

Scientific Discussions on the Possibility of Life Continuing After Death

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ABSTRACT

'Death' is a word no one wants to talk about. Each person believes it is not for him but all are eager to know what happens after death! Do we perish as do the irreparable machines, or a part of us survives in bodiless form as is claimed in the Hindu religion. This paper discusses the aspect of the afterlife using a scientific perspective. The general argument given for life after death is the occurrence of incidents of manifestation of ghosts/spirits as experienced worldwide. Literature abounds in tales of apparitions and ghostly appearances. I personally experienced seeing my late mother. The paper scientifically proves that ghost manifestations are not real and hence cannot be taken as evidence of life existing after bodily death. Direct evidence of afterlife is simply not possible because ticket is one-way—dead cannot come back to reveal what happens after death! But, then, is there no way to get at the truth? This paper discusses scientifically the possibility of life continuing after death!!

Keywords: *Life after Death, Ghosts/Spirits, Reincarnation, Near Death Experiences (NDEs), Out of Body Experiences (OBEs), Theories on Life after Death, Energy Survival Theory*

Is death the end of everything? Does life end with bodily death? Is there an afterlife? Debate continues from times immemorial whether or not we continue to live even after our physical death!

There is a school of thought which believes that live bodies are nothing but machines. All machines, someday, have a permanent breakdown when they cannot be revived and have to be discarded; similarly, our bodies also suffer a permanent breakdown and cannot be revived back to life at death and have to be cremated! Nothing remains after death!

Generally, people reconcile with the idea that death means permanent dissociation with the deceased, but still, philosophical and religious views support the claim of life after death. Hindus believe that the soul is liberated at death and gets into a new body, and reincarnation happens! Muslims, Christians and Egyptians believe that life will return in the body on the day of resurrection, and hence they do not burn the body.

Thoughts and beliefs aside, what is the reality? No one really knows what happens after we die! Reality is governed by the laws of science. Scientific laws need evidence. Direct evidence

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is not possible because the ticket is one-way as you cannot come back after death and reveal the evidence! Are there even indirect scientific evidences which could be expanded to reveal the mystery of life after death?

This paper attempts to bring in scientific discussions that support the claim of consciousness outliving bodily death, suggestive of Life continuing after Death!!

Before we start the above exploration of the reality, let us first examine what believers and disbelievers have to say about 'The possibility of Life after Death'

The crucial debate

Some believe that consciousness outlives death; how else do we see and communicate with ghosts! Literature abounds in real-life stories of ghost manifestation. The ghost manifestation phenomena have been reported worldwide from time immemorial. Such real-life incidents strongly suggest that we don't perish at death but continue to live without our bodies. These real-life incidents can't be brushed aside as mere nonsense. You will realise their relevance to our topic once you explore such incidents. It is very relevant to cite some of these before we carry forward the debate.

Some Incidents reported for sighting/ perceiving / getting communication or feeling the presence of ghosts/ spirits:

Ghost helps find the lost will

Dr Joseph Murphy¹ gives a narration of after-death communication in his book "Psychic Perception"-

A widow visited me last year, saying that her husband, shortly before his demise, had told her that he had made out a new will leaving all of his estate to her. But his lawyer knew nothing about it, and he had a will made ten years back. She had searched everywhere but could not find the new will.

I suggested to her that she should believe in the sentence, 'Infinite intelligence knows where the will is and reveals to me.' And she should chant this sentence in her daily prayers.

She started praying, and after three or four days of praying, she distinctly heard her husband's voice in the kitchen where she was doing the ironing: 'Look up the 45th chapter of Isaiah.' She did that, and there she found the new will, attested by two witnesses, all in legal phraseology, dated and signed.

Strangely, a voice from the late husband guides the wife to find the lost will. The incident just sends a chill down our spine. Can the dead really come back?

The dead are reborn—reincarnation.

Erica Simon² gives an account of a person who, after death, is reborn and remembers his past life. *Pramod Sharma was born in Bisauli, India on October 11, 1944. By the age of two and a half, he learned to talk and immediately began to make some very strange statements about himself. He told his mother that it was unnecessary to cook for him as he had a wife at Moradabad who could do that for him. He claimed to be Parmanand, one of the "Mohan Brothers," the owners of a large biscuit-making factory in Moradabad, and he owned a large biscuit shop that also sold soda water. He added that he was wealthy and complained of his present poverty. He said that he had died in his previous life after falling ill from eating excess curd..... The statements were*

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found to be true. There was a Mehra family at Moradabad, and the brothers of this family-owned a soda and biscuit shop (called Mohan brothers); one of the brothers Parmanand Mehra had died on May 9, 1943, as a result of a gastrointestinal illness which he suffered after eating too much curd....."

Such instances are commonly found in world literature. You also must have encountered or heard about such instances in your own personal lives sometimes or other.

My maternal uncle used to tell me that when my mother was a kid and was pestered by him and his friends, she used to tell them that if they did not stop pestering her, she would go back to her previous family, where she is highly respected by her sons and daughters-in-law.

Visitations by the dead

The book by Erica Simons² cites instances where a person, just after his death, had come to meet the living relatives

One night in June in Indianapolis, Mrs Gladys Watson. was awakened from a deep sleep by someone quietly but insistently calling her name. As she roused and sat up, she was astonished to see her paternal grandfather, to whom she was devoted, leaning toward her. He looked perfectly real and lifelike. There was a pleasant smile on his face. "Don't be frightened," he reassured her in a warm, affectionate voice. "It's only me, I've just died." Mrs. Watson found tears starting in her eyes and she instinctively reached across the bed to rouse her sleeping husband. "This is how they'll bury me," her grandfather said, indicating the dark suit and black bow tie he was wearing. He added, "I just wanted to tell you I've been waiting to go ever since the mother was taken." Gladys Watson could see her grandfather looked as solid as though he were physically present in the room. And she heard his voice not with an inner ear but as though he were actually speaking to her.

Mrs Watson shook her husband again, but the apparition had vanished before he awakened. He told her that she had simply been dreaming and that her grandfather was alive and well with her parents in Wilmington. Because she was so upset, he decided to prove it by phoning them--- only to learn that his wife's grandfather had died at home a few minutes before.

These are only a few incidents that I picked from the vast literature on the subject. Such reported incidents and our own experiences bring out the fact that people across the world are witnessing incidents wherein they have come face to face with their near-dear dead ones. They have heard them and also seen their apparitions.

Apart from the incidents picked from literature, I cite my own personal experiences:

My brush with ghosts/ spirits was a few years back when my father breathed his last at the age of 93. He died on 23rd February 2018 at 2.55 p.m. I came out of the ICU, and when I glanced at the relatives of other patients seated on benches outside the ICU, I could visualise my mother sitting there. I was astonished because she had passed 27 years ago!

I was baffled, and when my brother reached the ICU after learning of the passing away of our father, I asked him to look at the bench where relatives of patients were sitting and look at the lady who was, none other, than our mother. He saw that lady, and he, also, jumped with excitement and exclaimed that Ma had come to take away Daddy!!

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A few seconds later, our sisters also came to the ICU, and there was crying and weeping from all of us, and I forgot about seeing the ghost of my mother. My sisters, however, had not noticed our mother. The incident of sighting the ghost of my mother is etched permanently in my mind!!!

Another incident where I heard the voice of the dead occurred on the death anniversary of my sister-in-law, Mrs Sangeeta Prasad.

On the first death anniversary of my Bhabhi (sister-in-law), while going to bed, in the darkness of night, my wife and I both heard a clear, audible voice coming from nowhere; it was loud and clear, and we heard it as "Renu". The voice was unmistakably that of my mother, who used to call my bhabhi Sangeeta as "Renu" which was her pet name. We were shocked to hear the loud and clear voice because my mother had died twenty-seven years ago!!

Was it again an encounter with a ghost!!!

The above incidents left me completely stunned, and my logical reasoning was stumped; fear kept engulfing me. Probably the fear tormented me because my mind had been conditioned since childhood with stories about ghosts and spirits. Since I had an inclination from my very childhood to learn more and more about the things which defied science, I had been reading literature about telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and Life after death. History abounds in stories where ghosts did manifest in person before the near dear ones. Hence, my mind was not able to think of anything except that I did see a ghost and this confirmed my belief that Ghosts do exist.

The incidents narrated above challenge scientific minds and are suggestive of the existence of life after death, even when science does not accept life existing after bodily death.

On the other hand, there is a contrary view that is often debated. As stated at the beginning of the paper, there is a school of thought which believes that live bodies are nothing but machines. Since all machines, someday, have a permanent breakdown when they cannot be revived and have to be discarded, similarly, our bodies also suffer a permanent breakdown and cannot be revived back to life at death and have to be cremated! Nothing remains after death!

This is a materialistic view, and it discards the existence of life after death. Naturally, this view does not support the belief that ghosts exist. How does this lobby negate the existence of ghosts?

The real life experiences where people have perceived ghosts with their own eyes appear as direct evidence of the existence of ghosts and are indirect evidence of the afterlife. How then can one argue against these experiences?

Some eminent thinkers argue that these experiences could be far from reality.

Let us examine some of these views:

Bonnie Butcher³ examines the facts behind the ghostly experiences. As per her thoughts, there are numerous ways someone can wrongly experience a ghost. The encounter can be visual, auditory, or tactile or it can even be unexplainable by our usual senses.

"Sometimes there is no actual evidence that there is a ghost," she stated. "There may just be a sense of a presence. There is often a strong sense of something or someone is there, and it might be watching you."

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When trying to comprehend the different kinds of ghosts possible, Dr Christine Simmonds Moore, an accomplished researcher and professor of parapsychology at the University of West Georgia, suggests we have to think beyond the stereotypical idea of a ghost sighting.

"We might have pre-existing beliefs about ghosts, stories, or context that can drive what people experience," she explained. "There has been researching in psychology that supports that there is something about beliefs that can drive what you are likely to experience."

*One explanation to consider comes from our human nature to make meaning out of complex things. Humans tend to weave things into stories, and this behaviour is known as **apophenia**.*

*"**Apophenia is the tendency to see or hear things that aren't there,**" she stated.*

She provided an example of someone staring at the clouds long enough; eventually, the clouds will seem to take the shape of an object, such as an animal.

"The messages aren't actually there, but we are making meaning from them because that is what we do," she explained.

There are many pieces to the puzzle when considering the whole picture of ghostly phenomena. With respect to older buildings, Simmonds-Moore explains, there could be a rational explanation for feeling a sense of presence.

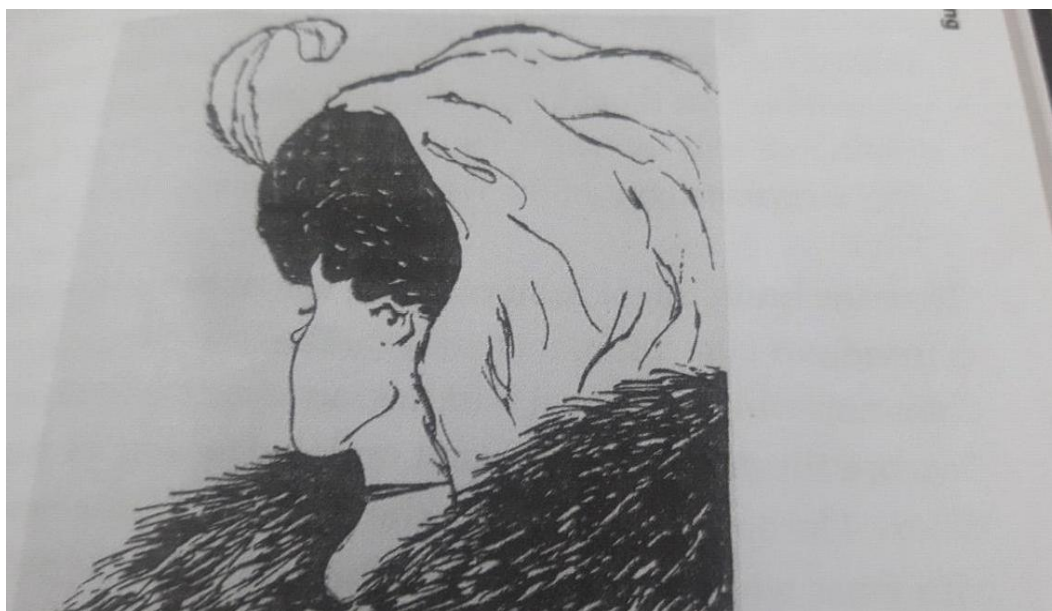
"What is mysterious about old buildings that are close to roads with a lot of traffic, or close to heavy machinery, is that the building is more likely to vibrate," she stated.

"Those vibrations can cause something called infrasound. It cannot be heard because of its low frequency, but it is still perceived by the body. You can tell something is there, and humans try to make sense of these things. The mind may label this stimulus as a ghost."

The views of Dr. Christine Simmonds-Moore's views are echoed by Susana Martinez Conde⁴ who talks about the phenomenon of *Pareidolia*.

***Pareidolia** is defined as a psychological phenomenon that causes people to see patterns in a random stimulus. This often leads to people assigning human characteristics to objects.*

Susana Martinez Conde⁴ maintains that human brains are attuned to perceive faces – an entire region of the brain, called the Fusiform Gyrus, is dedicated to it. The face detection skill by this portion of the brain, coupled with our brain's compulsion to extract meanings from the sensory chaos that surrounds us, drives us to see faces where there aren't any. Pareidolia can also result in a perception of two things from a single image. This visual illusion created by Pareidolia can be experienced by looking intently at the painting entitled "My wife and Mother-in-law" by W E Hill. You will either see a young woman looking away or the profile of an old woman: two perceptions contained in the same picture. The picture is reproduced below:



Pareidolia is often taken as a logical explanation for ghosts seen in vague forms in a low-illuminating environment.

*I had talked about my experience of seeing my late mother sitting on benches before the ICU where my father had expired. **Pareidolia could be the reason that made me feel like I saw my deceased mother when I came out of the ICU, where my father had just expired. The incident goes like this:** Learning about his death, when I came out of the ICU and glanced over the benches where relatives of other patients were sitting, I could not believe my eyes when I saw a lady resembling my mother sitting there on the bench. I told this to my brother, and he, also, exclaimed that Ma has come to take away daddy! At that time we were in a dazed state but later when I recalled and analyzed the incident using my gained knowledge in psychology and parapsychology, I realized that it was Pareidolia at work that created an illusion in our minds (mine and my brother's), so, our minds could perceive our mother through a wrongly morphed face of our mother on the lady's face because of brain aberrations created by external stimuli of thought.*

Our sisters did not experience it as there were no stimuli to her brain as we had not shared our above feelings with her.

Thus, the mind under external stimuli can lead to a perception of anomalous happenings which, actually, have not happened but are just creations of the mind under external stimuli.

Apart from the above facts against the existence of ghosts, my research compiled in research papers^{5 to 8} provides additional facts that eliminate this doubt.

The above are strong counterarguments in the debate and are suggestive of the fact that many a times what we see does not really exist and is just a creation of our minds!!

Thus, the evidence for the existence of ghosts and hence for 'Life after Death' may not be true and hence cannot be considered as scientific evidence.

Let us further explore whether there is some scientific evidence that supports the theory that consciousness outlives death and life continues even after our physical body dies?

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Exploring scientific evidence for Life continuing after bodily death

Science demands concrete evidence. Since ticket to death is one way, there cannot be a way to come back to give a direct concrete evidence!! This fact is behind this mystery, which continues to haunt us from time immemorial, and we are still groping in the dark.

True, direct evidence/evidences don't seem to surface up to support the claim but does that mean that the "After Life" theory should be scrapped aside?

The views put forth by Sean M Carroll⁹ puts things in a correct perspective:

There is a view that there is "simply is no controlled, experimentally verifiable information" regarding life after death. By these standards, there is no controlled, experimentally verifiable information regarding whether the Moon is made of green cheese. Sure, we can take spectra of light reflecting from the Moon, and even send astronauts up there and bring samples back for analysis. But that's only scratching the surface, as it were. What if the Moon is almost all green cheese, but is covered with a layer of dust a few meters thick? Can you really say that you know this isn't true? Until you have actually examined every single cubic centimetre of the Moon's interior, you don't really have experimentally verifiable information, do you?

Obviously, this is completely crazy. Our conviction that green cheese makes up a negligible fraction of the Moon's interior comes not from direct observation, but from the gross incompatibility of that idea with other things we think we know. Given what we do understand about rocks and planets and dairy products and the Solar System, it's absurd to imagine that the Moon is made of green cheese. We know better.

We also know better about life after death, although people are much more reluctant to admit it. Admittedly, "direct" evidence one way or the other is hard to come by -- all we have are a few legends and sketchy claims from unreliable witnesses with near-death experiences, plus a bucket load of wishful thinking. But surely it's okay to take account of indirect evidence -- namely, compatibility of the idea that some form of our individual soul survives death with other things we know about how the world works.

Claims that some form of consciousness persists after our bodies die and decay into their constituent atoms face one huge, insuperable obstacle: the laws of physics underlying everyday life are completely understood, and there's no way within those laws to allow for the information stored in our brains to persist after we die. If you claim that some form of soul persists beyond death, what particles is that soul made of? What forces are holding it together? How does it interact with ordinary matter?

Everything we know about quantum field theory (QFT) says that there aren't any sensible answers to these questions. Of course, everything we know about quantum field theory could be wrong. Also, the Moon could be made of green cheese.

Among advocates for life after death, nobody even tries to sit down and do the hard work of explaining how the basic physics of atoms and electrons would have to be altered for this to be true. If we tried, the fundamental absurdity of the task would quickly become evident.

Even if you don't believe that human beings are "simply" collections of atoms evolving and interacting according to rules laid down in the Standard Model of particle physics, most people would grudgingly admit that atoms are part of who we are. If it's really nothing but atoms and the known forces, there is clearly no way for the soul to survive death. Believing in life after death, to put it mildly, requires physics beyond the

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Standard Model. Most importantly, we need some way for that "new physics" to interact with the atoms that we do have.

Thus, the above arguments are pointers to the fact that the current laws of science are inadequate to explain the 'Afterlife' if it exists. Maybe science will someday evolve new laws to explain this if, in reality, there is an 'Afterlife'

Whatever the ultimate reality may be, one thing is certain—if 'Afterlife' is a reality, then we must accept that 'Consciousness' is not a part of the physical body. Is it true?

There are conflicting views among thinkers.

Is Consciousness a part of the physical body

'Consciousness' is considered a "Hard Problem" by scientists! No one can say for sure how and from where consciousness comes in our bodies, and where does it go!! There is no scientific explanation for consciousness. However, there are indirect explanations and theories.

Some theories posit the view that consciousness is a part of the brain and when the brain stops at death, consciousness also meets an end.

Jim Rutt¹⁰ cites a paper, 'Adversarial Testing of Global Neuronal Workspace and Integrated Information Theories of Consciousness', which mentions two theories that posit that consciousness arises from brain-based information processing, specifically through neural integration and global broadcasting.

Integrated Information Theory (IIT) suggests that consciousness arises from complex interactions in networks of neurons, particularly focusing on posterior (rear) brain areas involved in sensory processing. IIT predicts that conscious experiences correspond to sustained neural interactions within these areas, and notably, does not consider the frontal cortex as necessary for consciousness.

Global Neuronal Workspace Theory (GNWT), in contrast, proposes that consciousness results from the global broadcasting of information across widely distributed neural networks involving frontal brain regions. According to GNWT, when information enters consciousness, it becomes broadly accessible across the brain, particularly engaging the prefrontal cortex (PFC).

This school of thought suggests that conscious experience manifests through complex neural interactions either in frontal or posterior cortex regions of the brain. But these theories do not speak about location of consciousness—whether it resides in the brain or enters the brain from outside to trigger the neural interactions. One thing, however, is clear that the awareness is evidenced or experienced only when the neural brain interactions use the sense organs to create perceptual awareness. Does it mean that consciousness without the neural interactions and without use of sense organs will not create perceptual awareness? Does it mean that Consciousness cannot manifest on its own and needs the neurons and sense organs?

These theories do not have a scientific base and are just theories!

On the other hand, there is a logical and scientific experiential explanation that the above fact is not true.

The above theories do not explain how we have perception without the use of the known five senses—

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- Telepathy—Mind to Mind connection
- Clairvoyance—Seeing through the mind's eyes
- Precognition—Mind foreseeing the future
- Psychokinesis—Mind Influencing the matter

These Parapsychological experiences are occurring without use of known sensory organs continuously and sporadically across the world? Do these extrasensory perceptions suggest that manifestation of perceptual awareness by consciousness can happen without use of the physical body, i.e., is consciousness possible without the body?

Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) and Out of Body Experiences (OBEs) (where the experiencers are able to perceive the physical world including their own body, from outside the body) provide strong support to the view that perceptual awareness is possible without the physical body and hence consciousness may live on without a physical body.



Figure: NDE depicting that consciousness can exist outside the physical body

Is it really true? Do NDEs and OBEs really mean that we can perceive things without the use of our physical body, or could there be some other explanation?

If we look at it from a mainstream scientific viewpoint, OBEs or NDEs could be considered "dissociative states" or hallucinations induced by the brain under stress, injury, or anaesthesia. In this view, the brain continues to construct a model of the world even while senses are disconnected, creating a "felt" reality.

But still many anecdotal reports of *veridical perception*—which accurately describe events while officially unconscious—fuel the debate about whether consciousness can operate independently of the brain, and here enters the Extra Sensory Perception (ESP) as a strong support to the view that consciousness does not need a body for perceptual awareness and hence there is a possibility that consciousness may outlive bodily death.

Even without bringing in ESP (which is still being researched), there could be a logical explanation----

"We all know that the body influences the experience. It's the Hardware, and if the brain has a chemical imbalance or 'strange fluctuations,' the user interface glitches.

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Maybe even the mood changes and perceptions shift. But because the hardware itself affects the experience, we assume the hardware creates the experience.

Consider then that consciousness (The 'I Am') is a fundamental conscious field, like a broadcast signal. Your body and brain are just the antenna and the tuner. Memories and Personalities aren't stored in the neurons like files on a hard drive; they are accessed through the neurons from the field (IF it helps, think it's your own 'cloud storage', spiritually you can consider it your own Monadic history). When the radio in this example (your body) dies, the broadcast (consciousness) doesn't stop. It just stops playing through that specific speaker/unit. So, regarding 'in some way to have memories, personality, maybe even emotions': All of it isn't in a physical box; it is the field itself. Your memories, personality and experience is data, when you die, that experience still continues.

So yeah, Consciousness can be bodiless. In fact, many frameworks suggest that 'Bodiless' is its natural state. It takes on a body not to exist, but to experience the specificity of limitations, emotions and chemical textures that only a physical form can provide.

It can be heady, but you are the signal, not the device.”

(source:

https://www.reddit.com/r/consciousness/comments/1pvr5hc/bodyless_consciousness/)

Lewis Stafford Betty¹¹ adds to the above thinking as follows:

If an NDE/ OBE is an experience of a reality and not some sort of hallucination, life after death is strongly implied. Here's why. First, if you can get out of your body and still move about, and see and be aware of yourself as the person you are, then you're not your body. And if you're not your body, then the body's death doesn't mean that you have to die.

This line of reasoning seems clear enough. But what if the NDE is a hallucination? In that case, the experience isn't any more valid than a dream, and the NDE fails as evidence of an afterlife. So the question comes down to this: What are the reasons for thinking the NDE is an experience of real things, and what are the countervailing reasons for thinking that it's just a vivid dream, a hallucination? In which direction does an open-minded, even-handed analysis take us?

What if NDEs/OBEs are not hallucinations? I am inclined to think that they are not. One reason to support this view is that NDEs are all strangely similar. Why should an old black man from Baptist Alabama have roughly the same experience as a gay atheist from Madrid, or a Mormon housewife from Idaho? If they were hallucinating, wouldn't their hallucinations be radically different? People's hallucinations are based on their memories and expectations. But these characters don't have similar memories and expectations. They come from very different worlds. So how do you account for the similarity of their experience? The only way to do it is to assume that they've entered into a real world – a world equally surprising to all three. Does that make sense?

Maybe the brain acts the same way for all when they go through NDE/OBE. Maybe at the moment of death, the brain screams out a protest against its own imminent extinction. It contains material deep in the right temporal lobe that can explode into experience if provoked. And looking into death is the provoker. And since we're all part of the same human family, our brains are all coded the same basic way, regardless of background and experience. It's a species thing. That would explain the similarities of

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the NDEs. We're all programmed to hallucinate the same basic thing because we're all members of the same species.

While the above is a logically strong argument, another reason that NDE/ OBE are not hallucinations is scientifically established by the following observation: "A hallucination is the most vivid kind of dream. If a dream is a four on the Richter Scale, a hallucination is an eight. REM is always found when we dream – as you know. Look at someone sleeping, and if her eyes are fluttering, you can be sure she's dreaming. If they're not, you can be sure she's not dreaming. Every psychologist knows that. Those eyelids should be singing! But it is observed that experiencers of NDE/OBE don't have rapid-eye movement when they're having their vivid experiences. And that tells me that the NDE is not a hallucination."

Another strong reason that NDEs/ OBEs are not hallucinations is the NDE/OBE experiences of people who are blind since birth. Research on blind NDEs is captured in the book called Mindsight by Kenneth Ring, the NDE researcher at the University of Connecticut. A study of blind NDErs was done a few years ago, in which people blind from birth experienced vision for the first time during their NDEs and were able to describe the scene around their body vividly and accurately. Such incidents scientifically prove that NDEs are real and not hallucinations. Just think how people blind from birth can hallucinate a visual world during an NDE, and report the same things that we see.

Furthermore, many NDErs see things while out of their body that are actually going on. A man might take an 'astral trip' to see his sister and later report what she was doing and wearing at the time – a report later verified by the surprised sister, who wonders how he knew. Or a child might describe in detail, and with impressive accuracy, what happened when her body was being resuscitated while she, out of her body, watched from the ceiling of her hospital room. Such anecdotes are routine in NDE literature. One study even compared what NDErs saw when their bodies were being resuscitated to a control group of patients asked to describe what they thought happened during a typical resuscitation. None of the NDErs made mistakes, while almost everybody in the control group made major mistakes. If NDEs were merely hallucinations, where could all this true information come from? No materialist explanation makes sense. Keep in mind that NDErs are comatose and usually clinically dead when they're having their out-of-body experience.

The foregoing discussions reveal a startling scientific fact that the NDE experiencer is not hallucinating. This means that the experience of perceiving the world from outside the body is real!! Extending the logic further, we are not wrong to deduce that in a comatose condition of the body, the NDE experiencer was dead but still he/she had the perceptual ability, i.e. the consciousness continued to live without the physical body. Furthermore, on resuscitation when NDEr re-entered the body, it amounted to saying that he/she came back to life after being dead. Thus, it means that the ticket is not one way but a dead could come back to life as NDEr did and also the fact that "Consciousness outlives Death" gets scientifically established.

The above narration provides scientific evidence that our consciousness is still alive when our physical body is lost at death. The only thing that happens is that this consciousness cannot express his/her perceptual ability to the physical world, and it has no physical shape. These factors prevent the world from accepting the fact that we are alive after our bodily death.

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Well, if we are alive after bodily death, what then is the way forward? Does consciousness continue to live in the bodiless state forever?

Scientific view on the way forward for bodiless Consciousness

We know that religions provide viewpoints on the future journey of bodiless consciousness. The Hindu religion believes in Reincarnation, i.e. person is reborn as new life form after death. Consciousness (Soul) is liberated at death and enters a new body at birth, and assumes physical life under a different identity.

Hindu belief in reincarnation is not just a belief! The belief is supported by real-life incidences of reincarnation all over the world!!

My paper, “Is Reincarnation Real?”¹² put forth scientific facts about Reincarnation: If we talk about scientific investigations about Reincarnation, 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 bodies of the people whom they claimed were their past lives. Such research tends to put forth a scientific theory that not only is the afterlife possible, but also a new life is possible after we die.

I just quote one famous reincarnation incident:

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.

Wikipedia¹³ 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

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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.

This is not a stand-alone case; as mentioned earlier, there were more than 3000 credible cases investigated and verified by Dr Stevenson.

My Paper, "Is Reincarnation Real" (Naresh Kumar¹²) gives more details:

He investigated more than 3000 cases where current living persons remembered their past lives and gave details which were verified and found true. Among them were cases which had birthmarks that were exactly similar and in the same places on the bodies of people from past lives.



Dr Ian Stevenson, an authority on Reincarnation

Dr Satwant Pasricha of NIMHANS Bangalore joined him, and together they investigated around 500 cases in India.



Dr Satwant Pasricha—Indian researcher on Reincarnation

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.

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 in their 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 the 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's dislike of curd. The person in a 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 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.

The lessons we learn from the events of Reincarnation, 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. Theory is credibly based on observed, verified facts and warrants causal research to have its complete understanding.

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

Doubts need to be cleared to put reincarnation on a 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.*

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- 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. NDEs provide not one but many instances to falsify the claim "Nothing exists after death" and are scientific evidence that consciousness outlives death. Coming back to reincarnation, 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 from the cases present facts that such a life was lived in the past, but whether it was the child who lived may be questionable. He may have lived the life (making reincarnation a real fact!), but it is also possible that someone else lived it, 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 their 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 the Gita!! Does it signal that a scientific theory can emerge from 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.

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The soul or the “Consciousness” could be that Energy, and founded on this thought, I developed the “Energy Survival Theory”¹⁴. This theory is based on scientific laws and must not be taken as a pinch of salt.

In Indian Philosophy, the soul is indestructible, and it transforms from one body to another as we change clothes—it gets liberated at the death of a person and transforms to another person at birth. In my Energy Survival Theory, 'Soul' is replaced by 'Energy' because energy, like soul, cannot be destroyed; it only transforms. The theory does not believe in the existence of ghosts and posits that consciousness (soul /energy), when liberated at the death of a person, instantly fertilises the waiting mating fluid of male and female and transforms into a new person. The fact that many times after copulation, there is no pregnancy is because at that instant, there was no consciousness liberated to fertilise the mating fluid, and hence the consciousness (soul/energy) does not have a chance to manifest as a ghost!! But the reverse is not true; there is always mating fluid waiting for a consciousness to fertilise it. Mating fluids, before entry of consciousness, is just a chemical liquid, and when consciousness enters, it becomes a biological entity. Complete details of the theory can be had from my published paper- “Life After Death-surpassing existing contemporary theories—Some Scientific Thoughts.” (Naresh Kumar¹⁴)

CONCLUSION

We started the discussions with a general belief that the manifestation of apparitions of deceased people and after-death communications from ghosts/ spirits indicate that we continue to live in a bodiless form after we die. However, new research (including my research papers) scientifically prove that perception of ghost manifestation may not be real and there appears a strong case that indicate that ghosts/ spirits do not exist. (Bonnie Butcher³ and Naresh Kumar^{5 to 8 & 12}). Thus, illusory ghost manifestations are no proof for life continuing after physical bodily death.

On the other hand, there is positive research work that supports the belief that life exists even after death.

As promised, the paper has dealt with the subject of Life after Death in a way that moves from belief to scientific understanding. We have circumvented the dilemma, the paradox--- ‘how could we know what happens after death’ since the ticket is one way because once you die, you can't come back and tell your story about what happened after you died!!! We have proved that there are cases (NDE incidents) that prove that the ticket is not one-way and one can come back after death to reveal the fact that consciousness does outlive death!! We have scientifically established this fact as evidenced by NDEs in which one, during the state of momentary death, can have bodiless perception of the world, and the perception is real and not a hallucination. Since NDEs are not hallucinations, they become direct scientific evidence because the person has defied the paradox and has come back after death to apprise us that he was conscious even after death.

NDE is proven to be non-hallucinatory and hence posits that bodiless consciousness is possible. Currently, NDE is being rigorously researched for arriving at complete understanding of the phenomenon. Most likely, future research will firmly establish that life continues even after the body meets death.

As per Alex Blasted¹⁵ there is a widespread sense throughout the community of near-death researchers that we are on the verge of great discoveries. Charlotte Martial, a neuroscientist at the University of Liège in Belgium who has done some of the best physicalist work on near-death experiences, hopes we will soon develop a new understanding of the relationship between

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the internal experience of consciousness and its outward manifestations, for example, in coma patients. "We really are in a crucial moment where we have to disentangle consciousness from responsiveness, and maybe question every state that we consider unconscious," she told me. Parnia, the resuscitation specialist, who studies the physical processes of dying but is also sympathetic to a parapsychological theory of consciousness, has a radically different take on what we are poised to find out. "I think in 50 or 100 years time we will have discovered the entity that is consciousness," he told me. "It will be taken for granted that it wasn't produced by the brain, and it doesn't die when you die." It will put the reality of the afterlife on a firm scientific footing.

Near-Death experiences are proof that consciousness is possible without a body, thus indicating that life is possible even after death.

Another field of research supporting the claim of the afterlife is by Dr Ian Stevenson, who did pioneering work in Reincarnation. We discussed the details in the paper.

Reincarnation research is astonishing and credible. Reincarnation incidents are indicators that consciousness does outlive death, and we have rebirths of a dead person in another body. The researched incidents by Dr Stevenson, Dr Pasricha and others, possibly, could be indicative of only Reincarnation, but if we couple these incidents with the facts of Energy Survival Theory, the scientific explanations taken together do present a strong case that the theory of Reincarnation is real!!!

Summing up, I can claim that the NDE phenomena, Energy Survival Theory and the Reincarnation phenomena bring forth a scientific conclusion that there exists a strong case in support of the fact that Consciousness does outlive death and Life continues even after physical body meets death.

Further research will reveal a complete understanding of death and the afterlife. The death, then, will be considered a continuation of life and will become the last phase in life which goes through phases of infancy, adolescence, youth, old age and the phase of afterlife, thus, making the life immortal.

Scientists believe that observing the pace of research, maybe, in the next 50-100 years we shall have the complete picture!!!

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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