

Is Reincarnation Real?

Dr. Naresh Kumar^{1*}

ABSTRACT

We all have heard stories in which people recall their past births. But none of us took them seriously, and hardly anyone attempted to verify whether the narration about a past life was correct. However, some researchers devoted almost whole of their lives investigating reincarnation incidents. Dr Ian Stevenson's name stands out, who researched almost 3000 such cases and found credible evidence suggestive of reincarnation. Not only were the stories narrated by children true, but some had also birthmarks/ birth defects exactly similar to the wounds on the body of the people who they claimed were their past lives. Such research tends to put forth a theory that not only is the afterlife possible, but also a new life is possible after we die. Can consciousness outlive death and can we start our life afresh as a new person after death? This paper attempts to explore whether reincarnation is real.

Keywords: *Life after Death, Rebirth, Reincarnation, Soul, Afterlife, Surviving death*

Reincarnation symbolizes the Afterlife!!
Does life really exist after death?? Instances of reincarnation speak volumes about this possibility!!

Instances are reported worldwide where children below 5 years of age speak about their past lives. They give minute details including the location of their past lives, what they did, what their family did and even how they eventually met their death!

Not many such instances urge their parents to take such blurts seriously and attempt to verify the child's narration. My maternal uncle spoke of my mother who, at the age of five, used to tell her siblings not to trouble her or else she would go back to her old family where she lived with her grown-up sons and daughters-in-law!! The siblings used to tease her more and took her narration with a pinch of salt.

Not that all such incidents go without investigation. Literature is full of reincarnation incidents which were well researched, and the narrations by children for past birth were investigated and found true.

In this paper, we shall be exploring whether the Reincarnation phenomenon is real and shall try to look into it through a scientific lens.

¹Independent Researcher, Vadodara, India

*Corresponding Author

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Let us first look at some prominent incidents which were investigated and researched for Reincarnation.

Some Prominent Researched Reincarnation Incidents

An incident of world fame was that of Shanti Devi's recalling of her past life. The incident came into the limelight because it was personally looked into by Mahatma Gandhi who appointed a commission to verify the truth behind Shanti Devi's narrations.

Wikipedia¹ gives details: "***Shanti Devi*** (11 December 1926 – 27 December 1987), known as ***Lugdi Devi*** (18 January 1902 – 4 October 1925) in her alleged past life, was an Indian woman who claimed to remember her previous life and became the subject of reincarnation research. A commission set up by the Indian political leader Mahatma Gandhi verified and supported her claim.

Shanti Devi was born in Delhi, India. As a young girl, she began to claim that she remembered details of a past life. According to these accounts, when she was about four years old, she told her parents that her real home was in Mathura, where her husband lived, about 145km from her home in Delhi.



She unequivocally stated in school that she was married and had died ten days after giving birth to a child. Interviewed by her teacher and headmaster, she used words from the Mathura dialect and divulged the name of her merchant husband, "Kedarnath Chaube". The headmaster managed to locate a merchant by the name of Kedar Nath in Mathura who had lost his wife, Lugdi Devi, nine years earlier, ten days after having given birth to a son. Kedar Nath travelled to Delhi, pretending to be his brother, but Shanti Devi immediately recognised him and Lugdi Devi's son. As she knew several details of Kedar Nath's life with his wife, he was soon convinced that Shanti Devi was indeed the reincarnation of Lugdi Devi.

The case was brought to the attention of Mahatma Gandhi, who set up a commission to investigate. The commission travelled with Shanti Devi to Mathura, arriving on 15 November 1935. There, she recognised several family members, including the grandfather of Lugdi Devi. She found out that Kedar Nath had neglected to keep many promises he had made to Lugdi Devi on her deathbed. She then travelled home with her parents. The commission's report, published in 1936, concluded that Shanti Devi was indeed the reincarnation of Lugdi Devi."

The incident became famous because of the involvement of Mahatma Gandhi.

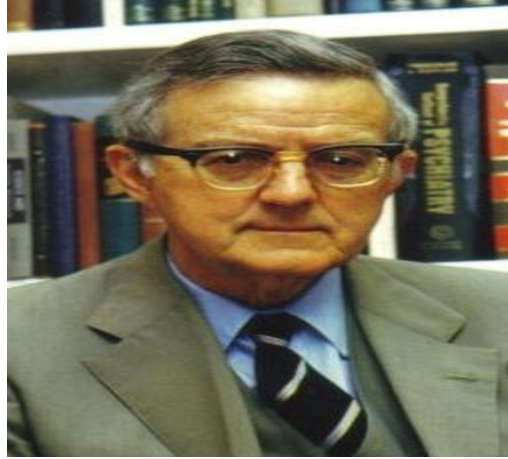
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This was not the only incident researched for reincarnation. In fact, Dr Ian Stevenson (considered an authority on 'Reincarnation') has investigated around 3000 cases all over the world, including many in India. The reincarnation research was intensified after 1961 when

Ian Stevenson took up the research spanning over four decades.

Wikipedia² gives details:

Ian Pretyman Stevenson (October 31, 1918 – February 8, 2007) was a Canadian-born American psychiatrist, the founder and director of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. He was a professor at the University of Virginia School of Medicine for fifty years.



Ian Stevenson-an authority on Reincarnation

He is best known for his research into evidence of reincarnation – the premise that emotions, memories, and even physical bodily features can be passed on from one life to another. Over his forty years of international research, he amassed three thousand cases of children who claimed to remember past lives. In some cases, a child in a "past life" case may have birthmarks or birth defects that in some way correspond to physical features of the "previous person" whose life the child seems to remember. Stevenson's Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects (1997) examined two hundred cases of birth defects or birthmarks on children claiming past-life memories. These included children with malformed or missing fingers who said they recalled the lives of people who had lost fingers; a boy with birthmarks resembling entrance and exit wounds who said he recalled the life of someone who had been shot; and a child with a scar around her skull three centimetres wide who said she recalled the life of a man who had had skull surgery. In many of the cases, in Stevenson's view, the witness testimony or autopsy reports appeared to support the existence of the injuries on the deceased's body.

Stevenson was the author of around three hundred papers and fourteen books on reincarnation, including Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation (1966), Reincarnation and Biology and its simplified version Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect (both 1997), and European Cases of the Reincarnation Type (2003)."

Ian Stevenson also visited India to investigate Reincarnation cases. While in India, he, along with Dr Satwant Pasricha (the then head of the Department of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences at Bangalore) who had

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also worked at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in the USA) investigated many reincarnation cases in India.

I take up only two more cases, which were well-researched by researchers, including Dr Stevenson, before I take up exploring the credibility of the reincarnation phenomenon:

Case1: Dr Swarnlata Tiwari Case

Here is a case from Bhopal in India where Dr Swarnlata Tiwari, principal of a Government Arts & Commerce College from Bhopal, popularly known as Naveen College, is a unique case of rebirth. Her case is one of the seven cases in the world over in which scientists have been researching the theory of human rebirth. Dr Swarnlata's case is unique in the sense that she not only remembers her immediate previous birth but also the previous to the previous birth.

In an interview, Dr Swarnlata Tiwari narrated interesting events and memories of her three births. The first at Katni in Madhya Pradesh when she was born in a Pathak family, the second in a Goswami family of Silhat (Assam) which is presently in West Pakistan. And now presently she was born in the village of Shahpur Tikamgarh district.

The wife of an IAS officer, Dr Tiwari, 59, at present, has two sons. She has been leading a happy, peaceful life with her present family, at the same time keeping in touch with her previous birth relatives of Katni.

She said memories flashed back to her when she was passing through a river near Katni at the age of about 4 years. She narrated her past life's incidents to her parents, who did not believe all that and ultimately saw a doctor for her mental check-up. It was here that the doctor declared her fit, saying "She is recalling her previous birth memories."

At the height of all that, she suddenly started singing Assamese songs at the age of 5. This was her previous to the immediate birth. In this life, she died in a road accident in Silhat at the age of 8.

When her case flashed in newspapers, her previous birth brother came to her house, whom she immediately *recognized* as "Babu". He confirmed that she was his sister as she narrated such incidents, which only he and she knew. At that birth, her husband was a Tehsildar from whom she had three children. She then died of heart failure at the age of 39.

Her story may seem interesting and amazing to listeners, but not to her, as she is now used to it and feels quite "normal".

Strange Facts about Dr Swarnlata

1. Born on March 2, 1948
2. She scared her parents by claiming that her name was Biya Pathak and lived in Katni in past.
3. Biya Pathak died in 1939
4. was reborn as Kamlesh in 1940 at Sylhet in Assam and died in 1947, a very short life.
5. Then, in 1948, Kamlesh was reborn as Swarnlata Mishra at the village Shahpur in the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh.
6. Remembers all three births and that every time she was born as a girl child and in all the births in a Brahmin family.

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7. Her story of rebirth was investigated by a noted Virginia University Professor, Dr Ian Stevenson, when he visited India in 1997, and he found her case as "Authentically Correct" after intensive confirmation of tales told by Swarnlata.
8. At present, she lives in Bhopal. Her husband, K.P. Tiwari is a senior IAS officer here, and she herself is a botanist and is presently posted at Bhopal as the Principal of a Government Arts and Commerce College.

Case 2 - Pramanand reincarnates as Pramod

Parmod Sharma was born on October 11, 1944, in Bisauli, India. When Parmod was about two and a half, he began telling his mother not to cook his meals for him any longer because he had a wife in Moradabad who could cook. Moradabad was a town about ninety miles northeast of Bisauli. Between the ages of three and four, he began to speak in detail of his life there. He described several businesses he had owned and operated with other members of his family. He particularly spoke of a shop that manufactured and sold biscuits (cookies) and soda water, calling it "Mohan Brothers." He insisted that he was one of the "Mohan Brothers" and that he also had a business in Saharanpur, a town about a hundred miles north of Moradabad.

Parmod tended not to play with the other children in Bisauli but preferred to play by himself, building models of shops complete with electrical wiring. He especially liked to make mud biscuits, which he served his family with tea or soda water. During this time, he provided many details about his shop, including its size and location in Moradabad, what was sold there, and his activities connected to it, such as his business trips to Delhi. He even complained to his parents about the less prosperous financial condition of their home compared to what he was used to as a successful merchant.

Parmod had a strong distaste for curd, which is quite unusual for an Indian child, and on one occasion, he even advised his father against eating it, saying that it was dangerous. Parmod said that in his other life, he had become seriously ill after eating too much curd one day. He had an equally strong dislike for being submerged in water, which might relate to his report that he had previously "died in a bathtub." Parmod said that he had been married and had five children--four sons and one daughter. He was anxious to see his family again and frequently begged his parents to take him back to Moradabad to visit them. His family always refused his request, though his mother did get him to begin school by promising to take him to Moradabad when he had learned to read.

Parmod's parents never investigated or tried to verify their son's claims, perhaps because of the Indian folk custom that children who remembered a previous life were fated to die early. News of Parmod's statements, however, eventually reached the ears of a family in Moradabad named Mehra, which fit many of the details of his story. The brothers of this family owned several businesses in Moradabad, including a biscuit and soda water shop named "Mohan Brothers." The shop had been started and managed by Parmanand Mehra until his untimely death on May 9, 1943, eighteen months before Parmod was born. Parmanand had gorged himself on curd, one of his favourite foods, at a wedding feast and had subsequently developed a chronic gastrointestinal illness, followed later by appendicitis and peritonitis, from which he died. Two or three days before his death, he had insisted, against his family's advice, on eating more curd, saying that he might not have another chance to enjoy it. Parmanand had blamed his illness and impending death on overeating curd. As part of his therapy during his appendicitis, Parmanand had tried a series of naturopathic bath treatments. While he had not died in a bathtub, he had been given a bath immediately before his death. Parmanand left a widow and five children--four sons and one daughter.

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In the summer of 1949, the Mehra family decided to make the trip to Bisauli to meet Parmod, who was a little under five years old at the time. When they arrived, however, Parmod was away with his family and no contact was made. Shortly thereafter, Parmod's father responded to an invitation from the Mehra family and took him to Moradabad to explore his son's compelling remembrances first-hand.

Among those who met Parmod at the railway station was Parmanand's cousin, Sri Karam Chand Mehra, who had been quite close to Parmanand. Parmod threw his arms around him, weeping, calling him "older brother" and saying, "I am Parmanand." (It is common for Indians to call a cousin "brother" if the relationship is a close one, as was the case for Parmanand and Karam.) Parmod then proceeded to find his way to the "Mohan Brothers" shop on his own, giving instructions to the driver of the carriage which brought them from the station. Entering the shop, he complained that "his" special seat had been changed. (It is customary in India for the owner of a business to have an enclosed seat--a gaddi--located near the front of the store where he can greet customers and direct business.) The location of Parmanand's gaddi had, in fact, been changed sometime after his death. Once inside, Parmod asked, "Who is looking after the bakery and soda water factory?" This had been Parmanand's responsibility. The complicated machine which manufactured the soda water had been secretly disabled in order to test Parmod. When shown it, however, Parmod knew exactly how it worked. Without any assistance, he located the disconnected hose and gave instructions for its repair.

Later, at Parmanand's home, Parmod recognized the room where Parmanand had slept and commented on a room screen that he correctly observed had not been there in Parmanand's day. He also identified a particular cupboard that Parmanand had kept his things in as well as a special low table which had also been his. "This is the one I used to use for my meals," he said. When Parmanand's mother entered the room, he immediately recognized her and addressed her as "Mother" before anyone else present was able to say anything. He also correctly identified Parmanand's wife, acting somewhat embarrassed in front of her. She was, after all, a full-grown woman, and he was only five, though apparently possessing at least some of the feelings of an adult husband. When they were alone, he said to her, "I have come, but you have not fixed bindi," referring to the red dot worn on the forehead by Hindu wives. He also reproached her for wearing a white sari, the appropriate dress for a Hindu widow, instead of the coloured sari worn by wives.

Parmod correctly recognized Parmanand's daughter and the one son who was at the house when he had arrived. When Parmanand's youngest son, who had been at school, showed up later, Parmod correctly identified him as well, using his familiar name, Gordhan. In their conversation, Parmod would not allow the older Gordhan to address him by his first name but insisted that he call him "father." "I have only become small," he said. During this visit, Parmod also correctly identified one of Parmanand's brothers and a nephew.

Parmod showed a striking knowledge of the details of Parmanand's world. While touring the hotel the Mehra brothers owned in Moradabad, the Victory Hotel, Parmod commented on the new sheds that had been built on the property. The Mehra family confirmed that these had indeed been added after Parmanand's death. Entering the hotel, Parmod pointed to some cupboards and said, "These are the almirahs I had constructed in Churchill House." Churchill House was the name of a second hotel the Mehra brothers owned in Saharanpur, a town about a hundred miles north of Moradabad. Parmanand had, in fact, had these cupboards constructed for Churchill's house during his life. Shortly after Parmanand's death, however, the family had decided to move these cupboards to the Victory Hotel.

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On a visit to Saharanpur later, Parmod spontaneously identified a doctor known to Parmanand in that city. "He is a doctor and an old friend of mine," he said. During that visit, he also recognized a man named Yasmin, whom he insisted owed him (Parmanand) money. "I have to get some money back from you," he said. At first, Yasmin was reluctant to acknowledge the loan, but after being reassured that the Mehra family was not going to press for repayment, he admitted that Parmod was quite right about the debt.

Paramanand had a strong liking for curd and died of serious illness after eating curd. Paramanand was a dedicated businessman and had a strong attachment to his family and business. Destiny seems to have played its role in bringing Paramanand back to Bisauli as Pramod, from where he can get a better chance to meet the family of his previous birth. In both the lives - Pramod and Paramanand are born as males.

Webmaster

Kokolu Anka Rao

Date : 01/ 02/ 2009, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

(Source: https://www.geocities.ws/rebirth_stories/rebirth_stevenson.html#story05)

The above two cases and the one of Shanti Devi described earlier are indicative of reincarnation because the events and facts of the previous birth were correctly described by the child of the next birth, who had no means of learning the facts.

Not only the above phenomenon of a child recalling incidents correctly about previous lives, but there have been instances when there are some birthmarks on the body of the child which were also known to be as a wound in exactly the same location at the body of the person of past life.

A reincarnation incident was researched where a Maharashtrian lady, knowing only Marathi, suddenly started speaking Bengali fluently, which she had never learnt. Not only did she start speaking Bengali, but she also recalled her previous life as a Bengali lady who lived in Bengal and narrated incidents of her past life, which were found to be true.

I recall reading about an incident where a child used to run out of the house and got busy directing and controlling traffic at a road crossing. On investigation, it was revealed that in a past life, he was a traffic policeman.

Instances are many and literature is flooded with such events, many of which have been rigorously researched in India and abroad. While we can't foresee the causes behind the observed reincarnation phenomena, all these are indicative of Reincarnation being real.

Having explored some reincarnation cases, let us look at the analysis and conclusions drawn by Researchers.

Data Analysis and Inferences drawn out of reincarnation research

Dr Satwant Pasricha (who had worked with Dr Ian Stevenson) is a living Indian legend in the field of Reincarnation. She completed her M. Phil. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, and obtained a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of Virginia, U.S.A She is a former Professor and Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore, and a former Professor of Clinical Psychology, Himalayan Institute of Health Sciences, Dehra Dun. Presently, she is engaged as a senior Hon. Clinical Psychology Consultant at a Psychological and Counselling Services clinic, Dehra Dun.

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Dr Satwant Pasricha

Dr Satwant Pasricha gave a speech on April 12, 2022 at the Institute of Science and Spirituality, New Delhi. It was titled “**Reincarnation Research- A Scientific Approach**”. She explained how reincarnation progressed, how the data was collected and analysed, and what inferences were drawn (Source: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox?projector=1>):

As per Dr Pasricha, there were hardly a few cases researched and reported for reincarnation before 1960. The notable researchers between 1920-1960 were Rao Bahadur Shyam Sunder Lal, KKN Sahay, S C Bose and B L Atreya.

The research gained momentum when Dr Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia undertook the research worldwide. It all started in 1957 when Stevenson wrote a paper to win a contest organised by the American Society for Psychical Research in honour of William James on “the topic of paranormal mental phenomena and their relationship to the problem of survival of the human personality after bodily death. Ian had read about reincarnation cases in books, magazines and newspapers and was intrigued by the topic “Reincarnation”. He analysed 44 of them as a group in a paper that won the contest and was subsequently published in 1960.

At the end of the paper, he wrote that more study of the reincarnation hypothesis was justified, and he asked people who knew of additional cases of apparent past-life memories to contact him. At the time, however, he was not planning to investigate cases himself; he was too busy running his department, treating patients, and conducting other research. After the paper was published in 1960, his plans changed when he received a telephone call from Eileen Garrett, the head of the Parapsychology Foundation. She had learned of a case in India similar to the ones Ian had written about, and she offered to pay his expenses to investigate it. Ian accepted the offer, and by the time of the trip, he had heard about four or five cases in India and two in nearby Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

Once he got to India, he was surprised at how easily cases could be found. He was there for four weeks and saw 25 cases. Likewise, he visited Ceylon for a week and found seven cases. The cases were subjected to investigation, and personal contacts were made with the child’s family and also with the family where the child lived in the past birth. The claims of the child were checked during those visits, and not only were the family members interviewed, but the friends and even neutral persons residing nearby were also interviewed on both sides.

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During the process, some people came forward and informed about more cases that they knew and those cases were also looked into this way, through the information received, the research spread.

Dr Stevenson visited India in 1961 and started his research here and also in nearby countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Japan, etc. Dr Satwant Pasricha of NIMHANS, Bangalore, joined his research team in 1973.

The team researched 2650 cases- 2078 of which were in Asia and 572 in other countries like the USA, Europe, Canada, and Africa. 500 cases were investigated in India.

Data Analysis of the Investigated Cases

In most of the cases, it was found that the child starts recalling his/her previous birth between the ages of 2-5 years, and the memory of the cases starts fading after 8 years of age. Parents usually discouraged the child as they feared the belief that this memory of past life may shorten the life of the child, and they shied away from the publicity that these memories brought and they tried to suppress the child's memory with the fear that the family of past life may claim ownership of the child.

Still, many families cooperated with the research team in reincarnation research.

The children were found to recall:

- Their name in their past life
- The family details and also important events in their past life
- How they died
- Name and identity of the person who killed them, if they had been murdered

There were some unusual features observed in the children indicative of reincarnation:

- Some children were born with birthmarks/ birth defects which were somehow caused in the body of the person of last life e.g.,
 1. A mark on the chest of the child was found- the person in the past life had died of a bullet fired at his chest at the same position.
 2. The child had a deformed palm in one hand where the fingers were only formed till stumps (deformity known as Brachydactyly)--- the person in past life accidentally got his fingers chopped when his hand came within the Fodder Chopper Wheel.
 3. A mark was found on the skull of the child—the person in the past life was hit by an axe on his head.
- Unusual behaviours were found in children indicative of past life:
 1. Some children had a phobia of water, and they would be afraid of ponds/ rivers, etc.---- the person in the previous life had died of drowning
 2. A case discussed above had the child a dislike of curd--- The person in past life had died because of complications due to excessive consumption of curd.
 3. Sometimes the child displayed mannerisms and traits that matched the mannerisms and traits of the person of the previous life.

The researched cases revealed that a person could be born in the same sex or also in the opposite sex in the next birth. Next birth was possible in other religions, i.e., Hindus born as Muslims and vice versa. The researched cases showed that the next birth could be in the vicinity or could be 500 kilometres away. Some cases were reported where birth had taken place in a different

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country. The period between death and rebirth varied (Median being 15 months and maximum being 14 years)

Most of the rebirths were for the persons who had violent deaths (51%), and many had died without completing a desired goal.

Inferences drawn

The researchers inferred that the manifestation of the Reincarnation phenomenon could be interpreted in normal ways, as it could have occurred due to

- Fraud
- Fantasy of the child
- Paramnesia
- Cryptomnesia
- Genetic Memory

The manifestation could also be due to ***Paranormal Causes***:

- ESP and Personation—The child has the extrasensory capability and, through this capability, gets to know about a family where a person died and all the details of the family and unconsciously starts impersonating that person
- Possession—The child is possessed by a discarnate spirit
- Reincarnation

As per Dr Stevenson and Dr Pasricha- out of several interpretations, ***Reincarnation*** appears to be the most plausible one.

Dr Stevenson is considered to be a pioneer in Reincarnation Research. Despite his credible research to back the theory of reincarnation, Stevenson, still, felt that there could be alternate explanations but the most plausible one is ***Reincarnation***.

Stevenson was cautious in making claims about reincarnation. He emphasized that the information he collected was suggestive of reincarnation but "was not flawless and it certainly does not compel such a belief." He did, however, believe he had produced a body of evidence for reincarnation that should be taken seriously."

The aspects which Dr Stevenson considered as possible alternate explanations for reincarnation were:

Stevenson's alternate explanations

Stevenson's cases, then, would be abnormal ones from the standpoint of the customary pattern of reincarnation. But it is their very abnormality that makes it possible to identify and study them. The normal pattern of reincarnation leaves no easily identifiable traces of a preceding life; the abnormal pattern does.

Possible Explanations for "Memories"

In investigating his cases, Stevenson considered a variety of possible explanations for the accuracy of the memories reported (these have been indicated in Dr Pasricha's speech also, which was discussed above):

1. **Fraud**- Deliberate deceit is the least likely explanation in most cases. It would require an elaborate conspiracy between the children, their relatives, neighbours, strangers in other cities, and so on. Furthermore, the presumed conspirators normally had nothing to gain and no other motive. On the contrary, parents were often extremely reluctant to accept such memories.

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2. **Cryptomnesia.** It is possible to believe quite firmly that we have experienced something we have actually read or been told about, but which our mind has converted into a memory. Such hidden (Greek crypto-) memory (mnnesia) is also responsible for the phenomenon of unconscious plagiarism: writers may store away a particularly appealing phrase or sentence read somewhere, and then come to think of it as one they themselves composed. Part of what Stevenson investigated was whether anyone in contact with the child knew about the matters the child reported as memory.
3. **Telepathy** with the living. Possibly the children were reading the minds of living persons who had knowledge of the events and then converting that information into pseudo-memories.
4. **Retrocognition or Precognition.** Another possibility is that the child, by some extraordinary faculty, was directly aware of events in the past, before its birth (retrocognition). Or perhaps the child, by an even more extraordinary faculty, was somehow aware of the facts that the investigator would uncover in the future and was predicting them (precognition).
5. **Telepathy with the dead-** Perhaps the child had entered into telepathic contact with the consciousness of a deceased person and was misperceiving the information thus gained as its own memories.
6. **Possession-** Perhaps the child was in fact possessed by the spirit of the dead person, and the memories reported were the actual memories of that other consciousness who was co-dwelling in the body or who had replaced the original personality. Possibilities 3 through 6 are increasingly improbable from the standpoint of ordinary science and, while not impossible, would require a revolution in scientific thinking just as great as the acceptance of reincarnation as an explanation. Finally, then, Stevenson concluded that the seventh possibility was sometimes the most likely one:
7. **Reincarnation.** The memories are what they seem to be: recollections of events from the past life of the child. Stevenson never claims that his cases "prove" reincarnation, certainly not in the popular sense of that term. The evidence is hard to come by and hard to evaluate. **All Stevenson claims is that these cases suggest reincarnation as an explanation and that there is no more probable explanation available for them.** That is a modest claim, but it is still a remarkable one for an academic scientist to make. Since Stevenson's work, it is no longer correct to say that there is no real, solid evidence for reincarnation. That is exactly what he has supplied.

The thoughts projected by Dr Stevenson create a storm in our minds with a volley of questions, apart from the ones raised by him. I will shortly dwell on those. But before that, let us understand what does above narration means:

What Does It All Mean?

Stevenson has been notoriously reluctant to draw general conclusions from his formal research, preferring simply to let it stand as evidence. However, in an Omni magazine interview, he was quoted as being atypically free in stating some generalisations. For example, he suggested that some reincarnation memories may be "behavioural" rather than "imaged," that is, not memories of specific names, places, people, and events, but rather of interests, aptitudes, and phobias. He also asserted that the human personality and such behavioural characteristics cannot be explained solely by genetic inheritance and environmental influences, but require some other factor such as reincarnational memories.

In that same interview, Stevenson is quoted as proposing some basic metaphysical propositions. In response to the question, "Do you see in reincarnation a glimpse of a larger

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purpose?" the response was- Well, yes, I do. My idea of God is that He is evolving. I don't believe in the watchmaker God, the original creator who built the watch and then lets it tick. I believe in a "Self-maker God," who is evolving and experimenting, and so are we as parts of Him. Bodies wear out, souls may need periods for rest and reflection. Afterwards, one may start again with a new body.

When asked why certain children are born into certain families, Stevenson replied, "It might be that the purpose is to live and learn together." And when asked for advice from people who have no memories of a previous life, the response recorded is--Some persons have said it is unfair to be reborn unless you can remember details of a previous life and profitably remember your mistakes. They forget that forgetting is essential to successful living in the present. If every time we walked, we were to remember how we stumbled, we would fall again.

Similarly, in his autobiographical "Some of My Journeys in Medicine," he says, "I am suggesting that instead of a single line of evolution—one of our physical bodies—we also participate in a second line of evolution—that of our minds or if you prefer, our souls." He also says---There are other means of attaining knowledge besides the scientific method. Art, music, poetry, and other types of literature give us knowledge. I can also believe that in mystical experiences, we may have direct access to important truths or, more specifically, to the most important truth of all, which is that we ourselves are part of a Great All. Stevenson concludes his autobiographical reminiscences with this evaluation of his own work:

Perhaps my main contribution will be that of making Western persons familiar, not with the idea of reincarnation—it must be one of the oldest ideas in the world—but with evidence tending to support a belief in reincarnation.

(source:<https://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/reincarnations-white-crow>)

The lessons we learn from the events of Reincarnation, research summaries given by Dr. Pasricha, and thought-provoking comments by the Father of Reincarnation, Dr. Stevenson, are that the theory about consciousness outliving death and people getting reborn cannot be taken lightly. Maybe the theory falls short of being accepted by science, but it is credible and warrants further research.

The above discussions bring forth a need for further research on the following aspects:

Doubts need to be cleared to put reincarnation on firm footing

- Claiming that reincarnation is a real phenomenon applicable universally across the globe based on a handful of researched events (2600 cases, a negligible fraction of Earth's population) will not hold water for the simple reason that the sample size is too small. It does give a faint hint in that direction, but more research is needed to call it even a theory.
- On the other hand, the research cannot be scrapped aside just because of the above factors. After all, to falsify a theory, "All crows are Black", one needs to find only one white crow. The theory "Nothing exists after death" can similarly be falsified if there is one instance which indicates that someone had lived in past and is telling real stories of life lived. I am not saying that the research brought forth scientific evidence that a person came back to a new life and is telling stories of a past life. The instances may not be solid evidence but are indicative or suggestive that such an eventuality is a possibility, and further research should be undertaken to get at the truth.
- The indications emerging out of the cases present facts that such a life was lived in the past, but whether it was the child who lived it is questionable. He may have lived the life (making reincarnation a real fact!), but it is also possible that someone else lived it,

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and the child learnt it somehow (maybe through ESP or by some other means), was fascinated, and is unconsciously impersonating. Which one of the above alternatives is more convincing must be explored. This puts forth a need for further research.

- While the research suggests that some children recall their past lives, why can't others recall? If reincarnation is real, then each of us must be able to recall, why only a select few?
- On this earth, we are not the only living beings who die; there are others also! Do they not have a rebirth? Maybe they can't communicate as humans do, but there must be a way to know if reincarnation happens for animals, insects, and other living species! If reincarnation is real, can it be across species, i.e., whether a human could be born as an animal or vice versa?
- We found in the research that a child may reflect the mannerisms/traits of the person who was his past life, thus, a behaviour was linked to a past life! Could it not be that a person showing an exaggerated sense of smell was a 'dog' in a past life? Or a person not trained in swimming if found to swim when thrown in water, could be a 'fish' in a past life!! Could a person adept in imitating not be a mockingbird in a past life because imitating habit is a benchmark for mockingbirds who can imitate other birds, animals and even mechanical sounds such as a car alarm! As an extension of the logic, could it not be possible that a bunch of cuckoo birds were reborn as the Mangeshkar sisters? There may be many behaviours specific to animals which can be found in some humans as the same could get carried over to their rebirth as humans, but since the other species may not have the means to express memories, they can't communicate the past life when born as humans.
- Is reincarnation limited to earth only? Maybe life exists on other planets, and we have reincarnations on Earth from living species on other planets!
- If reincarnation is real, then each death means a new birth, so the number of humans should be constant—how is it that the population is increasing?
- Reincarnation means that death has to happen for a birth, and one born has to die, and thus the cycle of death-birth-death-birth... goes on eternally, meaning the entity who lives never dies but gets transformed into another living entity and again to another and so on... Sounds as if Lord Krishna is talking in Gita!! Does it signal that a scientific theory can emerge out of this inference?

I did pursue this line of research and could easily understand that an analogy does exist in the current laws of science. The law of conservation of energy states that Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it just transforms.

The soul or the "Consciousness" could be that Energy, and founded on this thought, I developed the "Energy Survival Theory"^{3,4,5}

Energy Survival Theory

All living creatures have two components: one is the physical and visual component, and the other is the subtle and invisible component. The physical component is the physical body and the subtle component is the "Consciousness" or "soul".

The Energy Survival Theory stands on concepts of two energy forms; one of them is the physical ***Self Life Energy Form (SLEF -the living Energy Entity as currently living creatures)*** and the other is the subtle energy form ***-Individual Self Energy Form (ISEF) which is invisible subtle Energy Entity unique to a living creature which has got***

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transformed to the current living Energy Entity as the living creature after so many cycles of transformations ISEF-SLEF-ISEF-SLEF.....

ISEF is the eternal subtle energy form having a unique identity that goes on transforming into different SLEFs with different physical identities. SLEF loses its identity on physical death, and this energy form gets transformed back to its unique subtle energy form ISEF. The reincarnation of SLEF takes place when its unique ISEF gets transformed into another SLEF at the time of birth with a different physical identity. When male and female living creatures mate, their fluids mix and react with each other, but this reaction is only a chemical reaction which does not bring new life. The new life manifests when fertilization happens when subtle energy (Consciousness) enters the mating fluid. The birth is thus a transformation of ISEF into SLEF. On the other hand, death happens when the Physical Life Energy attains its weakest form and all capabilities leave this form; the last one to leave is consciousness, which happens when SLEF transforms into ISEF.

Thus, the cycle of energy transformations ISEF-SLEF-ISEF-SLEF.... goes on, and in this physical world, the same is known as the cycle of birth-death-birth-death... bringing us the phenomenon of **Reincarnation**.

As per this theory, all living entities are getting transformations from ISEF to SLEFs and back. Humans don't need to get transformed again as humans, they may get transformed as humans or even as non-human living forms. They can be reborn on this earth or any other planet in the universe.

The theory is credible enough to answer questions which are not answered by other theories on life after death.

Let us see whether the theory clears the doubts about reincarnation theory as is listed above.

Energy Survival Theory and Reincarnation

We have discussed Energy Survival Theory and before we take up a connection between reincarnation and Energy Survival theory, let us once again revisit the reincarnation research. Jim Tucker⁶ of Virginia University elaborates on Ian's work: "*Ian Stevenson's study concerning ostensible reincarnation, specifically that of young children, will be remembered as the primary focus of his life's work. He wrote several books on the cases he had investigated in India and Sri Lanka. After some delay in the publication, Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation was published in 1966. It consisted of detailed case reports that included lists of every person he had interviewed, along with lengthy tables in which each statement the child had made about a previous life. As he continued with his work, several other books were published in different parts of the world. One aspect that Ian was greatly interested in was the frequent presence in the children of birthmarks and birth defects that appeared to match wounds suffered by the deceased individuals whose lives they were said to remember. In 1997, he published Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects to attest to such interest. Another topic that interested him was children's behaviour. He wrote a paper about phobias that many of the children showed that was again related to the life they claimed to remember.*

Dr Ian Stevenson demonstrated a cautious attitude toward the overall phenomenon of young children's claims of past-life memories. He wrote that no single case offered evidence that compelled a belief in reincarnation. Although he emphasized that other explanations were possible, he considered reincarnation to be the best explanation for the stronger cases that he had investigated."

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Reincarnation can be viewed as a transformation from a Subtle Energy Form to a Living life Energy Form after its last physical form on death got transformed into its real unique subtle energy form, which has now got further transformation into a new physical form by making its manifestation as a new life entity.

The first aspect which was raised against reincarnation being real is the inadequate number of researched cases. My thinking is that even expanding the sample size cannot exhibit that the phenomenon is real because not all humans living now had a past life as a human and hence you just cannot have a big enough sample for testing the theory of reincarnation because the people who were not humans in past life will not be capable of recalling past birth. The reincarnation theory, if viewed through the Energy Survival Theory clears this hurdle.

The second doubt that the child could have ESP capability to learn about a person of the past and could be unconsciously impersonating that he lived that life seems less probable when we have Energy Survival Theory before us. It is more probable that the child could have been born as a human after past life was led as a human if we keep focus on the possibility of energy transformations as projected by the Energy Survival Theory.

The next question coming in the way of reincarnation being real was: *While the research suggests that some children recall their past lives, why can't others recall? If reincarnation is real, then each of us must be able to recall, why only a select few?*--- Energy Survival Theory presents a simple answer—All children cannot recall past lives because many of them were not human in past lives!!!

The next question in line is whether reincarnation is limited to Earth only--- No, as per Energy Survival Theory subtle energy can travel faster than light and a person who dies on Earth can manifest as a new living entity on any other planet because the Subtle energy released from the dead body can instantly reach the planet where the mating fluid is waiting for the subtle energy (i.e., the consciousness).

Another aspect needing clarification was that if reincarnation is real, how do we come out of an identity crisis because transformations of life energies keep on happening and we do not know who was who in previous births. This confusion is avoided with a theory that ISEF for the string of transformed SLEFs is unique and may be identified by its unique identity number. ***ISEF has a unique identity*** (some sort of UIN-unique identification name) and is linked to numerous SLEFs, which manifest in different transformed forms with a different name. Their bond is with unique ISEF, so there is no identity crisis/ confusion.

Coming to the next question- *If reincarnation is real, then each death means a new birth, so the number of humans should be constant—how is it that the population is increasing?* – True, the human population is increasing worldwide, but reincarnation is not limited to humans and not limited to planet Earth also. The phenomenon covers the whole universe and concerns all living energies. The increasing number of humans on Earth may be resulting in a decreasing number of other species on Earth and other planets, keeping the number of Life Energy Entities and Subtle Energy Entities (SLEF and ISEF) constant.

The scientific law of energy also suggests that the total number of living creatures in the universe is constant because Energy cannot be created or destroyed so the Energy sum total (ISEFs + SLEFs) has to be constant, and only transformations ISEF-SLEF, SLEF-ISEF keep

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happening. A rise in the human population may not affect the total count of all living creatures as other living creature count could decrease keeping the total as constant.

This paper was intended to explore whether the observed incarnation incidents can prove that reincarnation may be a real phenomenon. We have established beyond doubt that the researched incidents alone are only suggestive, but if the incidents are viewed through the Energy Survival Theory, there appears a credible reason to establish the phenomenon as a reality.

In conclusion of the exploration, I intend to add some scientific observations to the theory of incarnation.

We saw that the foundation of reincarnation is the law of conservation of energy.

Let us revisit the law of conservation of energy:

In a closed system, i.e., a system that is isolated from its surroundings, the total energy of the system is conserved. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. Although it may be transformed from one form to another.

The law talks about *a closed system*—what does this mean?

In the law of energy conservation, a closed system is a system that doesn't allow energy to enter or leave but can be exchanged between objects within the system.

While Life Energy is an open system because our bodies do get and release energy outside bodies, the **universe** where the Energy entities, including Life/Subtle Energies, exist is a closed system, and the law of Energy Conservation does apply to the Universe.

The following important facts emerge which support the Reincarnation theory.

- The Universe is a closed system that holds life energies and the subtle energy unique to life energies, which change life forms through transformations (i.e., reincarnations)
- Energy Entities can change from one form to another, such as from Life Energy to Subtle Energy and vice versa.
- The total energy of the universe is the sum of all its forms of energy, and this sum total always remains constant because energy cannot be created or destroyed.

Life Energy comprises life forms in humans, animals, birds, insects, mosquitos, sea creatures, worms, bacteria, etc. which thrive in our **universe**, i.e., on Earth and also on other planets. The system i.e., **“The Universe”** being a closed system, the laws of conservation and entropy apply to this system.

The implication of the Law of energy conservation as applied to the Universe is that at death, Life Energy i.e., SLEF (Self Life Energy Form) transforms to Subtle Energy i.e., ISEF (Individual Self Energy Form) and vice versa happens at birth, and the cycle goes on with passage time. Thus, at all times, the total count of Energy Forms (Life and Subtle taken together) remains constant in the universe.

The above narration does confirm that the first law of thermodynamics, which is also known as the Law of energy conservation, governs the universe comprised of Subtle and Life Energies.

What about the Second Law?

The second law of thermodynamics states that *entropy increases in any natural process and that this process is irreversible. It also states that processes occur in a specific direction. The*

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second law of thermodynamics applies to the entropy of a system and its surroundings. It states that the entropy of the universe will always increase over time.

In the Reincarnation Theory, the Subtle Energy ISEF and the Life Energy SLEF do create entropy in the universe when they transform from one form to another. ISEF transforms to SLEF at birth, and SLEF transforms to ISEF at death, creating ripples in the stagnant water of the universe and increasing its entropy. With each birth and death, entropy increases. This is the second law of thermodynamics, which applies to the universe having physical life energies and subtle energies.

This aspect of life energies increasing entropy is interestingly brought out by Maximilien Kitutu⁷ as follows:

The second law of thermodynamics applies only to isolated systems, i.e. systems in which the amount of matter and energy is not only fixed but not exchanged with the surroundings.

Living beings are open systems: matter and energy are constantly flowing in and out. So, you can't really apply the second law of thermodynamics to it.

However, you can take a larger system including these living beings, and this bigger system should be quite isolated from an even bigger surrounding which is the Universe.

The second law of thermodynamics applies to the Universe because it is a closed system and the entropy is always increasing because birth-death-birth cycles go on repeating, thereby, continuously increasing the entropy in the universe.

Summing up, I can say that Dr Stevenson was absolutely right when he said that while the observed incident (*of reincarnation*) could be explained by alternate theories yet the most plausible theory explaining the incidents is ***The Reincarnation Phenomenon***.

Taking the researched incidents by Dr Stevenson, Dr Pasricha and others, the explanation possibly could be indicative of only Reincarnation, but the incidents coupled with the facts of Energy Survival Theory and the scientific explanations as discussed above, do present a strong case that the theory of Reincarnation is real!!!

Before I conclude, I must touch upon Reincarnation as projected by Past Life Regression, which is supposed to take a person to a past life during a hypnotic session. It utilises hypnosis to guide individuals into a relaxed state where they can supposedly access memories and experiences from past lives.

Past Life Regression (PLR) is based on the belief in reincarnation, the idea that souls are reborn into different lives. A trained practitioner guides the individual through a series of questions and suggestions to help them relax and access these memories. While PLR is a popular practice, it's important to note that it's not scientifically proven, and the memories accessed during PLR are not necessarily factual.

Even though I brought this topic in discussion in this paper because it is relevant for the discussions of Reincarnation but I sincerely believe PLR does not create any evidence of reincarnation. Past life regression is a subjective experience, doesn't scientifically prove reincarnation because it relies on the interpretation of memories and the possibility of confabulation rather than verifiable evidence of past lives.

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Even though Past Life Regression is not proof of Reincarnation, all other facts presented in the paper strongly put credible evidence about Reincarnation and now I leave it to the readers to form their opinions but I do admit that even though scientific arguments support the reincarnation theory, yet it cannot be said to be a scientific theory because there is no way to testify and/or falsify it because to do it one has to experience death and there is no way we can, after death, come back and give evidence of reincarnation—because after all, the ticket is one way!!!!.....

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