

In Upaniṣads the bright fortnight path has been named 'devayāna', 'arcimārga', 'Uttaramārga', 'devapatha' and 'brahmapatha' also.



Link:—In the next verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa, describes the path of those, who depart to return.

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।
तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥ २५ ॥

dhūmo rātristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam
tatra cāndramasaṁ jyotiryogī prāpya nivartate

In the path, in which gods preside over smoke, the night, the dark fortnight and the six months, of the southern solstice, then traversing through, the Yogī (devoted to action with a motive) after death, catches the lunar light and he returns to the mortal world. 25

Comment:—

'Dhūmo rātristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam tatra cāndramasaṁ jyotiryogī prāpya nivartate'—In the dark path, the god of smoke, hands over those, who pass along that path to the god of night, when they have crossed his territory. Similarly, the god of night, hands them over to the god of dark fortnight, who hands them over to the god of the southern solstice. He hands them over to the god of lunar light, and they attain the divine worlds, such as heaven etc. Then after enjoying pleasure as fruit of their merit and virtue, they have to return.

Here, a point needs attention, that the lunar sphere which is seen, is not the lunar world, mentioned here, because the lunar sphere is near the earth, while the lunar world, is farther than even the sun. The nectar (energy), to the lunar sphere, comes from the lunar world, and that energy nourishes, all herbs and plants.

Here, the dark path stands, for the path which leads to the higher worlds. It has been called dark, because it is darker than the bright path. Ordinary men, are born in the mortal world after death, sinners go to the demoniac wombs, while vile sinners, to hell. Thus those, who pass along the dark path, are far superior to those who take demoniac births or go to hell, because this path is better and brighter, than other paths which lead, to the cycle of birth and death.

While returning from the dark path, the soul first comes to the sky, then to the clouds through air; and through rain, it enters the grain. Then, it enters men, when they eat food according to the fruit of actions, of the previous birth. From man it goes to woman, and takes birth. Thus, it follows the wheel of birth and death.

Now a question arises, as to why the Lord has called the people who perform actions, for their fruit, Yogīs (ascetics). There can be several reasons—

(i) The Lord in the Gītā declares, that those who are established in sattva (the quality of goodness), go to higher regions, while others go to middle or lower regions (Gītā 14/18). Here, there is a description of those, who go to the higher regions. Thus being superior to those, who go to the middle or lower regions, they have been called Yogīs.

(ii) They go to higher worlds, for enjoying heavenly pleasures, after having renounced mundane pleasures by self-control. They have been called Yogīs, because they become equanimous to some degree, whether they receive mundane pleasures or not in this world.

(iii) Their aim has been to realize God. But, at the time of death, they deviate from Yoga, because of their subtle desire for pleasure, so they go to higher worlds, such as the abode of Brahmā etc. After living there for a long time, they are born, in the houses of pious and wealthy men. Devotees, who deviate from

Yoga, go along this dark path. As persons, having an interested motive also pass through this path of yoga. Therefore they have been called Yogīs.

In the twenty-fourth verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa has used the expression 'Brahmavido janāḥ' (Brahma knowing people), in plural number, while in this verse He has used the term 'Yogī', in singular. It shows, that all men deserve God-realization and it is easy to attain Him, because He is naturally attained to all. So, the Lord, has used a plural number. But it is difficult to attain heaven, etc., because so many efforts have to be made and so many rituals to be observed, by a person. Moreover, from heaven he has to return to this mortal world. So, here a singular number has been used.

An Exceptional Fact

(1) Those, whose aim is to realize God, but their desire for pleasure is not rooted out, go to the abode of Brahmā. Thereafter, enjoying pleasure, their desire is wiped out and they are liberated from the bondage of birth and death, as described in the twenty-fourth verse.

Those, whose aim is to realize God, and have no desire for pleasure here or hereafter, but at the time of death deviate from meditation on the attributeless Lord, are directly born, in the family of enlightened Yogīs. There, by striving with greater vigour than before, for perfection, they attain salvation (Gītā 6/42-43).

Those, whose aim is to enjoy heavenly pleasures, ascend heaven, by virtue of their meritorious deeds, and return to the earth, when their fruit has been enjoyed (Gītā 7/20—23; 8/25; 9/20-21).

Those, whose aim is to realize God, and deviate from Yoga, because they could not root out the desire for worldly pleasures, at the time of death. So they obtain higher worlds, such as heaven etc., enjoy pleasures there, and then, take birth

in the house of pious and wealthy men. There, by their former practice, they are drawn towards God and reach the Supreme Goal (Gītā 6/41, 44-45). Such strivers, are far superior to those, whose aim is to enjoy heavenly pleasures.

(2) Generally, people think that those who die, in day time, in a bright fortnight, and in the six months of the northward course of the sun, attain salvation, but those who die in nighttime, in a dark fortnight and in the six months of the southern passage of the sun, do not attain salvation. But, actually it is not so. This description has been given, only for those who go to higher regions. It does not apply to those, who go to hell or take birth in evil species. The fact, is that beings go to higher or lower regions, according to their actions, whether they die, in the daytime or nighttime, bright fortnight or dark fortnight, or northern or southern solstice.

Devotees who take refuge in the Lord, attain Him, whether they die in the daytime or nighttime, bright fortnight or dark fortnight, or northward course of the sun, or the southward course of the sun.

Now a doubt arises why Bhīṣma, a liberated soul, waited for the northward course of the sun, in leaving his mortal body. The clarification is, that Bhīṣma had not to go to the Abode of God. He being a god named Vasu, had to go to the world of the gods. There the doors remain closed, at the time of the southward course of the sun. So, if he went at that time, he would wait outside, to enter his world. He had the power to die, anytime, as he willed. So he thought it better to die and wait, as he could behold Lord Kṛṣṇa, and have good company, which would be useful for the welfare of everyone. So, he left the body, at the time of the northward course of the sun.

Appendix—Selflessness is Light and selfishness is Dark.

In Upaniṣads the order of the dark fortnight has been given in different ways—

According to Chāndogyopaniṣad—the god of smoke, the god of night, the god of the dark fortnight, the god of the southern solstice, the abode of manes, the sky, the moon and then return to the mortal world (5/10/3-4)

According to bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad—the deity of smoke, the deity of night, the deity of the dark fortnight, the deity of the southern solstice, the abode of manes, moon and then return to the mortal world (6/2/16).

In Upaniṣads the dark fortnight has been named—‘pitryāna’, dhūmamārga’ and ‘dakṣiṇamārga’ also.



Link:—The next verse, is the concluding verse, on the topic of the two paths.

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।

एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः ॥ २६ ॥

śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate
ekayā yātyanāvṛttimanyayāvartate punaḥ

These two paths—the bright and the dark, are considered to be the world's eternal paths. Proceeding by one, a man has not to return, while taking the other, he returns. 26

Comment:—

‘Śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate’—All creatures, according to their actions, or by God's grace, sometime or other, receive this human life, and then according to the actions of this human life, go to higher, middle or lower regions. Now, it depends upon them, whether they pass along the bright path or the dark path, because they are all linked to the two paths.