

The Mechanics of Karma and Transmigration

www.ProjectNaad.com



1 Contents Page

1	Contents Page.....	2
2	Introduction	5
3	What is life after death?.....	6
3.1	Atheists and agnostics.....	6
3.2	Resurrection and the day of judgment	6
3.3	Reincarnation.....	6
4	Why does reincarnation occur?.....	8
4.1	God's grace at work	8
4.2	Mastering the 5 thieves (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride).....	8
4.3	Law of cycles	9
4.4	God in the midst of evil	9
5	Making sense of suffering	10
5.1	Types of suffering	11
5.2	Suffering matrix	11
6	Is there any scientific evidence for reincarnation?	15
6.1	Past life regression	15
6.2	Research by Peter Ramster	17
6.3	Spontaneous past life recall.....	18
6.4	Arthur Guirdham and Mrs. Smith.....	19
6.5	Research by Dr Ian Stevenson.....	20
6.5.1	Marta Lorenz (case study 1).....	22
6.5.2	Imad Elawar (case study 2)	23
6.6	Alternative explanations.....	23
6.6.1	Extrasensory perception?.....	24
6.6.2	Fraud?.....	25
6.6.3	Cryptomnesia?.....	26
6.6.4	Inherited memory/collective unconscious?.....	26
6.6.5	Possession?.....	27
7	Quotes from the Guru Granth Sahib regarding reincarnation.....	29
7.1	Quotes highlighting the dangers of the 5 thieves	29
7.2	Quotes highlighting the importance of dwelling in God	29
7.3	Importance of the holy congregation (saadh sangat).....	30
8	Common misconceptions regarding reincarnation.....	32
8.1	Attitude towards other less fortunate people	32
8.2	What is karma and where did karma first come from?	32
8.3	How do the fruits of karma from previous lives affect the fruits of karma from our current life?.....	33
8.4	Does karma abdicate personal responsibility?	34
9	What do other Religions say about Reincarnation?.....	35
9.1	Reincarnation in Judaism	35
9.2	Reincarnation in Christianity	36
9.3	Reincarnation in Islam.....	37

9.4	Reincarnation in Hinduism.....	38
9.5	Reincarnation in Buddhism.....	39
9.6	Summary regarding reincarnation in world religions.....	40
10	Arguments against reincarnation	41
10.1	What is the origin of evil?.....	41
10.1.1	Answer.....	41
10.2	Where is the Justice in being punished for past lives?.....	42
10.2.1	Answer.....	42
10.3	How does Karma know the difference between reward and punishment?	43
10.3.1	Answer.....	43
10.4	Reincarnational thinking assumes that one lifetime is not enough for adequate moral progress	43
10.4.1	Answer.....	44
10.5	Reincarnation does not make sense physically nor spiritually	44
10.5.1	Answer.....	44
10.6	Most of Dr Stevenson’s research can be understood without reincarnation	45
10.6.1	Answer.....	45
10.7	Reincarnational thinking assumes that one lifetime is not enough for adequate moral progress	45
10.7.1	Answer.....	45
10.8	Reincarnational thinking to property rights.....	46
10.8.1	Answer.....	46
10.9	Assets and liabilities should not be transferred from one life to the next	46
10.9.1	Answer.....	47
10.10	Divine administration of karma	47
10.10.1	Answer.....	47
10.11	Everything we do in this life is ultimately pointless.....	48
10.11.1	Answer.....	48
10.12	Happiness at the end of the journey seems a strange happiness	49
10.12.1	Answer.....	49
10.13	What were the mistakes we committed that resulted in our failure to acquire liberation.....	49
10.13.1	Answer.....	50
10.14	An example of injustice through reincarnation.....	50
10.14.1	Answer.....	51
10.15	An example of injustice through reincarnation.....	51
10.15.1	Answer.....	52
10.16	There is no connection between ones previous life and the next	53
10.16.1	Answer.....	53
11	Suffering child held accountable for actions from previous life	54
11.1.1	Answer.....	54
11.2	Suffering child due to external reasons.....	55
11.2.1	Answer.....	55

11.3	Suffering due to natural disasters.....	55
11.3.1	Answer.....	55
11.4	Karma abdicates personal responsibility	56
11.4.1	Answer.....	56
11.5	Origin of Bad Karma.....	57
11.5.1	Answer.....	58
11.6	Sikhism is ridiculous.....	58
11.6.1	Answer.....	59
12	Conclusions.....	60

2 Introduction

Guru Nanak Dev Ji the first Sikh master was a universal teacher with a simple goal of delivering the message of truth to humanity so that we may learn to live our lives in alignment with the will of the Great Spirit and achieve Moksha (oneness).

This essay looks at one of the eternal questions of life, which is 'What happens when I die?' Closely related questions are 'Is there a soul?', 'Is there an afterlife?' and 'What is the nature of the soul?' We hope to provide the reader with answers to these timeless questions including life after death and the truth behind the concept of Reincarnation.

3 What is life after death?

The afterlife (or life after death) is a generic term referring to a continuation of existence, typically spiritual or experiential beyond this world, or after death. There are 3 main widely held positions in regard to life after death, and these include:

3.1 Atheists and agnostics

To the Atheist or the Materialist, the whole idea of life after death is an absurdity. To them it might seem like some invention designed to deal with the fear of death, or some fantasy that allows religious people to better cope with the passing away of loved ones. The debate between those who believe in eternal life and those who dismiss the idea of it, has been going on throughout history. The kinds of people who deny the reality of eternal life will often also have materialist assumptions. That is they will usually suppose that our existence is based on our physical bodies with nothing else being in existence apart from the material Universe. They will find it impossible to see how anything of what we are can survive after our bodies have stopped working and decayed away. Or else they'll counter the idea of eternal life with the objection that it is something which can never be proven.

Agnostics generally hold the position that like the existence of God, the existence of supernatural phenomena, such as souls or life after death, is unverifiable and therefore unknowable.

The validity of both these beliefs will be examined within the scientific section of this essay.

3.2 Resurrection and the day of judgment

The religiously minded believe and have believed through the ages, all sorts of different stories concerning the details of the passage of the soul. Most Christians and Muslims of this world believe in the idea of 'resurrection'. That is after death we return to life with the same physical bodies that we had during our lives on Earth. This 'resurrected' body will then inhabit for all eternity either some sort of paradise i.e. Heaven or else will be condemned to some sort of Hell. Often it will also be believed that we may meet again deceased friends and loved ones, who will also be similarly physically reconstituted in this imagined afterworld.

3.3 Reincarnation

The third and ever growing belief regarding eternal life is common to the mystical heart of all world religion. This is the well known but not universally believed idea called reincarnation or the transmigration of souls.

Reincarnation is the belief that when one dies, one's body decomposes and a person will either attain salvation (depending on a persons actions and the grace of God) or be consigned to the cycle of birth again and be given another body which is not necessarily human and another opportunity to either attain salvation or reap the fruits of ones actions in their previous life.

4 Why does reincarnation occur?

The creation of the reincarnation cycle is a beautiful gift from God because it provides a soul with all the opportunities and experiences to eventually find its way back to its primal source (God).

4.1 *God's grace at work*

What kind of God would say: *"If you make an error, too bad; suffer with it for the rest of eternity?"* That would be a cruel and mindless God. But God says quite the opposite: *"I know you make errors, and I shall give you every opportunity to correct them and become a better soul, and someday we shall become one."*

Through reincarnation, we are given the opportunity to set straight that which may have gone wrong. We are given the opportunity to come back to the Earth plane and "relive" some of our experiences, to see if we can react less to the thrill of the moment and respond more to the prompting of the spirit. Through reincarnation, we are given the opportunity to come back with another soul, or group of souls, to make good that which may be bad, or to make even better that which is already good. Through reincarnation, we are given the opportunity to become all that we are capable of becoming, rather than remain where we are. Reincarnation, as it manifests within the great Law of Karma, is perhaps the greatest demonstration of God's love for and faith in us.

4.2 *Mastering the 5 thieves (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride)*

The process of spiritual evolution involves mastering the lower personality, that the higher aspects of the soul and spirit may be free to express themselves. In order for us to master the lower nature, we must rise above the temptations of the flesh and personality and work consciously with the inspirations of the spirit.

The Earth plane offers the greatest opportunity and potential for the lower aspects to dominate the life of the individual. Where else are we able to deal with the limitations of time and money? Where else is the bodily form of such importance? Where else is the sexual appetite so powerful? The Earth plane, with all its limitations, is truly one of the most expansive realms of life because it is the only place in Creation where we are allowed to become fully engrossed within such dense matter while dealing with our spiritual quest and journey.

So the Earth plane is truly a grand place where we can, for all practical purposes, have the best of both worlds: spiritual and material. It is also a realm full of paradox because we use the material world to appreciate its non-reality and that we might then begin to sense and work with the reality of Naam (the

spirit of God). To consider that this can be done in the span of a few short years is foolish, to say the least.

Through the process of reincarnation, we are able to deal with the whole of the earthly experience and reach a point where we no longer need these experiences. It is at that point that we can say to ourselves: *"I no longer need to come back to earthly form."*

4.3 Law of cycles

Everything in life follows the great Law of Cycles. Seasons come and go. People are born and die. Trees follow a cyclic pattern of life and apparent death. History seems to repeat itself, until there is no longer a need to repeat the cycle. Why should we assume that our earthly lives would not follow the same cyclic patterns exhibited by the rest of creation?

4.4 God in the midst of evil

A question which will challenge one's faith perhaps more than anything else is:

How can there be such evil and suffering in a world which is supposed to be governed by an all-loving and all-forgiving God?

An understanding of reincarnation and karma sheds great light upon this perplexing question and offers hope where there seems to be little hope. Through an understanding of karma and reincarnation, we can see that it is because there is such a loving and forgiving God that evil and suffering do appear upon our planet. God could very easily intervene and wipe away all pain, all suffering, and all form of negativity from our lives. But in so doing, He would rob us of our greatest gift: the gift of choice. We would, then, most assuredly be nothing more than puppets on a string, manipulated by God.

But God is a loving God; He allows each of us to become the master of our own destiny. We are given the freedom of choice: the choice either to live by divine law, or in opposition to it. Choice is very important to us. Men and women have suffered and died, in order to defend that inherent right and gift. In this, however, we shall reap the fruits of our labors and our choices. This is the Law of Karma.

If we plant bad seeds, the harvest will be bad. If we plant good seeds, the harvest will be good. If we plant good seeds, but do not tend to them, they will sprout and die shortly thereafter. If we plant bad seeds, and then recognize that we have done so, we can dig up our garden and plant good seeds. So, we have ample opportunity to manifest good as well as evil.

Karma explains why there is evil in the midst of a loving creation. Reincarnation offers us a means of transforming that evil into good.

5 Making sense of suffering

If we have been born into a loving family with perfect health, a good education, a great job, a nice house and amazing friends then we are truly blessed! We must have worked extremely hard in our previous lives to get to where we are today.

However not everyone is as fortunate as that in life. There are people who are born with disabilities, there are people who get murdered, there are people who get raped, there are people who have no food and die from starvation, there are young children who have to witness their parents being killed in front of them etc.

There are many grades of suffering in human experience and the Karmic theory is the only one which can explain everything and at the same time support the existence of an all loving creator.

Let's examines the different levels and grades of suffering.

5.1 Types of suffering

Suffering comes to us for two reasons - either as a consequence of our own actions or as a test sent by God for our spiritual development. Below we look at 7 different types of suffering and the reasons for this suffering according to the 3 main “models” which include:

Theory	Reasons for Suffering
Karmic	1) Reaping the fruits of thoughts and actions from previous lives 2) Reaping the fruits of thoughts and actions from current life 3) Tests from God where we have a choice and an opportunity to learn something and develop our relationship with God
Traditional Abrahamic	1) Reaping the fruits of actions from current life 2) Tests from God where we have a choice and an opportunity to learn something and develop our relationship with God
Atheist	1) Humans cause suffering e.g. Wars 2) Natural

As can be seen from the suffering reasons above, Karma does not denounce the reasons for suffering used by the Abrahamic faiths, however it does add a new dimension of understanding to suffering, human nature and our relationship with the cosmos.

5.2 Suffering matrix

Type of Suffering	Scenario of this type of suffering	Karmic reason for suffering	Abrahamic reason for suffering	Atheistic reason for suffering
Spiritual Suffering (individual disconnected from God)	Every individual that is born into the earthly plane will have undergone a separation from their primal source (God)	The disconnection has occurred due to the accumulation of karma from living a life not centered on Truth	Due to adam an eve eating forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden	This form of suffering cannot exist as God does not exist

Mental Suffering (applied only to one person)	Example could be a student studying for exams and the mental stress that this causes to the individual	This form of suffering is a challenge from God in learning to deal with stress and remaining centered	The Abrahamic reason for suffering in this example would be the same as the Karmic reason	Everyone has to go through exams. This may or may not have personal meaning or growth for the individual.
Physical Suffering 1 (applied only to one person)	A still born baby	This child required one human breath to attain moksha and so attained its liberation from the cycle of birth and death. There will also be a component of learning for the parents, however this is a secondary item	As far as the soul in question is concerned. It never got an opportunity to grow or learn about God. So its only purpose may have been to 'teach' a lesson about suffering, pain or attachment to the parents	This is simply life. There is no meaning and provides evidence for the belief in no God.
Physical Suffering 2 (applied only to one person)	A person born with painful birth defects resulting in the child dieing at the age of 5	As far as the child is concerned, the suffering of the child is solely due to previous karma. There will no doubt be a component of learning for the parents involved but that again is a secondary issue.	If the individual is not responsible for his/her suffering then God must be responsible for the suffering. God may want the parents to grow spiritually and so He chooses to do this at the expense of another soul.	This is evidence for the belief in no God.

Natural Suffering (caused by natural disasters)	An earthquake occurs in India and 500,000 people loose their lives	This is called collective Karma where a group of people will be reaping the fruits of their actions individually but as a collective whole	God is punishing people for their sinful acts even though this may include children and babies who have done nothing wrong	Further evidence for the belief in no God.
Moral Suffering 1 (brought about through human choice at both personal and group levels)	A guy takes part in lots of pre-marital sex, contracts a lethal sexually transmitted disease and dies	Every action has a consequence. So the individual is only reaping the harvest of seeds which they themselves have sown through the free choice given by God.	The Abrahamic reason for suffering in this example would be the same as the Karmic reason	The Atheistic reason for suffering in this example would be the same as the Karmic reason
Moral Suffering 2 (brought about through human choice at both personal and group levels)	When humans spread hate towards one another and kill each other such as when the Nazis killed 6 million Jews	This could be seen in two ways. Firstly a person following Judaism could easily convert to another faith. So the suffering endured by a Jew becomes a choice to dwell in God no matter what the consequences and if they have consciously chosen to be killed with their religion then they are spiritual martyrs and Karma from past lives is of no concern. The other reason is that these souls	This situation causes difficulties for traditional Christian / Islamic groups as either God has willed such an event because people have done something wrong (even though babies and children are involved) or it may be to teach other people a lesson	Life has no meaning so humans are responsible for their own suffering. This is actually no less than Karmic theory.

		we were just experiencing the fruits of actions from previous and current lives.		
Metaphysical Suffering (the apparent unfairness of suffering in the world)	This is the apparent unfairness in the suffering in the world. E.g. why do people in the western world have more than enough to eat whereas our brothers and sisters in Africa are dieing from starvation?	When we have no control over our environment or circumstances then we are experiencing Karma in action. We are reaping the fruits of our actions in a previous life.	The reasons for such suffering are either that this is God's will (for some unknown reason) or that this is helping to teach other people a lesson such as "do not over indulge" which is a great lesson in itself but it greatly unfair for another soul to have to be the guinea pig.	Life is generally not fair and this is just an example.
Suffering to teach and heal	This occurs rarely and will involve a great teacher such as Jesus choosing to give his life on the cross or Guru Arjun Dev Ji Maharaj choosing to be tortured for 5 days and 5 nights for the rights of his Sikhs to practice Dharma.	Karma has no place in this form of suffering as the Masters are beyond Karma. This is a special blessing from the masters to show us how to live in Truth, to be strong, to be calm and to always have our consciousness of God	Abrahamic reason same as Karmc reason.	The teachings of the Avtaars and Prophets would have little meaning

6 Is there any scientific evidence for reincarnation?

The answer to this is a resounding yes!

The modern evidence for reincarnation comes from past life regression, spontaneous recall of past lives, transmission of information from the afterlife, Theosophy, Edgar Cayce, and recent translation of Sanskrit texts. However in keeping with the scientific emphasis of this section concentration will be made on past-life regression, and spontaneous recall of past lives.

6.1 Past life regression

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 reasons 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 skeptical 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 total skeptics 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” (cited Fisher 1986: 65).

Psychiatrists all over the world have found that regression works. Dr Gerald Edelstein, psychologist wrote:

“These experiences (past life regressions), for reasons I cannot explain, almost always lead to rapid improvements in the patient” (cited Fisher 1986: 65).

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" (cited Fisher 1986: 65).

Dr Gerald Netherton, who was raised as a fundamentalist Methodist, has successfully used the method on 8,000 patients. He was initially skeptical but as a result of his experience is now convinced of the effectiveness of past life regression. His patients, who included both priests and physicists, are almost always skeptical at first but this had no effect on the effectiveness of the treatment. He says:

"Many people go away believing in reincarnation as a result of their experience ...What is the logical answer? That it actually is happened!" (cited Fisher 1986: 65).

Dr Arthur Guirdham, English psychiatrist, maintains that he has been a skeptic ever since he was nicknamed 'Doubting Thomas' as a boy. But after his experience of 44 years doing hypnotic regressions he claims:

"If I didn't believe in reincarnation on the evidence I'd received I'd be mentally defective" (cited Fisher 1986: 65).

Dr Helen Wambach was a skeptic 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 favor 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!"* (Wambach 1978).

It may surprise the reader that Russian psychiatrists are also using past life regression. Dr Varvara Ivanova, held in high esteem by Russian scientists and

writers, is only one of a number of psychiatrists who are successfully using past life regression for therapy (Whitton and Fisher 1987).

6.2 Research by Peter Ramster

The following information is taken from Peter Ramster's very important book, *In Search of Lives Past* (1990) and from a speech he gave to the Australian Hypnotherapists ninth National Convention at the Sydney Sheraton Wentworth Hotel on the 27th March, 1994 and from the films he made on reincarnation.

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 skeptic 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 was able to correctly point out in three directions the location of villages she had known
- she was able to direct the film crew as to the best ways to go far better than the maps
- 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 pointed out an intersection where she claimed that there had been five houses. Enquiries proved that this was correct and that the houses had been torn down 30 years before and that one of the houses had been a 'cider house' as she claimed
- 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
- the people she claimed that she knew were found to have existed?one was listed in the records of the regiment she claimed he belonged to
- she knew in detail of local legends which were confirmed by Somerset historians
- she used correctly obscure obsolete west country words no longer in use, no longer even in dictionaries, words like 'tallet' meaning a loft
- 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

- she was able to correctly describe the way a group of Druids filed up Glastonbury Hill in a spiral for their spring ritual, a fact unknown to most university historians
- she knew that there were two pyramids in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey which have long since disappeared
- she correctly described in Sydney carvings that were found in an obscure old house 20 feet from a stream, in the middle of five houses about one and a half miles from Glastonbury Abbey
- she had been able to draw in detail in Sydney the interior of her Glastonbury house which was found to be totally correct
- she described an inn that was on the way to the house. It was found to be there
- she was able to lead the team direct to the house which is now a chicken shed. No-one knew what was on the floor until it was cleaned. However on the floor they found the stone that she had drawn in Sydney
- the locals would come in every night to quiz her on local history?she knew the answers to all the questions they were asking such as the local problem which was a big bog—cattle were being lost there.

Cynthia Henderson, another subject of Peter Ramster, remembered a life during the French Revolution. When under trance she:

- spoke in French without any trace of an accent
- understood and answered questions put to her in French
- used dialect of the time
- knew the names of streets which had changed and were only discoverable on old maps.

Peter Ramster has many other documented cases of past life regression which in very clear terms constitute technical evidence for the existence of the afterlife and reincarnation.

6.3 Spontaneous past life recall

The internationally acclaimed Shanti Devi case is one of the most spectacular cases in the history of spontaneous past life recall. This was a case in India that began in 1930, long before Dr Stevenson began doing his own research. However, he did review the case from the available extensive documented information and stated that Shanti Devi made at least 24 accurate statements of her memories which matched confirmed facts (Reincarnation International, Jan. 1994 No 1 Lon).

At the age of four in 1930 in Delhi, India, Shanti Devi began to mention certain details about clothes, food, people, incidents, places which surprised her parents. Briefly, Shanti mentioned the following which were later verified to be true. She:

- identified herself as Lugdi who used to live in Muttra, 128 kilometres away
- spoke the dialect of that area without having learned it
- claimed to have given birth to a son and died ten days later, events which it was later found did happen to Lugdi
- when taken to Muttra recognized her husband of her former life, Kedar Nath, and spoke of many things they did together
- was able to identify with accuracy a number of landmarks where she used to live in the previous life in Muttra
- was able to correctly state how the furniture was placed when she used to live there in her home
- knew that in her former life where she had hidden 150 rupees in an underground corner of a room for safe keeping in the house. The husband of the previous life, Kedar Nath, confirmed that although the money was not there he was responsible for taking it himself
- correctly identified Lugdi's former parents from a large crowd.

This case was so impressive to the authorities that a committee of prominent persons, which included a prominent politician, a lawyer and a managing director of a newspaper, was formally organized to investigate it. The committee was more than satisfied that Shanti knew things that she could not have obtained knowledge about by cheating, fraud or in any illegitimate way. None of the members of the committee knew Shanti or had any connection with her in any way whatsoever. Their definitive verdict was in very clear terms that all the evidence was conclusive proof of reincarnation.

The case became internationally known and attracted the attention of many, many sociologists and writers. For example, in the 1950s a Swedish writer, Sture Lonnerstrand, traveled to India to meet Shanti Devi and to continue to investigate for himself the documented facts. He too came to an irreversible conclusion that the Shanti Devi case is a foolproof case for reincarnation (*Reincarnation International*, Jan. 1994 No 1 Lon).

6.4 Arthur Guirdham and Mrs. Smith

An English case that convinced many experts including the psychiatrist Dr Arthur Guirdham, was that of Mrs. Smith, a perfectly sane ordinary English housewife who for years had been suffering from terrible nightmares of being burned at the stake (Guirdham 1970).

She gave Dr Guirdham copies of drawings and verses of songs she had written as a schoolgirl. Experts in Medieval French confirmed that she was writing in langue doc, the language of Southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

She went on to astonish experts with her knowledge of the Cathars in Toulouse who had been persecuted by the forces of the Inquisition. She reproduced word

for word in 1944 songs which were only discovered in archives in 1967; she knew historical details which only came to light later upon the most painstaking investigation such as:

- correct drawings of old French coins, jewelry and the layout of buildings
- correct details of the family and social relationships of people who do not appear in text-books but who were ultimately traced through the records of the Inquisition
- that the crypt of a certain church was used to hold religious prisoners
- details of rituals and religious dress.

So impressed was Professor Nellie, the greatest living authority on the period, that he advised Guirdham that in future when there was conflict between the accepted historical view and the memories of his patient, he should 'go by the patient.'

Guirdham later went on to discover several other people close to him who all shared the same memories that he documented in his book *The Cathars and Reincarnation*. He went from being a total skeptic nicknamed 'doubting Thomas' to putting his considerable professional reputation on the line to lecture his colleagues in the British medical profession about 'Reincarnation and the Practice of Medicine' (Guirdham 1969).

6.5 Research by Dr Ian Stevenson

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.

Medical records are important especially when a child claims to have been murdered in a past lifetime, as Stevenson found that in cases of violent death the child may show a birthmark where he was knifed, shot or whatever caused his death.

An example of one of Dr Stevenson's birthmark cases is that of Ravi Shankar. He recalled being horrifically decapitated as a child by a relative who was hoping that he would inherit the child's father's wealth. The reborn child was found to have a birthmark encircling his neck. When his claim was investigated it was found that the person he claimed to have been, did in fact die by decapitation.

A second case involves a child in Turkey who recalled being a robber who when about to be captured by the police had committed suicide, shooting himself with a rifle by placing the muzzle against his right underside of the chin. The child who claimed to remember his life was born with a very distinct mark under his chin. On further investigation, he was found to have another birthmark on top of his head exactly where the bullet would have exited. When Dr Stevenson was investigating this particular case in Turkey, an old man informed Stevenson that he remembered the incident and testified as to the condition of the shot body.

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 published, greater detailed confirmation was accumulating for his evidence for reincarnation.

Stevenson's scientific research shook the academic world out of its usual skeptical 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.

There were others who repeated the criticism leveled at Stevenson without first examining for themselves Stevenson's scientific work. For example, in Paul Tabori and Phyllis Raphael's book, *Beyond the Senses? a report on psychical research in the sixties* (1971) a former 'prominent' member of the Society for Psychical Research, George Medhurst, admits in answer to a question put to him that he knew very little about Dr Stevenson's work, but he says, and notice very carefully the blatant unfounded hostility against Stevenson's works:

I know only a little about these (Stevenson's) researches. I know that there have been some criticism about the results reported... it has been said... that Stevenson would not have the right sort of contact with the people with whom he was dealing (1971:216).

First, George Medhurst admits technical ignorance of Stevenson's scientific research. Secondly, he is relying on somebody else to criticize Stevenson. Thirdly, Medhurst does not identify this somebody else, if there was somebody else. Medhurst accepts the criticism as valid, otherwise he would not have

repeated it. This kind of intellectual dishonesty and cheating by Medhurst is an indication of the extent some of these closed-minded skeptics will go to in order to denigrate great scientific work.

By contrast there were objective scientists with national reputations who attested to the professionalism and high credibility of Dr Stevenson's strict adherence to scientific method. These include Professor Dr. Albert J. Stunkard, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania. Among other most positive statements, he says:

“Dr. Stevenson is the most critical man I know of working in that sphere, and perhaps the most thoughtful, with a knack for building research appropriate investigative controls.”

Professor Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler, of the City College at the City University of New York says among 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.”

Professor Dr Herbert S Ripley, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Washington in Seattle, says:

“I think very highly of Stevenson. I regard him as thorough and honest. We are lucky, I feel, to have someone of his ability and high integrity investigating this controversial area.”

Dr Harold Lief in the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease (September, 1977) says among other things:

“Either he is making a colossal mistake... or he will be known as the Galileo of the 20th century.”

Dr Stevenson became interested in spontaneous past life recall when, at the pinnacle of his profession as a psychiatrist, he found that traditional remedies in psychiatry were too restricted and did not deal effectively with the problems of the patients. He found many cases that could not be satisfactorily explained by genetics, environmental influences or a combination of these.

6.5.1 Marta Lorenz (case study 1)

One very convincing case investigated by Dr Stevenson was the Brazilian case of Marta Lorenz, who at the age of one year recognized a friend of her parents with the words 'Hello, Papa.' At around two she began talking about details of a previous life as her mother's best friend, the daughter of the family friend she

had recognized. Many of these details were not known to the child's mother but were later confirmed by several different people.

She remembered one hundred and twenty separate and unrelated details about her previous life as Maria de Olivero, including details of what Maria had told her best friend (Marta's mother) immediately before she died - that she would try to be reborn as her best friend's daughter and that as soon as she was old enough would relate many details of her former life (Stevenson 1974).

6.5.2 Imad Elawar (case study 2)

In Lebanon, Stevenson went unannounced into a Druse village and asked the villagers if they knew of any cases where children talked of past lives. He was referred again without any prior warning to the home of five-year-old Imad Elawar. Since the age of one Imad had reportedly been talking incessantly about a former life in a village twenty-five miles away.

At age one his first words had been the names 'Jamileh' and 'Mahmoud'; at the age of two he had stopped a stranger in the street identified him as a former neighbor.

Stevenson interviewed the child and the parents and recorded over fifty-seven separate claims about his former life. When Stevenson went with the boy and his father to the other village to investigate the boy's claims it took them several days to locate the boy's former house. No prior contact with the relatives had been made. However:

- Imad was able to make thirteen correct statements and identifications about his former life including photographs of himself and his brother
- he recognized photographs of his former uncle, Mahmoud, and his former mistress, a prostitute named Jamileh
- he was able to point out details of where he had kept his rifle - a secret known only to his mother and of how his bed had been arranged during his last illness
- he stopped a stranger and had a long talk with him about their experiences together in their army service.

In all Stevenson calculates that of the fifty-seven claims Imad had made about his former life, fifty-one could be verified (Stevenson 1978).

6.6 *Alternative explanations*

When critics are confronted with this most convincing evidence for reincarnation, they try to explain the results away. They claim it was caused by extrasensory perception, by telepathy or clairvoyance - 'the child was able to tune in to the people around him and lifted from them all the information they had about the circumstances'. In the alternative, skeptics have argued, the whole thing could be fraud, cryptomnesia, spirit possession, fantasy,

paramnesia, inherited memory/collective unconscious. Let us examine, as Ian Stevenson did, each of these arguments in turn (Stevenson 1977).

6.6.1 Extrasensory perception?

Initially, anyone who suggests that these children are tapping into the memories of living people would have to concede the existence of extrasensory perception, also known as telepathy or thought transference. This concession alone greatly weakens the position of the skeptic because for decades skeptics have been arguing, and still argue, that ESP and telepathy do not exist! Either ESP exists or it does not exist.

Further, Dr Stevenson claims, if children do have extrasensory powers they either do possess them generally or they don't. It is simply not logically consistent for the skeptic to say that a person has ESP for some things and not for others, that the children can have ESP in relation to their alleged past lives but not in relation to anything else.

Stevenson continues to explain that in context of what is known about ESP where mediums and sensitives are concerned, these children would have to have 'super ESP'. This is because in some cases, the children give significant amounts of information, extending the existing boundaries of all presently known cases of ESP.

In most cases the children would have to tap the memories of not just the one person, but of many people because the information is not stored with just one person. This would entail being able to read the minds of different people who would each have some of the information. Stevenson says that 'all the known information did not reside in a single living mind'.

No amount of ESP can explain the behavioral change of these children. In many instances the children take on the personalities they claim to have been. This is something that cannot be obtained by using ESP. Stevenson explains that it is difficult for any critic not acquainted with these cases to understand the 'magnitude of these features of behavior and personation'.

Another particular difficulty for the critic claiming ESP is the fact that many times children often reveal how things were when they were alive not how they are now. You have read above about the very famous case of Shanti Devi, who claimed that when she was alive in a previous life she had hidden 150 rupees in the corner of the room in the house where she used to live. While investigators dug in the place and no money was to be found, her former husband shamefully admitted that he was responsible for removing the money. If she had been 'tapping into his mind' she would have known this fact.

Birthmarks and deformities in the children are clearly beyond any scope of ESP explanation. These children, according to Dr Stevenson, often point to a mark or marks on their body and explain that is where they were shot or mutilated. Parents attest that these marks were present from infancy. Other children born with deformities or missing limbs or missing fingers claim that these deformities indicate what caused their previous deaths.

In a number of cases Stevenson was able to have had access to hospital records to confirm these claims. Accordingly, Stevenson was able to make a link between the birthmarks and the hospital / autopsy records revealing the cause of death.

6.6.2 Fraud?

Initially one has to take into consideration the qualifications, the professionalism, the caliber and the integrity of one of America's foremost scientific investigators. Dr Stevenson has a long track record as a highly professional scientific investigator, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. In addition, years of interviewing thousands of witnesses gave him enormous practical experience in detecting fraud. He himself wrote textbooks on psychiatric examination and diagnostic interviewing.

He says that his interviews and cross-examinations of so many children and witnesses clearly reveal that it would be a gigantic, a Herculean task for anyone to try to organize the situation, the coaching of the parents, relatives, friends, witnesses—sometimes the number involved is over fifty people and even more.

Then there would have to be the staging of the emotions when there is a reunion of the child with the loved ones of his former life. The staging of the intense emotions of these situations is outside the human capacity to structure 'on site'. Having interviewed thousands of 'reborn' children, Dr Stevenson adds that, 'small children are not easy to coach for the assumptions of the roles that do not seem natural to them'.

Stevenson publicly stated that he does not give money to any of the people involved and consistently applies his policy that no payment is to be made for any testimony. Nor is publicity given as some incentive to co-operate.

Dr Stevenson has always been fully aware that the scientific investigations he conducted would be scrutinized in the minutest detail by other scientists, by outsiders and by those with vested interests who would not want him to succeed and who would try to denigrate and undermine his scientific investigations into the afterlife and reincarnation.

6.6.3 Cryptomnesia?

This simply means that the reborn child had learnt in this lifetime what he is saying about some previous life. The claim is that, consciously or unconsciously, the reborn child must have read the information, or heard about it, or been told about it, but forgotten it.

Dr Stevenson explains that some of the original information from some of the reborn children, especially from those who were as young as two years, was not known to those around the reborn child. From Stevenson's own observation, the child on learning to say a few words would start to talk about his or her previous life. This greatly reduces the other possibilities where the information could have come from.

6.6.4 Inherited memory/collective unconscious?

One of the arguments most frequently expressed by the critics of spontaneous past life recall is that the allegedly 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. It is claimed that somehow that ancestor's memories of different things the child is recalling have been genetically transmitted. Alternatively, the critics say that the child is getting his information through the 'collective unconscious'.

Stevenson very convincingly rebuts these arguments by explaining that what is so far recorded about any information coming from the 'collective unconscious' is very general. For example, someone might remember a great flood in some very distant land. Stevenson points out that although there are some isolated cases of the 'collective unconscious' these lack specific and minute details of the re-born child.

The genetic, 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.

For the majority of cases, certainly in most of the Asian ones, Stevenson found that children remembered lives which ended only a few years before they were born, but in a different family and village to those of their parents and grandparents.

Secondly, as Stevenson says a parent could only transmit genetically to his or her offspring memories of events that had happened to the parent before that child's conception. It follows, therefore that the memory of a parent's mode of death could never be inherited.

6.6.5 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. It is not credible to imagine a spirit imprinting some birthmark while the child is in the womb or finding an actual person who died tragically with the same marks as the child in order to tell the child about that particular life.

And further still, why is it that the re-born child shows amazement at how some relative he used to know is now much older, has wrinkles or has no teeth? If there is a spirit with the child, why doesn't it recognize its relatives? And why does the child's knowledge about the relatives and the buildings around former environment cease exactly with the time of death of the former life?

Dr Stevenson states that the number of those who remember a past life is so great that certain specific features can be discerned. These features transcend national boundaries and are similar in different parts of the world. As stated earlier in this argument, the world conspiracy theory—that all these people got together to concoct similar stories—is too ridiculous to take seriously.

The following are features in the cases of spontaneous past life recall that Stevenson investigated. A very good summary of these is in Cranston and Williams' book *Reincarnation—a New Horizon in Science, Religion and Society* (1984):

- age when the memories appear—usually between two and four
- age when memory fades—almost universally between five and eight
- behavior more characteristic of an adult than a child
- claims of strangeness of new body
- typical vivid events remembered
- incidents of violent death in a large percentage of the cases
- phobia for objects or circumstances causing deaths in previous life

- changes in people and surroundings detected by children
- dreams remembered by the mother or someone close in the family announcing that the coming child was a reincarnation
- the mothers reporting abnormal appetites or strange food likes and dislikes during their pregnancy which corresponded to the likes and dislikes of the person in the former incarnation
- the child possessing skills not taught or learned
- birthmarks or deformities.

7 Quotes from the Guru Granth Sahib regarding reincarnation

All the scientific evidence supporting reincarnation is great. But how do we break this cycle and achieve liberation?

The quickest way to break the transmigration cycle is by controlling the 5 thieves which include lust, anger, greed attachment and pride and this is most easily done by developing a relationship with God in which the holy Naam is implanted within our hearts and consciousness by the Guru.

7.1 Quotes highlighting the dangers of the 5 thieves

“Without the Guru, devotion is not obtained, even though everyone may long for it. ||1||Pause|| The soul-bride in love with duality goes around the wheel of reincarnation, through 8.4 million incarnations. Without the Guru, she finds no sleep, and she passes her life-night in pain. Without the Shabad, she does not find her Husband Lord, and her life wastes away in vain. ||2|| Practicing egotism, selfishness and conceit, she wanders around the world, but her wealth and property will not go with her. The spiritually blind do not even think of the Naam; they are all bound and gagged by the Messenger of Death. Meeting the True Guru, the wealth is obtained, contemplating the Name of the Lord in the heart. ||3|| Those who are attuned to the Naam are immaculate and pure; through the Guru, they obtain intuitive peace and poise. Their minds and bodies are dyed in the Color of the Lord's Love, and their tongues savor His Sublime Essence. O Nanak, that Primal Color which the Lord has applied, shall never fade away. ||4||14||47||”

(Guru Granth Sahib page 32)

“Their comings and goings in reincarnation do not end; through death and rebirth, they are wasting away. ||3|| The bride may buy sandalwood oil and perfumes, and apply them in great quantities to her hair; she may sweeten her breath with betel leaf and camphor, but if this bride is not pleasing to her Husband Lord, then all these trappings are false. ||4|| Her enjoyment of all pleasures is futile, and all her decorations are corrupt. Until she has been pierced through with the Shabad, how can she look beautiful at Guru's Gate? O Nanak, blessed is that fortunate bride, who is in love with her Husband Lord. ||5||13||”

(Guru Granth Sahib page 19)

7.2 Quotes highlighting the importance of dwelling in God

“This world is engrossed in corruption and cynicism. Only those who know God are saved. Only those who are awakened by the Lord to drink in this Sublime Essence, come to know the Unspoken Speech of the Lord. ||2|| Purchase only that for which you have come into the world, and through the Guru, the Lord shall dwell within your mind. Within the home of your own inner being, you

shall obtain the Mansion of the Lord's Presence with intuitive ease. You shall not be consigned again to the wheel of reincarnation. ||3||” (Guru Granth Sahib page 13)

*“As is their awareness, so is their way. According to the account of our actions, we come and go in reincarnation. ||1|| Why, O soul, do you try such clever tricks? Taking away and giving back, God does not delay. ||1|| Pause|| All beings belong to You; all beings are Yours. O Lord and Master, how can You become angry with them? Even if You, O Lord and Master, become angry with them, still, You are theirs, and they are Yours. ||2|| We are foul-mouthed; we spoil everything with our foul words. You weigh us in the balance of Your Glance of Grace. When one's actions are right, the understanding is perfect. Without good deeds, it becomes more and more deficient. ||3|| Prays Nanak, what is the nature of the spiritual people? They are self-realized; they understand God. By Guru's Grace, they contemplate Him; such spiritual people are honored in His Court. ||4||30||”
(Guru Granth Sahib page 25)*

*“In countless incarnations, I went astray. Now that I have found You, I shall no longer wander. It is His work; those who are absorbed in the Word of the Guru's Shabad come to know it well. ||3|| The Shabad is Yours; You are Yourself. Where is there any doubt? O Nanak, one whose essence is merged with the Lord's essence does not have to enter the cycle of reincarnation again. ||4||1||15||35||”
(Guru Granth Sahib page 162)*

7.3 Importance of the holy congregation (saadh sangat)

*“In the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, the fear of reincarnation is gone. ||1|| Meditating, meditating in remembrance on the Lord of the Universe, I live. In His Mercy, He protects His slave; the True Lord is forever and ever the forgiver. ||1|| Pause|| The mountain of sin is burnt down, like straw, by chanting and meditating on the Name, and worshipping God's feet. God, the embodiment of bliss, becomes manifest everywhere. Linked to His loving devotional worship, I enjoy peace. ||2|| I have crossed over the world-ocean, as if it were no bigger than a calf's footprint on the ground. I shall never again have to endure suffering or grief.”
(Guru Granth Sahib page 899)*

*“Forever and ever, work for God; He is our True Lord and Master. ||2|| In the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, you shall become absolutely pure, and the noose of death shall be cut away. So offer your prayers to Him, the Giver of Peace, the Destroyer of fear.”
(Guru Granth Sahib page 44)*

By great good fortune, I found the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy; I have fallen in love with the Supreme Lord God. ||1|| Chanting the Name of

the Lord, Har, Har, His servant has been carried across. The Guru has lifted me up and carried me across the ocean of fire. || 1 || Pause || Singing the Kirtan of His Praises, my mind has become peaceful; the sins of countless incarnations have been washed away. I have seen all the treasures within my own mind; why should I now go out searching for them? || 2 ||
(Guru Granth Sahib page 178)

8 Common misconceptions regarding reincarnation

8.1 Attitude towards other less fortunate people

Karma does say that much of the suffering on the earthly plane is there due to our own actions either from this life or from previous lives.

However, some people who have a hostility to this concept of eternal life automatically make the wrong assumption that people who are born in unfortunate circumstances should be looked down upon.

This is a ridiculous suggestion and irrelevant of whether you believe that suffering is:

- Your fault
- God's fault
- Nature's fault

Sikhism is the Dharma (way of life) of service to humanity. Every Sikh temple offers free food and shelter if required to one and all irrelevant of social status, caste, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender etc. The Sikh masters integrated selfless service for humanity and the free community kitchen as practical tools for realizing oneness with creation and also as a mechanism for relieving basic forms of suffering within society such as hunger.

The central Sikh shrine in India alone feeds 4 million people per annum from all walks of life completely free of charge, in the spirit of service to humanity.

8.2 What is karma and where did karma first come from?

Karma is a Law of Nature. We might go further, and say: It is the law. For it is everywhere and always - omnipresent, all-pervasive. Other names are given to it in the West, and the names are useful, because they are not surrounded by all the traditions and discussions which blur the meaning of karma in the East. The Western philosopher calls it The Law of Causation. He sees in every happening a double fact - it is both an effect and a cause; it is an effect, for it has a cause; something went before and made this thing to happen; it is also a cause; for it will generate a new happening, another thing will arise from it. As a man is a son of his father, and is also the father of his son; as his father was a son to his own father, and as his son will be a father to his own son in turn, so is it with causes and effects; each event is at once an effect and a cause - an effect of the past, a cause of the future.

We partly answer, then, our first question, " what is karma?" by the statement: karma is a law of nature of universal validity, called in the West the law of causation, or the law of action and re-action.

The remainder of the answer to the question, " what is karma? " is very closely connected with the second question: " When did karma begin ? " A general law of nature cannot be said to have either a beginning, or an ending; wherever there is any manifestation, any universe, any world, there, general laws are also present, inherent in the very nature of things. Attraction of one mass of matter to another cannot be said to *begin*; wherever there are masses of matter, there, attraction is working; gravitation does not *begin*, it is ever manifested where the conditions for its working are present. Hence karma, being, a general Law, is said to be eternal; it is a condition of manifested existence, and wherever existence is manifested, there is karma.

Hence the question: "When did karma begin?" shows a misconception of the very nature of karma; it is a perpetual condition of existence in matter, neither beginning nor ending, but eternal.

If the form of the question be modified, and it is asked: "When did the karma of a particular creature begin?" then the answer is: "At the time at which that particular creature came into manifestation." When the unborn, undying Spirit takes to himself a vesture of matter, then he steps into conditions, and comes under the law of karma. His stepping into the conditions begins his particular karma. At first it will be the karma of a mineral, the play upon him of surrounding force and matter, and the re-action from him on his surroundings. These actions and re-actions weave the links of his karma, and the chain draws him into one or another type of the vegetable kingdom. In that, as his re-action becomes more complex, the web of karma attaching to him becomes more complicated, and ultimately lifts him into some animal type. In the animal kingdom his increasing sentiency enters into karmic causes, and pains inflicted by him re-act as pains on him. But the feeling of pain is due to the evolution of the power to feel in him; it is still action and re-action, but where in the mineral these were unaccompanied by feeling, in the animal, feeling results in pleasure and pain: the law is the same; the creature is different, and so the result on the creature is different. As reason develops, another stand is added to the karmic web, and the action in the thought world is added to that in the acting and feeling worlds, and hence another powerful factor is added to the reaction. But once again, the law of action and reaction is working on the same lines.

8.3 How do the fruits of karma from previous lives affect the fruits of karma from our current life?

This is an excellent question and this can be answered with a simple story from the Sikh world.

There was an old man who would always pray and visit the Guru and a young guy who was not spiritual at all and would have illicit sex every night. One day as the old man was walking he stumbled and got pricked by a small thorn. On the same day the young man stumbled across a hoard of wealth making him

rich! The young man then came across the old man and asked him how come if he (the old man) was living a righteous life he got pricked by a small thorn and why he (the young man) enjoying illicit sex every night was rewarded with so much wealth?

The old man started having doubts about his righteous way of life and went to ask the Guru for advice.

The Guru clarified his understanding of karma by saying that due to the his previous life, the old man was required to suffer a consequence in this life. However the result of his previous actions had been reduced from him losing a limb to him being pricked by a small thorn. In addition, if the young man would have led a righteous life then he would have gained 10 times the amount of wealth which he did, however due to the actions of his current life his fortune was very much reduced.

This story shows the interrelationship between our current life and our previous lives. There is unfortunately no way of escaping from the consequences of actions from previous lives. But we can most definitely minimize their effect in this life by following simple truthful living as demonstrated by the Sikh masters.

8.4 Does karma abdicate personal responsibility?

The idea that karma somehow abdicates personal responsibility has been mentioned by some people who are intrinsically hostile to the concept of reincarnation. This misconception occurs because the mechanisms of Karma and Reincarnation are not fully understood.

Karma does not shift the responsibility of any wrongdoing of a person to a past life. Karma theory states that, "So as you sow, so shall you reap". This means that if we "plant" good seeds of thought and "water" them good actions then we should get a good harvest, but it will of course depend on the consequences of our actions from previous lives.

So in short the answer is No it doesn't.

9 What do other Religions say about Reincarnation?

At first it may seem that this is an idea which is exclusive to the Eastern religions such as Sikhism, Hinduism or Buddhism. However when we examine the other religions more closely then we find one of two things. Firstly that the idea of reincarnation has either been once prevalent but then later suppressed. Or else secondly we discover that reincarnation is believed by the mystics at the heart of their respective religions and also by the members of certain esoteric sects within World religions that we don't normally associate with reincarnation. We when study closely all the main religions of this world, then we find that the idea of reincarnation occurs again and again.

9.1 Reincarnation in Judaism

In modern times, matters of eternal life in Judaism are seriously considered mainly by the mystically inclined Kabbalists who believe in reincarnation. Kabbalah being the name for esoteric Judaism. Though if you asked many Jews and Rabbis concerning this question, they would reject the idea of reincarnation. This is only out of ignorance of their long history and venerable tradition.

Kaballah, also known as the hidden teachings of Moses, can be considered the mystical heart and spiritual well spring of Judaism. It has a very long history, going back even as far as ancient Egypt. At the heart of Kaballah is the belief in reincarnation. The Zohar which is the central text of the Kaballah from mediaeval times onwards is unequivocal. In it is to be found the passage...

'The souls must re-enter the Absolute, from whence they have emerged. But to accomplish this end they must develop the perfections; the germ of which is planted in them. And if they have not developed these traits in this one life, then they must commence another, a third, and so forth.'

The founder of the orthodox Lubavitcher Hasidim sect Bal Shem Tov who was a Kabbalist Rabbi appropriately enough also believed firmly in reincarnation. Lubavitcher Jews can be recognized by their distinctive black dress, archaic looking black hats and long side burns. So at the heart of this large Jewish sect is the belief in reincarnation.

Historical we know that the Pharisees, which was a strict Jewish sect that existed around the time of Jesus held reincarnation as one of their central tenets. It is interesting to note that Saint Paul of Tarsus, who was a major contributor to the New Testament in the Bible, started out as a Pharisee. Also the 1st century Jewish commentator and historian Josephus tells us that the Essenes were thought to believe in reincarnation. The Essenes were the Jewish sect who wrote the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. They were also known to have had

a keen interest in the early Kabbalah, and because reincarnation is a central tenet of the Kabbalah, this supports the idea that the Essenes believed in reincarnation.

Today, most Jewish Rabbis mainly consider practical earthly matters, i.e. questions concerning morality and ritual. Matters concerning the after life and the nature God have effectively become the exclusive domain of the Kabbalists or Jewish mystics. This is why one would not normally associate reincarnation with modern Judaism. It is simply because the matter is not really an integral part of the religion on a day to day level and so it is not really thought about very much. However when we explore Judaism's mystical heart, the Kabbalah, then the belief in reincarnation is firm and strong. But because the Kabbalah has for so long been a hidden and secret tradition, correspondingly its truths have not been very widely distributed, even among practicing Jews. To most people, the fact that the Kabbalists believe in reincarnation, only surfaces in the very occasional freak news story. For instance a couple of years ago when a Kabbalist Rabbi in Israel made the appalling claim that the Holocaust victims were being punished for the sins of their past lives. Interestingly, quite recently, there has been a surge of interest in the Jewish Kabbalah. This has been due to its commercialization by new age opportunists and also due to celebrity dabbling in the Kabbalah by the likes of people such as the singer Madonna and the comedian Rosanne Barr. Hopefully in the future, this will help to make the ideas of the Kabbalah much more widespread.

9.2 Reincarnation in Christianity

One doesn't normally associate the idea of reincarnation with Christianity. However if we examine the early history of the Christianity then we discover that many early Christians did indeed believe in reincarnation including some very prominent figures. We know that at least a half dozen or so of the Church Fathers believed in reincarnation, namely the likes of Clement, Origen, Justin Martyr, St Gregory, Arnobius and St Jerome. Also if we read the Gospels then it is clear that the disciples of Jesus certainly entertained the idea of reincarnation. We may infer this from the passage in John 9:2 where the disciples ask Jesus, "Was this man born blind because of his sins or because of his parents's sin?". This question certainly contains within it a reference to reincarnation, unless we suppose that the disciples thought a foetus could sin whilst in its mothers womb.

Early Christianity included some esoteric sects which came to known as the Gnostics, which means 'those who know'. The Gnostics were firm believers in reincarnation. Also the popular mystery traditions that were current during the formation of the early church, such as Mithraism and the Dionysian mysteries, have reincarnation as central tenets. This fact is relevant when we consider that these belief systems were an integral part of the loose confederation that was the early Christian church. Christianity in the early stages of its evolution consisted of a number of diverse and often competing sects. This was before

any orthodoxy was recognizable. Much has been written about how the mysteries of Mithraism and Dionysus became incorporated into the Christian faith. For instance the fact that the birthday of Mithraism was the 25th of December and also that he was a godman who was 'hung on a tree', died and then rose again on the third day. When we consider these and other such facts, it would seem that aspects of these ancient mystery traditions were incorporated in later Christianity, because at the beginning they were an integral part of the religion as were the Gnostics. This supports the idea that reincarnation formed an important aspect of Christian belief during the early formative stages of the religion.

But if many early Christians believed in reincarnation, then how did we arrive at the situation that we have today? Modern day Christians throughout the world believe in a version of eternal life called resurrection as opposed to reincarnation. This is a belief in a returning to life after death but retaining the physical body that one had during one's earthly existence. Also most Christians today would reject the idea that reincarnation was once accepted by many of the early Christians. It is when we examine history that we discover exactly where and when the idea was suppressed. It was in the Second Church Council of Constantinople in the year 553 AD that the idea of reincarnation was made heresy. This came about through the instigation of the Roman Emperor Justinian. His motivation behind this was that he thought that if people were given one earthly life only, then they would be more diligent and obedient. 'Give them one life only', he said, 'Give them one life then give them heaven or hell.' Even the Pope at that time, who was named Vigilius, had reservations about what was happening. The matter was put to a vote but the participants of this council were deliberately composed of heads of the church known to oppose the idea of reincarnation. Because of this the Pope himself boycotted the actual vote.

It is as a direct result of this political manipulation that the doctrine of reincarnation would become banished from the orthodoxy of Christianity, right up to present times. So when Christians today say any words to the effect that reincarnation is somehow un-Christian then they are really echoing the sentiments of a Roman Emperor whose main interest in religion was as a tool for political control. The truth is that before reincarnation was made heresy, many Christians did believe in reincarnation. Afterwards once having a belief in reincarnation was made heretical, then the idea was certainly actively suppressed as heretical beliefs generally were. So reincarnation was literally consigned to the flames, as were undoubtedly some of the heretics who subscribed to the idea.

9.3 *Reincarnation in Islam*

The picture we have in Islam concerning the nature of eternal life is one where only a small minority of those Muslims belonging to some of the more esoteric sects believe in reincarnation. The vast majority of Muslims in the world today

and also all throughout the history of Islam, believe in the idea of resurrection. The most widely accepted version of the afterlife in Islam is one where after you die then first you are interviewed in your grave by an angel. Depending on your answers you are then assigned to a temporary state of Heaven or a temporary state of Hell. Then at the end of time you are resurrected with the same physical body that you had in your previous life. In this body you are assessed by Allah according to your deeds in the Last Judgement. Depending on the verdict you are then sent to eternal paradise or else eternal damnation. This is what the average mainstream Muslim believes. The Koran doesn't really make it clear one way or the other whether it supports the idea of resurrection or that of reincarnation. However we do find in Islam the idea of the '*batin*' which suppose the existence of hidden meanings in the Koran and the sayings of Muhammad. This is the idea that Muhammad withheld key esoteric doctrines from most Muslims and only imparted these truths to a select group of the early Muslim community, that is those he felt would be best able to grasp them. When we consider that the sects which believe in reincarnation such as the Druze, Ismaili, Alawis, Alevi, Yazidi and various Sufi groups, are exactly those branches of Islam associated with its more esoteric aspects, then it is reasonable to suppose that reincarnation may be one of those hidden teachings of Muhammad.

This pattern is very similar to the situation that we have in Christianity and Judaism where a fantastical and wishful but easy to grasp version of eternal life is given to most of the religions believers, but a more abstract and mysterious vision of the afterlife is reserved for a select minority. So even though most Muslims don't believe in reincarnation, at Islam's mystical heart we find a clear and firm belief in reincarnation.

9.4 Reincarnation in Hinduism

In Hinduism, the idea of reincarnation is a central doctrine and universally believed by all people of the Hindu faith. In the premiere holy book of Hinduism which is the Bhagavad Gita, reincarnation is described thus

'As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body from childhood, to youth, to old age, the soul inhabits another body at the time of death'

In one of the Upanishads which are a collection of holy books, also sometimes referred to as the Vedanta, which means the summing up of the Vedas, reincarnation as well as the law of karma is elaborated upon in this way...

'As the body is augmented by food and water, so the individual self, augmented by its aspirations, sense contact, visual impressions, and delusion, assumes successive forms in accordance with its actions.' - Shvetasvatara Upanishads

So without a doubt, reincarnation is one of the central tenets of the Hindu faith. Where there has been debate within the religion over the centuries, is on the question of what is reincarnating. The two main opposing camps are made of firstly those who believe that the soul of the person is the same as that of God, i.e. that *atman* or self is the same as *Brahman*, i.e. God. Secondly there is the more accessible position of those who believe in many individuated and distinctly separate souls. I deal with this important issue in other sections of this website. However whether it is only the undivided and indivisible soul of God that is transmigrating through all the life forms of the universe or else it is a myriad number of different and separate souls being reborn, the case is still reincarnation.

9.5 Reincarnation in Buddhism

Like Hinduism, reincarnation is a central tenet of the Buddhist faith. This is a natural thing, seeing as Buddhism can be viewed as an offshoot of Hinduism. Buddha himself emerged out of a context and tradition that already firmly believed in reincarnation. However it seems that in his teachings Buddha introduced some new insights and amendments to existing doctrine, regarding reincarnation. This has led to some confusion and debate as to whether Buddha really believed in the idea of reincarnation. It seems that Buddha introduced the notion of 'rebirth' as something subtly distinct from reincarnation, and also the idea of the 'entity' as something distinct from the idea of the soul. Taken together with Buddha's doctrine of 'anatma' or 'anatman', which means 'no self'; this has led some people to believe that because there is no self to reincarnate, therefore Buddha was saying that there is no reincarnation. This position has mainly been taken up by those involved with the Theravada or 'lesser vehicle' traditions. However, in the Buddhist scriptures, Buddha makes himself clear on the extreme interpretation of the idea of 'no self'. thus he says...

'And I, O monks, am accused wrongly, vainly, falsely, and inappropriately by some ascetics and Brahmanas: "A denier is the ascetic Gotama, he teaches the destruction, annihilation, and perishing of the being that now exists." These ascetics accuse me of being what I am not, O monks, and of saying what I do not say.'

Also the idea of reincarnation is implicit in the universally held belief within Buddhism that enlightenment, or the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice, is only obtained through the cumulative efforts of a succession of numerous different lifetimes.

A way of resolving the controversy surrounding Buddha's doctrines of 'rebirth' and 'no self' is to understand these ideas in relation to another controversy that has always existed in Hinduism and is still a matter of dispute right up to present times. This is the debate over whether the *atman*, or the soul of a person, is the same or else is distinct from *Brahman*, which is the ultimate

term for God in Hinduism. So the issue here and the same one that Buddha was implicitly addressing was the question of 'what is it that is reincarnating?'. The choice of answers boils down to two distinct options, that is either one believes that there are many, perhaps even an infinite number of souls transmigrating, or else the alternative position which is the idea that there is a single undivided and indivisible soul which becomes embodied in an infinite sequence of separate lives. Put another way, there is the belief that the human soul is distinct and separate from God but then there is the more controversial belief that a person's soul and innermost identity is ultimately one and the same as that of God. i.e. *atman* is equal to *Brahman* or to say that the real nature of a person's being is God. Seen in this light, Buddha's doctrine of 'anatman' or 'no self' can therefore be interpreted to mean that there is no self that is distinct from the Buddhist Void; The Void being the equivalent in it's given attributes to *Brahman* or God. And so Buddha's doctrine of rebirth, is a subtle assertion of a distinct opinion concerning the nature of reincarnation and what is being reincarnated. It is certainly not an idea that is competing with the idea of reincarnation itself. So despite, certain misunderstandings which have occurred in the history of Buddhism, reincarnation has always been and still is one of the central features of the Buddhist faith.

9.6 Summary regarding reincarnation in world religions

So there is a case to be made for reincarnation being a common unifying thread throughout all World religion. Far from being exclusively an exotic 'Eastern' doctrine, reincarnation can be said to be part of the Western tradition as well. Furthermore, when we consider that many of the great luminaries of ancient Greek civilization such as Socrates, Plato and Pythagoras, and also others who were involved in the various mysteries, were firm believers in reincarnation; then the idea of reincarnation really lies at the foundations of Western civilization. We then see clearly that all the other ideas about eternal life, are really imaginative fantasies that have been promoted and made orthodoxy either through the need to give people something they can easily absorb or else because of political motivations. It is when we really take religion apart that we are able to arrive at a unified understanding of central doctrines such as the nature of eternal life. By studying the world's faiths more closely we can see that the idea of reincarnation is a common denominator which may one day help to facilitate the future unification of world religion.

10 Arguments against reincarnation

We have gone through various websites hostile to the idea of reincarnation and which have claimed to have found the “proof” as to how Reincarnation is completely absurd. We have quoted the texts just as they are from the website in blue and we have provided our answers below:

10.1 What is the origin of evil?

“Second, while it is true that the origin of evil poses extremely difficult problems for Christianity, it becomes insurmountable with reincarnation. According to karmic theory, the (apparent) existence of evil is explained by way of a past life. Circumstances are awry because of a previous incarnation. But what causes that previous incarnation to result in the present experience of evil? Another previous incarnation? What caused that? Ultimately, an infinite regress results where no explanation of evil’s appearance is given (see, Amano and Geisler, The Reincarnation Sensation, pp. 101-102). Reincarnation is helpless at this juncture.”

Christianity offers a viable option to the origin of evil. Moral evil, according to Augustine and many others, is a metaphysical reality in moral agents (a.k.a. human persons). Moral evil manifests when humans misuse something good such as freedom. God is no more responsible for the misuse of freedom than are car manufacturers responsible for drunk driving. Also, it could be that God has a reason, unknown to us, for allowing other kinds of evil (e.g., natural evil). With this option it is logically possible for evil and the God of Christianity to co-exist. This response will not satisfy every inquisition regarding the existence of evil, it can provide a meaningful framework for further study and it could appear more satisfying than the infinite regress of New Age reincarnation.

10.1.1 Answer

It is true that the origin of evil poses extreme difficulties for traditional Abrahamc thinking. However in the Sikh world view there is no such thing as absolute evil. Everything has emanated from an all loving creator and everything is an extension of God in some form.

Our current life will no doubt provide an opportunity for us to experience the results of actions from our previous lives. But these are simply actions and reactions. There is no idea that the consequences of our previous actions should be labeled as either good or bad.

The start of Karma for a being and hence the start of action and consequence for a being starts with the creation of the being. As soon as a being manifests itself within the physical universe that being will be subject to the laws of Karma. However there is no suggestion that the consequences of these laws are “evil”.

With regards to moral evil i.e. evil caused by humans either doing something they ought not to do e.g. murder, or not something they ought to do, there is absolutely nothing in Karma theory which denies the existence of moral evil. If

God with his grace has given us the gift of free choice and we choose to engage in moral evil such as murder then there will potentially be earthly punishment in the form of jail and there will potentially be divine consequences for the soul in terms of Karmic debt.

10.2 Where is the Justice in being punished for past lives?

Third, if reincarnation is the great moral equalizer where everyone gets what he/she deserves, then where is the justice in being punished for past lives that one can't remember? Not only is it unfair to hold someone responsible for being born blind, it is cruel to inform them they should have know better! Jesus thought quite the opposite and believed misfortune can, in some cases, have a better explanation (Jn. 9:1-3)

10.2.1 Answer

The reason why the experiences of past lives are blocked from our current life is to allow an individual to have as best a start as possible in their new life and make the most of their opportunity to become one with God. Most people can just about deal with the challenges of their current life and so finding out about issues from 10 previous lifetimes might not be too helpful.

With regards to whether it is cruel to be judged for our actions from a previous live, we argue that there really is no excuse for any individual to not live a righteous dharmic life. There have been plenty of teachers, avatars, sages and prophets who have come to show humanity how to live Truth. So it seems only fair that if we are given the gift of free choice then we are free to choose pain or pleasure and this is the law of Karma. The law of action and reaction. The fact that we can't remember we need to pay a debt does not mean we should not pay it.

If Hitler had been captured after the war and when appearing in court, if he told the jury that he should be excused for his crimes because he couldn't remember committing them, should the jury excuse him?

The reality of suffering provides 3 different choices as to who is to blame regarding the misfortunes of a soul and these are:

- You are to blame
- God is to blame
- Nature is to blame (atheist)

So if we take the example of a baby born blind the only explanation left for a Christian if they choose to reject Karma theory is that God is to blame and that God has caused the suffering of the child for some "unknown" reason and yet God is all loving and all compassionate!

If Jesus thought there were other "better" explanations to suffering in the above example we would love to know. We have scanned a lot of Christian websites and have not found anything.

Finally, there is a misconception that people who believe in Karma would by default go up to someone in a wheelchair or up to someone with some form of disability and

tell them that they should have known better. That would be the action of a truly sick mind. Should a Christian or Muslim who believes that God has caused suffering to e.g. a child born with a painful disability go up to such a child and say “you should have known better”!

Irrelevant of whether you believe that an unfortunate soul is suffering because of a) his actions b) God’s wrath or c) nature - Sikhs believe that all of God’s creation should be treated with respect and reverence and the divine light within all of creation should be honored.

10.3 How does Karma know the difference between reward and punishment?

*Fourth, if there are no ultimate standards for actions to be judged by, then karmic debt is really impossible. How does karma know the difference between rewards and punishment? Conceptually it cannot. More importantly, how can the individual know that the present life is better than a previous life? Even if reincarnation is logically possible, no one could assert that the present life is "better" than a previous life apart from some criteria against which to measure progress (Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking The New Age*, p. 151). At best, the reincarnationist can only claim that the present life is different from a previous life. And being different is a long epistemological distance from being better.*

10.3.1 Answer

The judging of actions can be left to karma to calculate. Karma has been doing it since the beginning of our physical universe. The system of karma and transmigration was built by God so there is no question as to its ability in differentiating between rewards and punishments.

More importantly though, with regards to whether the present life is better than a previous life, firstly we need to define what we mean by better? Does better mean better financially?, better physically?, better spiritually? etc.

If we assume that better means all the above then the simply answer is who cares! It is useless to ponder whether our previous life was better or worse than our current life. Our goal in our CURRENT life is to attain moksha (liberation) from the cycle of birth and death. So our consciousness should be focused on God alone and there is no doubt that through the grace of the Guru we will attain salvation and we can then most definitely say that this life was better than our previous life because in our current life we became immortal i.e. never to be assigned to the reincarnation cycle again.

10.4 Reincarnational thinking assumes that one lifetime is not enough for adequate moral progress

*Fifth, reincarnational thinking assumes that one lifetime is not enough for adequate moral progress. This is probably related to the ideas that (1) existentially most, if not all, don't get it right the first time around and (2) God is live and would not send another to eternal damnation where the chance for another go-around is forever lost. Therefore, individuals will have as much time as necessary to realize their oneness with the One. Yet is not one life, indeed one hour, long enough to make a lifetime decision (Amano and Geisler, *The Reincarnation Sensation*, p. 130)? In addition,*

Christianity does not expect anyone to "get it right." In fact, Christianity would post that no matter how many times one has a go of it, humanity could never get it right apart from God's direct and supernatural intervention (Jn. 6:65).

10.4.1 Answer

Indeed the most beautiful aspect of reincarnation and the awesome display of God's love for his children is that there is no such thing as burning for eternity in the fires of hell based on the actions of one life.

With regards to the question of: "is one life not long enough to make a lifetime decision", Sikhs say that it depends on the person! It may be for some and it may not be for others because God has made us all different. The second point regarding this question is that for those people who do choose to walk the path of truth in this life, they need to then take the next step which is to actually walk the path. Nothing is gained by simply deciding to do something and then not taking any action.

Sikhs agree with Christians that humanity will no doubt make mistakes and that without the grace of God there can be no salvation. However the grace of God must be earned and this is only done through personal effort. However this later point does not nullify the existence of Karma and reincarnation.

10.5 Reincarnation does not make sense physically nor spiritually

Reincarnation is not a thrill for a Hindu, nor even a good happening to expect, it is the worse imaginable "curse"!... the greatest fear for a Hindu is not to die, but to reincarnate... all the ascetic sacrifices, all the hard yoga and puja practices, is to avoid reincarnation... to live nude or without food of a Jainist is to avoid the next reincarnation... the great sacrifices of a Buddhist in a monastery for life, is to obtain enlightenment, thus avoiding reincarnation...

For some westerns, it may be an opportunity God gives to amend previous errors. But one life-time should be more than enough for it... among other things, because God is for us, The God of the Bible wants everybody to go to eternal Heaven: "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1Tim.2:3-4).

But even in this view, reincarnation does not make sense physically nor spiritually, because the soul incarnates in a different body, with a different brain; therefore, a different person is involved, and that person has not technically experienced reincarnation. And if he soul reincarnates in a Doberman, she can become a great dog, but physically and spiritually totally incompatible with the human person before the reincarnation.

10.5.1 Answer

The physical body and the soul are completely independent and separate "bodies". The soul body can be considered to be the hard disk of a computer whereas the physical body which includes the body and the brain can be considered to be the

motherboard and the CPU. It is easy to take the hard disk and plug it into a new machine and then the ways the data can express itself will be either limited or expanded depending on the power of the PC and its software.

Similarly the soul when passing from e.g. a human body to an animal body will experience a decrease in the ways it can express itself because it is limited to experiencing reality based on the senses of the physical body.

So it is a misconception to suggest that a soul is incompatible with a dog body but compatible with a human body.

10.6 Most of Dr Stevenson's research can be understood without reincarnation

The American Edgar Cayce claimed to be in touch with many of his past lives, and today's foremost secular "expert" is the Canadian psychiatrist Dr. Ian Stevenson who claims to have documented 1,800 actual cases of reincarnation, but most of them can be understood without reincarnation, just by the use of hypnosis or mediums of the Occult or demonic possession, or simply by several kinds of hallucination - Past-life recall as proof for Reincarnation

10.6.1 Answer

If you read the rebuttals in the scientific evidence section of this essay regarding all the alternative theories such those listed above, it is clear that Dr Stevenson's research very clearly points to reincarnation as the only clear explanation to life after death.

10.7 Reincarnational thinking assumes that one lifetime is not enough for adequate moral progress

Let's assume for a moment that reincarnation is real and happens to everyone. How can rewards and punishments for behavior be properly administered? If Hitler came back to this world just after his death in the form of a newborn baby, should that baby be persecuted for his past life crimes against humanity? What about in American prisons, where many criminals are serving multiple life sentences? If a criminal dies while serving the first of three life sentences, should his new reincarnated self also be forced to serve the remaining life sentences?

10.7.1 Answer

This is a great example of too much spare time thinking of useless scenarios! We would recommend some selfless service feeding the hungry in your nearest shelter for the homeless.

Now to the questions at hand, we are going to use a small dose of Sikh common sense!

It is important to remember that for every action there will be a consequence in terms of both man-made laws and divine laws (karma). Man-made laws will be applicable to e.g. Hitler only while he is living a life as Hitler. So typical man-made laws are only applicable to your current life (obviously!). The same applies to criminals serving multiple life sentences.

10.8 Reincarnational thinking to property rights

And what about property rights claims? If a rich man dies, can his reincarnated self lay claim to his previous life's estate and property? If he believed in reincarnation, would he even bother writing a will? Or better yet, would he write his will so that all his property was given directly to the next incarnation of himself? I doubt his next of kin would be very happy with that idea. Conversely, if a man with large financial debt dies, can his creditors attempt to settle his debts through his next incarnation?

10.8.1 Answer

Let's apply a little more common sense to these interesting questions.

With regards to property rights, a reincarnated individual can not lay claim to his previous life's estate and property because the court of law can not acknowledge the existence of the soul. However even if it could (such as countries in the east) this has never been practiced even in countries which acknowledge the reality of reincarnation and so the answer is a NO.

There are millions of people who believe in reincarnation and YES they do write wills to ensure that their wealth is transferred to the correct people in the right quantities after they depart from the physical plane.

The idea of reincarnation is that you only come back again to the earthly plane if you have not lived in resonance with Truth. If you do come back again then there is no absolutely no guarantee that it will be in human form and if you did come back in human form then there is no guarantee that it will even happen in the next millennium! So to suggest writing a will to enable you to inherit your wealth in your next life is ludicrous and yes the next of kin will no doubt not be very happy about this.

Finally it doesn't seem right for creditors to chase debts from reborn souls as we think banks already make too much money ;0)

10.9 Assets and liabilities should not be transferred from one life to the next

Assets, liabilities, and responsibilities should not be transferred from one life to the next. At first glance, this answer would be in line with the karma concept. But why would this answer really be justified, because divine administration of karma would take care of it already, or because the next incarnations of every spirit deserved a clean slate? If the next incarnations deserve a clean slate, then karma becomes immoral. Let's imagine for a moment that karma was not in effect (no divine "correction" ever took place for the actions of past lives) because of the idea that new incarnations did deserve clean slates or another chance. Wouldn't it provide for a big escape hatch for criminals? What if Hitler shot himself at the end of WWII, knowing that karma did not happen in between lives, and that he could give himself a quick death with little suffering and avoid his deserved punishment, all to start anew with a clean slate? Where is the morality in that?

10.9.1 Answer

The author in the above extract is getting confused with spiritual and material debt! There is no doubt that assets (e.g. property), liabilities (e.g. loans) or responsibilities (family) should not be transferred to the reborn individual. In any case if we assumed that the soul took human form again and was reborn immediately then it would be at least 20 years before the soul is mature enough to understand and able to live the life of a modern adult with all its burdens and responsibilities.

There is unfortunately however no escape from spiritual karmic debt. Every individual will reap the fruits of the seeds they sow, so there is NO escape for Hitler. Period! Hitler must experience the consequences of his actions in his subsequent animal and human lives. There is absolute morality in this reality.

10.10 Divine administration of karma

Getting back to the concept of divine administration of karma: Let's now assume that karma "fixes" problems created by a person upon his death and rebirth, like a murderous criminal being born as a murder victim or a septic tank repairman in his next life. Not only would this make the transferring of liabilities and responsibilities to the next life pointless, but it would also make the administering of punishments in the current life pointless! Don't believe me? Consider this: Charles Manson is in prison for life for his crimes. He is being punished in this life for his crimes in this life. But when he dies, won't karma still intervene and punish him in his next life as well? Isn't this still an issue of redundancy or even "double jeopardy" as I mentioned a few paragraphs above? Charles Manson would be punished by divine karma in an appropriate manner, regardless of how we punish Manson while he is alive here and now. We could dismiss the idea of punishing anyone for his or her crimes by saying "karma will get that person eventually." Indeed, punishment for crimes committed by humans wouldn't even be the responsibility of other humans; it would be the responsibility of divine karma. The victim would be in the wrong to directly seek justice.

10.10.1 Answer

This is a flawed interpretation of justice and karma! It is amazing how few people understand the idea that we are spiritual beings having a human experience and that living on the earthly plane will no doubt be a blend of the spiritual and temporal (worldly) laws.

If we are spiritual beings having a worldly experience then it is reasonable to assume that we will receive punishment from both worldly and spiritual laws if we do something bad. So there is no doubt that e.g. Charles Manson will be punished by both worldly law and karmic law. This is not an issue of double jeopardy because Karma will take into consideration all the past and present actions of e.g. Charles Manson and deal with him accordingly and will not solely

focus on the reason for his jail or life imprisonment which may solely be the consequence due to one action.

Finally we can not dismiss the idea of punishing someone for his or her crimes (e.g. murder) because the victims of human indecency (e.g. family who had relative murdered) deserve justice. If Sikhs had taken the above line of thinking they would have been made extinct by battle hardened Islamic fundamentalists. Thankfully such ideas regarding Karma and lack of action do not exist in Sikh thought.

10.11 Everything we do in this life is ultimately pointless

I don't like the idea of reincarnation which is why I choose not to believe it. If it is true then anything we do in this life is ultimately pointless. I also prefer to believe in an afterlife where I retain all the knowledge of my mortal form (and futher it). Also I feel it would be better that spouses believe their late husband/wife is in an afterlife where they will be reunited rather than be reborn where the chances of them meeting again is infinitely small.

10.11.1 Answer

We are free to believe in little green men from Mars if we want and there is no harm in that if it makes us sleep better at night. But you must consider the fact that there is overwhelming scientific evidence to support reincarnation.

Also it is illogical to suggest that a belief in reincarnation renders our current life useless. The law of Karma states that the fruit of our actions in our current life is a SUMMATION of our action in both this life and previous lives. So that actions you perform in your current life are of utmost importance.

Indeed reincarnation in human form is the most precious gift in the universe and is a not to be missed opportunity to unite with God and end the transmigration of the soul. But this can only happen if you live in resonance with Truth in your CURRENT life.

There is no suggestion that a belief in reincarnation is somehow going to wipe your consciousness of your current mortal form although your current physical is only a temporary vehicle.

You will most definitely meet your spouse in the Kingdom of God if both of you live your life with the fullness of the Naam (holy spirit) in your heart. But if you don't then you may need to wait a while before you are reunited.

10.12 Happiness at the end of the journey seems a strange happiness

Whatever the particular theory of reincarnation ascribed to (Eastern doctrines, New Age, Buddhism of the little vehicle or great vehicle), it is not truly eternal life. It is an adding on of small lives which are always subjected to the limits of the present life, until, all of a sudden, there is no life at all: the state of 'nirvana'.

The happiness offered at the end of the journey seems a strange happiness indeed! If we acknowledge the etymology of the word nirvana, the ultimate state after reincarnation, is an absence of breath and of respiration.

The purification by successive lives consists of detaching oneself from the desires for material goods, power, feelings, relationships with others and friendship. Then there is the detachment from life itself - a state in which one no longer thinks or breaths. Finally, one blends into the universe, the great all. We do not move, think or love. We no longer have an identity or personality.

Is this the happiness to which we aspire: to be blended into everything and no longer ourselves?

10.12.1 Answer

The answer to whether someone aspires to merge their consciousness with God is a personal choice and it is indeed the highest form of spiritual experience.

Sikhism is a way of life that teaches people to merge their soul body (encapsulated by the subtle body) with Satnam (God). However you do not lose your individual identity and you can achieve this while you are still in human form. The merging of individual consciousness with God is a beautiful merger which expounds the feelings of unconditional love and divine grace.

10.13 What were the mistakes we committed that resulted in our failure to acquire liberation

According to SGGSJ (Sikh Holy Scripture): "After union, the separation comes and after separation the union. After living the span of life, the death comes and after death the life. He becomes the father of many and the son of many, the disciple and preceptor of many. Their lives in the past and future are countless. Nothing is known what was in the past and what will be in the future?" (Salok M.1. P 1238)

Hence, according to Sikhism, our past life and actions are unrecollectable. We are made to go through khand for past misdeeds we are in fact incapable of recalling. Based upon this, the next question one should ask is: If one does not know what one is being punished for, then does not the possibility exist of repeating the same mistake?

The answer is not only an obvious yes; but, the problem is further compounded when we realise that since we do not know what evil deeds we committed, resulting in failure to liberate ourselves from the cycle of life and death, then how is it possible for us to learn from our mistakes in order that we do not repeat them, or worse still, commit worse transgressions?

10.13.1 Answer

There is no doubt that for most people the actions of previous lives are not available to the conscious mind and there is always the chance that an individual will make the same mistakes as they did in their previous lives. However there is no shortage of religious instruction in the 21st century and people are given the gift of free will to walk on the path of truth.

Also, just because the conscious mind is not aware of the mistakes of our previous lives does not automatically mean that our sub conscious mind is unable to guide our actions and thoughts in our current life. Finally lets not forget that God who is always there as a guide to help us in our current life.

It is a testimony of God's love that we are given as many chances as needed to achieve moksha and not be resigned to an eternal punishment of hell because we screwed up in one life.

However it should be noted that none these arguments against reincarnation are even relevant in mainstream Abrahamic thought because you get one chance to attain heaven and if you screw it up, you WILL be resigned to hell for eternity.

10.14 An example of injustice through reincarnation

Leading on from this, if we hold to the concept of "A person reaps what he sows" - "Jehaa beejai so lunai karma sandraa khet: The man sows so does he reap. Such is the field of actions." (SGGS 134) - it can safely be said that if one is born under circumstances that could be construed as unfavourable, then this is simply a case of reaping what was sown in a previous life or lives. For example, if a baby was born with a deformity or born into a family stricken by extreme poverty, which in either case would assure a life of difficulty and hardship, and as a result lead to an early death, the question that would immediately arise is:

Is it just on God's part to punish a person under such unfavourable conditions for past misdeeds that one has absolutely no knowledge of?

The answer to this question can quite easily be determined when we see children suffering and realise that this is merely just reward (punishment) for misdeeds committed in some unknown and unrecollectable past life.

10.14.1 Answer

To answer this question lets assume Hitler is caught after the war and is placed in front of a jury to be tried for the murder of 6 million Jews. However, for whatever reason Hitler develops genuine amnesia. In this worldly example would it be right to find Hitler guilty of crimes which he no longer has any recollection of?

I think the answer is obvious!

Just because someone cannot remember their actions in their previous life does not automatically mean that it is unjust for them to receive the fruits of the actions (consequences) which they themselves have performed.

The 3 different explanations for e.g. young children suffering is:

- Suffering is the result of our own actions
- Suffering is the result of God's will
- Suffering is natural (atheist view)

So if a Muslim argues that it is unjust for a young child to undergo suffering due to his or her actions in a previous life, then the only other option is that God is responsible for such suffering on a child who could not have done anything wrong because it's his/her first and only life! This unfortunately throws the concept of an all compassionate God out of the window.

10.15 An example of injustice through reincarnation

Going back to the example of the child born with a deformity or one that suffers terribly and then dies, we can examine the implications in light of the following:

- *The child's suffering is directly related to sins committed in previous lives.*
- *The child's parents are likewise suffering the pain and anguish as a result of their own sins committed in their own respective past lives.*

SGGS: "Daddai dos na deyoo kisai dos krammaa aapanyaa. Jo mai keeyaa so mai paayaa dos na deejai avar janaa: Do not blame anyone else; blame instead your own actions. Whatever I did, for that I have suffered; I do not blame anyone else." (SGGS 433)

Before we determine how just and humane this concept is, we have to realise certain factors.

Recalling that the parents and child have no recollection of their past lives in terms of sins and transgression to justifiably warrant them being reborn, we can, thus, see clear absurdities that lead us to inevitable conclusions of injustice when we consider the following:

(A) Personality and self-awareness developed over one lifetime comes to an end after we die.

(B) Upon being reborn, there is absolutely no trace of ones personality and self-awareness from any so-called previous life.

(C) Hence, if a completely new personality and a totally different self awareness exist, then various reincarnations, extending over a period of time, are no more significantly linked than the lives of all the individuals who happen to be alive at the same given moment in time.

The questions that needs to be asked is:

- How is it possible to justify the suffering of a person as a deserved punishment for previous sins when one has absolutely no recollection of the transgressions committed in a past life?*
- Is there any difference between this and accusing a newly born child, who has no means of determining the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, of possessing a sinful nature before it has acquired the faculties of reason - similar to the Christian notion of Original Sin?*

10.15.1 Answer

In this example, the following 2 points are accurate:

- The child's suffering is directly related to sins committed in previous lives.
- The child's parents are likewise suffering the pain and anguish as a result of their own sins committed in their own respective past lives.

However the above points do not validate the 3 points below, all of which are incorrect:

(A) Personality and self-awareness developed over one lifetime comes to an end after we die.

Point A has been shown to be incorrect through the scientific research done by Dr Stevenson in matching hand writing styles of deceased and reborn individuals.

(B) Upon being reborn, there is absolutely no trace of ones personality and self-awareness from any so-called previous life.

Point B can also be proven incorrect through modern scientific methods such as past life regression and analysis of spontaneous past life recall.

(C) Hence, if a completely new personality and a totally different self awareness exist, then various reincarnations, extending over a period of time, are no more significantly linked than the lives of all the individuals who happen to be alive at the same given moment in time.

The logic used to support Point C is no longer applicable as the first 2 points can be proven (scientifically) to be false.

We have already discussed the morality regarding the reaping the fruits of previous actions in a new life when we have no recollection of our previous actions. So this point will not be mentioned again.

There is a similarity between the Christian concept of original sin and karma. However the difference is that karma in Kaliyug is about people being judged for their actions only. The Christian concept of original sin suggests that all beings are still paying the price of the decision of our ancestors to disobey the command of God. The other big difference is that the traditional Christian model of suffering (same applies to Islamic model of suffering) can not explain the grades of suffering i.e. why one man is born into a rich family and another one into a poor family.

10.16 There is no connection between ones previous life and the next

If there is no connection between ones previous life and the next in terms of personality and self-awareness, it stands to reason, therefore, that actions of a previous life are separate, distinct and unconnected to the next life. This implies that an innocent person will be punished for crimes committed by another said person, i.e. one person accumulates karma and another completely independent person with a different personality will suffer the consequences. It is a case of 'one person sows and a different person reaps', since no personal characteristics can be preserved from one incarnation to the next. This is not only unfair, but fundamentally contradicts the idea of perfect justice. From this absurdity, can it therefore be said that Hitler will suffer for his sins in the next life? No! Since there is no continuity between the person of Hitler and that of the individual who has to endure, presumably, the severe hardships incurred by Hitler's karma.

The only conclusion one can arrive at is that not only will an innocent person be unduly punished, but Hitler himself will go unpunished for his crimes against humanity because he ceased to exist! As a result, it is not possible to justify punishment for past actions (deeds) that are neither connected to one's present existence nor recollectable, let alone being able to justify it for an innocent child. Moreover, this child, for all intents and purposes, is innocent of those unrecollectable yet incriminating actions since it has absolutely no means of learning from them.

10.16.1 Answer

Stop... stop! We have already mentioned that there is indeed a connection between ones previous life in terms of personality and self awareness and so this next section of reasoning is all resigned to the bin.

No one can escape Karma because it is divine justice. Hitler will most definitely suffer from the actions in his life as Hitler. All the other points have been mentioned previously.

11 Suffering child held accountable for actions from previous life

In Islaam, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said that the pen for the recording of actions and deeds in life, including the judgment, is lifted i.e. suspended, in such cases where one has either not developed the means or lost the ability to rationalise, i.e. the use of sound reasoning and moral judgment:

"The pen has been lifted for three: the insane until he regains his sanity, the child until he reaches puberty (age of discernment), and the sleeper until he wakes up."

And yet, under the Karmic worldview, this child is not only held accountable for unrecollectable actions, but must also be deemed and described as a guilty sinner! The ramifications are of course shocking to say the least and in light of this, we can do nothing but come to the harrowing conclusion that in relation to the suffering child, God must be described as unjust. We seek refuge in Allaah!

11.1.1 Answer

The author of the above quote is confused between the concepts of blame and suffering.

The Karmic view regarding suffering of a child born with a painful deformity is that the child was born that way because of previous sins.

The Abrahamic view regarding suffering of a child born with a painful deformity is that the child was born that way because of God's will.

In the Karmic world view there is a reasonable reason for the suffering which is namely that the soul had performed various deeds in their previous life for which they are now experiencing the consequences.

In the Abrahamic view regarding suffering there seems to be no logical reason why God would cause such suffering to a young child when they have done nothing wrong. So why is the child suffering? God indeed must be described as unjust in this incomplete view of suffering.

There is no suggestion that a child undergoing suffering should be described as a guilty sinner. The attitude to every creature of God should be one of compassion and unconditional love.

Finally there is also no suggestion that the soul in its current state is accumulating much good or bad karma as it is unable to either. Again this

shows the authors poor understanding of both the Karmic and the Abrahamic models of suffering.

11.2 Suffering child due to external reasons

In Islaam, the suffering of the child is not due to previous sins. On the contrary, it occurs due to factors external to it and beyond its control by the decree of Allaah. It cannot be said that the child is being punished since punishment is only meted out upon the one who commits sins and transgressions. As for the suffering of a child then this could either be due to punishment meted out upon others with whom it is associated to, e.g. parent's being punished for their transgressions and evil deeds, the consequences of which directly affects the child, or Allaah is testing the parents to see how they will react in the face of their child's suffering. In both cases the child is considered innocent from any personal blame.

11.2.1 Answer

The above is an interesting and confused account of the reasons for suffering of a child born with severe deformities. According to traditional Islam - God will make a child undergo untold pain because of the actions of its parents or because God is testing the faith of the parents. This renders the life of the child almost useless like a “test object” for the greater good of someone else! This definitely sounds like an all compassionate God and “just” divine laws.

11.3 Suffering due to natural disasters

What conclusions would be drawn if we attempted to explain away the deaths of thousands of people due to a natural disaster? Let us take the example of the great Tangshan Earthquake of 1976 in China, which lasted between 14-16 seconds, leaving a death toll of approximately 242,000 people. Were all these men, women and children, who died so suddenly, simply deserving of such a fate? Perhaps they were even a catalyst for the disaster itself! Can we not ask whether nature too is subject to this deadly Karmic Effect? Was this disaster meant to occur so that these people payoff the past-debt? And was death the ultimate and necessary price for those unrecollectable actions they had sown?

If one were to hold to this incredulous Karmic theory, the absurd and inexplicable conclusions reached for any given scenario in life would not only be morally untenable, but also extremely distasteful, objectionable and wholly unjustifiable.

... This shows that Islam does not hold in anyway that Allaah punishes mankind for actions committed in the past in which they have no choice. According to Islaam, people fall into trials and tribulation, or receive punishment after they have consciously chosen to disobey the commandments and violate the edicts of their Lord, i.e. they have knowledge of right and wrong and based upon this they continue to go ahead and do wrong, before they are subjected to any type of worldly punishment.

11.3.1 Answer

The above is an interesting example of a natural disaster involving human suffering. So let's look at the Karmic and Abrahamic models on this again:

The Karmic model would state that it was a combination of their previous lives deeds and deeds performed in their current life which lead to the unlucky 242,000 being killed by the Earthquake. So these people would have indeed earned this seemingly harsh end to their lives.

The Islamic model would state that, *“people receive punishment after they have consciously chosen to disobey the commandments and violate the edicts of their Lord, i.e. they have knowledge of right and wrong and based upon this they continue to go ahead and do wrong, before they are subjected to any type of worldly punishment.”*

This seems great on the outset; however it fails to explain why babies and young children died in the earthquake. Surely they could not have consciously chosen to disobey the edicts of their Lord?

This is where the additional insight from the Karmic model provides the missing link to the puzzle as the only way children and babies could suffer death in such traumatic way would be if there was a past life reason.

11.4 Karma abdicates personal responsibility

On the face of it, the Karmic theory seems alluring since it merely shifts the immediate consequences of one's actions to past lives. However, when viewed holistically, this concept leads not only to apathy, but also a very real undermining of the meaning of the term: personal responsibility.

We have seen that all outcomes in life are inexorably linked to the actions of past lives. From this it was understood that blame cannot be assigned to a person or people who choose to do a particular action since these actions, and the results, are a direct consequence of actions carried out in previous lives.

This concept shifts any immediate blame from the one who consciously committed wrong to his/her alleged past life. Hence, the Karmic theory abdicates complete personal responsibility from that person and places it squarely upon unrecollectable past lives, which, as we saw, has no real tangible connection to one's present life.

It is an incredible proposition that this theory provides one with the excuse of shrugging off responsibility for any wrongdoing with the comforting thought that they were merely forced to enact actions in order to pay off some mysterious karmic debt.

11.4.1 Answer

This question has already been answered previously. But in summary in no way does karma abdicate personal responsibility.

It is incorrect understanding to suggest that the actions of a being in his/her current life are the results of previous lives. In every life we are given free will to choose between good and bad and the choices we make will lead us closer to or further away from God.

It is ONLY correct to suggest that the results of actions performed in our current life are a summation of the actions in both this life and in previous lives.

11.5 Origin of Bad Karma

According to the Karmic theory, our Karma is an accumulation of evil actions stemming from past lives and is responsible for suffering in this life. However, a unique dilemma arises.

If we take the present life to be the 100th life and the suffering that occurs is from the 99th life and the Karma of the 99th life stemmed from the 98th life, etc. one would eventually come to life number one. Since there was no life before the 1st, the question we ask is: Where did this karma originate from?

According to SGGs, we began to believe our mind and body to be our own, which resulted in the cycle of birth and rebirths:

"kaachae bhaaddae saaj nivaajae anthar joth samaaee. jaisaa likhath likhiaa dhur karathai ham thaisee kirath kamaaee. man than thhaap keeaa sabh apanaa eaeho aavan jaanaa. jin dheea so chith n aavai mohi andhh lapattaanaa."

"He created and adorned the earthen vessels (human bodies) and infused His Light within them. As is the destiny pre-ordained by the Creator, so are the deeds we do. The human began to believe that the mind and body were all his own; this is the cause of his coming (births) and going (rebirths). He does not think of the One who gave him these; he is blind, entangled in emotional attachment." (AGGS, M 5, p. 882)

The question that follows is: When did this occur and what was the initial reason behind man acquiring this free-thinking aberration?

Guru Arjun Dev in SGGs asks:

"jab kachh na see-o tab ki-aa kartaa kavan karam kar aa-i-aa: When nothing existed, what deeds were being done? And what Karma caused anyone to be born at all?" (SGGS p.748 Arjun Dev)

Likewise, Bhagat Naam asks:"Saasat no hotaa Bed naa hotaa karam kahaan te aa-i-aa: When there was no Shastras and no Vedas, where did the Karma come from?" (SGGS p.973 Nam Dev)

However, this above explanation opens up a whole new can of worms. If the cycle of birth-rebirth was kick-started by those free-thinking humans, it stands to reason that this cycle of birth-rebirth did not exist amongst their ancestors. If this is true, then the question is:

What type of belief did they hold and did they only share the understanding of the Semitic religions of just one life?

Another interesting question is: Why did these pre-Karmic humans not achieve liberation from the cycle of birth-rebirth and become one with God?

Had this occurred, the existence of karma would not arise. Or perhaps even more profoundly, they would not have formulated the reincarnation-transmigrational theory and accepted the just revelatory truth of Islam.

11.5.1 Answer

There is no can of worms here just misconceptions about Karma. Karma came into being when the material universe came into being just the same way gravity came into being. Karma is simply a universal law within nature.

The author of the above text is correct in thinking that there was no Karma before creation, however as soon as a being was created then its karma would start from that specific point in time.

The belief that the first humans in Satyug held would have been those of the Indian religions including Karma and Reincarnation. This history of divine avatars and sages in the different ages is recorded in Bhai Gurdas Vaars.

Again there is no such thing as pre-karmic humans. You can't have zero gravity humans on earth because gravity affects everyone. Similarly Karma affects everyone and no one can escape it.

11.6 Sikhism is ridiculous

We have seen from the above arguments how the notion of karma leads to absurdities and mind-boggling scenarios that point to two possible conclusions:

- *God is unjust for subjecting mankind to a countless number of lives, wherein so much suffering is endured, based upon the indefensible reasons derived from the Karmic Law.*
- *God is all-just, but Sikhism is untrue and man-invented explaining why such insurmountable problems exist when attempting to justify reincarnation-transmigrations*

May Allaah guide us all away from falsehood and towards the clarity and light of our Creator and His Truth so that our hearts become united upon a singular understanding and worship of Him; brothers and sisters upon a singular faith and creed.

11.6.1 Answer

We have looked at the mechanics of reincarnation and a great deal of scientific evidence to support the reality of such a phenomenon. In light of such evidence it would be small minded to suggest that this is a fantastical idea.

Sikhs believe that God is indeed just and that reincarnation is a testimony to his love for his children. Sikhs uses the tools of experience of divinity, logic, common sense, science and the eternal principles of the Guru Granth Sahib to understand their relationship with creation and the Creator. Sikhism is very much a Dharma for the modern age.

12 Conclusions

It is a healthy trend that today and in recent times, belief in reincarnation is on the increase. Poll after poll has shown that a steady and growing number of people are coming to believe in the idea of reincarnation. This trend has been particularly pronounced in industrialized Western countries. For instance, some representative numbers are that in the United states and Europe, around 25% of people believe in reincarnation, the figure for the United Kingdom is around 30%. The growth in the numbers of people who believe in reincarnation are demonstrated by these figures: in 1968, 23% of people in France believed in reincarnation versus 28% in 1990. Comparable figures for the United Kingdom over the same time period are 18% versus 30%.

In the West, where once belief in the transmigration of souls was seen as the reserve for eccentrics or oddballs, these days the idea is quite commonly accepted. It is worth noting that young people, that is those in the 15 to 30 age group, are disproportionately represented in the statistics which show a growing belief in reincarnation, i.e. there exists a greater tendency among the young to subscribe to a belief in reincarnation. This trend encourages the hope that perhaps in the future, the idea of reincarnation will become the dominant doctrine concerning the nature of eternal life (God willing).