

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 73: Chapter 8, Verses 23-26

(September 25 –October 1, 2019)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिमावृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।

*yatra kāle tvanāvṛittim āvṛittim chaiva
yogināḥ*

प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ ॥ ८-२३ ॥

*prayātā yānti taṁ kālaṁ vakṣhyāmi
bharatarṣhabha*

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।

*agnir jyotir ahaḥ śhuklaḥ ṣhaṇ-māsā
uttarāyaṇam*

तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥ ८-२४ ॥

*tatra prayātā gachchhanti brahma brahma-
vido janāḥ*

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।

*dhūmo rātris tathā kṛiṣṇaḥ ṣhaṇ-māsā
dakṣhiṇāyanam*

तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥ ८-२५ ॥

*tatra chāndramasaṁ jyotir yogī prāpya
nivartate*

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।

*śhukla-kṛiṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śhāśhvate
mate*

एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः ॥ ८-२६ ॥

ekayā yātyanāvṛittim anyayāvartate punaḥ

TRANSLATION

- (23) I shall now describe to you the different paths of passing away from this world, O best of the Bharatas, one of which leads to liberation and the other leads to rebirth.
- (24) Those who know the Supreme Brahman, and who depart from this world, during the six months of the sun's northern course, the bright fortnight of the moon, and the bright part of the day, attain the supreme destination.
- (25) The practitioners of Vedic rituals, who pass away during the six months of the sun's southern course, the dark fortnight of the moon, the time of smoke, the night, attain the celestial abodes. After enjoying celestial pleasures, they again return to the earth.
- (26) These two, bright and dark paths, always exist in this world. The way of light leads to liberation and the way of darkness leads to rebirth.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=13XvAkF2e83jXoWG1yWSK-Nn8J-peK9Sk>

Chapter 8

Verse 23:

It has been repeatedly stated by Lord Krishna that the worshippers of the Supreme Lord having successfully attained Him never return to the material existence, whereas others continue to revolve in *samsara*, the perpetual cycle of birth and death. Those who have already realized the *Brahman* and those who are performing *Yagna* or propitiation and worship to the Supreme Lord to eventually realize the *Brahman* are two different categories and have two different paths and destinations when they leave their bodies from this material world. In this verse, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that he will now explain to him those two different paths.

Verse 24:

In this verse, Lord Krishna presents the path by which there is no return for rebirth. This is the path of light. The six months of the northern solstice, the bright fortnight of the moon, the bright part of the day, are all characterized by light. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* VI.II.XII states: By this way they reach *The All Effulgent*. So, on this path of no return, are stationed the demigods identified with fire, illumination, the daytime, the moon's 15 days of bright fortnight and the six months of the sun's waxing course of northern hemisphere. The *Yogis* or those perfecting the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the ultimate consciousness, who have already realized the *Brahman* or the spiritual substratum pervading all existence, proceed on this path of no return after death.

This path is guided by the aforementioned demigods of the time divisions until they finally reach the very *Brahman* they have realized. All terms stating time periods denote the respective demigods of those time periods as described in the *Chandogya Upanishad* V.X.I-II as follows: “Those who have realized the *Brahman* as well as those who meditate in the wilderness with faith and austerity at death, are guided by a demigod for each time period, first through the fire, from the fire to the illumination, from the illumination to the day, from the day to the moon’s bright fortnight, from the bright fortnight into the six months of the sun’s northern waxing”.

Verse 25:

Now Lord Krishna speaks of the 2nd path by which there is a return to rebirth in the world of mortals. This path is the path of darkness, where the *manes* or ancestors are situated and wherein are stationed the demigods presiding over smoke, night, the dark fortnight of the moon, and the six months of the sun’s hemisphere of waning southern course. This path comprises the aspirants who are devoted to self-aggrandizing Vedic and meritorious social activities, which are considered fruitive actions seeking rewards, in order to attain the pleasures of the heavenly realms. After death, such aspirants are led by the aforementioned presiding demigods, one after another, in ascending succession until they reach *Svargaloka*, the heavenly realms. There, they enjoy the rewards of their material activities until the merits of their worldly deeds expire, at which time they return to the world of mortals and are born again. Here the words *dhumo and rattris*, meaning smoke and night, respectively, signify the presiding demigods of *Pitriloka* the world of the *manes*. The *Chandogya Upanishad* V.X.III-VI is consistent with the message of this verse.

Verse 26:

In this verse, Lord Krishna concludes His explanation of the two paths: The path of light characterized by *jyoti* or illumination and the path of darkness characterized by *dhumah* or smoke. He reiterates that those who practice the path of knowledge take the route of light, presided over by the all effulgent Agni, the demigod of fire, and those who practice the path of action take the route of darkness, presided over by the demigod of smoke. Both are eternal and without beginning. Preceding by the route of light, the qualified *Yogi* or one perfecting the individual consciousness attaining communion with the ultimate consciousness, is not reborn again in the world of mortals but eventually achieves *moksha* or liberation from material existence. The aspirant who performs meritorious activities with the desire for rewards in this life and the hereafter must return to material existence and take birth again.