

published, greater detailed confirmation was accumulating for his evidence for reincarnation. Stevenson's scientific research shook the academic world out of its usual sceptical complacency. It was one of the first times that a scientist with an established reputation in the physical sciences produced clear evidence for reincarnation and inevitably for the afterlife.

Of course, there were those who tried to criticize Dr Stevenson's research, but the critics were *not* scientists, nor did they have the necessary technical substance to deal with the scientific method used by Dr Stevenson. Many of these minor critics hold a particular belief system which is intrinsically hostile to reincarnation.

Professor Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler, of the City College at the City University of New York says amongst other things, "*Stevenson is a most careful and conscientious person of great intellectual ability and high professional standards. He has a most painstaking approach to collection and analysis of raw data.*"

Dr Stevenson's research highlights very clearly the existence of reincarnation.

### Arguments against Reincarnation

When critics are confronted with convincing evidence for reincarnation, they try to explain the results away. They claim it was caused by extrasensory perception, fraud, spirit possession, fantasy or inherited memory. Let us examine, as Dr Ian Stevenson did, the main arguments in turn.

#### Extra Sensory Perception

If reborn children have extrasensory powers they either do possess them generally or they don't. It is not logically consistent for the sceptic to say that a child has ESP for some things and not for others, i.e. that children have ESP in relation to their alleged past lives but not in relation to anything else.

Also with regards to what is known about ESP, children who have recounted past lives would have to have 'super ESP' due to the significant amounts of information they provide. Finally, birthmarks and deformities in some children are clearly beyond any

scope of ESP explanation. Children recounting past lives, often point to a mark or marks on their body and explain that is where they were shot or mutilated.

#### Inherited Memory/Collective Unconscious?

Some sceptics argue that a reborn child has actually 'inherited memories'. This means that instead of the child having been re-born, the child is in fact remembering the life of one of his ancestors. However the 'inherited memory' argument, has fundamental flaws. If a person was remembering the life of one of his or her ancestors there would have to be both a racial and geographic link between the remembered life and the life of the person's ancestors. However many people remember past lives as members of totally different races.

#### Possession?

Some critics of reincarnation have argued that when a child claims that he or she remembers a past life, what is really happening is that a discarnate entity, a spirit, is taking control of the child's mind and the information is really coming from the spirit and not from the allegedly re-born child. Dr Stevenson negates this argument by explaining that possession of young children, especially from two years on is extremely rare, if it ever occurs. In most of the cases, the children make certain 'past life' statements quite spontaneously, fully conscious and definitely not in a trance or in any altered state of consciousness. Anybody familiar with a medium in a trance state will notice a change of consciousness in the medium where the particular personality of the medium dramatically changes. This does not happen in these cases. Another reason why the possession argument fails, says Stevenson, is that it doesn't explain birthmarks.

#### Summary

The scientific evidence for reincarnation is already there with 1000's of verified cases of reborn children. Based on scientific evidence therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest that reincarnation exists.



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# Scientific Evidence For Reincarnation

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## Introduction

Belief in reincarnation is an ancient phenomenon and is a central doctrine within the Indian religious traditions. The modern evidence for reincarnation comes from past life regression, spontaneous recall of past lives, transmission of information from the afterlife, Theosophy and Edgar Cayce. However, in keeping with the scientific emphasis of this essay, concentration will be made on past-life regression and spontaneous recall of past lives.

## Past Life Regressions

Past life regression simply involves placing a person under hypnosis and asking them to go back through their childhood to a time before they were born. In many cases the person begins talking about his or her life or lives before the present lifetime, about their previous death and about the time between lives including the planning of the present lifetime.

The main reason why at least some of these claims must be considered as evidence are:

- The regression frequently leads to a cure of a physical illness
- In some cases the person regressed begins to speak an unlearned foreign language
- In some cases the person being regressed remembers details of astonishing accuracy which when checked out are verified by the top historians
- The emotional intensity of the experience is such that it convinces many formerly sceptical psychiatrists who are used to dealing with fantasy and imagined regressions
- In some cases the alleged cause of death in an immediate past life is reflected by a birthmark in the present life.

By 1950 past life regression was being accepted by doctors who had previously been sceptics because it worked. As Dr Alexander Cannon wrote, *"For years the theory of reincarnation was a nightmare to me and I did my best to disprove it... Yet as the years went by one subject after another told me the same story in spite of different and varied conscious beliefs. Now well over a thousand cases*

*have been investigated and I have to admit that there is such a thing as reincarnation."*

Psychiatrists all over the world have found that regression works. The very well known clinical psychologist, Dr Edith Fiore of the United States says, *"If someone's phobia is eliminated instantly and permanently by his remembrance of an event from the past (life), it makes logical sense that the event must have happened"*

Dr Helen Wambach was a sceptic who in 1975 undertook a major study of past life regressions in order to find out once and for all if there was any truth to reincarnation. By doing a scientific analysis on the past lives reported by her 10,000 plus volunteers she came up with some startling evidence in favour of reincarnation:

- 50.6 % of the past lives reported were male and 49.4 % were female—this is exactly in accordance with biological fact
- The number of people reporting upper class or comfortable lives was in exactly the same proportion to the estimates of historians of the class distribution of the period
- The recall by subjects of clothing, footwear, type of food and utensils used was better than that in popular history books. She found over and over again that her subjects knew better than most historians. When she went to obscure experts her subjects were invariably correct.

Her conclusion was, *"I don't believe in reincarnation—I know it!"*

## Further Hypnotherapy Evidence

A world renowned hypnotherapist who showed a link between past life regression and reincarnation is psychologist and former sceptic Peter Ramster from Sydney, Australia.

In 1983 he produced a stunning television documentary in which four women from Sydney, who had never been out of Australia, gave details under hypnosis of their past lives. Then, accompanied by television cameras and independent witnesses, they were taken to the other side of the world.

One of the subjects involved was Gwen MacDonald, a staunch sceptic before her regression. She remembered a life in Somerset between 1765-82. Many facts about her life in Somerset which would be impossible to get out of a book were confirmed in front of witnesses when she was taken there:

- When taken blindfolded to the area in Somerset she knew her way around perfectly although she had never been out of Australia
- She knew the location of a waterfall and the place where stepping stones had been. The locals confirmed that the stepping stones had been removed about 40 years before
- She knew correctly names of villages as they were 200 years ago even though on modern maps they do not exist or their names have been changed
- She knew that the local people called Glastonbury Abbey 'St Michaels' - a fact that was only proved by reading an obscure 200 year old history book not available in Australia

## Spontaneous Past Life Recall

The scientific research into reincarnation by Dr Ian Stevenson, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, is most brilliant. Specifically, he has investigated what is known as 'spontaneous past life recall'.

Over a number of years Dr Stevenson interviewed over four thousand children from the United States, England, Thailand, Burma, Turkey, Lebanon, Canada, India and other places, who claimed that they could remember a number of incidents from a past life. Procedural scientific investigation included the checking and analysis (where relevant) of documents, letters, autopsy records, birth and death certificates, hospital records, photographs, newspaper reports and the like.

What is to be kept in mind is that Dr Stevenson put his considerable reputation on the line when he introduced his scientific work to the world through most prestigious psychiatric journals like The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease (September 1977) and The American Journal of Psychiatry (December 1979). He published several volumes about past life recall and each time a volume was