

Evidences Suggestive of Reincarnation based on Indian Beliefs

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ABSTRACT

Ancient scriptures in Indian culture strongly support the concept of reincarnation. Researchers have travelled from place to place to study cases and concluded that over 92% of them were true. This article discusses the various pieces of evidence that strongly suggest the existence of rebirth, describes the characteristics specific to reincarnated individuals, and also methods adapted to prove the existence of reincarnation. The article, however, does not claim that reincarnation exists, for it is still debatable.

Keywords: Reincarnation, rebirth, evidence of reincarnation, personalities of reincarnated people

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, reincarnation has always been a mystery. Reincarnation refers to the rebirth of an individual, in which their soul leaves the previous body after death and enters another flesh. Along with the soul, it carries the mind, consciousness, memories and karma. This event is also known as transmigration in common language, and metempsychosis in professional terms.

The Bhagavad Gita, the holy book of Hindus, states that every being has a soul that goes through the cycle of birth, death and rebirth until they reach the heavenly abode of God. The physical form of the soul is based on the karmas or actions of the person in their previous birth. Depending on the karmas of their past life, they may become humans, insects, animals or take any other form of being.

Children below 5 years of age have claimed to have distinct memories of their past lives. They have described their former birth life so accurately that their parents were compelled to visit the described place, find the people they mentioned in their stories and confirm by themselves. However, only some have been able to go to the depths of the matter and confirm the tales their children narrated.

Furthermore, in over 93% of reincarnation cases, an association between birthmarks or birth defects and wounds on the body from the previous birth has been found. Some people also experience phobias related to their cause of death in the previous birth. It was thus concluded that birthmarks, injury marks, congenital disabilities (such as heart ailments) and phobias might relate to the cause of the individual's death in their previous life.

THE CYCLE OF BIRTH AND DEATH^{1,2}

The life cycle of birth, death and rebirth is termed reincarnation or samsara. The holy book of Bhagavad Gita, in its shlokas 8.17 to 8.19, describes this periodic emergence of life in depth. It states that all beings have souls that derive from Brahma, Lord Vishnu or Shankar. Every soul leaves the physical form once it perishes and then resides in the body of Lord Vishnu. They take birth on earth when they are released from the physical body, and after death, they reside within the supreme Brahma's body. Souls are everlasting and indestructible in contrast to the physical bodies that they reside in. The cycle of birth and death continues until the soul reaches the humble abode of God.

Moreover, all souls aim to be liberated forever from this cycle to obtain Moksha or salvation. A soul keeps taking birth in different forms on the earth based on their past karmas and is set free once he is detached from the clutches of maya or the material world.

It is also said that rebirth is inevitable, and so is death. Every being that is born has to die. To liberate oneself from this cycle, turning to spiritual practices can help. The Bhagavad Gita is thus major evidence that life after death exists. In conjunction with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, various case studies of people who claim to have been reincarnated support its prevalence.

Cases of Rebirth

In his research paper, KM Wehrstein³, states that people may have the choice of reincarnating in a specific way or choosing the kind of life they wish to live. Along with their choice of life, they carry forward their past karmas (deeds). Even though there is no large-scale statistical analysis on the selection of new life, co-authors Ohkado Masayuki and doctor Ikegawa Akira⁴ surveyed several parents and children who experienced intermission; and they stated that 80% of their subjects chose their parents.

One example is William George Jr.'s case⁵:

He was an Alaskan fisherman who told his son and his son's wife that he would return as their son in his next life. He added that they could recognise him by the three large moles on his left arm and his shoulder. In addition, he gave his son a gold watch and asked him to save it. Unfortunately, some weeks later, he fell off his boat and died; his body was never recovered.

About nine months later, his son's wife gave birth to a boy who had three moles exactly like William George Jr. His behaviour, with time, resembled that of his grandfather. Surprisingly, he instantly recognised his grandfather's gold watch when his mother showed it to him⁶. This case proves that people may choose to reincarnate. There are many cases wherein people have chosen to reincarnate as family members or close ones.

Understanding The Characteristics of Reincarnated Individuals^{7,8}

Many professors and scientists have taken up reincarnation as their primary field of study. Among them, a renowned personality, Dr Satwant K Pasricha, a professor of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS, has studied over 500 cases of reincarnation, of which about 77% were authentic⁹. In one of her articles, she states that in over 82% of her case studies, a relationship between

injuries or marks on reincarnated people's bodies and the cause of their death in a previous life was evident.

Some children are reborn with similar facial features, mannerisms or thought processes that correspond to their previous lives. In addition, children with birth defects, birthmarks, or significant moles have been attributed to incidences that may have occurred in their previous lives.⁸ Children who spoke of their past were normally between 2 to 5 years of age and rarely above 10 years of age. At times, their behaviour is deemed inappropriate for their present circumstances but appropriate for the behaviour of the deceased person whose life they claim to recall.

Ian Stevenson, a well-known Psychiatrist working at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, USA, has conducted extensive research in the field of reincarnation. Dr Satwant and Dr Stevenson have collaborated on several projects of reincarnation and have published several papers in reputed journals. Their contribution to the field of rebirth is commendable and forms the basis of today's research regarding reincarnation. Dr Stevenson has described some characteristics of people who have reincarnated in his study published in 1986⁸. His findings are not only applicable to specific communities but to everyone who may have reincarnated or claimed to have so.

He states that when a person reincarnates, they depict certain characteristics and personality traits that differ from common individuals. These can be described in the form of physical characteristics, recognition of places, people and objects, statements about matters relating to the past life, emotions, and more.

Physical Characteristics¹⁰

Many individuals who reincarnate often have birthmarks, moles, birth defects and other physical marks on their body that have been present since birth. These marks or defects are often unexplained but have been known to be carried forward from previous births.

Some may have evident moles in a particular pattern, as described in the case above, or may have prominent marks that correspond with the cause of death in their previous lives. In about 33% of recorded cases, birthmarks were of significance. Other forms of physical marks include wounds, severed limbs, surgical scars, skin and hair colour, deformities, facial features that resemble the deceased person, and more.

Statements Made by Children About Their Past Lives

Research suggests that children often make claims about their past lives spontaneously. Sometimes, they reveal appalling yet apt details about incidents that may never have been previously discussed with them. According to studies by Stevenson, about 73% of 80 detailed cases could recall their names from previous lives, and 74% could remember the residence.

Children have also discussed or reclaimed their formerly owned belongings without having seen them before in this life. Some statements included the nature of the incidence of their death, be it violent or due to natural reasons. Children have also been able to name their murderers from former lives and able to bring justice to themselves and those associated with

the incident. In Stevensons' study of 80 cases, 57% of the 28 homicides could recall the name of their killer.

Recognising People, Places and Objects

Claimants often recognise former members of their family immediately, even on their first encounter (in about 20% of 80 cases, by Stevenson). More often, they also identify their nicknames, family relationships, objects, places, homes, and roads and, surprisingly, correctly pinpoint the changes which have taken place.

Furthermore, children have been able to recognise people from earlier photos. Often, when researchers attempt to confuse children in order to test the veracity of their claims, they fail (21% of the 80 cases, by Stevenson). They did so by asking leading questions or twisting information.

Sentiments

About 75% of children in Stevensons' study were aware of their former name, and some wished to be called that way. They could speak the language of their former life without having to learn it or hear it in their present birth. Their demeanour mirrored their past life emotions and mannerisms. Some claimants strongly intended to be taken to their former homes and also declared their purpose of making property claims.

Children have also depicted strange phobias (about 37% facing a violent death, and 7% in natural death cases). These phobias are attributed to the events surrounding their previous deaths. Moreover, it has been noted that most had similar preferences, skills and habits that resemble their past lives, such as eating habits, smoking, gambling, hobbies, interests, capabilities, and more.

Dreams and Past Life

Recently, it has been stated that dreams are capable of showing clips of our past lives. This includes repeatedly seeing places, and names, seeing certain people and meeting them in future, and more such incidences. These dreams can be distinguished into "arrival dreams" and "leaving dreams".

Arrival dreams often announce the welcome of a baby, a person who is about to come into our life, a deceased person requesting reincarnation, or hint at a situation that we are about to face. One such case, studied by Stevenson, states that announcing dreams, in which a deceased person announces their reincarnation to a mother-to-be or another person. They sometimes also inform about the parents they have chosen to be the child of. This is a very common feature of reincarnation, seen in 22% of 1,100 cases investigated by Stevenson, as per researcher Jim B Tucker¹¹.

On the other hand, leaving dreams may indicate that a relationship with a person is about to end or a tough situation is about to be resolved.

Unusual Utterances

The time interval between death and rebirth is termed intermission. 23% cases of 80, by Stevenson, claimed to have memories of the intermission period, in which they had vivid experiences. People with memories of the intermission period, or 'the Beyond', often showcase more proven facts about reincarnation.

While some claim to have earth-bound memories, such as of the funeral, memories of birth and death, which could be verified, and about 36% were true. On the other hand, there are people with a recollection of times when they were travelling towards the Beyond shortly after their demise or in preparation for their rebirth; of course, the veracity of these incidents cannot be verified.

Sources That Give Proof of Reincarnation¹²

There are a handful of sources that help researchers study and understand the science of reincarnation. However, it should be noted that reincarnation is a subject that cannot always be verified for veracity and requires more accurate methods to prove its existence. Some of such precious sources are discussed in this article.

Statements Revealed by Children

Children are by far the most important source of the study of reincarnation. This is because the stories they narrate can be verified to the last bit of the detail they provide, ranging from whom they were in their past life, assessing their records at their place of birth in their previous lives, speaking to people who may still be alive, and more.

Understanding and verifying their statements, physical characteristics, places they claimed to originate from, their sentiments, and dreams about past life opens doors to our understanding of reincarnation and life between birth and death.

Past Life Regression Through Hypnosis

Past life regression therapy has been commonly employed by specialists to evaluate the traumatic incidents in the past life affecting the mental and physical issues in this life. It is the most common method to study past lives in adults. This method makes use of hypnosis, through which past life memories are accessed. However, the memories are so powerful that they can even take us to several past lives.

Unfortunately, this method is less reliable than the statements revealed by children and has its limitations.

Near-Death Experiences

Near-death experiences include times such as when a person is in a coma or has met with an accident and has fallen unconscious. When people are in a state of unconsciousness, they experience certain visions that often cannot be explained. Upon revival, some may recollect what they have seen and describe their experience about what is called the 'Beyond' or 'intermission'. These are memories of the time they spent between this life and the new life.

The stories sometimes correspond with those told by children and adults who have reincarnated. Some people have also narrated past life incidents. Cases have been reported in which they feel they are speaking to their spirit guides who guide them towards the path they should choose ahead. However, there is no concrete way to prove such an incident.

Sensitive Humans

Some people have spiritual abilities and can communicate with those who are dead in a process called séance. This method has also been proven useful in proving that reincarnation exists. People who practise this art have spoken to the deceased, and frequently in their conversations, the topic of past life has appeared.

Dreams

The science of dreams, to date, remains unclear. However, some research suggests that dreams result from a blend of life experiences, be it past or present, and anticipation of future events¹³. It still needs to be clarified how exactly that happens, but it may be related to our purpose of coming onto this planet or taking rebirth.

Deja-vu

Most of the population has experienced deja-vu. It is a personal experience in which it feels as though what is happening in the present has happened before. Some people claim that these experiences may be related to a past life. However, there is no concrete evidence that supports such a claim.

CONCLUSION

Even though each piece of evidence is spellbinding and questions our beliefs about reincarnation, the process of how and why reincarnated children remember the minute details is still in the shadows. Despite the proof and shreds of evidence that corroborates their stories to be true, it is still a mystery whether reincarnation truly exists.

Some existing studies suggest that these children performed better academically, have superior memory power and are cleverer than their fellow associates. The reason behind their wits is yet to be discovered and might correlate with the recollections of their past lives. However, more research needs to be conducted to understand the psychology, characteristics and features of children who claim to have been reborn.

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