

**‘Journey of Jīvas after death’-  
With Special reference to Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad**

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Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad is one of the Upaniṣads that belongs to Ṛgveda. It consists of four chapters. The first chapter of Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad describes the journey of jīvas after death. This chapter is composed as a philosophical discussion between Gārgyāyani, the teacher and Śvetaketu, the pupil.

Based on the main content of this discussion it is made clear that “Those people (jīvas) who depart from this world go to the world of moon. Moon is said to be the door of heaven. He, who knows this and tells, sends him to the next stage. He who does not know this rains down on earth, becoming himself rain. He is born on earth as a worm, or a grasshopper, or a fish, or a bird, or a lion, or a boar, or a snake, or a tiger, or a man, or another creature in one or other station according to his deeds and his knowledge ”.

Further, in a question, “Who was forwarded in the journey? ‘Who art thou?’ The reply comes as: ‘from moon I came to seasons, from seasons I came to father, as a seed I placed in mother by father. If early I had this knowledge I would not have to take birth again. Thus I again placed on the earth in order to attain the sacred knowledge. So I am season I am related to season’. Then he is forwarded to the Devayāna, from there he goes to agniloka, from agniloka to vāyuloka, from vāyuloka to varuṇaloka, from varuṇaloka to indraloka, from indraloka

to prajāpatiloka, from prajāpatiloka to brahmaloka. In brahmaloka he attains the bliss of Brahma, he becomes free from his good and bad deeds, and he realizes Brahman and never comes back to earth .

This description in Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad ascertains two paths for the journey of jīva after death. All the jīvas firstly go to the world of moon. From there those who ignorant about the truth behind creation send back to the earth again and those who know about the truth forwarded to other worlds such as agniloka, vāyuloka, etc. and finally reach brahmaloka. There is no particular name mentioned to the first path but the second path is entitled as 'Devayāna'.

The journey of jīva after death is also described in Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad. and Chāndogyopaniṣad. Chapter VI of Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad. describes two paths; Arcirādimārga and Dhūmamārga. In Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad Arcirādimārga is described as follows. Those who know this as such and those others who worship and meditate on satya with faith in the forest reach his flame, from the flame to the day, from the day to the bright fortnight, from the bright fortnight to the six months in which the sun travels northwards, from the months to the world of Gods, from the worlds of Gods to the sun, from the sun to the lightning, a mind-born puruṣa coming takes those lightnings to the worlds of Brahma. These great ones live for many cycles in those worlds of Brahma; to them there is no return to this world .

Pañcāgnividyā is the topic of discussion before this description of paths. So the householders who know Pañcāgnividyā are mentioned by the term 'those who know this'. The knowers of Pañcāgnividyā , the people who live in the forests and practice meditation are the qualified jīvas to enter in this path. Those who reach the world of Brahma live there for the life time of Brahma, which is the scripture say is many kalpas. They do not take birth again on earth.

Dhūmamārga is described in Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad as follows. Then those who attain the worlds through sacrifices, charity and austerity, go to smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the dark fortnight, from dark fortnight to those six months, from those six months to the world of manes, from the world of manes to the moon. They reach the moon and become food. There the Gods eat those, as the priests drinking the shining soma juice saying 'do flourish, do dwindle'. When their results of deeds are exhausted, then they go to this ether verily, from ether to air, from air to rain, from rain to earth. They coming to earth become food. They again are offered in the fire of man, thereafter in the fire of woman from where they are born with the desire to go to other worlds .

Those who do only virtuous karmas and who are ignorant about the truth behind creation are the jīvas sent to the Dhūmamārga. They reach the world of moon and when their effect of karma exhausted they send back to earth to take birth again. The Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad also mentions a third category, those people who do neither meditation nor virtues karma, go through neither Arcirādimārga not Dhūmamārga. They are born as little creatures such as worms, flies, etc. .

Chāndogyopaniṣad describes these paths as follows. Those who know this and those who worship and meditate on tapa with faith in the forests reach flame, from flame to the day, from the day to the bright fortnight, from the bright fortnight to the six months in which the sun travels northwards, from the months to the year, from the year to the āditya, from the āditya to the moon, from the moon to the lightning, from there a person, who is not an ordinary person send to the world of Brahma. This is the path of Devayāna . Here also the term 'those who know this' indicates those person who know Pañcāgnividyā . The knowers of Pañcāgnividyā and those persons who live in forests and practice meditation are the qualified jīvas to enter in this path.

Those householders who lived in the villages and performed virtues karmas such as iṣṭa, pūrta and datta, go to smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the dark fortnight, from dark fortnight to those six months in which sun moves southward, and they do not reach the year. From those six months to the world of manes, from the world of manes to the ether, from ether to moon. They reach the moon and become food. There the Gods eat those. When their results of deeds are exhausted, then they go to this ether verily, from ether to air, being air they become smoke, from smoke they become lightning, from lightning they become rain and come to the earth. Then they born as different plants. Who eat them then they become the nature of eater. Those who perform good karmas in this world they reach better and better living body. Those who perform bad karmas they reach lower and lower living body .

Like Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, Chāndogyopaniṣad also mentions a third category, those who do not reach one of these two paths, they are born as little creatures such as insects, worms, etc. and they live destined to be born and to die again and again .

The journey of jīva after death, which described in Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad provides knowledge of only two paths while Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad and Chāndogyopaniṣad refer these same two paths and provide a third one for those who are ignorant of first two paths. This problem between Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad and other Upaniṣads is compromised in aniṣṭādikāryādhikaraṇa in Brahmasūtraśāṅkarsbhāṣya. According to Śaṅkara, those who perform sacrifices only enter into the world of moon, and all other jīvas reach the world of Kāla, which is known as 'Saṃyamanam'. There they experience miseries in accordance to their bad deeds and then come again to earth . He says that, those words ' yao ko ' which mean 'those all depart from this

world' in Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad should be commented as all those who qualified to enter into the moon only enter moon after their departure . He says that, the word ' tu ' in the sūtra solves the problem which can be made by Upaniṣadic teachings belonging to different śākhās . Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad belongs to Ṛgveda, Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad belongs to Yajurveda and Chāndogyopaniṣad belongs to Sāmaveda. So there will be some variations in teachings. Thus Śāṅkara solves the problems in teachings between Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad and the other Upaniṣads dealing with the journey of jīvas after death.

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