deity aspect. The second component [2] consists of a list that seems to correspond to what is commonly known as *aṅgamantra*s, a characteristic "accessory" of Tantric mantras. The *aṅgamantra*s are a set of elements associated with a deified mantra. They are usually six in number: *hṛd(aya)* "heart," *śiras* "head," *śikhā* "tuft," *varman*/*kavaca* "armor," *astra* "weapon," and *netra*(s) "eye(s)."[1052] In the early Tantric texts, however, they were only five, *netra* being excluded.[1053] In the MNārUĀn, too, the are only five elements. Moreover, the list deviates from the standard: *mukha* "mouth," *śiras* "head," *hṛdaya* "heart," *śikhā* "tuft," *yoni* "womb." We observe that *varman*/*kavaca* and *astra* are dropped, whereas *mukha* and *yoni* are given at the beginning and at the end, respectively. A further irregularity is that the GM's "*aṅgamantra*s" are not mantras, but gods.[1054]

Because the date of the MNārUĀn[1055] and of this set (which are not necessarily the same) is still unknown, it is difficult to interpret this deviation. One may hypothesize that the set of five (irregular) *aṅgamantra*s goes back to a pe-

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1049 MNārUĀn 35: [1a] *gāyatriyā gāyatrī chando, viśvāmitra ṛṣiḥ, savitā devat*_a- [2] *-ā*_a*gnir mukhaṃ, brahmā śiro, viṣṇur hṛdayaṃ, rudraḥ śikhā, pṛthivī yoniḥ.* [3] *prāṇāpānavyānodānasamānā saprāṇā śvetavarṇā sāṅkhyāyanasagotrā gāyatrī caturviṃśatyakṣarā tripadā̇ ṣaṭkukṣiḥ pañcaśīrṣā̇-* [1b] *-o*_u*panayane viniyogaḥ.*

1050 See, for instance, above p. 160; cf. Hanneder 1997: 153.

1051 See Hanneder 1997: 158–159; cf. Rastelli 2006: 207–209.

1052 *TAK* I, *s.v. aṅga.*

1053 *TAK* III, *s.v. netra.*

1054 Given that *aṅgamantra*s often follow a certain pattern, however, it would easily be possible to form mantras addressing the gods mentioned; see Padoux 2011: 70–71.

1055 See above p. 184.

riod in which they had not yet been standardized. Alternatively, they may also belong to a milieu in which they were not even expected to follow the standard: the *aṅgamantra*s are, after all, a characteristic of Tantric mantras. Furnishing the GM with normal *aṅgamantra*s might have implied that it is a Tantric mantra – and that was certainly not desired. The GM's "*aṅga*s" (which, interestingly, do not include the martial elements of armor and weaponry) might thus have been devised as Vedic analogues of the much more common Tantric ones.[1056]

Turning to the third component **[3]**, we encounter a curious mixture of mantra and deity elements. Gāyatrī is depicted as a (super-)anthropomorphic being, having five vital forces and a white color, that is, a fair complexion. Sāṅkhyāyana, to whose *gotra* or "clan" she belongs, might be another form of Śāṅkhāyana, a sage to which the ŚāṅkhGS and ŚāṅkhŚS are attributed. Why exactly Gāyatrī is said to be related to him is not clear to me; possibly it has something to do with the fact that this Ṛṣi is associated with the ṚV.

The following attributes are again concerned with her mantric aspect. That she has twenty-four syllables is (almost)[1057] self-explanatory. The same goes for her three *pāda*s (that these were ever understood in the sense of three human feet is rather doubtful). Her five heads, in contrast, most likely belong to the deity, not to the mantra (the six abdominal sections, which are mentioned before them, are addressed below). The heads are nevertheless symbolic. According to a note in the edition, four of them are the four Vedas, while the fifth is constituted by the Itihāsa-Purāṇas. It seems plausible to associate at least four heads with the Vedas. The number of five heads could have been inspired by Brahmā, who originally had five heads, too (according to a myth, the fifth was cut off by Śiva). There is, however, certainly more than one set of valid associations. Which one the author of the MNārUĀn had in mind is difficult, and probably impossible, to determine.

The GM's six "abdominal sections, abodminal sides," or "bellies" (*kukṣi*) are quite enigmatic. Do these belong to the mantra or to its deification? The ĀśvGSPar seems to connect the *kukṣi*s with the mantra's deity aspect. According to this text, the six *kukṣi*s are located in the North, East, South, West, as well as in the additional "cardinal" or "axial regions" above and below.[1058] However, the passage does not specify what they are. According to a note in the

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1056 Another irregular set of *aṅgamantra*s is found in the so-called "Ucchuṣmakalpa" of AVPar XXXVI. There, they are only four, *śiras* and *netra* being omitted: the passage 1.12–15 lists *hṛdaya*, *śikhā*, *kavaca*, and *astra*; see Bisschop & Griffiths 2007: 12–13. Interestingly, other early Tantric texts include both *gāyatrī* and *sāvitrī* in their list of *aṅgamantra*s; see Acharya 2015: xxxi–xxxvi and xliii.

1057 See n. 157 on p. 44 above.

1058 See below p. 256. Similarly, AVPar XLI 6, which only mentions two (anatomically normal) *kukṣi*s, states that they are "the ten directions" (*daśa diśaḥ kukṣī*); see below p. 254.

edition of the MNārUĀn, the six *kukṣi*s are the six *vedāṅga*s (*śikṣā* "phonetics," *chandas* "prosody," *vyākaraṇa* "grammar," *nirukta* "phonetics," *kalpa* "ritual," and *jyotiṣa* "astrology"). Neither of these explanations are very convincing, as they do not let us know why there are six *kukṣi*s in the first place.

In view of the fact that the specification *ṣaṭkukṣi* follows immediately after the syllables and the *pāda*s, I propose to interpret it as referring to an aspect of the mantra rather than to its deification. Henk W. Bodewitz and Ela Filippone have shown that *kukṣi* does not necessarily refer to the "belly" as a whole, but to any of two "abdominal sides" or "sections" – a division of the body that is unusual in anglophone cultures, but seems to be widespread in certain regions of Asia (both ancient and modern).[1059] Like the two halves of the rib cage, the two *kukṣi*s essentially form two joint "containers" that are not easily separated. In the case of the GM, the *kukṣi*s could therefore refer to the halves of each *pāda* (see Table 21).[1060]

	kukṣi 1	*kukṣi* 2
pāda a	tat sa-vi-tur	va-re-ṇi-yaṃ
	kukṣi 3	*kukṣi* 4
pāda b	bhar-go de-va-	sya dhī-ma-hi /
	kukṣi 5	*kukṣi* 6
pāda c	dhi-yo yo naḥ	pra-co-da-yāt //

Table 21: The six-part structure of the GM

*pāda*s of eight syllables do not have a caesura in their middle. However, inasmuch as their generally iambic cadence (i.e., the last four syllables) much more frequently follows a metrical pattern than their opening (the first four syllables) does, they do show a bipartite structure. The fact that breaking up the text of the mantra into two symmetrical halves involves cutting through words was not necessarily considered a problem. As a matter of fact, the ĀśvGSPar does just that in order to transform the GM into a set of six mantras to be applied to the body (*nyāsa*).[1061] While the context is different, this text proves that such a dissection was indeed carried out.

1059 See Filippone 2020 and Bodewitz 1992.

1060 Of course, one can also speculate that the *kukṣi*s refers to the so-called rectus abdominis muscle, which is a paired muscle with each muscle strand usually being divided into three segments (when visible, this is the commonly referred to "six-pack"). In this case, the *kukṣi*s could belong to the deification as well.

1061 ĀśvGSPar I 5: *tat savitur hṛdayāya nama iti hṛdaye, vareṇiyaṃ śirase svāheti śirasi, bhargo deva śikhāyai vaṣaḍ iti śikhāyāṃ, sya dhīmahi kavacāya hūṃ iti urasi, dhiyo yo no ne-*

Another Tantricized form of the Sandhyā is found in **AVPar XLI**. As part of the quite complex ritual prescribed by this text, the goddess is invited and later dismissed with the *āyātu* verse and the *vedamātṛ* verse.[1062] As usual, the GM is to be recited between these verses. The text also says that one should do so while "concentrating mentally, according to the syllables, on the dedication to the deity and the appearance" (2.6: *yathākṣaraṃ daivataṃ rūpaṃ ca manasi samādhāya*). What is meant by this is explained towards the end of the text.

We will explain the dedication of the syllables to the deities:

The first one [i.e., the first syllable, *tat*] belongs to Fire, the second [*sa*] belongs to the Aśvins, the third [*vi*] belongs to Soma, the fourth [*tur*] belongs to Viṣṇu;

to Savitṛ belongs the fifth [*va*], the sixth [*re*] belongs to Pūṣan, the seventh [*ṇi*] belongs to the Maruts, the eighth [*yaṃ*] belongs to Bṛhaspati;

the ninth [*bhar*] belongs to Mitra, the tenth [*go*] belongs to Varuṇa, the eleventh [*de*] belongs to Indra, the twelfth [*va*] belongs to All Gods;

to the Vasus belongs the thirteenth [*sya*], the fourteenth [*dhī*] belongs to the Rudras, the fifteenth [*ma*] belongs to the Ādityas, to Aditi belongs the sixteenth [*hi*];

to Wind belongs the seventeenth [*dhi*], to earth belongs the eighteenth [*yo*], the nineteenth [*yo*] belongs to the interspace, to the sky belongs the twentieth [*naḥ*];

four syllables [*pra*, *co*, *da*, *yāt*] are the deities of the cardinal directions.[1063]

This passage, which is concerned with the mantra rather than with its deification, links the individual syllables of the text with certain deities. Examples of interpretations that are in one way or another based on the syllables of a mantra (e.g., on their number or their phonetic similarity with another word) are already found in the Vedic literature, where they are in fact quite numerous.[1064] But linking each syllable, one after the other, with a specific item becomes most prominent in the Tantric domain, where sounds are generally viewed as parts

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→   *tratrayāya vauṣaṭ netralalāṭadeśeṣu vinyasyātha pracodayād astrāya phaḍ iti karatalayor astraṃ prācyādiṣu daśasu dikṣu vinyased eṣo 'ṅganyāsaḥ.*

1062   AVPar XLI 2.4 and 3.2; cf. above pp. 248–249.

1063   AVPar XLI 5.6–7: *akṣaradaivataṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ prathamam āgneyaṃ dvitīyam āśvinaṃ tṛtīyaṃ saumyaṃ caturthaṃ vaiṣṇavaṃ sāvitraṃ pañcamaṃ ṣaṣṭhaṃ pauṣṇaṃ saptamaṃ mārutam aṣṭamaṃ bārhaspatyaṃ navamaṃ maitraṃ daśamaṃ vāruṇam ekādaśam aindraṃ dvādaśaṃ vaiśvadevaṃ vasūnāṃ trayodaśaṃ caturdaśaṃ rudrāṇāṃ pañcadaśam ādityānām aditeḥ ṣoḍaśaṃ vāyavyaṃ saptadaśamaṃ bhaumam aṣṭādaśam ekonaviṃśam āntarikṣaṃ divyaṃ viṃśaṃ digdevatāni catvāry akṣarāṇi.*

1064   See Jamison 1986.

of some kind of *system* (e.g., the Sanskrit alphabet).[1065] The emphasis on a single mantra and the effort to engage with it from different angles, too, is a Tantric feature.[1066]

Against this background, it is conspicuous that all of the deities mentioned in the list are known from the Vedic pantheon. In fact, all of them are already listed in almost the same order in one of the most ancient Vedic texts, the MaitrS.[1067] Many of them were no longer widely worshipped as individual gods when AVPar XLI was composed. For this reason, their being linked with the syllables is only meaningful when viewed as whole: their collective presence in the ritual invokes a certain Vedic atmosphere, reinforcing the "Vedic potency" already associated with the GM. In other words, old wine has been put into new wineskins: the form being Tantric, the content is decidedly Vedic.

In its last passage, the text turns to the deification of the mantra. Earlier it was announced that, while reciting, one should concentrate mentally and "according to the syllables on the dedication to the deity and the appearance" (2.6). Since the information needed to concentrate on the syllables has been provided, we can assume that what comes next relates to the outer appearance of the (deification of the) mantra. The text reads:

> Her head is the sound *om*, together with the Vyāhṛtis, her hair is the bunches of grass, her body hair is the herbs and trees, her eyes are the sun and the moon, her laughter is lightning, her breasts are Viṣṇu and Varuṇa, her heart is Rudra, her nipples are the full and the new moon, her flanks are day and night, her two abdominal sections are the ten directions, her stomach is all knowledge-branches, [including?] grammar, her buttocks are the earth, her stance is wind, the lunar stations are her decoration.

> Sāvitrī has the appearance of illustrious Sarasvatī, her body is the mantras

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1065 This is, for instance, shown by the use of certain code words to designate syllables; see Padoux 2011: 12–14 and Wilke & Moebus 2011: 718–721. An exemplary case is given in Sāhib Kaul's Śārikā-Stotra, in which the mantra dedicated to the goddess Śārikā is "hidden"; see Hanneder 2020. Cf. also n. 725 on p. 169 above.

1066 Cf. Wilke & Moebus 2011: 723.

1067 MaitrS I 11.10: 171.14–172.8: *agnír ékākṣarām údajayad aśvínau dvyàkṣarāṁ víṣṇus tryàkṣarāṁ sómaś cáturakṣarām savitá páñcākṣarāṃ pūṣá ṣáḍakṣarāṃ marútaḥ saptá-kṣarām bṛhaspátir aṣṭákṣarām mitró návākṣarāṁ váruṇo dáśākṣarām índrā ékādaśākṣarāṁ víśve devá dvádaśākṣarāṁ vásavas tráyodaśākṣarāṁ rudráś cáturdaśākṣarām ādityáḥ páñ-cadaśākṣarām áditiḥ ṣóḍaśākṣarāṃ prajápatiḥ saptadaśó-.* In the AVPar, Viṣṇu and Soma have swapped positions; moreover this text omits Prajāpati in position seventeen and instead adds four plus four new items (beginning with Wind). Interestingly, the list possibly recognizes the six-*kukṣi* structure, in that the second, fourth, and sixth *kukṣi*s are marked by a different word order. However, we also observe that with the sixteenth syllable (curiously enough, the MaitrS deviates as well, but at position seventeen), the word order seems to become somewhat chaotic.

in the *pada* and *krama*,[1068] the Brāhmaṇas and ritual texts, in terms of [?] *gotra*, she is given by Brahmā, given by Brahmā – thus ends the Brāhmaṇa.[1069]

According to this passage, the goddess appears to be – or rather, appears as – little less than the entire cosmos. It is doubtful that this means that there was a real cult in which the deification of the GM was (exclusively) worshipped as a universal, "pantheistic" godhead. But even if it was only meant as praise, being identified with the cosmos – which also subsumes gods such as Viṣṇu and Rudra – is no small achievement for a mantra goddess.

The following characterizations, however, are more down-to-earth. The goddess, now called Sāvitrī instead of Gāyatrī,[1070] is said to look like Sarasvatī, and to belong to Brahmā's *gotra* – both characterizations that are easily understood against the relationships between these deities in this period.[1071] Nevertheless, the idea of an anthropomorphic deity is, again, not really pursued: rather, Sāvitrī's body is explicitly said to be constituted by ritual texts of various genres. The apparent "reluctance" to endow the mantra goddess with one concrete body reinforces the impression that she was perceived as a deification rather than an independent goddess in her own right. The ties to her "substrate" remained strong.

When looking at the development of the mantra goddess from her first appearances up to the Tantricized versions of the Sandhyā, we can observe that the number of visual attributes tends to increase. In the ritual texts, which, as we have seen, show a great concern for the formal or structural aspects of the

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1068 The words *pada* and *krama* designate two modes of Vedic recitation in which each word of a mantra is recited separately (*pada*) or bundled together with others (*krama*). The idea in this passage could be that her body is made up of the individual parts of the Vedic mantras (or just of the GM?). For a *pada* and *krama* reading of the GM, see Devasthali 1978: 574.

1069 AVPar XLI 6.4–5: *tasyā oṃkāraḥ śiraḥ saha vyāhṛtibhir darbhāḥ keśā oṣadhīvanaspatayo lomāni cakṣuṣī sūryācandramasau vidyud dhasitaṃ viṣṇuvaruṇau urasi rudro⁺hṛdayaṃ* [ed. *hṛdaye*; but cf. Bolling & Negelein 1909–10: 266: "We must take hṛdaye as it stands <in which case two deities would be expected> or emend to hṛdayam"] *paurṇamāsī cāmāvāsyā ca stanau ahaś ca rātrī ca pārśve daśa diśaḥ kukṣī sarvajñānāni vyākaraṇam udaraṃ pṛthivī śroṇī vāyuḥ sthānaṃ bhūṣaṇaṃ nakṣatrāṇi śrīsarasvatīrūpā padakramamantrabrāhmaṇakalpaśarīrā sāvitrī gotreṇa brahmadeyā bhavati brahmadeyā bhavatīti brāhmaṇam.*

1070 The text uses the word *gāyatrī* both for the meter and the deification of the meter and mantra, which are barely kept apart; cf. the following paragraph: "Like Agni among the gods, the Brahmin among humans, spring among the seasons, thus is the *gāyatrī* among the meters. So how many sounds does the Gāyatrī have, how many *pādas*, and what is her *gotra*, and what is her appearance, what does her body look like?" AVPar XLI 5.1–2: *tad yathāgnir devānāṃ brāhmaṇo manuṣyāṇāṃ vasanta ṛtūnām evaṃ gāyatrī chandasām | tad yathā gāyatrī katyakṣarā katipadā kiṃ vāsyā gotraṃ kiṃ vāsya rūpaṃ kīdṛśaṃ tasyāḥ śarīraṃ bhavati |.*

1071 See above pp. 241–246.

mantra (such as its meter), these attributes generally seem to be more abstract. Many of them are in some way linked to the mantra (its syllables, its ritual functions, etc.). Instances of "plain anthropomorphization" are only found in narrative texts, where Sāvitrī simply manifests as a divine girl or woman. The Sandhyā goddess's nature was thus quite complex: First, she was the deification of a mantra (and a meter) that has two names. Second, she was strongly associated – and at times even identified – with Sarasvatī. (Her identification with or as Savitṛ's daughter, on the other hand, seems to have ceased to play a role at some point, probably because Sāvitrī was "absorbed," so to speak, by the mantra goddess.)

Presumably during the last third of the first millennium CE, a system was devised in which the various identities of the goddess were, for the first time, consciously separated. Corresponding to the three different Sandhyās (morning, noon, and evening), a triad of goddesses was formed, consisting of Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī, and Sarasvatī. We have already encountered this triad in the Gāyatrī passage of the Āth recension of the MNārU, where it resulted from the insertion of Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī into the text. Neither the Āth nor the Ān recension tells us much about the relationship between the three goddesses. A much more detailed account, however, is found in the undated (but potentially late) **ĀśvGSPar**. Part of the elaborate Sandhyā ritual taught by this text is the "visualization of the deity" (*devatādhyāna*):

[1] Precisely the one that is called Juncture is worshipped as the deity of the mantra.[1072] One should visualize her as having one form at all times or, according to the junctures, with one form after the other.

[2] If (one worships her) in one form, then one should visualize this goddess Gāyatrī as one and the same at the three junctures; having the verses of praise (*ṛc*), the ritual formulae (*yajus*), and the melodies (*sāman*) as her three feet; having six abdominal sections in the North, East, South, West, above and below;[1073] having five heads, Agni as her mouth, Viṣṇu as her heart, Brahmā as her head, Rudra as her tuft; having a staff, a jar, a rosary, and the fearlessness-gesture[1074] as marks[1075] on her four arms; being bright-colored; wearing bright clothes, unguent, and garland; shining like a thousand autumnal moons; consisting of all gods.

1072 Cf. MārkP 81.55cd: *tvam eva sandhyā sāvitrī tvaṃ devi jananī parā*.
1073 Literally "in the (four) horizontal, the upper and the lower directions" or "regions."
1074 A gesture whose purpose is to dispel fear: an upright hand with the palm facing the viewer.
1075 The formulation of the text suggests that the goddesses do not carry these items in their hands, but wear them as marks on their (upper?) arms. Painting or even branding divine items as marks became a common religious practice in the medieval period; see also Rastelli forthcoming-a.

[3] If, in turn, (one worships her) in distinct forms, in the morning one should visualize the deity as a girl (*bālā*), located in the orb of the boy (*bāla*) sun [i.e., the morning sun]; red-colored; wearing red clothes, unguent, and garland; having four faces; having a staff, a jar, a rosary, and fearlessness as marks on her four arms; having ascended a goose as her seat; having Brahmā as her deity; uttering the Ṛgveda; presiding over the earth-world; bearing the name Gāyatrī.

[4] At noon, in turn, one should visualize the deity as a young woman (*yuvatī*), located in the orb of the young adult (*yuvan*) sun [i.e., the noon sun]; white-colored; wearing white clothes, unguent, and garland; having five faces, with three eyes on each face; having the moon at her crest; having a trident, a sword, a club, and a drum as marks on her four arms; having ascended a bull as her seat; having Rudra as her deity; uttering the Yajurveda; presiding over the interspace-world; bearing the name Sāvitrī.

[5] In the evening, in turn, one should visualize the deity as an old woman (*vṛddhā*), located in the orb of the old (*vṛddha*) sun [i.e., the evening sun]; dark-colored; wearing dark clothes, unguent, and garland; having one face; having a conch, a discus, a mace, a lotus, and fearlessness as marks on her four arms; having ascended Garuḍa as her seat; having Viṣṇu as her deity; uttering the Sāmaveda; presiding over the sky-world; bearing the name Sarasvatī.[1076]

The description of the first, uniform goddess is in many ways similar to that in the MNārUĀn:[1077] she has six *kukṣi*s; "*aṅgamantras*" (these even include

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1076 ĀśvGSPar I 6: [1] *yā sandhyoktā saiva mantradevatā khalūpāsyate, tāṃ sarvadaikarūpāṃ dhyāyed anusandhyam anyānyarūpāṃ vā,* [2] *yadaikarūpām ṛgyajuḥsāmatripadāṃ tiryagūrdhvādharadikṣu ṣaṭkukṣiṃ pañcaśirasam agnimukhīṃ viṣṇuhṛdayāṃ brahma-śiraskāṃ rudraśikhāṃ daṇḍakamaṇḍalvakṣasūtrābhayāṅkacaturbhujāṃ śubhravarṇāṃ śubhrāmbarānulepanasragābharaṇāṃ śaraccandrasahasraprabhāṃ sarvadevamayīm imāṃ devīṃ gāyatrīm ekām eva tisṛṣu sandhyāsu dhyāyed* [3] *atha yadi bhinnarūpāṃ tāṃ prātar bālāṃ bālādityamaṇḍalamadhyasthāṃ raktavarṇāṃ raktāmbarānulepanasragābharaṇāṃ caturvaktrāṃ daṇḍakamaṇḍalvakṣasūtrābhayāṅkacaturbhujāṃ haṃsāsanārūḍhāṃ brah-madaivatyāṃ ṛgvedam udāharantīṃ bhūrlokādhiṣṭhātrīṃ gāyatrīṃ nāma devatāṃ dhyāyed* [4] *atha madhyandine tāṃ yuvatīṃ yuvādityamaṇḍalamadhyasthāṃ śveta-varṇāṃ śvetāmbarānulepanasragābharaṇāṃ pañcavaktrāṃ prativaktraṃ trinetrāṃ candraśekharāṃ triśūlakhaḍgakhadvāṅgaḍamarukāṅkacaturbhujāṃ ⁺vṛṣabhāsanārūḍhāṃ rudradaivatyāṃ yajurvedam udāharantīṃ bhuvarlokādhiṣṭhātrīṃ sāvitrīṃ nāma devatāṃ dhyāyed* [5] *atha sāyaṃ tāṃ vṛddhāṃ vṛddhādityamaṇḍalamadhyasthāṃ śyāmavarṇāṃ śyāmāmbarānulepanasragābharaṇāṃ ekavaktrāṃ śaṅkhacakragadāpadmāṅkacatur-bhujāṃ garuḍāsanārūḍhāṃ viṣṇudaivatyāṃ sāmavedam udāharantīṃ svarlokādhiṣṭhātrīṃ sarasvatīṃ nāma ⁺devatāṃ dhyāyed.*

1077 That the uniform goddess is called Gāyatrī is probably due to the fact that, in the context of the Sandhyā, Gāyatrī was indeed the first goddess. This also explains her position as the first of three manifestations. Moreover, as Goudriaan (1987: 76) observed, "more often than once [...] in Tantric literature the idea is expressed that the young girl represents the Goddess in her purest, essential, unevolved state."

the atypical *mukha* or "mouth"; the "earth", on the other hand, is missing here), and so on. The jar and rosary, which we also encountered in the Harṣ., are typical attributes of an ascetic.[1078]

The characteristics of the three goddesses do not appear to depend on any peculiarities of the goddesses themselves, but on a scheme comprising five sets of three elements. To these belong, on the one hand, age (girl/ young woman / old woman), hue or color (red/white/ dark/black), Veda (ṚV/YV/SV), as well as "world" (earth/interspace/sky). Each of these three sets follows its own, internal logic.[1079] The remaining attributes, on the other hand, are based on the famous *trimūrti*: not only are the goddess associated, one after the other, with Brahmā, Rudra/Śiva, and Viṣṇu, they also have the corresponding number of heads, bear the characteristic attributes of the male gods as marks on their arms, and ride on their mounts.

Combining the GM with this kind of practice was evidently problematic for some. Immediately after the above descriptions, the ĀśvGSPar (I 6) states that *dhyānaṃ necchanty eke*: "Some do not accept the visualization." This was also stated for several other components of the Sandhyā, such as using the GM for an *aṅganyāsa*. Clearly, the reason for this is that these are of Tantric origin, and therefore *avaidika*, non-Vedic.[1080] Orthodox adherents of the Vedic tradition would have refused it. On the other hand, not all Tāntrikas would have performed the regular Sandhyā worship either, because many of them considered the Vedic ritual tradition subordinate to their own.[1081]

The middle ground between these two groups, however, was large. It is well known that in texts such as the Purāṇas (and, indeed, many others), which became important sources for mainstream Smārta Hinduism, Vedic and Tantric elements were frequently melded. The ritual practices they describe are in many ways "hybrid." In fact, not even the tradition that harbored the deification of the epitome of the "eternal" Vedas remained static. Tantric elements are even

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1078 See also n. 1075 on p. 256 above.

1079 For various examples of the phases of life or ages of the goddess, see Goudriaan 1987. The colors of the goddesses follow a pattern that is already found in the ŚvetU (IV 5). They could also be explained with the help of the three Sandhyās: while the morning Sandhyā is usually done close to sunrise – and therefore often during the reddish dawn – the evening Sandhyā can last up to the point where the first stars become visible, that is, when it becomes dark; cf. Kane II(1): 313. The order of the Vedas is the traditional one; that of the worlds is known from the three Vyāhṛtis.

1080 Cf. Hanneder 1997: 155: "For this one must keep in mind that the uncompromising Vaidikas, i.e. the Śrautas, as well as the Tāntrikas, were minorities keenly aware of their religious identity and therefore most probably alert to foreign influences." For the "Vaidika exclusivity," see also Sanderson 2015: 159–169.

1081 "Abhinavagupta's student Kṣemarāja (fl. c. 1000–1050)," for instance, "asserts that one should continue to perform the Vaidika ritual of venerating the Juncture of the day (*brāhmī saṃdhyā*) before one venerates it in the Śaiva manner (*śaivī saṃdhyā*) only so long as one's mind is in thrall to one's constructed social identity as a member of a caste." Sanderson 2015: 176.

found in texts that (often successfully) claimed to be part of the Vedic corpus: the various versions of the MNārU, associated with the KYV and the AV; the Atharvavedic AVPar; and the Ṛgvedic ĀśvGSPar. Many of the religious practices codified in such Tantricized Vedic texts have become quite popular.[1082]

Conclusion

Section 1 examined the meaning of the designation "Mother of the Vedas." As we saw, it was not only applied to the mantra, but also to its deified form. One could expect that this designation was the concomitant of the emergence of a family mythology,[1083] in which the mantra goddess is the mother, Brahmā the father, and the Vedas are their children. But evidently this was never the case. Despite the fact that it was applied to a real personification, the personification remained metaphorical.

The metaphor was based on the role of the mantra as the epitome of the Vedas. In the MānDhŚ and other texts, the GM is characterized as the essence of the Vedas, which in this case are temporally prior to the mantra. However, in the case of eternal entities, such as the Vedas, temporal priority is not a concept that is easily sustained. The idea of the epitome or extract of the Vedas could easily be turned on its head: if the essence of the Vedas is encapsulated in the mantra, the mantra may also be the original source from which they were extracted, their "mother," as it were. This also makes sense in view of the fact that the GM is the very first Vedic mantra to be learned.

The same logic also has to be kept in mind when facing the problem of the two "aspects" of the goddess: the metrical Gāyatrī and the mantric Sāvitrī. As we saw, these were more often conflated than distinguished, and it is generally unwarranted to assume the existence of two individual goddesses (see Figure 12 below). The reason for this is not only that both names were used as names of the mantra, but also that neither the meter nor mantra could claim temporal, or ontological, priority: in the emic view, both Vedic meters and Vedic mantras have existed since beginningless time. In practice, the same generally also applied to the corresponding deification(s).

Section 2 turned to another salient development: the entanglement of the mantra goddess with Sarasvatī. In the preceding Chapter, I suggested viewing

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1082 As Hanneder (1997: 162) remarked, the ĀśvGSPar in particular "has made its way into mainstream ritual and was not only quoted by later authors, but also used by Hillebrandt and Kane for their description of details of domestic ritual."

1083 Cf. Leeming 2001: 150: "Sāvitrī is the birth-giver of and sometimes, as Gāyatrī, a personification of the *Vedas*."

the development of the goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī in four stages: first, there was Sūryā Sāvitrī, whose father was Savitṛ and whose husband was Soma; second, Prajāpati was introduced as an alternative father; third, the goddess gave up her first name and became Sāvitrī (Brahmā's wife and/or Savitṛ's daughter and/or Tapatī's sister); fourth, she was identified with the mantra. Not long after the last stage, the emerging mantra goddess was identified with other goddesses, most importantly, with Sarasvatī. These new identifications inaugurated what we may call **stage 5** in the development of the goddess Sāvitrī.

Her conflation with Sarasvatī only seems to have taken place when she had already assumed her role as a mantra goddess, that is, sometime during the middle third of the first millennium CE. Ever since, the two goddesses have been frequently associated with each other. In the Harṣ., Bāṇabhaṭṭa simply depicts them as friends. Inasmuch as they appear as two (anthropomorphic) girls in this work, their identities are strictly kept apart. In ritual or religious contexts, on the other hand, this was less often the case: especially in the Sandhyā, Sarasvatī often simply appears as a manifestation, or different name, of Sāvitrī/Gāyatrī (or *vice versa*).
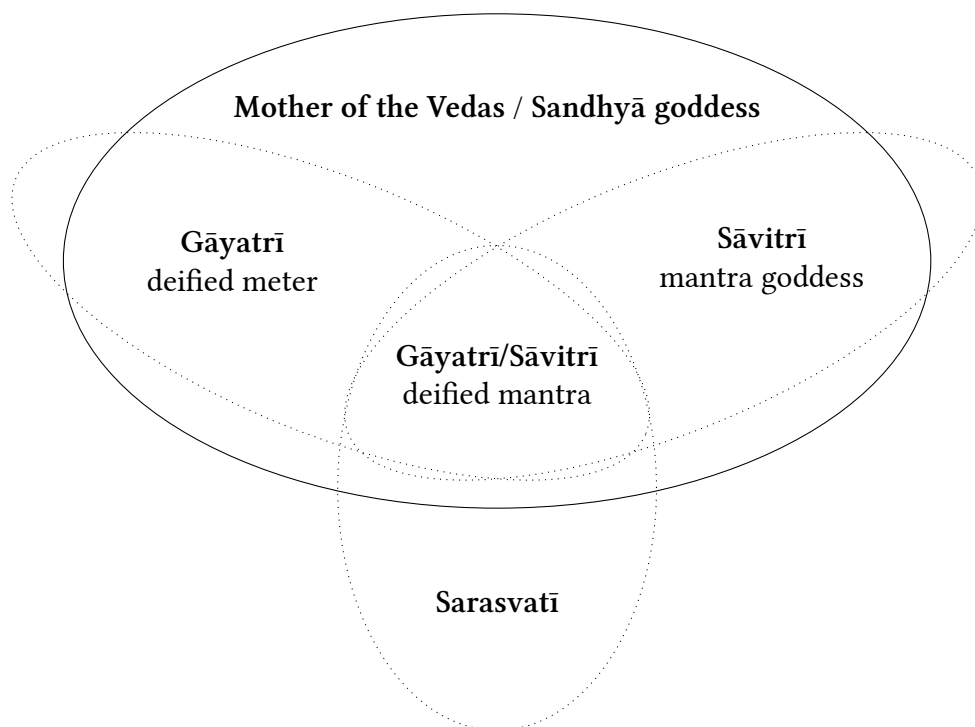
Figure 12: The Mother of the Vedas and Sandhyā goddess

Section 3 was dedicated to the mantra goddess as she appears in the Sandhyā. When looking at the history of the goddess in this ritual, we observed that her identities were in a constant flux. Indeed, the Sandhyā verses give the

impression that the primary idea was that this ritual should somehow include the worship of a goddess – the "Sandhyā goddess," as it were – but whether this goddess was understood as the deified *gāyatrī* meter, the mantra, or a combination of both, appears to have been secondary.

The earliest texts indicating the presence of goddess worship in the Sandhyā probably came into being in the centuries around the turn of the millennium. The idea that reciting the *sāvitrī* during the Sandhyā might also involve imagining it – or presumably, her – might even be alluded to in the CarS and the JaimGS, but the evidence is highly uncertain. The Sandhyā verses, on the other hand, unequivocally attest to goddess worship in the Juncture ritual. It seems plausible to me that the MNārUDr and the MānGS were composed at a time when goddess worship was not yet an integral part of the Sandhyā, and that subsequent versions tend to become more explicit and elaborate. Both the Upaniṣad and the Sūtra only contain the first Sandhyā verse in which the goddess is called Gāyatrī and is ambiguously described as the mother of the *chandas*es, the meters or metrical texts. In their terseness, they leave open whether the mantra itself was already conceived of as a goddess. However, the name Sāvitrī soon found its way into the ritual, and the characterization of the goddess as Mother of the Vedas leaves little doubt that the mantra, too, became included in the deification.

Her worship in the Sandhyā secured the mantra/meter goddess a permanent place in the daily lives of many devout twice-born. The Sandhyā, which, almost from the beginning, has been a composite ritual comprising various (and varying) practices, also became a hub for the introduction of a multitude of new ideas, speculations, and concepts surrounding the goddess. We saw that this even included Tantric elements: In the case of the MNārUĀn, we observed the introduction of atypical "*aṅgamantra*s," normally a characteristic accessory of Tantric mantras. In AVPar XLI, each syllable of the text of the mantra is linked with a specific Vedic deity – an emphasis on sound (rather than form) that became especially prevalent in Tantric traditions.

The Tantricization of the Sandhyā can be observed particularly in the increase of visual elements in the description of the deified form of the GM. The earliest texts in which the mantra goddess appears do not provide much information about her outer appearance. In the texts from the Tantric Age, on the other hand, details abound. There appear to be two modes of anthropomorphism occurring side-by-side: on the one hand, there are the mantric attributes: the three *pāda*s – literally "feet" – the six *kukṣi*s – "abdominal sections" or, as I have argued, *pāda*-halves – as well as the *aṅga* or limb mantras, which are routinely associated with or identified as deities, Vedas, and so on. Despite their designations, these properly belong to the mantra, or to its "body," and not to the goddess. On the other hand, the mantra goddess is also given a concrete

shape, for instance when she is said to have five heads, a fair complexion, to wear a garland, look like Sarasvatī, etc. Attributes such as these clearly belong to an anthropomorphic goddess.

Significantly, however, both aspects are frequently intertwined. The paragraph in the MNārUĀn starts with specifications concerning the mantra. It then states that Gāyatrī is alive (*saprāṇā*), has a fair complexion, and belongs to Sāṅkhyāyana's *gotra* – and immediately after, that it/she has twenty-four syllables, and so on. A similar description is given in the ĀśvGSPar, especially for her first, uniform manifestation. In these contexts, Sāvitrī/Gāyatrī remained a true personification deity, which is strongly dependent on its substrate. The explanation for this is simple: Unlike the river of the goddess Sarasvatī, for example, the mantra was always readily available. Its worship almost always included its recitation.[1084]

1084 As Brahmā's or Satyavat's wife, the goddess could also be venerated by those who were not allowed to recite the Vedic texts – a group which, significantly, also comprises women; cf. n. 934 on p. 215 above.

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General Conclusion:
From Verse to Deity

During the long time of its existence, the formula technically referred to as ṚV III 62.10 has played many roles: that of a verse that mentions, and a mantra dedicated to, the god Savitṛ; a manifestation of the *gāyatrī* meter; an excellent "opening" for recitation; an initiation mantra; a means of purification; the Vedic verse *par excellence*; and the epitome of the Vedas. Furthermore, it also came to be seen as a manifestation of the goddess Sāvitrī; a deification of the mantra and its meter; a Sandhyā goddess; a wife of Brahmā; and a form of Sarasvatī. In its two introductory chapters, the present study first dealt with the meaning and the designations of this formula, which has become known as the Gāyatrī-Mantra. The subsequent six chapters showed how the mantra gained prominence as a religious text and how it came to be deified.

To reconstruct this history, passages from more than one hundred Vedic and Sanskrit texts from about 1000 BCE up to 1000 CE were subjected to philological-historical analysis. The classical explanations of the use of Vedic mantras in the Gṛhya and Śrauta rituals were supplemented by a statistical approach that made use of the possibilities offered by the digitized version of the *UVC*. In addition, recent research on the history of Vedic religion and Early Hinduism was utilized to contextualize and describe the early development of the GM. To explain the process of deification, the study also drew on perspectives and insights from religious studies. This made it possible to trace the process of deification in a conceptually more precise way than a purely historical or philological analysis would have done.

Part I demonstrated that the adaptive reuses of the mantra in the mid-Vedic Śrauta rituals were decisive for its selection as the primary initiation mantra, and further argued that this function was mainly responsible for its subsequent rise to becoming an emblem of Brahminical Hinduism. **Part II** traced the development of the mantra into and as a goddess as far as the Tantric Age. It showed that several factors contributed to its deification, among them not only its personification, but also its identification with the goddess Sūryā, or Sūryā Sāvitrī. The following pages summarize this study's results in more detail.

1. The rise of an inconspicuous verse

In **Chapter 1** ("Meaning"), we saw that those who first heard Viśvāmitra's verse must have immediately understood it: in fairly simple language it formulates a wish shared by many poets of the time, namely the wish to obtain "splendor" (*bhárgas*). Specifically, this is the splendor of the well-known deity Savitṛ, who (as the two verses following the GM in the ṚV make clear) is also expected to inspire the composition of even more verses dedicated to him. Considering the cultural and religious background, it is possible that Savitṛ's splendor was thought to be some kind of inspiring "light." However, I argued that Savitṛ's splendor was probably synonymous with glory and fame. This is indicated first of all by the fact that it is not Savitṛ's *bhárgas*, but Savitṛ himself, who is expected to provide inspiration. Second, other Vedic texts always use *bhárgas* alongside similar words, such as *várcas* "luster," or *yáśas* "fame."

In the course of the further development of Vedic ritual, the verse, like thousands of others, became the content of a fixed mantra. As a consequence, its literal meaning became secondary.[1085] Although it was at least partially understood throughout the entire Vedic period, as a mantra its use was virtually always determined by its formal features. This is first of all shown by its reuses in Śrauta ritual. **Chapter 3**[1086] ("Adaptive Reuse in Śrauta Ritual") presented an overview of these reuses and analyzed their interrelationships. It showed that the most important features of the mantra were that it mentions the god Savitṛ and is set in the *gāyatrī* meter. Thus, its employment was determined by what I have called the "deity principle" and the "metrical principle":[1087] verses mentioning Savitṛ were frequently recited at the beginning of liturgies, because Savitṛ, the "Impeller," is responsible for setting things in motion in general. The *gāyatrī* meter, on the other hand, was considered the "prototypical first," or "primordial," meter, and was associated with the early morning, the beginning of the day. Due to the properties associated with Savitṛ and the *gāyatrī* meter, the GM was very well suited to serve as the first or opening verse in various contexts, for example in the Agnyupasthāna litanies and most variations of the Vaiśvadeva-Śastra.

In Śrauta ritual in general, the GM was simply considered a perfect specimen of a *sāvitrī* in the *gāyatrī* meter. There were also other frequently cited and reused *sāvitrī*s, which sometimes even took the place of the GM. Looking at the various reuses from a diachronic perspective, however, a certain development can be discerned. We can distinguish two chronological phases of text produc-

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1085 For the relationship between mantras and language, see above pp. 11–13 (Section 2.1).

1086 Chapter 2, whose focus is on a later phase in the GM's history, is summarized below p. 267.

1087 See above pp. 13–18 (Section 2.2), especially pp. 15–16.

tion, which, moreover, also took place in different regions. First, there was an early, western/central phase, associated with texts such as the MaitrS, the TaittS, and the early parts of the AitB. In these texts, the GM is not regarded as having any special importance as an individual mantra. A later, eastern phase can be associated with the ŚatB, the VājS, the KauṣB, and the ŚāṅkhŚS, whose composition and formation were in many ways influenced by Western precursors. In this second phase, there are some indications that the GM may already have acquired a certain renown as a special mantra, for instance in the Aśvamedha hymn, where it seems to have inspired the creation of the other *gāyatrī sāvitrī*s.

It was also towards the end of the second, late-Vedic phase that the most decisive moment in the history of mantra took place. Around the time of the ŚatB, mantras were sought that would inaugurate the study of the Vedas as the first texts to be imparted. A number of mantras were to fulfil this function, not only the GM, but also other *sāvitrī*s (ṚV VII 45.1 and V 81.1; V 82.1 was taught as part of a repeated, additional Upanayana). In **Chapter 4** ("Selection as Initiation Mantra"), I argued that these mantras did not simply emerge as initiation mantras from the mists of time, but were selected according to certain principles. These principles can be inferred from the common features of the initiation mantras we know of: (1) explicit mention of Savitṛ; (2) dedication exclusively to Savitṛ; (3) appropriate meter; and (4) being the first verse in (5) a Ṛgvedic hymn dedicated to Savitṛ. Even if one only applies the first, most important principle to the ṚV, it appears that there are not even a hundred *sāvitrī*s in total.

If one checks how often the *sāvitrī*s that were actually used as initiation mantras had been cited or reused in Śrauta texts before they were selected, it turns out that they are among the most frequently mentioned *sāvitrī*s. This textual frequency reflects the circumstance that they were often recited in various rituals across schools. I suggested that the wide distribution of these verses was the consequence of a positive feedback loop of reciting and listening, whose effects on individual mantras I described as a kind of "snowball effect": Whenever a mantra is recited, it also leaves a certain impression in the mind of its reciter and of those listening (for example, the other priests in a Śrauta ritual). Every recitation serves to increase its familiarity and prominence, and like a rolling snowball picking up even more snow and momentum the larger it becomes, a single mantra becomes better known the more often it is recited and heard.

The "snowball effect" also has an influence on how often a mantra is reused. In the emergence of rituals (strictly religious or otherwise), creativity and conscious design often play at least as important a role as the codification of habitualized acts. Moreover, we observe that rituals are frequently modified and adapted to new circumstances. In the case of Vedic rituals, it was Brahmins who were primarily responsible for this. In particular, there are clear indications that Gṛhya rituals (including the Upanayana) were at some point

revised by Brahmin experts who were proficient in the Śrauta texts and rituals. When looking for suitable mantras for a new ritual, or a ritual that was to be modified, these experts primarily resorted to collections of mantras that were already used in Śrauta ritual. It stands to reason that in doing so, they would tend to reuse mantras that were well known to them. As I argued in Chapter 4, at least in the case of the *sāvitrī*s that came to be used as initiation mantras, this indeed seems to have been the case: all of them were already being reused in a range of rituals before they were selected for the Upanayana.

The earliest text to mention the use of the GM as an initiation mantra is the ŚatB. It does so in order to present it as the better alternative to a *sāvitrī* in the *anuṣṭubh* meter. This suggests that already in the late-Vedic period, *sāvitrī*s in other meters were used as well, possibly even in the standard version of the Upanayana. It is nevertheless plausible that the GM had early established itself as the primary initiation mantra, above all because the *gāyatrī* meter was associated with the Brahmins (the *triṣṭubh* and the *jagatī* were associated with Kṣatriyas and Vaiśvyas, respectively). An important side effect of this development was that the word *sāvitrī* came to be used as a name of the GM: by the time of the early Gṛhyasūtras, it was in most cases no longer necessary to specify which *sāvitrī* was meant, but rather to indicate if it was a *sāvitrī* other than ṚV III 62.10. This individuation represents a significant step in the career of the mantra.[1088]

In the following centuries, the GM became strongly associated with specific functions that were in many ways prefigured by its employment in Śrauta ritual. As it became the mantra that could make a person a full member of the *ārya* society, it also became important outside the liturgical and ritual domains. In **Chapter 5** ("Status in Early Hinduism"), I argued that in Early Hinduism, the status ascribed to the GM as well as its use in ritual practice continuously influenced each other. Thus, the GM was not only the first mantra to be taught in the initiation ritual, but also the key mantra in the first (and last) ritual of the day, the Sandhyā. In this ritual, its recitation above all served as a purificatory practice or *prāyaścitta*, whose purpose is to uphold or restore the pure status of the twice-born reciter. As the mantra that makes a person a twice-born in the first place, the GM was perfectly suited for this function. As a matter of fact, repetitive recitation of the GM features prominently among the many kinds of *prāyaścitta*s described in the Dharmasūtras.

The position of the GM in the Upanayana and the Sandhyā led to it being considered not only the typical first but also the "foremost" or most important Vedic verse. Several Gṛhyasūtras contain lists of divinities worthy of receiving oblations. In these lists, the GM is the only verse present, and usually precedes the Vedas. This shows that it was not only considered the Vedic verse *par excel-*

1088 Cf. above pp. 18–20 (Section 2.3).

lence, but even placed on a par with the Vedas. It even came to be regarded as an epitome of the Vedas. This role became manifest on two levels. On the practical level, it was in some cases possible to substitute recitation of (parts of) the Vedas with the recitation of the GM. On the "theological" level, the three *pāda*s of the verse were interpreted as an extract from the three Vedas. Similar to the syllable *om* – and often even together with it as well as with the Vyāhṛtis – the GM came to be considered "le Veda essentiel," the "essential Veda," as Malamoud (1977) put it.

One of the driving forces behind this development was the extension of the initiation ritual. In the beginning, only those Brahmins who engaged in the arduous study of Vedic texts underwent the Upanayana. At some point, however, the Upanayana became a rite of passage that was declared obligatory for non-Brahmin *ārya*s as well. The corollary of this extension was that in practice, almost every initiate learned the GM in order to become a full-fledged member of the *ārya* society. For a great number of twice-born, the GM was the only Vedic mantra they learned, and was therefore perceived as their most important element. This may have set in motion yet another feedback loop: we can imagine that when non-specialists began to view the GM as the essence of the Vedas, Brahmins trained in the Vedas, too, became more inclined to regard and also proclaim it as such.

The significance of the GM in Brahminical, or Veda-centered, Hinduism also inspired the creation of similar mantras in other traditions. These strongly modified versions of the GM were not dedicated to Savitṛ, but to the central deity (or deities) of the tradition that produced them. In **Chapter 2** ("Designations"), I argued that the modified GMs were responsible for the revival of, or renewed the attention to, a category that had, by that time, become obsolete: the category of *gāyatrī* verses. As the Vedic GM was naturally considered the original and most important one, it became possible to simply refer to it as *gāyatrī* without further specifications (nevertheless, occasionally *sāvitrī gāyatrī* or *gāyatrī sāvitrī* were used as well). The substitution of the name *sāvitrī* with *gāyatrī* (or their combination) can best be explained by the fact that the entire category had regained significance. Since the modified GMs can be dated to the second century CE at the very earliest, "Gāyatrī" must have established itself as another name of ṚV III 62.10 only after this time, probably around the third century CE. Since then, both class names have been used equally as names of the mantra, while never fully shedding their original meanings.

2. The deification of a well-known mantra

The second part of this study traced the development of the mantra into and as a goddess up to the Tantric Age. In the Introduction, I suggested that we understand the process of deification as an entangled interplay of intra- and inter-personal creation, appropriation, and modification of information and ideas.[1089] When studying deification from a historical perspective, we can only observe the surface of this process by identifying its results in the extant sources. Only in some cases is it possible to make inferences about the actual flow and transformation of ideas. In the particular case of the sources relevant to the deification of the GM, this can be done comparatively well: as many of them were reworked or updated several times over the centuries, we are in a position to infer how the redactors might have understood the original versions. Moreover, the textual sources are fairly numerous, thus offering us insights into conceptions concerning the (deified) GM prevalent in a certain period.

There certainly was more than enough "backing material" for the development of the notion of a mantra goddess.[1090] **Chapter 6** ("Personification, Divinization, Deification") showed that the earliest passages attributing the qualities of divinity and personhood – defined here as the key features of deities[1091] – to the GM are found in a small number of chronologically late passages in several Vedic texts: the JaimUB, the GopB, the MNārU, and the AV. Each of these passages exists in several versions that reflect historical developments.

In the JaimUB, the mantra appears as the partner or spouse of the Vedic god Savitṛ. The text exemplifies a well-known aspect of the Vedic religion: everything that has a name can be personified. While the numerous personifications in the Vedic texts were certainly given religious importance, their existence does not imply that they also had a cult.[1092] Even though the GM in the JaimUB is a divinity of sorts, the motive behind the creation of the passage was not to provide the basis for or promote the worship of its deified form but to explain the efficacy of the mantra.

In the GopB, the personification of the mantra was further developed. In this text as well as in several Dharma texts, the mantra is mentioned as the

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1089 See above pp. 28–30 (Section 3.3).

1090 In the Introduction (see n. 49 on p. 12 above), I mentioned that emic traditions consider mantras a form of speech or language (*vāc*), which, as many other concepts and abstractions, has been considered a deity since the ṚV. In the TaittB, Vāc is even once called "Mother of the Vedas" (see n. 988 on p. 234 above). As goddesses however, Vāc and Sāvitrī only came closer to one another via Sarasvatī (above p. 241), and I have not found that she contributed much to the deification of the GM specifically.

1091 See above pp. 30–34 (Section 3.4).

1092 Indeed, I would even venture the hypothesis that there were recipients of the texts who would have understood them as purely metaphorical devices, even though the specific concept of metaphor was alien to them.

mother of the initiate, that is, of the *brahmacārin* who has undergone the Upanayana. One might assume that this concept was particularly formative, especially considering that those who were confronted with it were generally young boys who had just been separated from their mothers. It seems plausible that many *dvija*s would at least remember it for the rest of their lives. Nevertheless, the personification of the GM in the Upanayana does not seem to have led to the development of a mother goddess – at least not of a goddess who would be the second mother of the twice-born.

The MNārU, which exists in (at least) three different versions, contains a passage that is dedicated to a goddess worshipped in the Sandhyā. In its earliest recension, a goddess called Gāyatrī is invoked. A parallel passage in the MānGS suggests that this goddess was originally (and above all) the deification of the *gāyatrī* meter. Inasmuch as the GM might have been easily understood as a manifestation of the deified *gāyatrī* meter, however, its deification was probably already prefigured in these Sandhyā liturgies. Her characterization as *chandasāṃ mātṛ*, "mother of the meters" or "metrical Vedic texts," was, just like the name Gāyatrī itself, also applicable to the deification of the mantra.[1093] Since the invocation of the goddess always included the recitation of the GM, the step from *gāyatrī* to Gāyatrī was not a big one.

The two later recensions of the MNārU also invoke the goddess(es) Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī, which to me suggests that the redactors (and users) of these passages understood the original passage to be about the mantra goddess. Moreover, they also composed and included what I have called the *vedamātṛ* verse. The purpose of this verse is to dismiss the *chandasāṃ mātṛ* who is invoked at the beginning of the liturgy. The wording of this verse, which even became part of the AV, leaves no doubt that the goddess worshipped in the Sandhyā was the deification of the GM. The latest version of the MNārU even contains a description of her anthropomorphic manifestation.

I assume that the textual developments in the JaimUB, GopB, MNārU, and AV reflect different stages of a protracted process of deification. The authors and redactors of these texts (and the creators and modifiers of the rituals for which they were used) belonged to various regions and times, and to various Vedic schools. Since the texts were handed down and also modified over a long period of time, generations of people were involved in their transmission. The number of people involved in conveying the simple idea that the GM has personhood and divinity was certainly even greater. Outside the domain of sacred texts, the reinterpretation of verbal information must have taken place even more frequently: while one person may occasionally have spoken of the mantra *as if* it was being endowed with divinity and personhood, another may have un-

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1093 There seems little reason to believe that two separate goddesses emerged. Rather, at best we can speak of two aspects of one goddess; see above pp. 239–240.

derstood this as being about a mantra that, in fact, *is* a divine being. One can therefore well imagine that at some point, one among them would eventually consider the GM a real deity and worship it as such, especially if he also knew authoritative texts that could support the idea.

Chapter 7 ("Identification with Sāvitrī") demonstrated, however, that the mantra did not become a goddess all on its own, so to speak. The emergence of the mantra goddess was also facilitated by another process, namely the identification of the mantra with a pre-existent goddess. To my knowledge, this first happens in the MBh in the famous Sāvitrī story. In this story, the childless king Aśvapati repeats the GM – here still only called *sāvitrī* – a great many times. After eighteen years, this approach bears fruit, as a goddess called Sāvitrī appears before him and promises that he will obtain a daughter: the princess Sāvitrī. Later versions of the story leave little doubt that the Sāvitrī is no longer only a divine mantra, but also an anthropomorphic goddess.

As a close reading of the text shows, however, Aśvapati's recitation of the *sāvitrī* does not necessarily have to be interpreted as the intentional worship of a mantra goddess. As a matter of fact, a goddess called Sāvitrī already existed before the mantra was deified, and probably before it was even composed. In the ṚV, we learn of Sūryā, a solar divinity that came to be recognized as Savitṛ's daughter, and as such was later also called Sūryā Sāvitrī. Her mytheme was characterized by three different elements: her role as the archetypical bride; the self-choice of her spouse; and her association with twins, in the Vedic case, the Aśvins. To varying degrees these three elements are even detectable in other IE mythical characters, which makes it likely that they go back to a PIE precursor.

While in the epic story, the goddess herself appears only briefly, at least two of her characteristics are present in the princess who is named after her: Sāvitrī, who is also explicitly said to be like her eponym, is said to be very beautiful, and she also chooses her husband herself. These resemblances suggest that the goddess Sāvitrī was indeed Sūryā Sāvitrī's successor, or her manifestation in epic literature. The goddess and the mantra of the same name had never before connected. I suggested that bringing them together may have been so surprising that it had a comical effect. But irrespective of whether this was the case or not, the story is the earliest evidence for a fully anthropomorphic deification of the mantra.

The goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī seems to have added what the deification of the mantra had been missing so far: agency, as well as an appealing anthropomorphic form. Already the very idea of associating the goddess called Sāvitrī with the mantra called *sāvitrī* may have facilitated the deification of the latter. The originally independent goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī, on the other hand, thereby acquired a new manifestation. Depending on the perspective, one could think of the goddess either as a deity that manifests in, but is essentially independent

of, the mantra – a mantra goddess – or as the deified form of the mantra itself, now having a visually perceptible, or imagined, form.[1094] As later texts show, the second conception became the more important one.

Chapters 6 and 7 both identified various factors that probably contributed to the deification of the mantra: the personification of the mantra in the JaimUB, the GopB, and various Dharma texts; the deification of the *gāyatrī* meter; and the association and even identification of the mantra with a pre-existent goddess. In Chapter 5, we also observed that the mantra was worshipped alongside deities such as Indra and Prajāpati (without, however, being actually personified).[1095] During the course of the first millennium CE, most of these developments and relationships faded into the background or came to an end altogether. The most important source contributing to the conception of the deified GM became the mantra itself.

As shown in **Chapter 8** ("The Mantra Goddess"), in Classical and early-medieval Hinduism, the qualities of the mantra were gradually integrated into the personality of its deification. "Mother of the Vedas" (*vedamātṛ*) became the most important epithet and second name of the emerging goddess. The designation was based on the role of the mantra as the epitome of the Vedas. This conception was turned on its head: while originally, the mantra was thought to have been extracted *from* the Vedas, it now became their source. However, despite the fact that it was used for a goddess who was, by that time, certainly believed to be real and was regularly worshipped by many, this personification always remained metaphorical. Just as in the case of the mother of the initiate, the deification of the mantra was not conceived of as an actual mother goddess. In one MBh story, the mantra goddess is even portrayed as a girl, "giving birth" to the (anthropomorphic) Vedas by emitting them from her mouth.

Sometime during the middle third of the first millennium CE, the mantra goddess was also conflated with Sarasavatī, who is well known as the Hindu goddess of knowledge, learning, music, and the arts. Both Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī were thought to be Brahmā's wife. The idea that they could be one and the same suggested itself, and they were indeed identified with each other. As a result, Brahmā once and for all replaced Savitṛ as Sāvitrī's father. Here we can observe that the identities of deities can be very fluid, perhaps even more fluid than that of literary characters.[1096] In Bāṇa's Harṣ., for example, Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī play the roles of two befriended goddesses and are therefore – inevitably – strictly distinguished.

1094 Cf. above pp. 24–28 (Section 3.2).
1095 In Chapter 8, I also briefly deal with passages in the CarS and the JaimGS that possibly prefigure her worship in the Sandhyā; see above pp. 247–248.
1096 Cf. above pp. 24–25.

Continuing from observations made in Chapter 6, I turned to later versions of the Sandhyā liturgy, and in doing so focused on the goddess herself rather than on the process of deification. As we saw, the goddess came to occupy a central position in the Sandhyā, which is why I suggested calling her a "Sandhyā goddess." Three verses dedicated to her were reused in several versions of the Sandhyā liturgy (according to the BaudhGŚS, two of them were even used for the worship of Sarasvatī). The Sandhyā became the most important ritual in which the deified GM was worshipped, and also became a hub for a multitude of new ideas and concepts surrounding the goddess. Texts such as the MNārUĀn, AVPar XLI, and the ĀśvGSPar use Tantric forms to add further details to the mantra and its deification, but fill these forms with Vedic content. Looking at the development of the mantra goddess in these texts, we can observe that she became much more visual. Two modes of anthropomorphism, which are frequently intertwined, can be distinguished: on the one hand, the description of parts of the text of the mantra as body parts; on the other, the elaboration of the figure of the goddess herself.

Notwithstanding this increase of visual elements, the elaboration of her anthropomorphic manifestation, and her identification with Sarasvatī, the Mother of the Vedas or Sandhyā goddess remained, above all, the deification of a mantra. In contrast to Sarasvatī's river (which, at some point, dried up and was then replaced by various other rivers), the mantra could always be made manifest by means of recitation. This was probably one of the reasons why very few temples were dedicated to the goddess: every place and time where the recitation of Vedic texts was permitted was also an opportunity to worship her.

∵ **APPENDICES** ∵

Translations of the Gāyatrī-Mantra

This appendix lists all scholarly and complete translations of the Gāyatrī-Mantra into European languages that I came across during my research.[1097] (Many more, much less accurate translations or paraphrases exist, but are not included here.) I call a translation "scholarly" if it is oriented around the original wording and is done by someone who in my (admittedly subjective) judgment has learned Vedic or Sanskrit beyond the level of a mere superficial acquaintance. Both due to their great number and my own language skills, English and German translations predominate. It has to emphasized, therefore, that this list is *not* the result of a systematic search for translations.

The earliest known paraphrase in a non-Indo-Aryan language, Persian, is that by the Mughal prince Dara Shukoh (1615–59). In his Sirr-i Akbar, there is an echo of a passage from the MaitrU, in which the GM is explained.[1098]

> Those who are well-read in the Vedas have said: He should meditate on the sun in such a way as to visualize it within himself. Those who are well-read in the Vedas have also said this: The shine of the mind that we have found is an image of this one. You should say: O Sun, give us the shine of the mind from your light![1099]

It is the last sentence that is meant to reflect the content of the GM; however, it cannot be called a translation.

According to Theodor Benfey, the GM was first translated into a European language by Manuel da Assomcoon (= Manoel/Manuel da Assumpçam/Assumpção), a Portuguese missionary who worked in Bengal in the eighteenth century; Benfey's statement, however, is probably the result of a misunder-

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1097 The possible meanings of the GM are discussed in Chapter 1.

1098 For a partial translation of this passage, see above pp. 50–52.

1099 *Ki bed-xwānān cunín gufta and: Va ba āftāb cunín maśghuli kunad ki o rā ba tasavvur-i xwad darāvarad. Va bed-xwānān cunín gufta and ki rauśani-yi 'aql ki mā yāfta em, az hamin tasavvur ast, bāyad ki bigoyed ki "Ai āftāb, mā rā ham az nūr-i xwad rauśani-yi 'aql bidahed!"* Sirr-i Akbar: 248 (§7). I would like to thank Stephan Popp and Svevo D'Onfofrio for transcribing and translating this passage (personal communication, January 15 and 16, 2023).

standing.[1100] The first published and widely received "translation" (which is still more of a paraphrase supplemented by interpretative glosses) of the GM is in fact that by Sir William Jones from 1799:

> LET us adore the supremacy of *that* divine sun, the godhead who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress toward his holy seat.[1101]

After his death in 1794, four much more literal renditions were found among his notes:[1102]

> "That sun's supremacy (or greater than the sun), God, let us adore which may well direct."

> "That Light far greater than the sun,
> The light of God, let us adore."

> "Illud, sole praestantius
> Lumen Dei meditemur
> Intellectus qui nostros dirigat."

> "Than you bright sun more splendid far
> The light of God let us adore
> Which only can our minds direct."

1100 Benfey (1848: 277, n. 1) states that the GM was "übers. [= übersetzt, i.e., "translated"] zuerst von Fra Manuel da Assomcoon," but does not specify his source. Two works by Assumpçam are known and accessible to me: a Portuguese/Bengali grammar-cum-vocabulary list (Assumpçam 1743a) and a catechism (Assumpçam 1743b). As already noted by Cannon (1977: 186, n. 12), in his vocabulary list Assumpçam (1743a: 126) translates the word "Gaitri" as "Origem da ley," (i.e., "source of law"), and on p. 575 provides a transcription of what he there calls the "GATRI DOS BRAMENES": "Ongbhur bhoboxó, tothoxobitur bhoroniong bhorg de boxio dhimohi o ono prosso doiat."" Neither in this work nor in the catechism, however, is there a translation (in the latter case this is of course hardly surprising). The most plausible explanation is that Assumpçam never translated the GM and Benfey simply misunderstood Jones's statement that "the original *Gayatri*, or holiest verse in the Veda, has already been published, though very incorrectly, by *Fra Manuel da Assomcaon*" (Teignmouth 1980 [¹1799]: 365 and 1799: 415; note that Benfey not only cites Jones, but, like him, also uses the anglicized spelling "Manuel" instead of "Manoel"). Had Jones been aware of an earlier translation (and not just publication), he most likely would have mentioned this.

1101 Teignmouth 1980 [¹1799]: 367. Jones himself must have been aware that this is not a direct translation; cf. n. 1102. See also generally Cannon 1977; cf. Johnson 2011: 56–57.

1102 See Martinengo-Cesaresco 1902: 100–101. Martinengo-Cesaresco (p. 100) also quotes another rendition of Jones, which he himself apparently called "paraphrase or tica": "Let us meditate with adoration on the supreme essence of the Divine Sun which illuminates all, recreates all, from which all proceed, to which all must return, and which we invoke to direct our understanding aright in our progress to his holy seats."

Parts of the GM also found their way to Europe in Anquetil Duperron's translation of Dara Shukoh's text echoing the MaitrU ("Oupnek'hat Mitri"), first published in 1801:

Quicunque vult quòd illum âtma obtineat, cum medio ejus (solis) obtinebit: quòd Beid khanan (τᾶ Beid lectores) hoc modo dixerunt: et cum sole (soli) maschghouli (homo) hoc modo faciat, quòd lucem ejus cum imaginatione (in cogitatione) in se adducat: Beid khanan dixerunt, quòd rectitudo intelligentiæ quam nos acquisivimus, ex illâ imaginatione es: oportet (quòd) dicat, quòd â sol! nobis (mihi) etiam è luce propriâ (tuâ) lumen intellectûs des.[1103]

In the following two centuries, however, numerous direct translations were produced:[1104]

1. Let us meditate on the adorable light of the divine ruler (Savitrĭ): may it guide our intellects.　　　　　　　　　Colebrooke 1808: 400 (ṚV)

2. We mediate [sic] on that Supreme Spirit of the splendid sun who directs our understandings.　　　　　Roy 1901 [¹1827]: 121 (ṚV)

3. Diesen, des Zeugers, herrlichen Glanz mögen empfangen wir, des Gotts, der unsre Werke fördern soll.　　　　tr. Benfey 1848: 276–277 (SV)

4. Nous adorons la noble lumière du divin Savitri, qui lui-même provoque nos prières.　　　　　　　　tr. Langlois 1850/II: 100 (ṚV)

5. We meditate on that desirable light of the divine Savitṛi, who influences our pious rites.　　　　　　tr. Wilson III [1857]: 110 (ṚV)

6. Wir denken nach über [nach Benfeys Uebersetzung: Mögen wir empfangen] das herrliche licht des göttlichen Savitri; möge er unsre Erkenntnisse [Werke] fördern!
　　　　　　　　　　　Wurm 1874: 33 (ṚV); brackets in the original

7. Dass wir des Gottes Savitar
begehrtes Licht erlangten doch,
Der unsre Bitten fördere.　　　　　　tr. Grassmann 1876: 105 (ṚV)

1103 Duperron 1801: 324.

1104 In the following, I will give the source for the translation in round brackets if specified by the translator. Deviating somewhat from the general referencing mode, references not marked with "tr." are to be found in the "Secondary Literature" section of the Bibliography. Several translators have also included the Vyāhṛtis in their renditions of the GM; I do not quote them here.

8. Let us meditate (or, we meditate) on that excellent glory of the divine
    Vivifier. May he enlighten (or stimulate) our understandings.

    Williams 1877: 61 (ṚV)

9. May we obtain the glorious light of the divine Savit*ri*, who, we trust,
    may inspire our prayers!   tr. Eggeling, *SBE* XII [1882]: 356 (ŚatB)

10. Let us meditate on the excellent glory of the divine vivifying Sun, may
    he enlighten our understandings!   Williams 1882: 164 (ṚV)

11. this splendor of Savitar the god, object of our desire, we would procure
    us |
    who will stir into activity our devices | tr. Ludwig : 436 (ṚV)

12. May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the God: So may he
    stimulate our prayers!   tr. Griffith 1991 [¹1893]: 348 (SV)

13. Of Savitar, the heavenly, that longed-for glory may we win,
    And may himself inspire our prayers.   Hopkins 1895: 46 (ṚV)

14. Let us meditate on the to-be-longed-for light of the Inspirer; may it
    incite all our efforts.   Frazer 1898: 61, n. 2

15. May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the God: So may he
    stimulate our prayers.   tr. Griffith 1899: 21, 205, 255 (VājS)

16. Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the divine Vivifier;
    May he enlighten (or stimulate) our understandings.

    Wilkins 1900: 30

17. Mögen wir erlangen den herrlichen Glanz des Gottes Savitar, der
    unsere Andacht fördern möge.

    Stönner 1901: 42 (Mantra-Brāhmaṇa)

18. (I here refer to Jones's translations cited above, which were written
    before 1794 but apparently were not published until 1902.)

19. May we attain the excellent glory of Savitr the god: So may he
    stimulate our prayers.   tr. Keith 1908: 56 (ŚāṅkhĀ)

20. That excellent glory of Savitṛ,
    The god we meditate,
    That he may stimulate our prayers.   tr. Keith 1914: 75 (TaittS)

21. Gott Savitars ersehnten Glanz,
    Den möchten wir erlangen jetzt!
    Er stärk' uns Andacht und Gebet.   Von Schroeder I [1914]: 9 (ṚV)

22. Möchten wir uns diesen herrlichen Glanz des Gottes Savitṛ zu eigen
machen, damit er unsere Lieder begeistere.

tr. Caland 1921: 202 (ĀpŚS)

23. We choose for ourselves that excellent refulgence of god Savitṛ, who
may stimulate our prayers.   Apte 1939: 34 (ṚV)

24. Puissions-nous recevoir cette excellente lumière du dieu Savitar, et
qu'il donne l'impulsion à nos pieuses pensées!

Dumont 1939: 25 (VājS/TaittS/ṚV)

25. This desirable splendour of god Savitṛ may we accept, who may urge
on our prayers   tr. Dresden 1941: 5 (MānGS)

26. we contemplate that esteemed (longed for) refulgence (glory) of the
divine Savitṛ who may inspire our intellects (or actions).

Kane II(2) [1941]: 302

27. Dieses vorzügliche Licht des Gottes S a v i t ṛ empfingen wir, der
unsere Gedanken anregen soll.   Geldner I [1951]: 410 (ṚV)

28. Of Savitr this glorious [...] Light of the God may we obtain [...] Who
may inspire our prayers   tr. Caland 1953: 39 (ŚāṅkhŚS)

29. Let us think on the lovely splendour
of the god Savitṛ,
that he may inspire our minds.   Basham 1959 [¹1954]: 162 (ṚV)

30. Nous voulons avoir en partage cette splendeur désirable du divin
Savitar; et lui, puisse-t-il diriger nos pensées!

tr. Varenne 1960/I: 83 (MNārU)

31. that we obtain that desirable (excellent) radiance of god Savitar who is
to impel our 'visions' (intuitions, which are to be transformed into
mantras)   Gonda 1963a: 284

32. On that excellent glory of the god Savitṛ we meditate, that he may
stimulate our prayers.   tr. van Gelder 1963: 136 (MānŚS)

33. That excellent glory of Savitṛ, the god, we meditate, that he may
stimulate our prayers.   tr. Kashikar 1964/II: 139 (BaudhŚS)

34. We meditate on the lovely light of the god, Savitṛ:
May it stimulate our thoughts!   Zaehner 1966: 3 (ṚV)

35. Yonder brilliance bright
Of God Savitar we praise,
Which may make our songs burst forth.   Bandhu 1969: 20 (ṚV)

36. Let us meditate on the most excellent light of the Creator (the Sun);
    may he guide our intellect   Pandey 1994 [¹1969]: 39 (GobhGS)

37. We meditate upon that choicest effulgence of Lord Savitṛ which
    directs our intellect   Prabhakar 1974: 60 (ṚV)

38. That we obtain that desirable (excellent) radiance of god Savitar who is
    (may be expected) to stimulate our visions   Gonda 1975: 52

39. We hope to obtain that desirable (excellent) radiance (brightness) of
    god Savitar, who will (is expected to) stimulate (inspire) our 'visions'
                                                          Gonda 1975: 68

40. Dies vorzügliche Licht des Gottes Savitṛ bedenken wir, der unsere
    Gedanken befördern soll   Gail 1978: 334, n. 3

41. May we receive this desirable light of the god Savitṛ, who shall impel
    our thoughts.   Staal 1983/I: 30 and 1989a: 231

42. puissions-nous posséder cet éclat désiderable du dieu Savit*r* en sorte
    qu'il incite nos pensées!   Renou 1985: 566

43. We contemplate the excellent glory of the divine Savitṛ; may he
    inspire our intellect!   Smith 1986b: 72 (ṚV)

44. May we obtain that esteemed effulgence of the god Savitṛ, who would
    inspire our thoughts   Einoo 1993: 201

45. Let us think on that desirable splendour of the celestial Inspirer. May
    he stimulate us to insightful thoughts.   Lipner 1994: 42

46. May we acquire that desireable brightness of the Divine Impeller
    [Deva Savitr]; may he stimulate our thoughts.
                              Lubin 1994: 135; brackets in the original

47. Méditons sur la lumière resplendissante du divin Soleil, afin qu'il
    inspire nos pensées.   Huet 2023 [¹1998]: 321

48. We meditate on the glorious splendor of the Arouser divine:
    may he himself illumine our inner vision!   Mahoney 1998: 171 (ṚV)

49. Mögen wir uns auf diesen strahlenden Glanz von Gott Savitṛ (die
    Sonne) konzentrieren, der unseren Geist anregt.
                                        Michaels 2006 [¹1998]: 109 (ṚV)

50. On that excellent glory of god Savitṛ we reflect, that he may stimulate
    our prayers.   Olivelle 1998: 530, n. on BṛhĀU VI 3.6 (cf. p. 153)

51. We will receive that best brilliance of the divine Instigator so that he may enliven our thoughts.   Parpola 1998: 205 (ṚV)

52. That excellent [glory] of Savitṛ [...] The glory of god we meditate [...] That he may stimulate our prayers.
                         Olivelle 2000: 293 (BaudhDhS); "[glory]" in the original

53. We want to put in ourselves the desirable lustre of the god Savitṛ, who would impel our poetical thoughts.   Einoo 2002: 44 (ṚV)

54. That most excellent splendor of the heavenly Sun we consider, so that he may arouse our inspirations.   Scharfe 2002: 112 (ṚV)

55. We meditate on the lovely
    Glory of the god Savitṛ
    That he may stimulate our minds   Roebuck 2003 [¹2000] (ṚV)

56. May we take to ourselves that excellent effulgence of the divine Savitṛ, that he may impel our thoughts.   tr. Rosenfield 2004: 140 (KaṭhB)

57. Wir wollen uns dies strahlende Licht des Gottes Savitṛ verschaffen, dass unsere Gedanken er beflügle.   Slaje 2007: 3 (ṚV)

58. This desirable light of the god Savitṛ we apprehend: may he sharpen our thoughts   West 2007: 215 (ṚV)

59. May we receive this excellent splendour of the god Savitā, which should inspire our thoughts!   Staal 2008: 220 (ṚV)

60. Wir wollen uns das ersehnte Licht des Gottes Savitṛ verschaffen, daß unsere Gedanken er beflügle.   Slaje 2009: 525, n. 11 (BṛhĀU)

61. Dieses, des Gottes Savitar,
    wünschenswertes Licht möchten wir (in uns) setzen,
    der unsere Eingebungen antreiben soll.
                         Witzel in Witzel et al. 2013: 108 (ṚV)

62. Might we make our own that desirable effulgence of god Savitar, who will rouse forth our insights.
                         tr. Jamison & Brereton 2014: 554 (ṚV)

63. Let us direct our attention to that most excellent radiant energy (*bhárgas*) of the *deva* Savitṛ who may impel our vision (*dhī́*).
                         Bausch 2015: 109 (ṚV)

64. Let us place [*within us/our minds upon*]
    that most desirable radiance of the Lord Savitṛ,
    Who will then stimulate our own insights.

    Sathaye 2015: 35 (ṚV); brackets in the original

65. May we attain that desirable splendor of the Heavenly Impeller [Deva
    Savitṛ], that he might stimulate our thoughts

    Lubin 2018a: 100 (ṚV); brackets in the original

66. That excellent glory of the sun (Sāvitṛ), the god, we meditate, that he
    may stimulate our prayers.   Michaels 2018 (ṚV)

67. We wish to obtain that desirable sparkle of Savitṛ who shall impel our
    thoughts.   Witzel 2018 (ṚV)

68. We hope to obtain the desirable radiance of the god Savitṛ: may he
    stimulate our thought.   Kajihara 2019: 1 (ṚV)

69. May we place within ourselves the radiance of the divine Savitri, the
    Sun God,
    who shall then awaken our insight.   Larios 2019 (ṚV)[1105]

70. That excellent glory of Savitri, the god, we meditate, that he may
    stimulate our thoughts.   Olivelle 2019c: 316, n. 12 (YājñSm)

71. So laßt uns denn
    Das strahlend helle Licht
    Des Gottes Savitar empfangen,
    Auf daß er unser Denken
    Vorwärts treibe!   Slaje 2019: 45 (ṚV)

72. The excellent divine power of the Sun.
    May we contemplate the radiance of that god.
    May this inspire our understanding.   Slatoff 2019: 30

73. De Savitṛ, no seu excelso brilho,...
    no brilho desse deus nós refletimos,...
    a fim de que ele as preces nos anime.   Aprigliano 2020: 113 (BṛhĀU)

74. Might we make our own that desirable effulgence of god Savitar, who
    will spur on our insights.   Brereton & Jamison 2020: 213 (ṚV)

1105 Larios 2019 also provides translations of the mantra into eight other languages.

For the sake of completeness, I here include my own translations:[1106]

75.   May we obtain that desirable splendor of the god Impeller, who shall
      spur on our thoughts! (ṚV)

76.   We visualize that excellent effulgence of the Sun god, who may inspire
      our thoughts! (Sanskrit)

77.   Jenen begehrten Glanz des Gotts
      Antreiber mögen wir empfahn,
      der unsre Geister vorwärts bringt! (ṚV)

78.   Das wünschenswerte Leuchten des
      Sonnengottes erschauen wir,
      der unser Denken inspiriert! (Sanskrit)

1106   See also above p. 60.

∴ APPENDIX 2 ∴

gāyatrī/sāvitrī in the Mahābhārata

Passages mentioning the word *gāyatrī* or *sāvitrī* (the counts also include uncertain passages and passages referring to more than one entity):[1107]

	main text of the critical ed.	star passages and appendices
passages	**109**	**73**
containing the word *gāyatrī*	7	19
containing the word *sāvitrī*	102	57
– referring to a mantra	16	50
– referring to the meter *gāyatrī*	7	2
– referring to a person	74	11
– referring to a deity	18	11

Table 22

mantra:

II 11.25

III 80.4; 83.26, 27*439.1, 27; 177.29; 277.9

IV 5.31 App. 4G22; 832*223.2

V 106.10

VI 40.78*113.5, App. 3A36, 3B111, 3B111, 3B36

VII 173.56*1457.2, App. 25.10

XII 36.33; 43.14; 189.11*514.6; 274.60 App. 28.283 (?); 308.191 App. 29B157; 326.7

XIII 22.19 App. 7A249; 24.25, 28, *207.1; 80.45 App. 9B146–147; 85.6; 92.14; 107.62*491.3; 113.13*569.4; 125.38 App. 14A48, 14A59, 14A75, 14A88; 135.26 App. 18.8, 18.143, 18.147–148, 18.151, 18.161, 18.167, 18.176; 145.27

XIII 14.22

XIV 44.5; 96.15 App. 4.511, 4.513, 4.518–520, 4.522, 4.524, 4.1544, 4.1552, 4.1560, 4.1565–1566, 4.1577, 4.2077, 4.2372 (4.2778, 4.3121, 4.3126: Viṣṇugāyatrī; see above p. 77), 4.3201

(XVIII 5.51: *bhāratasāvitrī*; see n. 579 on p. 139 above).

1107 See also above pp. 72–78.

deity:

I 161.20; 163.1

III 221.20; 277.10, 11*1310.1, 15*1311.1, 16, 19–20

IV 8.7 App. 6.41 (?); 14.19*297.4; 16.7*347.5

XII 192.11; 199.32 App. 15.92, 15.94; 264.10; (256.21: epithet of Śraddhā; see n. 955 on p. 220 above)

XIII 66.7; 134.3, 57 App. 15.4408; 151.4

mantra/deity:

VI 22.16 App. 1.24, 1.30

XIV 96.15 App. 4.494, 4.2778

mantra/deity/princess:

III 277.24

meter:

II 35.25*358.1

VI 5.18–19; 32.35

VII 173.56 App. 25.10

VIII 24.76*262.1, *262.3

XIV 446

meter personified/deified:

XIII 137.18

princess:

I 2.46*82.1, *83.1, 126, *12.872; 160.7; 212.1 App. 114.149

III 110.5; 277.4; 278.2, 11, 23, 25, 28, 31; 279.8, 23, *1315.1; 280.2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10*1316.1, 12–13, 17–19, 21, 27, 31; 281.4, 6, 12, 13*1320.0, 18–20, 26, 28, 31, 33, 37, 39, 44, 46, 51, 54, 59–60, 62, 64, 71, 76, 95, 98, 100, 102, 108*1329.1; 282.4, 8*1330.1, 10, 15–17, 21, 23, 26, 30, 33–34, 36; 283.2, 10, 12, 14–15, 16*1333.1

IV 20.11*401.2

V 115.12

VIII 4.47

XII 226.24 (?)

XIII 45.5

princess/deity:

III 282.34

<div align="center">

∴ **APPENDIX 3** ∴

The Ṛgvedic *sāvitrī*s in Śrauta texts

</div>

Below is a list of all Ṛgvedic *sāvitrī*s that are cited or quoted in Śrauta texts, with references.[1108] The list is based on the data provided by the *UVC*. In two cases, this *Concordance* uses editions other than those otherwise used in the present study: references to KauṣB passages can be found in Lindner's edition, and TaittB passages in Mitra's edition.

III 62.10: AitB IV 32.2, V 5.6, 13.8, 19.8; KauṣB XXIII 2, XXVI 10; SV II 812; VājS III 35, XXII 9, XXXVI 3; ŚatB II 3.4.39, XIII 6.2.9, XIV 9.3.11; TaittS I 5.6.4, 8.4, IV 1.11.1; MaitrS IV 10.3: 149.14

V 50.1: AitB IV 32.2, V 5.6, 19.8; KauṣB XX 3, XXII 2; VājS IV 8, XI 67, XXII 21; ŚatB III 1.4.18, VI 6.1.21, XIII 1.8.8; MaitrS I 2.2: 10.15, II 7.7: 82.10, II 6.5: 65.8; KaṭhS II 2.2, XVI 7, XXIII 2

V 81.1: AitB IV 30.4; KauṣB XX 2, XXII 1, XXV 9; VājS V 14, XI 4, XXXVII 2; ŚatB III 5.3.11, VI 3.1.16, XIV 1.2.8; TaittS I 2.13.1, IV 1.1.1; MaitrS I 2.9: 18.13, III 8.7: 103.13, IV 9.1: 120.3; KaṭhS II 10, XV 11

I 24.3: AitB I 16.2,22.2, V 17.7, VII 16.5; KauṣB VIII 1, XXII 5, XXVI 17; ŚatB XII 5.1.11; TaittS III 5.11.3; MaitrS IV 10.3: 148.1; KaṭhS XV 12, XXVIII 7

V 82.4: AitB IV 30.3, V 2.6, 8.6, 17.6, 19.9; KauṣB IX 9, XX 2, XXV 9; SV I 141; TaittB II 4.6.3

V 82.1: AitB IV 30.3, V 2.6, 8.6, 17.6, 21.9; AitĀ I 5.3.1; KauṣB XVI 3, IXX 9, XX 2, XXV 9

V 81.2: AitB I 29.14; KauṣB IX 3; VājS XII 3; ŚatB VI 7.2.4; TaittS IV 1.10.4; MaitrS II 7.8: 84.14, III 2.1: 14.15; KaṭhS XVI 8

V 82.7: AitB I 9.7, IV 32.2, V 5.6, 19.8; KauṣB XX 3; ŚatB XIII 4.2.13; TaittS III 4.11.2; MaitrS IV 12.6: 196.14

I 22.5: AitB V 19.9; KauṣB XXII 9, XXVI 13; VājS XXII 10; TaittS I 4.25.1, II 2.12.2; MaitrS IV 12.2: 180.11

VI 71.1: AitB I 22.3, IV 32.3; KauṣB VIII 7, XX 4, XXI 3, XX 5

VI 71.3: VājS XXXIII 69,84; TaittS I 4.24.1; TaittB II 4.4.7; MaitrS I 3.27: 39.13; KaṭhS IV 10

1108 See also above pp. 130–133.

VI 71.6: KauṣB XXIII 3; VājS VIII 6; ŚatB IV 4.1.6; TaittS I 4.23.1, II 2.12.2; MaitrS IV 12.2: 180.13

VII 38.7: VājS IX 16, XXI 10; ŚatB V 1.5.22; TaittS I 7.8.2; MaitrS I 11.2: 162.10; KaṭhS XIII 14

VII 45.1: AitB V 5.7; KauṣB XXII 9; ŚatB XIII 4.2.7; TaittB II 8.6.1; MaitrS IV 14.6: 223.13; KaṭhS XVII 19

IX 67.25: AV(Ś) VI 19.3; VājS IXX 43; TaittS I 4.8.2, II 6.3.4; MaitrS III 11.10: 155.17; KaṭhS IV 10

I 35.2: VājS XXXIII 43, XXXIV 31; TaittS III 4.11.2; MaitrS IV 12.6: 196.16, IV 14.6: 224.1

V 81.3: VājS XI 6; ŚatB Vi 3.1.18; TaittS IV 1.1.2; MaitrS II 7.1: 74.4; KaṭhS XV 11

V 82.9: AitB I 9.7; ŚatB XIII 4.7.2; MaitrS IV 12.6: 198.1; KaṭhS X 12, XXIII 12

IV 53.1: AitB V 2.7; AitĀ I 5.3.3; KauṣB IXX 9, XXI 2,4, XXII 2

V 82.5: VājS XXX 3; ŚatB XIII 4.2.10, 6.2.9; TaittB II 4.6.3

IV 54.1: KauṣB XX 3; TaittB III 7.13.4; KaṭhS XXXIV 18

VI 71.4: AitB V 8.7; KauṣB XXIII 3; ŚatB XIII 5.1.11

I 22.7: VājS XXX 4; ŚatB X 2.6.6

I 22.8: SV I 568, II 507

I 35.4: TaittB II 8.6.1; MaitrS IV 14.6

I 35.11: VājS XXXIV 27; TaittS VII 5.24.1

II 38.1: AitB V 13.9; KauṣB XXIII 8

II 38.10: TaittB II 8.6.3; MaitrS IV 14.6: 224.2

IV 53.7: AitB I 13.16; KauṣB VII 10

IV 54.3: TaittS IV 1.11.1; MaitrS IV 10.3: 149.16

VII 45.3: ŚatB XIII 4.2.10; MaitrS IV 14.6: 223.17

I 22.6: KauṣB XXVI 13

I 35.5: TaittB II 8.6.2

I 35.7: TaittB II 8.6.2

I 35.8: VājS XXXIV 24

I 35.9: VājS XXXIV 25

I 35.10: VājS XXXIV 26

II 38.11: KaṭhS XVII 19

IV 53.2: KauṣB XXI 14

IV 53.5: KauṣB XXII 2

IV 54.2: VājS XXXIII 54

IV 54.4: ŚatB XIII 4.2.13

X 149.3: ŚatB X 2.2.3

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The bibliographical entry (or entries) directly following the name of the source represents the edition (or editions) used in this study, followed in turn by other editions or translations. References to translations can be found under the respective sources. In order to make it easier to find referenced passages in multi-volume editions and translations, I have placed volume-specific information after the general bibliographical entries and inserted the textual divisions of the sources in bold type (e.g., the translation of ṚV **IV** is found in vol. I of Jamison and Brereton's translation). For the sake of completeness, in some cases I have also included works or volumes not referred to in this study.

ĀgnGS   Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). L. A. Ravi Varma (ed.), *Agniveśyagrhyasutra.* Trivandrum: University of Travancore, 1940.

AitĀ   Aitareya-Āraṇyaka (ṚV). Arthur Berriedale Keith (ed. & tr.), *The Aitareya Āraṇyaka.* Clarendon Press, 1909.

AitB   Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (ṚV). Theodor Aufrecht (Hrsg.), *Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. Mit Auszügen aus dem Commentare von Sāyaṇācārya und anderen Beilagen.* Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1879.

     Tr. Keith 1920: 105–344.

ĀpDhS   Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra (KYV). Ed. & tr. Olivelle 2000: 20–115.

ĀpGS   Āpastamba-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). A. Chinnaswami Sastri (ed.), *Âpastambagṛihyasûtra with Two Commentaries: The Anâkulâ of Haradatta Misra and the Tâtparyadarsana of Sudarsanâchârya.* 1928: Jai Krishnadas-Haridas Gupta, 1928.

     Tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXX: 249–297.

ĀpŚS   Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra (KYV). Richard Garbe (ed.), *The Śrauta Sútra of Âpastamba Belonging to the Taittiríya Saṃhitá. With the Commentary of Rudradatta.* 2 vols. Asiat. Soc., 1882–85. **I–VII**: vol. I. 1882. **VIII–XV**: vol. II. 1885.

     W[illem] Caland (Üb.), *Das Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba.* 2 vols. V&R / Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 1921–24. **I–VII**: vol. I: *1.–7. Buch.* V&R, 1921. **VIII–XV**: vol. II: *Achtes bis fünfzehntes Buch.* Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 1924.

ĀśvGS   Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (ṚV). Stenzler 1864.

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(For Kajihara 2016, see Secondary Literature.)

ĀśvGSPar (Āśvalāyana-)Gṛhyasūtra-Pariśiṣṭabhāga (ṚV). Rámanáráyana Vidyáratna & Ánandachandra Vedántávágísa (eds.), *The Gṛihya Sútra of Áswaláyana with the Commentary of Gárgya Náráyana.* Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1869, pp. 265–350.

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AV   Atharvaveda(-Saṃhitā), Śaunaka rec. R[udolf] Roth & W[illiam] D[wight] Whitney (Hrsgg.), *Atharva Veda Sanhita. Erster Band: Text.* Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1856.

Cf. Shankar Pâṇḍurang (ed.), *Atharvavedasaṃhitâ with Commentary of Sâyaṇâchârya.* 4 vols. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1895–1989. **I–V**: vol. I. **VI–X**: vol. II. 1895. **XI–XVI**: vol. III. **XVII–XX**: vol. IV. 1898.

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(For Renou 1956, Edgerton 1962, and Oberlies 2012, see Secondary Literature.)

AVP   (Atharvaveda)-Paippalāda(-Saṃhitā). **VI–VII**: Arlo Griffiths (ed.), *The Paippalādasaṃhitā of the Atharvaveda. Kāṇḍas 6 and 7. A New Edition with Translation and Commentary.* Egbert Forsten, 2009, https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01917946. **XX 1–30**: Philipp Kubisch (Hrsg. & Üb.), *Paippalāda-Saṃhitā Kāṇḍa 20, Sūkta 1-30. Kritische Edition, Übersetzung, Kommentar.* Dissertation. Bonn: University of Bonn, 2012, urn:nbn:de:hbz:5-30645.

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BaudhGS Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). R. Sha[r]ma Sastri (ed.), *Bodhâyana Grihyasutra.* Mysore: Government Branch Press, 1920.

BaudhGŚS Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra (KYV). See the edition of the BaudhGS, pp. 178–376.

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BaudhŚS Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra (KYV). C. G. Kashikar (ed. & tr.), *The Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra.* 4 vols. Delhi: Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts / MLBD, 2003. **I–V**: vol. I [pp. 1–275]. **VI–XII**: vol. II [pp. 276–788]. **XIII–XIX**: vol. III [pp. 789–1314]. **XX–XXIX**: vol. IV [pp. 1315–1845].

BhagG   Bhagavad-Gītā = MBh VI 23–40.

BhāgP   Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. J[agdish] L[al] Shastri (ed.), *Bhāgavata Purāṇa of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. With Sanskrit Commentary by Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmin.* MLBD, repr. 1999 (¹1983).

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BrahmP   Brahma-Purāṇa. Khemraj Shrikrishnadas (ed.), [*atha brahmapurāṇaṃ prārabhyate*]. Bombay: Shrivenkateshwar Steam Press, 1906.

BṛhĀU   Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, Kāṇva rec. (ŚYV). Ed. & tr. Olivelle 1998: 29–165.

BṛhĀUM   Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, Mādhyandina rec. (ŚYV) = ŚatB(M) X 6.4–5 and XIV 4–9.

CarS   Caraka-Saṃhitā. Jādavaji Trikamji (ed.), *The Carakasaṃhitā of Agniveśa, Revised by Charaka and Dṛidhabala. With the Āyurveda-Dīpikā Commentary of Cakrapāṇidatta.* Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1941.

ChāndU   Chāndogya-Upaniṣad (SV). Ed. & tr. Olivelle 1998: 166–287.

GarP   Garuḍa-Purāṇa. Khemraj Shrikrishnadas (ed.), [*atha garuḍamahāpurāṇaprārambhaḥ*]. Bombay: Shrivenkateshwar Steam Press, 1906.

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GautDhS   Gautama-Dharmasūtra (SV). Ed. & tr. Olivelle 2000: 116–189.

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Har.   Harivaṃśa → MBh

Harṣ.   Bāṇa, Harṣacarita. **I–VIII**: P. V. Kane (ed.), *The Harshacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa (Text of Uchchhvāsas I–VIII).* Repr. MLBD, 1986.

            E[dward] B[yles] Cowell & F. W. Thomas (trs.), *The Harṣa-Carita of Bāṇa.* Asiat. Soc., 1897.

HirGS   Hiraṇyakeśi-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). J[ohann Ferdinand Otto] Kirste (ed.), *The Gṛihyasūtra of Hiraṇyakeśin with Extracts from the Commentary of Mātṛidatta.* Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1889.

            Tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXX: 135–246.

HirŚS   Hiraṇyakeśi-Śrautasūtra (KYV). Kāśīnāthśāstrī Āgāśe (ed.) & Hari Nārāyaṇ Āpṭe (publisher), *Satyāṣāḍhaviracitaṃ Śrautasūtram.* [*Ānandāśramasaṃskṛtagranthāvaliḥ* 53]. 4 vols. Pune: Ānandāśramasamudraṇālaya, 1907–8. **I–III**: vol. I (pp. 1–391). 1907. **IV–VI**: vol. II (pp. 393–547). 1907. **VII–VIII**: vol. III (pp. 549–902). 1908. **IX–X**: vol. IV (pp. 903–1112). 1908.

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JaimB   Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (SV). Raghu Vira & Lokesh Chandra (eds.), *Jaiminīya Brahmaṇa of the Sāmaveda. With a foreword by* Louis Renou. Nagpur: 1954.

            Partially ed. and tr. W[illem] Caland (Hrsg. & Üb.), *Das Jaiminīya-Brahmaṇa in Auswahl. Text, Übersetzung, Indices.* Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1919.

            Tr. of **I 1–65**: H[enk] W. Bodewitz (tr.), *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1–65.* Brill, 1973.

            Cf. **I**: Raghu Vira (ed.), *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa of the Sāma Veda. Book 1.* Lahore: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1937.

            Cf. **II 1–80**: Lokesh Chandra (ed.), *Jaiminiya Brahmana of the Samaveda. (Gavamayana).* Nagpur: The International Academy of Indian Culture, 1950.

            (For Parpola 1998 and 2000, see Secondary Literature.)

JaimGS   Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra (SV). W. Caland (ed. & tr.), *The Jaminigṛhyasūtra. Belonging to the Sāmaveda. With Extracts from the Commentary.* Repr. MLBD, 1991. [Lahore, ¹1922].

JaimUB   Jaiminīya/Talavakāra-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa / Gāyatra-Upaniṣad (SV). Hanns Oertel (ed. & tr.), "The Jāiminīya or Talavakāra Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa. Text, Translation, and Notes." *JAOS* 16 (1896): 79–260.

JayS   Jayākhya-Saṃhitā. Embar Krishnamacharya (ed.), *Jayākhyasaṃhitā of Pāñcarātra Āgama. Critically edited with an Introduction in Sanskrit, Indices etc.* Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931.

Karm.   Friedrich Schrader (Hrsg. & Üb.), *Der Karmapradīpa. I. Prapāṭhaka mit Auszügen aus dem Kommentare des Āçārka.* Halle: Verlag von Chr. Gräger, 1889.

Alexander Freiherr von Staël-Holstein (Hrsg. & Üb.), *Der Karmapradīpa. II. Prapāṭhaka. Inaugural-Dissertation.* Halle: Druck der Buchdruckerei des Weisenhauses, 1900.

KaṭhB   Kaṭha-Brāhmaṇa (KYV). Susan J. Rosenfield (ed. & tr.), *Kaṭha Brāhmaṇa Fragments. A Critical Edition, Translation, and Study.* Dissertation. Harvard University, 2004.

(For Kajihara 2002, see Secondary Literature.)

KāṭhGS   Kāṭhaka-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). Willem Caland (ed.), *The Kāṭhakagṛhyasūtra, with Extracts from Three Commentaries, an Appendix and Indexes.* Lahore Hindi Press, 1925.

Caren Dreyer (Hrsg.), *Das Kāṭhaka-Gṛhya-Sūtra, mit Vivaraṇa des Ādityadarśana, Bhāṣya des Devapāla, Gṛhyapañcikā des Brāhmaṇabala. Kritische Edition mit Anmerkungen. Teil I. 1. Kaṇḍikā und Sandhyopāsanamantrabhāṣya des Devapāla.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986.

KaṭhS   Kaṭha-Saṃhitā / Kāṭhaka (KYV). Leopold von Schroeder (Hrsg.), *Kâṭhakam. Die Saṃhitâ der Kaṭha-Çākhā.* 2 vols. Brockhaus, 1900–9. **I 1 – XVIII 21**: vol. I. 1900. **XIX 1 – XXX 10**: vol. II. 1909.

KaṭhU   Kaṭha-Upaniṣad (KYV). Ed. & tr. Olivelle 1998: 375–403.

KātyŚS   Kātyāyana-Śrautasūtra (ŚYV). Albrecht Weber (ed.), *The Çrautasûtra of Kâtyâyana. With Extracts from the Commentaries of Karka and Yâjnikadeva.* Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler's Verlagsbuchhandlung / London: Williams and Norgate, 1859.

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KauṣB   Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa. (ṚV). E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma (Hrsg.), *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1968.

Cf. B[runo] Lindner (Hrsg.), *Das Kaushîtaki Brâhmaṇa. I: Text.* Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1887.

Tr. Keith 1920: 345–530.

KauṣGS   Kauṣītaki-Gṛhyasūtra. T. R. Chintamani (ed.), *The Kauṣītaka Gṛhyasūtras. With the Commentary of Bhavatrāta.* Madras: University of Madras, 1944.

KauśS   Kauśika-Sūtra (AV). Maurice Bloomfield (ed.), *The Kauśika Sūtra of Atharva Veda. With Extracts from the Commentaries of Dārila and Keśava.* MLBD, repr. 1972. [¹*JAOS* 1889].

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KauṣU   Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad (ṚV) = ŚāṅkhĀ III–VI.

KhādGS   Khādira-/Drāhyāyaṇa-Gṛhyasūtra (SV). A. Mahadeva Sastri & L. Srinivasacharya (eds.), *The Khadira Grihyasutra. With the Commentary of Rudraskanda.* [*Bibliotheca Sanskrita* 41]. Mysore: Government Branch Press, [1913].

Tr. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 371–435.

KūrmP   Kūrma-Purāṇa. Anand Swarup Gupta (ed.), *The Kūrma Purāṇa*. Varanasi: All-India Kashiraj Trust, 1971.

Ahibhushan Bhattacharya, Satkari Mukherji, Virendra Kumar Varma & Ganga Sagar Rai (trs.), Anand Swarup Gupta (ed.), *The Kūrma Purāṇa (with English translation)*. Varanasi: All-India Kashi Raj Trust, 1972.

LiṅgP   Liṅga-Purāṇa. Khemraj Shrikrishnadas (ed.), [*atha saṭīka-liṅgamahāpurāṇaprārambhaḥ*]. Bombay: Venkatesvara Steam Press, 1906.

MaitrS   Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā (KYV). Leopold von Schroeder (Hrsg.), *Mâtrâyaṇî Saṃhitâ*. 4 vols. Brockhaus, 1881–86. **I**: vol. I. 1881. **II**: vol. II. 1883. **III**: vol. III. 1885. **IV**: vol. IV. 1886.

MaitrU   Maitrāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad. J[ohannes] A[drianus] B[ernardus] van Buitenen (ed. & tr.), *The Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*. 'S-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1962.

(For Gonda 1963a, see Secondary Literature.)

MānDhŚ   Mānava-Dharmaśāstra/Manusmṛti. Patrick Olivelle (ed. & tr.), *Manu's Code of Law. A Critical Edition and Translation of the* Mānava-Dharmásāstra. *With the editorial assistance of* Suman Olivelle. OUP, 2005.

MānGS   Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra (KYV). Friedrich Knauer (Hrsg.), *Das Mānava-Gṛhya-Sūtra nebst Commentar in Kurzer Fassung*. St. Petersburg: l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1897.

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MānŚS   Mānava-Śrautasūtra (KYV). Jeanette M. van Gelder (ed. & tr.), *Mānavaśrauta Sūtra. Belonging to the Matrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1961/1963.

MārkP   Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa. Jīvānand-Vidyāsāgara-Bhaṭṭācārya (ed.), *mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇam. maharṣivedavyāsapraṇītam.* Calcutta: Sarasvatīyantra, 1879.

F[rederick] Eden Pargiter (tr.), *The Mārkandeya Purāṇa: Translated with Notes*. Asiat. Soc., 1904.

MatsyP   Matsya-Purāṇa. Calcutta: Caukhamba Vidyabhavan, 1954.

Anonymous [a Taluqdar of Oudh] (tr.), *The Matsya Puranam*. Allahabad: The Pâṇini Office, 196–17. **I–CXXIII**: *Part I*. 1916. **CXXIX–CCXC**: *Part II*. 1917.

MBh   Mahābhārata. Vishnu S[itaram] Sukthankar (general ed. Aug. 1925– Jan. 1943), S[hripad] K[rishna] Belvalkar (general ed. Apr. 1943 – March 1961) & Parashuram Lakshman Vaidya (general ed. Apr. 1961[–1971]), *The Mahābhārata.* 27 vols. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1927–71. **I**: Vishnu S. Sukthankar (ed.), vol. I. *The Ādiparvan.* 1927–33. **II**: Franklin Edgerton (ed.), vol. II. *The Sabhāparvan.* 1943–44. **III**: Vishnu S. Sukthankar (ed.), **1–154**: vol. III. *The Āraṇyakaparvan. Part 1.* 1941–42. **155–299**: vol. IV. *The Āraṇyakaparvan. Part 2.* 1942. **IV**: Raghu Vira (ed.), vol. V. *The Virāṭaparvan.* 1936. **V**: Sushil Kumar De (ed.), vol. VI. *The Udyogaparvan.* 1937–40. **VI**: Shripad Krishna Belvalkar (ed.), vol. VII. *The Bhīṣmaparvan.* 1945–47. **VII**: Sushil Kumar De (ed.), **1–121**: vol. VIII. *The Droṇaparvan.* 1958. **122–173**: vol. IX. *The Droṇaparvan.* 1958. **VIII**: Parashuram Lakshman Vaidya (ed.), vol. X. *The Karṇaparvan.* 1950–54. **IX**: Ramchandra Narayan Dandekar (ed.), vol. XI. *The Śalyaparvan.* 1956–61. **X**: Hari Damodar Velankar (ed.), vol. XII. *The Sauptikaparvan.* 1948. **XI**: Vasudev Gopal Paranjpe (ed.), vol. XII. *The Strīparvan.* 1956. **XII**: Shripad Krishna Belvalkar (ed.), **1–128**: vol. XIII. *The Śāntiparvan. [Rājadharma].* 1949–50. **129–167**: vol. XIV. *[Part II. Āpaddharma & Concordance].* 1950–54. **168–317**: vol. XV. *[Part III. Mokṣadharma, A].* 1951–53. **318–353**: vol. XVI. *[Part IV. Mokṣadharma, B].* 1953–54. **XIII**: Ramachandra Narayan Dandekar (ed.), vol. XVII. *The Anuśāsanaparvan.* **1–101.24**: *part I.* **101.25–154**: *part II.* 1966. **XIV**: Raghunath Damodar Karmarkar (ed.), vol. XVIII. *The Āśvamedhikaparvan.* 1958–60. Shripad Krishna Belvalkar (ed.), **XV**: vol. XIX, part I. *The Āśramavāsikaparvan.* 1959. **XVI**: vol. XIX, part II. *The Mausalaparvan.* 1959. **XVII**: vol. XIX, part III. *The Mahāprasthānikaparvan.* 1959. **XVIII**: vol. XIX, part IV. *The Svargārohaṇaparvan.* 1959. **Har.**: Parashuram Lakshman Vaidya (ed.), *The Harivaṃśa. Being the Khila or Supplement to the Mahābhārata.* Vol. I: *Critical Text.* 1969. Vol. II: *Appendices.* 1971.

            J[ohannes] A[drianus] B[ernardus] van Buitenen (tr.), *The Mahābhārata.* 3 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973–78. **I**: vol. I. *1. The Book of the Beginning.* 1973. **II–III**: vol. II. *2. The Book of the Assembly Hall. 3. The Book of the Forest.* 1975. **IV–V**: vol. III. *4. The Book of Virāṭa. 5. The Book of the Effort.* 1978.

            VIII: Adam Bowles (tr.), *Maha·Bhárata. Book Eight. Karna. Volume One.* New York: New York University Press / JJC Foundation, 2006.

            XII: Paul Deussen & Otto Strauss (Übb.), *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahâbhâratam. Sanatsujâta-Parvan – Bhagavadgîtâ. Mokshadharma – Anugîtâ.* Brockhaus, 1906.

            Har.: Simon Brodbeck (tr.), *Krishna's Lineage. The Harivamsha of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata.* OUP, 2019.

MNārU   Mahānārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad. **Dr** rec. = TaittĀ X.

            Āth rec.: G. A. Jacob (ed.), *The Mahânârâyaṇa-Upanishad of the Atharvaveda with the Dîpikâ of Nârâyâṇa.* Bombay: Government Central Book Depôt, 1888.

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Cf. also the **Pa**(ris) ed.: Jean Varenne (éd. & tr.), *La Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad. Édition critique, avec une Traduction française, une Étude, des Notes et, en annexe, la Prāṇāgnihotra Upaniṣad. I: Tome premier: Texte, Traduction, Notes. II: Tome second: Étude, Tables, Index et Appendices.* Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1960.

(For Gonda 1976, see Secondary Literature.)

MuṇḍU   Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad. Ed. & tr. Olivelle 1998: 434–455.

NārSm   Nārada-Smṛti/Dharmaśāstra. Richard W. Lariviere (ed. & tr.), *The Nāradasmṛti. Critical Edition and Translation.* MLBD, 2003.

NiśvMukh   Niśvāsamukha. Nirajan Kafle (ed. & tr.), *Niśvāsamukhatattvasaṃhitā. A Preface to the Earliest Surviving Śaiva Tantra.* Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry / EFEO / Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, 2020.

PañcB   Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (= Tāṇḍya-Mahābrāhmaṇa). Anandachandra Vedántavágíśa (ed.), *Tāṇḍya-Mahābrāhmaṇa.* 2 vols. Asiat. Soc., 1870–74. **I–XII**: vol. I. 1870. **XIII–XXV**: vol. II. 1874.

W[illem] Caland (tr.), *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇa of Twenty Five Chapters.* Asiat. Soc., 1931.

PañcBh   Kauṇḍinya, Pañcārthabhāṣya. R. Ananthakrishna Sastri (ed.), *Pasupata Sutras with Pancarthabhashya of Kaundinya.* Trivandrum: The Oriental Manuscripts Library of the University of Travancore, 1940.

PañcT   Pañcatantra. Johannes Hertel (ed.), *The Panchatantra. A Collection of Ancient Hindu Tales. In the Recension, Called Panchakhyanaka, and Dated 1199 A.D., of the Jaina Monk, Purnabhadra.* HUP, 1908.

Arthur W[illiam] Ryder (tr.), *The Panchatantra.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1925.

PārGS   Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra. Stenzler 1876.

Trs. Oldenberg, *SBE* XXIX: 263–368 and Stenzler 1878.

PārGSPar   Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra-Pariśiṣṭa. Included in Mahādeva Gangādhar Bākre (ed.), *Grihya-Sūtra by Paraskar. With Five Commentaries of Karka Upādhyāya, Jayarām, Harihar, Gadādhar and Vishvanāth as well as Appendices Called Vāpyādi-Pratishthā Kandikā with Kāmdeva Bhāshya Showcha Sūtra, Snāna Sūtra with Harihar Bhāshya and Shradha Sūtra with Three Commentaries by Karka, Gadādhara and Shrādha Kāshika by Krishnamishra and Bhojana Sūtra.* 2nd ed. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982 [1st ed.: Bombay: Gujarati Printing Press, 1917], pp. 404–546.

ParSm   Parāśara-Smṛti. Chandrakānta Tarkālaṅkāra (ed.), *Pārāśara-Smṛti. Parāśara Mādhava. With the Gloss By Mādhavāchāryya.* 2 vols. Asiat. Soc., 1973–74. Vol. I: *Āchārakāṇḍa.* Repr. 1974 (¹1893). Vols. II and III: *Prāyaśchittakāṇḍa and Vavyahārakāṇḍa.* Repr. 1973 (¹1899).

PāśS   Pāśupata-Sūtra. Peter Bisschop (ed.), "The Sūtrapāṭha of the Pāśupatasūtra." *IIJ* 49 (2006): 1–21.

PraśnU   Praśna-Upaniṣad. Ed. & tr. Olivelle 1998: 456–471.

Rām.   Vālmīki (attributed), Rāmāyaṇa. Raghu Vīra (ed.), *Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki,*
India's National Epic. For the First Time Critically Edited from Original
Manuscripts Derived from All Parts of India. Lahore: International Academy of
Indian Culture, 1938.

ṚV   Ṛgveda(-Saṃhitā). Theodor Aufrecht (Hrsg.), *Die Hymnen des Ṛigveda.* 2 vols.
2nd ed. Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1877. Vol. I: *Erster Teil: Maṇḍala I–VI.* Vol. II:
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I–III: London: Geoffrey Cumberlege / OUP/Harrassowitz, ¹1951. Vol. IV:
¹1957]. **I–IV**: vol. I. **V–VIII**: vol. II. **IX–X**: vol. III. Vol. IV: *Nachträge und*
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II–VIII: vol. II: *Zweiter Theil: Sammelbücher des Rig-Veda (erstes, neuntes,*
zehntes Buch). 1877.

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1850. Vol. IV. 1851.

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Zum ersten Male vollständig ins Deutsche übersetzt mit Commentar und
Einleitung. 6 vols. Prague/Vienna: Verlag F. Tempsky / Leipzig: G. Freytag,
1876–88. Vol. I: *Erster Band.* 1876. Vol. II: *Zweiter Band.* 1876. Vol. III: *Dritter*
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Verlag von F. Tempsky, 1881. Vol. V: *Fünfter Band (des Commentars zweiter*
Teil). Prague: Verlag F. Tempsky / Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1883. Vol. VI: *Sechster*
(Schluss-)Band Register der Belegstellen [*für den Rigveda*]. *Verzeichnis der*
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Mantralitteratur und das alte Indien Bd. III.]. *Sachliches und grammatisches*
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ṢaḍvB Ṣaḍviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (SV). Bellikoth Ramachandra Sharma (ed.), *Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa with Vedārthaprakāśa of Sāyaṇa.* Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1967.

SāmB Sāmavidhāna-Brāhmaṇa. B. R. Sharma (ed.), *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmana with Vedārthaprakāśa of Sāyaṇa and Padārthamātravivṛti of Bharatasvāmin.* 2nd ed. Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1980.

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ŚāṅkhGS Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra (ṚV). Hermann Oldenberg (Hrsg. & Üb.), "Das Çâñkhâyanagṛihyam." In: Albrecht Weber et al. (Hrsgg.), *Indische Studien. Beiträge für die Kunde des indischen Alterthums.* [*Indische Studien* 15]. Brockhaus, 1878, pp. 1–166.

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